



**Lao People's Democratic Republic**

**Voluntary National Review  
On the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on  
Sustainable Development**

**Prepared by the Government of the Lao PDR  
In consultation with national stakeholders and  
development partners in the Lao PDR**

**June 2024**

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## Abbreviation

ABER	Annual Blood examination rate
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Area
APB	Agricultural Promotion Bank
ARISE	ASEAN Regional Integration Support from the EU
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATM	Automated Teller Machines
BCC	Behaviour Change Communication
BCEL	Banque pour le Commerce Extérieur Lao
BOL	Bank of Laos
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
CDP	Committee for Development Policy
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination on the Discrimination against Women
CH4	Methane
CIT	Corporate Income Tax
CMFL	Copying or moving a file or folder
CO2	Carbon Dioxide
COPA	Copy and Paste tools
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSO	Civil-Society Organizations
DHIS	District Health Information Software
EBA	Everything But Arms
ECE	early childhood education
EMAPEC	Estimating the Morbidity from Air Pollution and its Economic Costs
EoDB	Ease of Doing Business
EPI	Expanded Program on Immunization
ESIAs	Ensuring that environmental and social impact assessments

EU	European Union
EW4A	Early Warning for All
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FIES	Food Insecurity Experience Scale
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
FP	Family Planning
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGHE	General Government Health Expenditure
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GPI	Gender Parity Index
GSP	Generalized System of Preferences
GW	Gigawatt
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunity Syndrome.
HMIS	Health Management Information System
HPIM	Health Personnel Information Management System
HSRS	Health Sector Reform Strategy
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IFI	International Financial Institutions
IHR	International Health Regulations
ILA	Investment License Agreement
ILO	International Labour Organization
INFF	Integrated National Financial Framework
INST	Installation
IPOA	International Plan of Action
ISP	Integrated Spatial Planning
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
IUD	Intrauterine Devices

IUU	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated
LAK	Lao Kip
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LDB	Lao Development Bank
LDC	Least Developed Country
LECS	Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey
LESMIS	Lao PDR Education and Sports Management Information System
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer
LNCCI	Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
LPG	Liquefied Petroleum Gas
LSB	Lao Statistics Bureau
LSIS	Lao Social Indicator Survey
LWU	Lao Women Union
LYU	Lao Youth Union
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
MCV	Measles-Containing Vaccine
MEM	Ministry of Energy and Mine
MFI	Microfinance Institution
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MJ	Megajoules
MOES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MOIC	Ministry of Information and Communications
MOICT	Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism
MOJ	Ministry of Justice

MOLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MONRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MOPS	Ministry of Public Security
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
MPWT	Ministry of Public Works and Transport
MR	Measles & Rubella
MRC	Mekong River Commission
MRV	Measurement, Reporting, and Verification
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
MTC	Ministry of Technology and Communications
MW	Megawatt
N <sub>2</sub> O	Nitrous Oxide
NAMA	National Appropriate Mitigation Action
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NCAMWC	National Commission for the Advancement of Women and Mothers and Children
NCD	Non-Communicable Disease
NCRDPE	National Committee for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NEET	Not in Employment, Education, Training
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGGS	National Green Growth Strategy
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NHI	National Health Insurance
NHSR	National Health Science Research
NPOA	National Plan of Action
NRA	National Regulatory Authority
NSEDP	National Socio-Economic Development Plan
NSPS	National Social Protection Strategy
NTD	Neglected Tropical Diseases
NUOL	National University of Laos
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODAMIS	ODA Management Information System

OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OOP	Out-of-Pocket
OOS	Out of Stock
OPD	Outpatient Department
PHC	Population and Housing Census
PIT	Personal Income Tax
PLHIV	People Living with HIV
PM	Prime Minister
PM2.5	Particulate Matter 2.5
PPA	Power Purchase Agreements
PPP	Public-Private Partnerships
PRF	Poverty Reduction Fund
PV	Photovoltaic
RAAB	Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness
RBA	Right Based-Approach
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
RMNCAH	Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health
SARS-COV-2	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2
SCP	Sustainable consumption and production
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEA-PLM	Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics
SHS	Solar Home Systems
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
SSC	South-South Cooperation
SSE	SDG Stakeholder Engagement
SSF	Small-Scale Fisheries
STS	Smooth Transition Strategy
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
SWG	Sector Working Groups
TB	Tuberculosis
TFEC	Total Final Energy Consumption.

TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
US	United States
USD	United States Dollar
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
VAC	Violence Against Children
VACS	Violence Against Children Surveys
VAT	Value-added Tax
VAW	Violence Against Women
VCSBE	Vientiane Capital State Bus Enterprise
VDCAP	Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan
VNR	Voluntary National Review
VSUTP	Vientiane Sustainable Urban Transport Project
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WEF	World Economic Forum
WESR	World Environment Situation Room
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

# Forward

To be added

## Chapter 1 – Introduction

Since embracing the transformative vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, **Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) has firmly embedded the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its targets within national planning processes to balance economic growth aspirations with sustainability and social inclusion.** Lao PDR stands at a pivotal juncture in its journey towards sustainable development. As the Government of Lao PDR presents this 2024 Voluntary National Review (VNR) or Third VNR (VNR3), it is imperative to assess the progress made and persisting challenges.

**Now past the halfway mark to 2030, Lao PDR's commitment to the Global Goals remains steadfast. The Government of Lao PDR intends to optimize its resources and orchestrate integrated solutions for the promise to leave no one behind.** The pioneering VNR of Lao PDR in 2018 highlighted mainstreaming linkages of our development priorities with the Global Goals: over 60% of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP 2016-2020) indicators are aligned with SDG metrics. The Government of Lao PDR also uniquely added an 18<sup>th</sup> Goal in the SDGs on “lives safe from unexploded ordnances”. The second VNR of Lao PDR in 2021 showed progress across some sectors but also revealed disparities in quality, access, capabilities, and efficiency needing concerted efforts within the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP (2021-2025) blueprint - while recovering from the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and restoring long-standing macro-structural issues that the country has been encountering for a number of years before the onset of COVID-19. Key priorities identified include economic diversification, strengthening sub-national SDG innovation, improving the business climate reform to spur investments, uplifting human capital, besides catalysing partnerships at all levels to finance progress on attaining the Global Goals.

**This 2024 Review (VNR 3) presents transparent, data-driven situational analysis and progress monitoring<sup>1</sup> of the SDGs.** While highlighting milestones, it also notes enduring development gaps around equity, sustainable land use practices, and other areas needing policy and priority recalibrations - to build back better amid global headwinds to socio-economic progress and to address macro-structural issues impeding the country both pre- and post- COVID-19. Economic instability and challenges in social services mean that Lao PDR is in danger of losing gains it has made in poverty eradication, education, nutritional status, and other key human development indicators. Through the VNR process, Lao PDR aims to enhance transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement in its sustainable development efforts. By evaluating progress across all SDGs, the country can identify priorities, mobilize resources effectively, and align policies and strategies to accelerate progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Therefore, the emphasis in this VNR3 is on elucidating policies and partnerships, enriching analytics on data systems that capture heterogeneities, accelerating localized innovations through participative monitoring.** It helps to highlight key areas for structural reforms which are needed to stabilize the economic situation and support a more inclusive growth pattern. These efforts are in consonance with fulfilling the vision of prosperity, equity, and resilience for all Lao citizens, without discrimination based on sex, age, socio-economic class, disability status, language, religion and ethnic origin.

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<sup>1</sup> Situational analysis examines current sector conditions and trends using descriptive indicators. For SDG monitoring, this provides a snapshot of the status quo through systematic data analysis, with indicators describing the current situation rather than measuring progress towards targets. On the other hand, Progress Monitoring uses normative indicators that track performance against specific targets and baselines, indicating whether there is improvement or decline over time. This approach is crucial for prioritizing actions, directing resources, focusing collaborative efforts, and ensuring accountability for outcomes. While situational analysis describes current conditions, progress monitoring evaluates advancements against set goals, determining if changes are sufficient to achieve desired results.

## 1.1 Methodology and Process for the Review

**The methodology adopted for this VNR is grounded in a participatory and inclusive approach.** The review exemplifies the whole-of-society approach to participative, multi-perspective discussions anchored in the principle of leaving no one behind. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of the SDGs, the Government engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including government agencies, people's organizations, private sector entities, and development partners, to ensure a holistic and balanced review. Extensive data compilation, analyses, and consultations align with the UN guidelines for the VNRs, ensuring consistency. Qualitative and quantitative assessments gauge progress, gaps and underlying factors influencing the national SDG performance. This approach allowed us to capture not only the trends in data but also the stories and experiences behind the numbers, providing a more nuanced understanding of the SDG journey of Lao PDR, thus enabling evidence-informed strategic recommendations.

**The data-driven approach utilizes official statistics, sectoral reports, and stakeholder inputs to portray granular progress across SDGs.** Assessment goes beyond situational analyses to a systematic approach for gauging the likelihood of achieving the Global Goals based on current trajectories. The latter uses a progress assessment approach and National SDG Tracker tool of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

**This VNR3 is a continuous work from the previous VNRs prepared for Lao PDR.** The first VNR prepared in 2018 focuses on narrative analysis looking what needs to be done to localise SDGs and identify national SDG indicators which are suitable for the Lao context. For second VNR prepared in 2021, a trend analysis was applied to look at trend of each SDG national indicator based on agreed up baselines. Based on these two VNRs, the time is appropriate for the third VNR or VNR3 to focus its analysis on both trend and track analysis. As such, two key indices used for SDG progress monitoring in this VNR3 are:

- **Trend Analysis (Current Status Index)**, which measures much progress has been made since the baseline year 2015 (data and information from VNR1 and VNRs are utilised).
- **Track Analysis (Anticipated Progress Index)**, which predicts if 2030 targets can be met at present rate of advancement. Indicators are categorized with this index into three levels based on this index assessment: (a) On track or target achieved; (b) Progressing too slowly; (c) Regressing away from target (Updated data and information from 2020 to 2023 are available and there is an agreement on the SDG national targets).

**For SDG progress monitoring to be undertaken, at least two years of data (ideally three years of data) and targets for 2030 for indicators examined are needed.** This means there needs to be at least and more than two data points. The 2030 targets for National SDG Indicators include considering (a) global SDG targets, (b) extending the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP targets from 2025 to 2030, (c) analysing historical trends, and (d) adopting the "champion approach"<sup>2</sup> advocated by UNESCAP. In cases where the different approaches suggest varying targets, a pragmatic choice involves selecting a target that is both reasonable and realistic, especially in light of long-standing macroeconomic structural vulnerabilities, COVID-19 impacts and available resources.

Moreover, the review applies a reflective logic on the VNR1(2018) and VNR2 (2021) learnings - extracting lessons from past policy practices and program delivery models, assessing stakeholder engagement, studying peer country best practices, and understanding external factors impeding progress across metrics. This systems-thinking driven approach enables strategic

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<sup>2</sup> The "champion approach" involves benchmarking against neighbouring countries that have excelled or been particularly successful in specific SDG indicators. This method focuses on making use of the average annual growth rates of these champions in an SDG indicator to project the 2030 country performance starting from the most recently available data. This approach not only helps in setting realistic and achievable 2030 targets in the SDG indicators based on proven success models but also provides valuable insights into policy-making and strategy development necessary to emulate the champions' growth rates, thereby guiding countries towards effective SDG implementation.

recommendations on planning, resource allocations and coordination realignments - rendering the VNR3 an invaluable instrument for fulfilling Lao PDR's development aspirations aligned to the SDGs built around principles of accountability, sustainability, resilience, inclusion, and shared prosperity by leaving no one behind.

## 1.2 Cluster of key selected SDGs around six transitions

For this VNR, the Government of Lao PDR selected 11 SDGs (SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 13, SDG 17 and SDG 18)) to be analysed in more detail. The rationale for this selection is to ensure the continuity from the previous VNRs prepared in 2018 and 2021. With a view towards setting a prioritized and coherent way forwards towards SDG achievement, these selected SDGs are clustered around the Six Key SDG Transitions or investment pathways as per the UN Secretary General (UNSG) encompassing 1) food systems, 2) energy access and affordability, 3) digital connectivity, 4) education, 5) jobs and social protection and 6) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Please refer to Table 1 - Summary of the Cluster of 11 Selected SDGs around Six Transitions, whilst recognising that progress under each SDG also has important implications beyond the Transition under which it is presented.

**Table 1 – Summary of the Cluster of 11 Selected SDGs around Six Transition**

Transition	SDGs	Relevant section
1. Food Systems	SDG 1 (No poverty) SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) SDG 3 (Health and Well-Being)	2.1
2. Energy Access and Affordability	SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy)	2.2
3. Digital connectivity	SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)	2.3
4. Education	SDG 4 (Quality Education)	2.4
5. Job and Social Protection	SDG 5 (Gender Equality) SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) SDG 18 (Mine Action)	2.5
6. Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss and Pollution	SDG 13 (Climate Action)	2.6

**Note:** While the selection of SDGs reviewed in this document are clustered around the Six Transition, each transition is also connected to a broader range of SDGs, including SDGs not reviewed under the VNR3. For instance, the 6<sup>th</sup> transition is also closely connected to SDGs 12 and 15 amongst others, not listed here (as not part of the VNR3).

The Government of Lao PDR is fully aware of the interconnection of the six transitions which plays a critical role in shaping sustainable development outcomes in Lao PDR. Examples of such connections include:

**Food systems, energy access, digital connectivity, education, and climate change are deeply interconnected and interdependent.** Reliable energy access is essential for efficient food production, processing, and distribution, enhancing the overall sustainability of food systems. Energy sources power agricultural machinery, refrigeration, and transportation, which are vital components of modern food systems. Digital connectivity enables precision agriculture techniques, such as real-time monitoring of soil moisture and crop health, optimizing resource use and reducing waste. Education is crucial for disseminating knowledge about sustainable farming practices, climate-smart agriculture, and the importance of healthy and environmentally-friendly diets. Climate change poses significant threats to food systems, with more frequent and intense extreme events potentially imperilling global access to affordable healthy diets. At the same time, food systems contribute to climate change through greenhouse gas emissions, tropical deforestation, and biodiversity loss.

**Education, jobs/social protection, and digital connectivity** are interconnected and interdependent. Education empowers individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to access quality jobs and improve their economic stability and well-being. Digital connectivity enhances education and job opportunities by providing access to information and communication tools.

**In essence, these interconnected transitions highlight the importance of a holistic approach to sustainable development, where advancements in one area can positively influence outcomes in others.** By addressing these transitions collectively, the Government of Lao PDR firmly believes that accelerated progress will be made towards achieving SDGs and creating a more resilient and sustainable development path for the country. Cluster of key selected SDGs (SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 13, SDG 17, and SDG 18) around six transitions in Lao PDR represents a strategic approach to accelerate sustainable development outcomes by focusing interventions and investments on critical areas. This framework does not diminish the interconnectedness of all 18 SDGs, but rather recognizes the need for a targeted approach to address the country's specific challenges and priorities. Therefore, the analysis throughout this VNR will keep the interconnectedness of all 18 SDGs in sight. For instance:

- **SDG 1 (No Poverty):** Addressing poverty through interventions in food systems, energy access, and jobs and social protection.
- **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger):** Enhancing food systems to ensure zero hunger and improve nutrition.
- **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being):** Improving health outcomes through sustainable food systems, access to clean energy, education, and innovation
- **SDG 4 (Quality Education):** Enhancing education through digital connectivity and skill development.
- **SDG 5 (Gender Equality):** Promoting gender equality through education and job opportunities.
- **SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy):** Ensuring universal access to clean, reliable, and affordable energy to power economic growth and development.
- **SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth):** Fostering economic growth and decent work through sustainable practices.
- **SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure):** Promoting innovation and infrastructure development for sustainable growth.
- **SDG 13 (Climate Action):** Addressing climate change through sustainable energy and food systems.
- **SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals):** Emphasizing collaboration and partnerships for effective SDG implementation.
- **SDG 18 (Life Save from UXO):** Addressing the challenges of mine action and UXO (Unexploded Ordnance) in Lao PDR will accelerate efforts on poverty reduction, food security, well-being, and education for all.

### 1.3 Enabling Environment for the SDGs

Lao PDR has conscientiously developed an enabling environment that integrates the SDGs into the national policy processes and operational frameworks.<sup>3</sup> Recognizing the interconnectivity of the SDGs, the Government has strategically fostered a policy landscape that supports sustainable and inclusive growth, strengthening institutional capacities, and enhancing

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<sup>3</sup> Decree No. 206 by the President of Lao PDR on the National Steering Committee on the SDGs in Lao PDR.

partnerships at all levels. For instance, roles and responsibilities of all ministries and provinces have been well identified as per the SDG roadmap for Lao PDR under the supervision of the National Steering Committee chaired by the Prime Minister. Assigning SDG reporting owners and SDG implementation has helped facilitating common understanding across ministries on their mandates and reporting lines.

**The SDGs have been integrated into Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP), ensuring that the Global Goals are localized and aligned with our specific context and priorities.** Significant efforts have been made to improve governance, enhance transparency, and promote public participation in the development process. Lao PDR recognizes that achieving the SDGs requires more than just government action; it demands active engagement from all sectors of society. Hence, Lao PDR has worked to build robust collaboration mechanisms to leverage strengths and resources to drive progress towards the SDGs. For instance, there has been a change in consultation approach moving away from traditional government consultations to more conventional public workshops and dialogues with various types of partners for this VNR (Section 1.4 highlights in more details on various consultations and inputs from key national and international partners). In addition, various sections of VNR3 also build on the work of the mid-term review of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP, the review of the national agenda<sup>4</sup> and other policy framework development like the Smooth Transition Strategy for Least Developed Countries Graduation (STS), Resilience Framework, and sectoral/cross sectoral development frameworks as staged in Chapter 3.

**The 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP encompasses graduating from Least Developed Country (LDC) status by 2026 and working toward attaining Upper Middle-Income status by the end of the current decade.** To achieve these milestones, Lao PDR is rebalancing high growth aspirations across productive sectors with greater alignment to sustainability imperatives as well as human development priorities warranted for an equitable society. The socio-economic blueprint banks on the twin transitions of a more digital and green future as accelerators for industrialization and private sector-led growth. Reforms aim at improving project execution capacities, service delivery and business environments to attract investments in modern infrastructure. Priority policies recognize a future based on emerging technologies and a green economy. Export orientation integrated into regional value chains is planned through calibrated economic liberalization. Expanding rural infrastructure access remains vital to spread opportunities. Large investments in education, healthcare, social protection, and community initiatives are intended to significantly uplift human development indicators. Importantly, ensuring high quality, inclusion opportunities for women, youth, ethnic groups, and other communities in a situation of vulnerability is underscored across each intervention silo given vulnerability risks. Additionally, active technologies and innovation integration across policies, programs and public digital services find salient emphasis in the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP given their immense potential to accelerate and deepen development impacts by unlocking efficiencies. Finally, elevating financing capacities and capabilities around decentralized governance and localized execution of schemes receives priority - closing the last mile delivery gaps.

**The policy priorities outlined in the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP revolve around six outcome areas which aim to guide policy-making for sustainable and inclusive growth, human capital investment, infrastructure development, and progress towards the transition from Least Developed Country status.** Key focus areas include ensuring no one is left behind in the development process with a stronger focus on children, youth, gender, and groups in the situations of vulnerability. The plan also emphasizes the development of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

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<sup>4</sup> The National Agenda on Economic and Financial Difficulties In response to the challenging context, the National Assembly endorsed in August 2021 the National Agenda on Addressing Economic and Financial Difficulties and its five priority themes: (i) export promotion, (ii) revenue mobilization, (iii) efficient expenditure and debt management, (iv) finance sector stability, and (v) rule of law. This National Agenda was planned for 2021-2023 but then extended to 2025.

framework, a costing, and a financing strategy as essential components to accompany the NSEDP. The plan was finalized with a high-level consultation with development partners and is aligned with the strategic framework that reflects the context of Lao PDR.

**To actualize this SDG-NSEDP integration, a multifaceted approach has been adopted.** At the heart of this, the vision of social justice through social protection has been seen as a critical investment for shared prosperity. Policies and programs on equity and inclusion have been recalibrated to target groups in vulnerable situations amid persisting challenges to macro-economic performance. Non-discrimination more broadly and specifically gender equality, social inclusion and Leave No One Behind (LNOB) are thus cornerstones of Lao PDR's enabling environment for the SDGs' achievement. Relevant narratives under this VNR will help inform progress and follow up actions on Right Based-Approach (RBA) which will be under review in coming years such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and some human rights conventions that the Lao PDR has ratified for instance, the Convention on the Elimination on the Discrimination against Women, (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and others.

**The Government has reinforced its commitment to creating equitable opportunities for all, recognizing the role of women, girls, and other segments of society in vulnerable situations as catalysts for development.** Efforts to mainstream gender equality, disability, and social inclusion across policy-making, coupled with specific interventions to empower vulnerable sectors economically, socially, and politically, exemplify this commitment. These initiatives are designed to dismantle barriers to equality of opportunities and participation in decision-making processes, and thus ensure that development gains are inclusive and widespread. Technological innovation is also a significant focus, with the Government promoting the adoption of sustainable technologies and fostering a culture of innovation. This includes supporting the growth of digital infrastructure, encouraging the use of renewable energy, and investing in sustainable agricultural practices and green industries. Such advancements not only contribute to economic diversification but also aid in addressing environmental challenges, enhancing productivity, and building resilience against climate change.

**Furthermore, Lao PDR has made concerted efforts to strengthen institutional mechanisms and governance structures to support SDG implementation, and monitoring of outcomes.** This includes enhancing the capacity of public institutions, improving coordination among various sectors, and fostering an environment that is conducive to public-private partnerships. The national SDG monitoring framework consists of 257 indicators with data sources from activities of the Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB) and other data producers – Please refer to Annex 1 for the list of SDG indicators.

## **1.4 VNR 3 preparation and consultations**

**The National SDG Secretariat in Lao PDR plays a crucial role in overseeing and facilitating the preparation of Lao PDR's third VNR (VNR3). SDG focal points from various ministries and government agencies are the backbones of the report responsible for gathering data, supplying information, and providing relevant statistics for the VNR3.** These focal points also report on different interventions undertaken for the implementation of the SDGs in Lao PDR. Furthermore, the SDG focal points collaborate with national and international stakeholders to evaluate the progress of each SDG indicator. This evaluation aims to identify indicators that are on track, those that require additional efforts, and those that are off-track. The review of the national SDG goals and targets considers both qualitative and quantitative dimensions where applicable. Additionally, the focal points update policy directions and relevant narratives for the VNR3 to ensure accurate and comprehensive reporting. Lastly, the focal points are responsible for reviewing and verifying the information included in the VNR3, as prepared and supported by the National SDG Secretariat. This process involves revising the content to ensure accuracy, consistency, and alignment with the national policy frameworks for the SDGs in

Lao PDR. Please refer to Table 2 below for a summary of Lao PDR's VNR3 preparatory and consultation process.

**Table 2 - Summary of Lao PDR 's VNR preparatory and consultation process**

Key tasks and consultations	Types of stakeholders involved	Focuses and key discussion points
<b>Preparatory process and meetings</b>		
Organization annual meeting of a National Steering Committee on SDG <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>June 2023</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Chaired by Deputy Prime Minister</b></li> <li><b>Participants:</b> Ministers/Vice Ministers, Director Generals/Deputy Director Generals from all Ministries and Ministries equivalent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update from various ministries on their work related to SDGs</li> <li>Discussion over a concept of the VNR3</li> <li>Agreement over trend and track analysis for the VNR 3</li> </ul>
Series of meetings between SDG National Secretariat and National SDGs Focal Points from line Ministries and Ministries equivalent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>June 2023</li> <li>September 2023</li> <li>November 2023</li> <li>December 2023</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Chaired</b> by Director General and Head of the SDG National Secretariat</li> <li><b>Participants:</b> SDG focal points from all line Ministries and Ministries equivalent (Director Generals/Deputy Director Generals, Division Heads and Technical Officials)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review baseline data for all SDG indicators</li> <li>Development of VNR 3 preparatory roadmap including list of consultations</li> <li>Agreement of methodology and criteria for trend and track analysis</li> <li>Agreement on selection of 11 key SDGs to be reviewed under VNR3</li> <li>Agreement of key theme and structure of the VNR3</li> </ul>
Inception multi-stakeholder workshop to present the process and the objective of the third SDG VNR as per the guidance from the National SDG Steering Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>January 2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Chaired</b> by Director General and Head of the SDG National Secretariat and UN Resident Coordinator</li> <li><b>Participants:</b> SDG focal points from all line Ministries and Ministries equivalent (Director Generals/Deputy Director Generals, Division Heads and Technical Officials), UN agencies, Bilateral Development Partners, IFIs and Multilateral International Organizations, Private Sector, Civil Society, Academia and other stakeholders ((youth union, people with disabilities, etc).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on the VNR3 preparatory process, content, structure and consultation plan</li> <li>Suggestions from partners on key theme and cluster of 11 SDGs around 6 transitions</li> <li>Introduction to LNOB analysis</li> <li>Work on SDG Tracker</li> <li>Introduction to Twinning Programme (Laos-Azerbaijan)</li> <li>A plan for stakeholder engagement and</li> </ul>
Round Table Implementation Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>February 2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Chaired</b> by Minister, Ministry of Planning and Investment and UN Resident Coordinator</li> <li><b>Participants:</b> all line Ministries and Ministries equivalent, provinces, UN agencies, Bilateral Development Partners, IFIs and Multilateral International Organizations, Private Sector, Civil Society, Academia and other stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and stock taking on the progress and implementation of national development frameworks (9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP Mid-Term Review, Financing Strategy and Lao PDR Resilience Framework</li> <li>Information and update about the preparation of the VNR3</li> <li>Update on the Lao PDR Smooth Transition Strategy for LDC Graduation (2022-2026 with a Vision to 2030) and Beyond</li> <li>Economic Situation and Way forward to sustainability and green growth.</li> <li>Human capital for sustainable development</li> <li>Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation</li> </ul>
<b>Consultation, data collection and analysis</b>		

Key tasks and consultations	Types of stakeholders involved	Focuses and key discussion points
<p>Series of individual meeting with all SDG focal points from line Ministries and Ministries Equivalent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>January to March 2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ministry of Health (SDG 3)</li> <li>Ministry of Education and Sport (SDG 4)</li> <li>Lao Women Union (SDG 5)</li> <li>Ministry of Energy and Mine (SDG 7)</li> <li>Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (SDG 1, 2, 14, 15)</li> <li>Ministry Public Work and Transportation (SDG 11)</li> <li>Ministry of Home Affairs (SDG 16)</li> <li>Ministry of Industry and Commerce (SDG 9)</li> <li>Ministry of Nature Resource and Environment (SDG 6, 12, 13)</li> <li>Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (SDG8)</li> <li>Ministry of Planning and Investment (SDG 10,17)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informing about the up-coming and next step for VNR3 process</li> <li>Checking baselines for all SDG indicators</li> <li>Updated data</li> <li>Discussion over key interventions, priorities, pathways, and focuses</li> <li>Discussion about trend and track of all SDG indicators</li> </ul>
<p>National youth consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>March 2024</li> </ul>	<p>60 young individuals across the country (balance between boys and girls, a few ethnic groups. Majority (students from rural areas, students with disabilities)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysing the trend and progress of the SDG4 implementation by focus on the most pressing issues that need urgent attention (i.e. school dropout rate and teacher shortage);</li> <li>Identifying policy recommendation (both new and exit), areas of interventions and proposed solution in addressing the school dropout issue in Laos, specifically in the provincial context;</li> <li>Further enhancing and strengthening coordination among the SDG focal points and relevant stakeholders whose work related to SDG4, education and health sectors; Job, employment and social protection</li> <li>Young people contribution to sustainable development, food systems, energy and environment</li> </ul>
<p>Meeting with private sector and 10 Sector Working Groups under Round Table Process and Private Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jan- April 2024</li> </ul>	<p>Series of meetings with Chairs of Sector Working Groups and representatives from private sectors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sectoral development frameworks</li> <li>Contributions to the sustainable development agenda</li> <li>Sectoral and cross-sectoral coordination</li> <li>Private sector contributions and how to ensure partnership</li> <li>Effective development cooperation and partnership</li> </ul>
<p>Lao CSO network consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>April 2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Chaired</b> by the Lao Civil Society Coordination Committee (LCCC)</li> </ul> <p><b>Participants:</b> member of the CSOs in the Lao PDR and others (youth union, people with disabilities, etc).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendations for the implementation of all 18 SDGs in Lao PDR</li> <li>Discussion over key priorities/pathways/focuses for each SDG</li> <li>Government-CSO partnership</li> </ul>
<p>UNESCAP 2024 VNR Twinning Programme – Share &amp; Learn I: Nationalizing SDG</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Chaired</b> by Director-General of DIO, MOFA, Lao PDR and Head of the National Coordination Council on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting VNR Twinning counterparts, beyond the VNR leading teams.</li> </ul>

Key tasks and consultations	Types of stakeholders involved	Focuses and key discussion points
<p>indicators: the role of data and statistics</p> <p>March 2024</p>	<p>Sustainable Development of the Republic of Azerbaijan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Participants:</b> National SDG Secretariat, namely DIO-MoFA, DOP-MPI and LSB-MPI, UNRCO, UNESCAP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing experiences, good practices and challenges in developing an evidence based VNR and deepening the data analysis.</li> <li>• Exploring best tools, data sources and other methodologies and techniques for SDG monitoring, including presenting preliminary results from the use of the National SDG Tracker.</li> </ul>
<p>UNESCAP 2024 VNR Twinning Programme – Share &amp; Learn II: Nationalizing SDG indicators: Stakeholder engagement for the VNR: the role of youth and other non-state actors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• April 2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Chaired</b> by Representatives from DIO, MOFA, Lao PDR and Representative from the National Coordination Council on Sustainable Development of the Republic of Azerbaijan.</li> <li>• <b>Participants:</b> National SDG Secretariat, namely DIO-MoFA, DOP-MPI and LSB-MPI, relevant SDG Focal Points, UNRCO, UNESCAP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share experiences, good practices, and challenges in engaging stakeholders throughout the VNR process and beyond.</li> <li>• Explore tools, methodologies, and techniques for meaningful and sustained engagement of different stakeholders.</li> <li>• Discuss how to receive feedback from stakeholders and how stakeholders perceive engagement.</li> </ul>
<p>Multi-stakeholder consultation on the VNR3 zero draft</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• April 2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Chaired</b> by Minister, Ministry of Planning and Investment and UN Resident Coordinator</li> <li>• <b>Participants:</b> all line Ministries and Ministries equivalent, provinces, UN agencies, Bilateral Development Partners, IFIs and Multilateral International Organizations, Private Sector, Civil Society, Academia and other stakeholders (youth union, people with disabilities, etc).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VNR3 Zero draft reviewed and key recommendations/feedbacks provided</li> </ul>
<p>UNESCAP 2024 VNR Twinning Programme – Share &amp; Learn III focusing on Digitalization and e-government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Chaired</b> by Representatives from DIO, MOFA, Lao PDR and Representative from the National Coordination Council on Sustainable Development of the Republic of Azerbaijan.</li> <li>• <b>Participants:</b> National SDG Secretariat, namely DIO-MOFA, DOP-MPI and LSB-MPI, relevant SDG Focal Points, UNRCO, UNESCAP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share experiences, good practices, and challenges in leveraging information technologies in public administration.</li> <li>• Explore tools and technologies to reduce the ‘distance’ between authorities and citizens in the provision of public services and increase transparency.</li> <li>• Discuss necessary legal frameworks for the development of communication and information technologies.</li> </ul>
<p>Participated in UN-ESCAP 2024 VNR3 Twinning Programme (Lao PDR and Azerbaijan)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June 2024</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Participants:</b> National SDG Secretariat, namely DIO-MoFA, DOP-MPI and LSB-MPI, relevant SDG Focal Points including LWU, UXO NRA, Representative from the National Assembly, UNRCO, UNESCAP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support countries in the VNR preparation through peer-to-peer exchange of best practices for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda</li> <li>• Share and Learn how other have approached the preparation of the their VNR</li> <li>• Establish a direct connection between national stakeholder of Azerbaijan and Lao PDR for enhanced peer learning.</li> </ul>

## Chapter 2 – Trend and Track Analysis of SDGs since the 2<sup>nd</sup> VNR clustered around six transitions: Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs

### Summary of overall performance of 18 SDGs in Lao PDR

The overall progress of all 18 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Lao PDR from the first Voluntary National Review (VNR1) in 2018, (VNR2) in 2021 and (VNR3) 2024 provides a general view of the country's advancement. While this VNR3 specifically focuses on 11 SDGs as mentioned early, a broader review of all 18 goals is essential to understand the country's overall development trajectory during this period.

The country's performance on the SDGs is examined through the lens of the national monitoring framework on the SDGs, which comprises 257 indicators, including some of the global SDG indicators. As of 2023, Lao PDR had 172 National SDG indicators with available data (73% of all national SDG indicators). Out of this 172, 97 indicators (around 62%) have sufficient data points for trend and track analysis (Figure 1 provides overview of data availability of all national SDG indicators). This is a noticeable increase from 2017 when only 130 indicators had available data, although data gaps persist as a quarter (26.8% or a total of 69) out of the 257 National SDG indicators lack data.

If we are to gain better insights into the achievements of Lao PDR in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the pace of improving data availability must increase. Thus, investments are needed for the production and communication of statistics. Currently, much attention is on the production of economic and social statistics, while statistics on the environment currently fall short of data needed for SDG monitoring. While the country has made strides in producing economic and social statistics, there is a pressing need to enhance the collection and analysis of environmental data to support comprehensive monitoring of progress towards the SDGs.

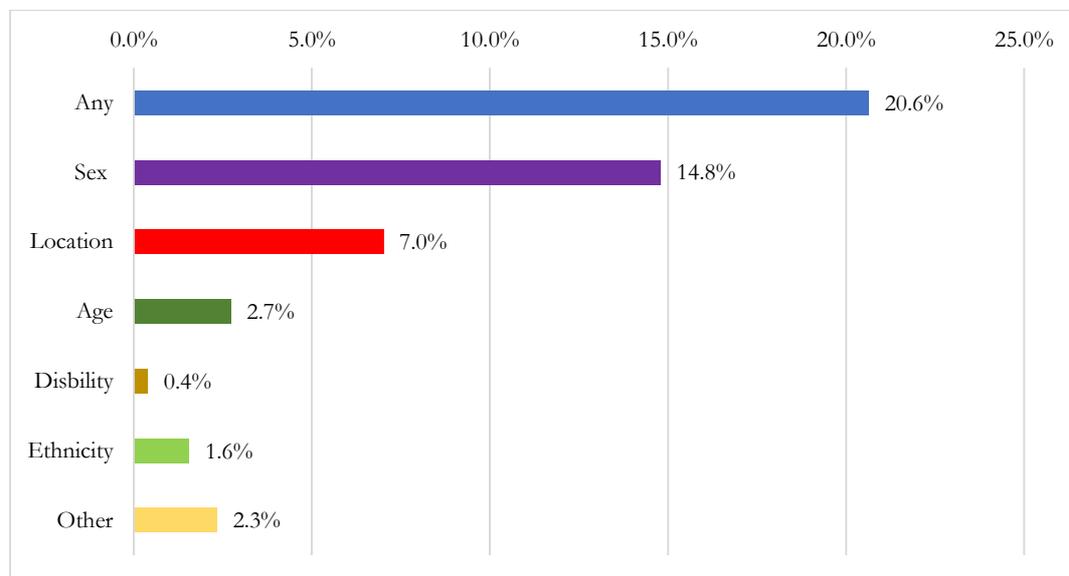
Figure 1 - Data availability (in %) of all national SDG indicators



Source: UNESCAP – Lao National SDG Tracker and LSB calculation  
<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/unescap.statistics.division/viz/SDG-LAO-2024/Story>

Further granular assessment of SDG milestones beyond the national level can be made for about a fifth (20.6%) of the total number of National SDG indicators or over a fourth (28.8%) of the indicators with available data (Figure 2). Disaggregation, however, is largely by sex or location. The amount of granular data has considerably improved from 2017 when only a tenth (9.3%) of the total indicators, or a fifth (18.5%) of indicators with available data. More data disaggregation is important as these are crucial inputs to the development of policies focused on equity and inclusion that are critical to the attainment of the promise of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind.

**Figure 2 - Data disaggregation (in %) of all national SDG indicators**



Source: UNESCAP – Lao National SDG Tracker and LSB calculation  
<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/unescap.statistics.division/viz/SDG-LAO-2024/Story>

**Overall, none of the 18 SDGs have met the mid-points (2023) of the SDG national targets, indicating that a need for greater work to be done across all areas of sustainable development.** In particular, Figures 3 and Table 3 highlights key features of the SDG progress in Lao PDR which reveals important insights as follow:

- **Eleven SDGs - Progressing Goals:** SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 15, and SDG 18 are progressing at different speeds, showing positive movement towards their targets,
- **Two SDGs - Regressing Goals:** Two goals (SDG 16, and SDG 17) are regressing or moving backward, highlighting areas that require urgent attention and intervention, and
- **Five SDGs – Insufficient Indicators:** most indicators for SDG 6, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13, SDG 14 data available has only one data point. Therefore, we cannot carry trend and track analysis base on the data available. However, the percentage of sufficient data (2 or more data points) is still limited for all SDGs.

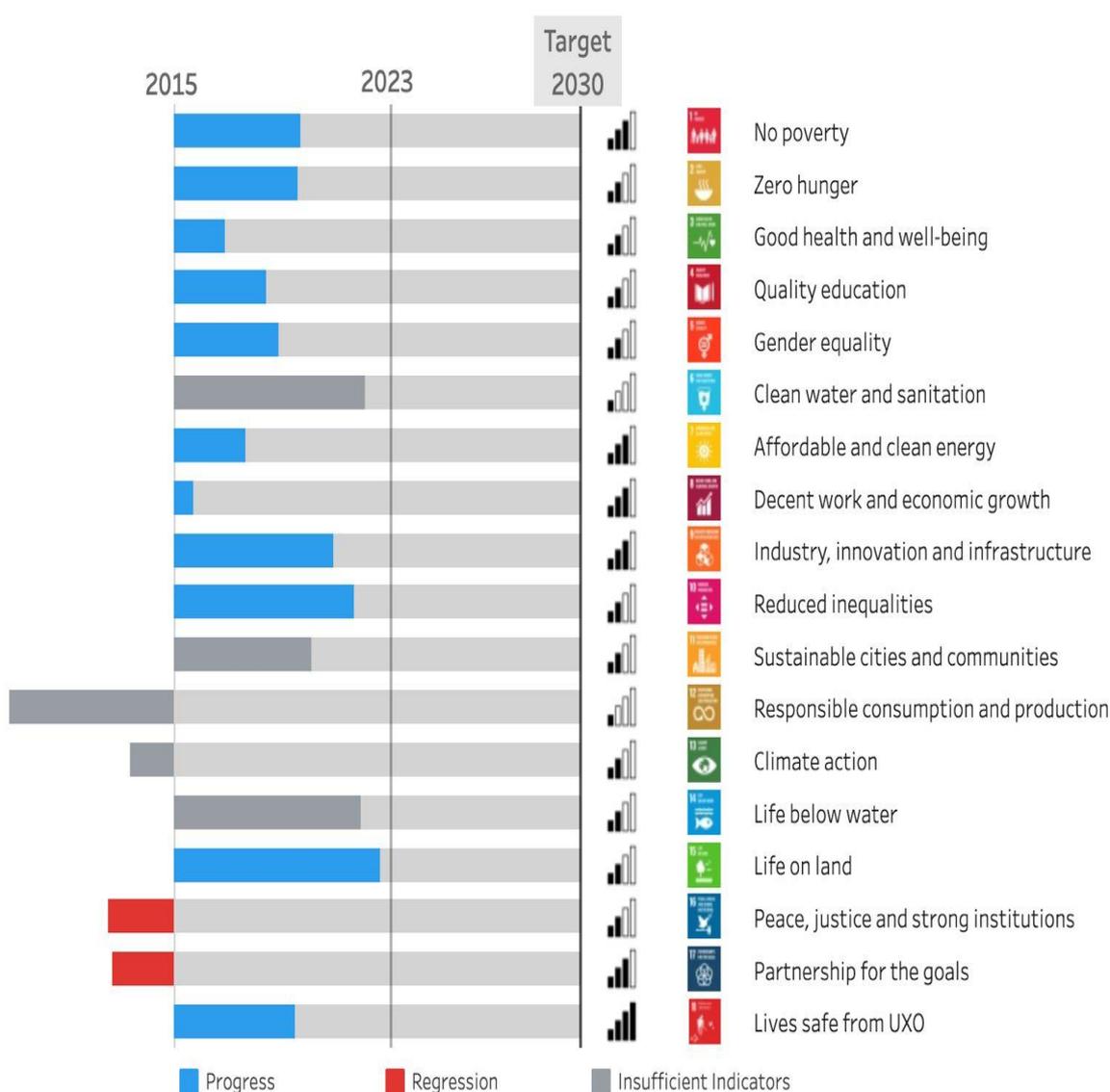
**Among the eleven SDGs for which more detailed analysis was undertaken, key conclusions were:**

- **Good performers:** SDG 15 (Life on Land) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) are identified as good performers, as they seem to be closer to reaching the mid-point of the national targets, and
- **Challenges for other Goals:** For the other nine SDGs (SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 18, SDG 5, SDG 7, SDG 8, and SDG 10), progress towards the mid-point (2023) of the national targets (2030) indicates significant challenges in achieving these goals.

These imply that while Lao PDR is making progress on a number of SDGs, significant challenges remain. The country urgently needs to accelerate efforts on the goals that are progressing slowly or regressing, and improve data collection for the goals with insufficient information. Targeted interventions and investments will be crucial to get the country back on track to achieve the SDGs by 2030. In addition, three key specific implications have emerged:

- **Data Quality:** The limited data availability suggests a need for improved data collection and reporting mechanisms to accurately track progress and inform decision-making,
- **Challenges in Progress:** The far-reaching progress for the ten SDGs indicates that significant efforts and resources are required to bridge the gap between current status and the mid-point targets (2023), and
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Enhancing data availability and quality for all SDGs is crucial for effective monitoring, evaluation, and decision-making to ensure that interventions are targeted and impactful.

Figure 3 - Snapshot of SDGs progress



Source: UNESCAP – Lao National SDG Tracker  
<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/unescap.statistics.division/viz/SDG-LAO-2024/Story>

**Table 3 - Summary of progress toward the SDG national targets**

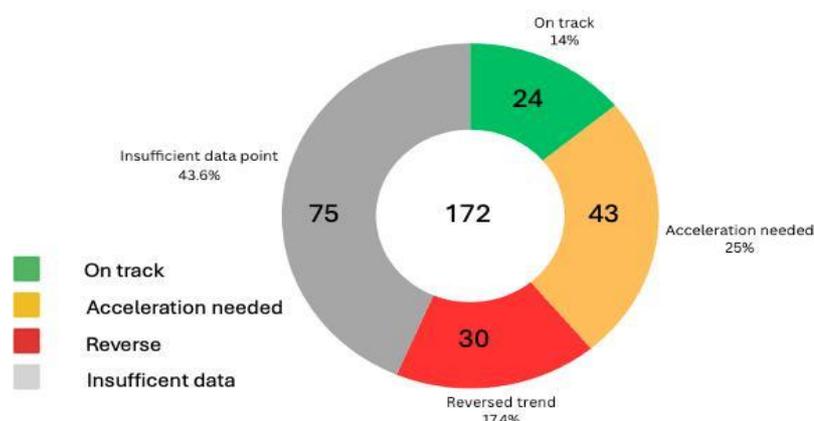
Description		Margin of gap to reach the mid points (2023)	Percentage of sufficient data
<b>11 SDGs that are progressing (descending order of performance)</b>			
1 <sup>st</sup>	SDG 15 (Life on Land)	Less than 5%	40%
2 <sup>nd</sup>	SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities)	10%	78%
3 <sup>rd</sup>	SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure)	20%	60%
4 <sup>th</sup>	SDG 1 (No Poverty)	40%	64%
5 <sup>th</sup>	SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)	40%	83%
6 <sup>th</sup>	SDG 18 (Mine Action)	40%	100%
7 <sup>th</sup>	SDG 5 (Gender Equality)	50%	47%
8 <sup>th</sup>	SDG 4 (Quality Education)	60%	62%
9 <sup>th</sup>	SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy)	70%	67%
10 <sup>th</sup>	SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being)	80%	87%
11 <sup>th</sup>	SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)	90%	95%
<b>2 SDGs that are regressing and reversed trend needed</b>			
	SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)		48%
	SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals)		68%
<b>5 SDGs – insufficient data as most indicators have one data point</b>			
	SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)	No confidence in making an assessment as the percentage of sufficient data is low	38%
	SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)		39%
	SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)		30%
	SDG 13 (Climate Actions)		14%
	SDG 14 (Life Below Water)		40%

Source: Source: UNESCAP – Lao National SDG Tracker and calculation by the National SDG Secretariat

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the progress towards achieving SDGs, **the VNR3 delves into key elements of each SDG to highlight areas of success and areas that require attention.** This analysis aims to showcase the positive advancements made and identify key areas for greater improvement, guiding the country towards a more interventions from now till 2030 (please refer to Figure 4 and Table 4). Some key features of anticipated progress of each SDG indicator moving toward 2030 target include:

- ⇒ Among 172 indicators with data availability, **track analysis was not undertaken for 43.6% of the indicators (75 indicators)** because of insufficient data points (only one data point),
- ⇒ **24 indicators are on-track** which is 14% of the total 172 SDG indicators with data availability,
- ⇒ **43 indicators require acceleration** which is 25% of the total 172 SDG indicators with data availability, and
- ⇒ **30 indicators are off-track** which is 17.4% of the total 172 SDG indicators with data availability and they need trend reversals to yield 2030 targets.

Figure 4 - Summary of anticipated progress of SDGs



Source: UNESCAP – Lao National SDG Tracker  
 (https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/unescap.statistics.division/viz/SDG-LAO-2024/Story)

Table 4 - Anticipated progress, challenges and way forwards of SDGs

SDGs and goal areas		To achieve 2030 SDG national target			
		On-track	Acceleration needed	Reverse trend	Insufficient data points
<b>SDG 1 – No Poverty</b> (Overall progress – 40% gap to reach the 2023 mid-point)					
1.1	International poverty				
1.2	National Poverty				
1.3	Social protection				
1.4	Access to basic services				
1.5	Resilience to disasters				
1.a	Resources for poverty programs				
1.b	Pro-poor public social spending				
<p>While the country has made noteworthy progress in poverty reduction with the proportion of persons (with consumptions below that national poverty line falling, reaching 2030 national target will not be possible at the current rate as the current overall progress is still far from the mid-point (2023). <b>Greater efforts are needed in four key areas</b> in order to accelerate the country progress towards achieving the 2030 national target for poverty reduction.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Social protection</b> by strengthening social assistance programs, health insurance, and education support and focusing on building resilience among vulnerable groups, such as children, women, and the elderly, by providing targeted support and services,</li> <li><b>Access to basic services</b> such as healthcare, education, and sanitation by prioritising investments and improving the quality and efficiency in addressing poverty,</li> <li><b>Resources for poverty programs</b> by allocating sufficient budgetary resources, leveraging international aid, and mobilizing private sector support and building partnerships with civil society organizations and rural communities, and</li> <li><b>Building resilience among rural and remote communities</b> to disasters and shocks by providing targeted support and services to enhance their ability to adapt to climate change and natural disasters.</li> </ol>					
<b>SDG 2 – Zero Hunger</b> (Overall progress – 40% gap to reach the 2023 mid-point)					
2.1	Undernourishment and food security				
2.2	Malnutrition				
2.3	Agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers				

SDGs and goal areas		To achieve 2030 SDG national target			
		On-track	Acceleration needed	Reverse trend	Insufficient data points
2.4	Agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture				
2.5	Maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild specie				
2.a	Investment in agriculture				
2.b	Agricultural export subsidies				
2.c	Food price anomalies				
<p>Lao PDR has made significant progress towards achieving zero hunger, with <b>declining rates of undernourishment and stunting</b>. However, <b>undernourishment, food security, and malnutrition remain pressing challenges</b>, particularly in rural and remote areas. The Government has been actively addressing these issues through various initiatives, including increasing investment in agriculture and promoting nutrition education. Despite these efforts, <b>concrete actions are necessary to transform food systems through a multi-sectoral approach</b> to ensure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Nutritious food for all</b> by promoting sustainable agriculture practices, improving food distribution networks, and increasing awareness about proper nutrition,</li> <li>2. <b>Sustainable agriculture productivity and sufficient food production/distribution/consumption</b> through modern practices, technology adoption, and diversification,</li> <li>3. <b>Livelihood and employment</b> by promoting commercialized agriculture, improving market links, and providing training and capacity-building programs, and</li> <li>4. <b>Resilience to climate change and disasters</b> through climate-resilient agricultural practices, early warning systems, and disaster risk reduction measures.</li> </ol> <p>To achieve these goals, a multi-sectoral approach is necessary, involving government agencies, private sector, civil society, and local communities. This will require <b>sustained efforts to address the root causes</b> of undernourishment, food insecurity, and malnutrition, as well as ongoing <b>monitoring and evaluation</b> to track progress and identify areas for improvement.</p>					
<b>SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being</b> (Overall progress – 80% gap to reach the 2023 mid-point)					
3.1	Maternal mortality				
3.2	Child mortality				
3.3	Communicable diseases				
3.4	NCD & mental health				
3.5	Substance abuse				
3.6	Road traffic accidents				
3.7	sexual and reproductive health-care services				
3.8	Universal Health coverage				
3.9	Health impact of pollution				
3.a	Tobacco Control				
3.b	Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries				
3.c	Health financing and workforce				
3.d	Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks				
<p>While Lao PDR has made <b>significant progress in improving health outcomes</b> in recent years, with <b>reductions in maternal mortality ratio, infant under-5 mortality and neonatal mortality rates, tuberculosis and malaria cases, and increased birth attendance by skilled health personnel</b>, some challenges persist in achieving the goal of ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all. <b>Particular attention needs to be focused</b> on addressing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Non-Communicable Diseases and Mental Health</b> which are on the rise and require long-term care and management.</li> </ol>					

SDGs and goal areas		To achieve 2030 SDG national target			
		On-track	Acceleration needed	Reverse trend	Insufficient data points
<p>2. <b>Substance abuse</b>, particularly the use of alcohol and tobacco which is a growing concern and requires a comprehensive approach that includes education, prevention, and treatment programs.</p> <p>3. <b>Road traffic accidents</b> - a significant cause of morbidity and mortality, particularly among young people.</p> <p>4. <b>Sexual and reproductive health</b> which need greater investments in education, training of health workers, and the provision of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services.</p> <p>5. <b>Universal Health Coverage</b> which requires sustained investments in healthcare infrastructure, training and retention of healthcare workers, and the implementation of effective health financing mechanisms.</p> <p>6. <b>Impact of pollution</b> including air pollution, water pollution, and soil contamination which requires investments in environmental protection, waste management, and the promotion of sustainable practices.</p> <p>7. <b>Research and development</b> for the health sector which faces challenges in allocating sufficient resources and requires sustained investments and promotion of collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and healthcare providers.</p> <p>8. <b>Health workforce training, recruitment, and retention</b> as well as the implementation of effective strategies for equitable <b>distribution of healthcare workers</b>.</p> <p>To address these challenges and achieve the goal of ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all, the Government is committed to implement a <b>comprehensive and integrated approach</b> that addresses the social determinants of health, promotes healthy behaviours, and strengthens the healthcare system. This will require sustained efforts to improve healthcare access, infrastructure, workforce, financing, and policy, as well as collaboration with various stakeholders, including the government, civil society, and development partners.</p>					
<p><b>SDG 4 – Quality Education</b> (Overall progress – 60% gap to reach the 2023 mid-point)</p>					
4.1	Effective learning outcomes				
4.2	Early childhood development				
4.3	Access to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education,				
4.4	Skills for employment				
4.5	Equal access to education				
4.6	literacy and numeracy Achievement				
4.7	Learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development				
4.a	Education Facilities				
4.b	Scholarships				
4.c	Qualified teachers				
<p><b>Education reforms and policy changes have helped improve the quality of education and enrolment in Lao PDR</b> throughout the years. In particular, efforts to increase school enrolment have been effective in primary enrolment and there has been an improvement in education facilities and equal access to education across segments of population. However, quality of education remains a major concern and there is an urgent need to address some key challenges:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>High dropout rates, particularly at the lower levels of education.</b></li> <li><b>Participation in some form of early childhood education (ECE)</b> which is important for primary school readiness and learning. However, after years of increasing enrolments, there has been decrease in public enrolments</li> <li><b>Production of skilled workers</b> which has been reduced with significant declines in enrolments in secondary education, TVET and TE.</li> <li><b>Gradual but significant decline in the teacher workforce</b> which is placing additional pressure on the education system</li> <li><b>Student learning outcomes and teacher competency</b> which have implication for the development of human capital, necessary for transitioning to a modern and high growth economy.</li> <li><b>Basic literacy and mathematics knowledge and strengthening content knowledge of teachers</b> are greater priorities for use of limited development funds.</li> </ol>					

SDGs and goal areas		To achieve 2030 SDG national target			
		On-track	Acceleration needed	Reverse trend	Insufficient data points
7. <b>Education budget allocation as a share of the national budget, and as a percentage of GDP</b> to meet the 18% benchmark set in the education law.					
<b>SDG 5 – Gender Equality</b> (Overall progress – 50% gap to reach the 2023 mid-point)					
5.1	Discrimination against women & girls				
5.2	Violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres				
5.3	Early marriage				
5.4	Unpaid care and domestic work				
5.5	Women in leadership				
5.6	Reproductive health access & rights				
5.a	Women equal rights to economic resources				
5.b	Technology for women empowerment				
5.c	Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels				
<p>Lao PDR has achieved <b>noticeable progress</b> towards gender equality and empowerment of women. <b>Three areas</b> of progress include (1) the formulation of <b>legal frameworks</b> that provide an overarching architecture for the effective implementation of advancement of women’s rights, (2) the <b>improved health care and service</b> to serve the medical needs for women and (3) the <b>better education attainment</b> by women. However, from now till 2030, key focuses among priorities include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Gross enrolment ratio for girls and boys</b> as there are still significant disparities in education between boys and girls and girls are more likely to drop out of school.</li> <li>2. <b>Women employment</b> particularly in the formal sector with increased social protection and benefits.</li> <li>3. <b>Healthcare, particularly in terms of maternal and reproductive health</b> which is higher than the regional average.</li> <li>4. <b>Economic empowerment</b> particularly in terms of access to financial services and ownership of assets.</li> <li>5. <b>Gender-Based Violence</b> in term physical or sexual violence and emotional abuse.</li> <li>6. <b>Implementation and enforcement of regulatory frameworks/policies</b> as there are still gaps and inconsistencies in their implementation and resources are still limited.</li> <li>7. <b>Awareness</b> about gender equality and the importance of promoting gender equality in all aspects of life.</li> </ol>					
<b>SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation</b> (Overall progress – cannot assess as the sufficient data is low)					
6.1	Equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water				
6.2	Access to sanitation & hygiene				
6.3	improve water quality by reducing pollution				
6.4	Water-use efficiency across all sectors				
6.5	Water basin with water resource management				
6.6	Protect and restore water-related ecosystems				
6.a	Expand international cooperation and capacity-building support				
6.b	Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management				
<b>SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy</b> (Overall progress – 70% gap to reach the 2023 mid-point)					
7.1	Access to energy services				
7.2	Share of renewable energy				

SDGs and goal areas		To achieve 2030 SDG national target			
		On-track	Acceleration needed	Reverse trend	Insufficient data points
7.3	Energy efficiency				
7.a	International financial flows to developing countries in support of clean energy research and development and renewable energy production*				
7.b	Investing in energy infrastructure				
<p>Lao PDR has made significant progress toward achieving affordable and clean energy, with a focus on</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Expanding energy access</b> with the proportion of the population with access to electricity increasing from 35% in 2000 to 85% in 2020 and around 96% in 2023.</li> <li><b>Promoting renewable energy sources</b> such as hydropower which accounts for the majority of the country's electricity generation and solar and wind power have been contributing smaller but growing shares of the energy's mix.</li> <li><b>Improving energy efficiency</b> through implementing energy-efficient lighting and appliances in public buildings and the use of energy-efficient technologies in industries.</li> <li><b>Energy policies</b> such as the National Energy Policy and the Renewable Energy Policy which have been <b>moving toward sustainable energy development</b></li> </ol> <p>However, the country still faces <b>significant challenges in achieving affordable and clean energy</b>. These challenges include limited access to electricity in rural areas, high energy costs, and the need for further investment in energy infrastructure and technology. To address these issues, the government has outlined several future directions for energy development in Lao PDR, including the promotion of renewable energy sources, the improvement of energy efficiency, and the enhancement of energy security. The country aims to become a net exporter of electricity and to increase its installed capacity to 6,000 MW in coming years.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Economic growth:</b> A reliable and affordable energy supply is essential for powering industries, businesses, and infrastructure. By developing its energy sector, Lao PDR can support economic growth and create opportunities for investment, job creation, and overall prosperity.</li> <li><b>Rural electrification:</b> Access to electricity is a key driver of development, particularly in rural areas. By expanding the energy sector and reaching underserved communities, Lao PDR can improve living standards, stimulate economic activities, and reduce disparities between urban and rural areas.</li> <li><b>Environmental sustainability:</b> Lao PDR has significant potential for renewable energy, particularly in hydropower and solar energy. By prioritizing the development of clean energy sources, Lao PDR can reduce its reliance on fossil fuels, mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, and contribute to global efforts to combat climate change.</li> <li><b>Energy security:</b> Diversifying the energy mix and investing in domestic energy sources can enhance energy security for Lao PDR. By reducing its dependence on imported energy, the country can ensure a stable and reliable energy supply, mitigating the risks associated with external energy dependencies.</li> <li><b>Regional cooperation:</b> The development of the energy sector can facilitate regional energy cooperation, enabling Lao PDR to engage in cross-border energy trade and collaboration with neighboring countries. This can enhance regional energy security, promote economic integration, and strengthen diplomatic ties with other nations.</li> </ol>					
<b>SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth</b> (Overall progress – 90% gap to reach the 2023 mid-point)					
8.1	Per capita economic growth				
8.2	Economic productivity & innovation				
8.3	Formalization of SMEs				
8.4	Material resource efficiency				
8.5	Full employment & decent work				
8.6	Youth NEET				
8.7	Child & forced labour				
8.8	Labour rights & safe working environment				
8.9	Sustainable tourism				
8.10	Access to financial services				
8.a	Aid for Trade				

SDGs and goal areas		To achieve 2030 SDG national target			
		On-track	Acceleration needed	Reverse trend	Insufficient data points
8.b	Strategy for youth employment				
<p><b>The Lao PDR experienced rapid economic growth in the 2000s and 2010s, with GDP growth averaging 7.2% per year from 2000 to 2019.</b> This growth was driven by various factors, including the country's strategic location, natural resources, and government policies aimed at promoting economic development. However, the growth rate gradually decelerated from 8.0% to 5.5% between 2013 and 2019 due to emerging structural constraints which include, among others, infrastructure development, human capital, institutional framework, and macroeconomic management. <b>The impact of COVID-19 further slowed down growth to 3.3% in 2020, slightly increased to 3.5% in 2021, and 4.4% in 2022 but then decline to 3.7% (2023).</b></p> <p><b>With the situation before and after COVID-19, the economic growth has been largely resource-driven and capital-intensive, but not broad-based and inclusive generating sufficient productive employment.</b> Labour productivity grew significantly in recent years, but remains limited and without sufficient impact on the agriculture and fishery sectors, which account for about 70 percent of employed persons. Therefore, to ensure economic growth translates into decent work in the country and accelerate progress for SDG8, the Government of Lao PDR prioritises the following action areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encouraging <b>inclusive growth</b> by focusing on sectors that create decent jobs and promote social cohesion. This includes promoting <b>agriculture sector productivity</b> and increased earnings for farm workers, <b>investing manufacturing, and green tourism &amp; services</b>, as well as <b>supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurship</b> which are on the rise. By providing access to financing, business training, and mentorship. This includes implementing policies that promote SME growth, such as support MSME development are more related to improving the business environment, strengthening public-private dialogue, and strengthening the SME Fund, subsidies, and regulatory support</li> <li>2. Developing <b>human capital</b> by investing in education and training programs that enhance skills and competitiveness. This includes vocational training, apprenticeships, and lifelong learning initiatives. The skills gap in the labour force will be urgently addressed. To meet the market demand for medium- and high-skilled workers, especially within the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), special efforts will be needed to upgrade education and training for young people, improve labour skills, raise national skills standards, and promote mutual recognition of qualifications.</li> <li>3. Focusing on <b>demographic transition</b> as the large numbers of young people entering labour market. This will include work on two key issues: 1) strengthening <b>labour market information systems</b> to better understand labor market trends, skills demand, and job vacancies and 2) encouraging <b>entrepreneurship</b> by providing access to financing, business training, and mentorship for aspiring entrepreneurs (this includes supporting start-ups, innovation hubs, and entrepreneurship programs)</li> <li>4. Strengthening <b>social protection systems</b> to ensure that workers have access to essential social protection, including healthcare, pension schemes, and unemployment benefits. At the same time, there is a need for promoting <b>decent work standards</b> by enforcing labor laws and regulations, ensuring fair wages, and protecting workers' rights. This includes implementing the current policies that support fair labor practices, such as minimum wage standards and occupational health and safety regulations.</li> <li>5. Promoting <b>gender equality in the workplace</b> by addressing gender-based discrimination, ensuring equal pay for equal work, and creating a supportive environment for women to thrive in their careers. This includes implementing policies that support work-life balance and parental leave.</li> <li>6. Addressing <b>informal employment</b> by developing a strategy to formalize informal employment and provide support for informal workers to transition to formal employment. This can help improve working conditions, access to social protection, and overall job quality.</li> </ol>					
<b>SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure</b> (Overall progress – 20% gap to reach the 2023 mid-point)					
9.1	Infrastructure development				
9.2	Sustainable/inclusive industrialization				
9.3	Small-scale industries access to finance				
9.4	Sustainable & clean industries (CO <sub>2</sub> emission intensity)				
9.5	Research and Development				
9.a	Resilient infrastructure and support				
9.b	Support domestic technology development, research and innovation				

SDGs and goal areas		To achieve 2030 SDG national target			
		On-track	Acceleration needed	Reverse trend	Insufficient data points
9.c	Access to ICT and the Internet				
<p><b>Lao PDR has made marginal progress in advancing SDG 9 with notable improvements in transport infrastructure (particularly in rural areas) and regional connectivity.</b> The majority of the rural population now live in villages with all-weather road access. Regional transport linkages have improved connectivity to neighbouring countries, leading to increased intraregional trade and tourism. The length and quality of the road infrastructure still needs improvement, especially in rural areas, while urban areas need better transport infrastructure and services.</p> <p>There are a number of <b>key areas that need acceleration and greater efforts:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Sectors in industrialization efforts include garment and textile manufacturing, food processing and hydropower development.</b> This requires incentive packages (a careful approach is needed and it will not have impact of government recollection – tax exemptions will be discouraged as in line with the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP Financing Strategy and the STS) to attract domestic and foreign investment and technology transfer to bolster industrial growth, with a particular emphasis on sustainable and environmentally friendly practices.</li> <li><b>SMEs and micro- small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are major employers but their productivity is relatively low.</b> SMEs and MSMEs are hampered by skill shortages and the lack of access to technology, finance, and markets. Small (and registered) firms in Lao PDR consider access to finance as one of their three major obstacles for business growth.</li> <li><b>Private partnership, skilled researchers and collaboration between academia and industry</b> which will help advance various efforts of the Government's initiatives in promoting R&amp;D (among others, for instance, establishment of Research Institutions in various fields, such as agriculture, natural resources, and technology, the development of a national innovation strategy and the establishment of innovation hubs, promoting entrepreneurship and start-ups).</li> <li><b>Climate-resilient infrastructure</b> focusing on: different mix of transport (not only road but rail and air transport) for the movement of good and people; Hydro power plants' safety and standards; maintenance of irrigation systems and water supply and quality; access to communication by rural population; private sector investment in infrastructure, and disaster risk reduction and management</li> <li><b>Digital transformation</b> by implementing the 5-Year National Digital Economic Development Plan (2021-2025) for the realization of the country's 20-Year National Digital Economic Development Vision (2021-2040), including 10-Year National Digital Economy Strategy (2021-2030).</li> </ol>					
<b>SDG 10 - Reduced Inequality (10)</b> (Overall progress – 10% gap to reach the 2023 mid-point)					
10.1	Achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average				
10.2	Empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion				
10.3	Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action				
10.4	Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality				
10.5	Improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation				
10.6	Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions				
10.7	Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people				
10.a	Proportion of tariff lines applied to imports from least developed countries and developing countries with zero-tariff				

SDGs and goal areas		To achieve 2030 SDG national target			
		On-track	Acceleration needed	Reverse trend	Insufficient data points
10.b	Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment				
10.c	Remittance costs as a proportion of the amount remitted				
<b>SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities</b> (Overall progress - cannot assess as the sufficient data is low)					
11.1	Access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums				
11.2	Provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems				
11.3	Enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management				
11.4	Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage				
11.5	Reduce number of deaths and people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters.				
11.6	Reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities				
11.7	Universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces*				
11.a	Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas*				
11.b	Adopt and implement national disaster risk reduction strategies				
11.c	Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance*				
<b>SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production</b> (Overall progress - cannot assess as the sufficient data is low)					
12.1	Adopting or implementing policy instruments aimed at supporting the shift to sustainable consumption and production				
12.2	Sustainable use of natural resources				
12.3	Food loss index				
12.4	Value of waste produced				
12.5	Waste reuse				
12.6	Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle*				
12.7	Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities*				
12.8	Access to relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature				
12.a	Support for R&D capacity for SD				
12.b	Sustainable tourism assessment tools				
12.c	Fossil-fuel subsidies				
<b>SDG 13 - Climate Action</b> (Overall progress - cannot assess as the sufficient data is low)					
13.1	Resilience & adaptive capacity				
13.2	Climate change policies				

SDGs and goal areas		To achieve 2030 SDG national target			
		On-track	Acceleration needed	Reverse trend	Insufficient data points
13.3	Improvement of education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning				
13.a	Climate Change Adaptation project				
13.b	Climate Change Adaptation implementation at sub-regional level				
<p><b>Lao PDR was the first country in ASEAN to submit its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)</b> to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in September 2015. Building on national development and environmental protection policies, the country aimed to make full use of existing institutional capacity and financial resources, and embed NDC targets in existing policies and planning.</p> <p>In May 2021, after becoming the first ASEAN country to pledge the net-zero greenhouse gas emission by 2050 at the 2020 Climate Ambitions Summit, <b>the Government of Lao PDR submitted its revised NDC</b> including this net-zero goal, along with an unconditional emission reduction target of 60% by 2030, relative to the baseline scenario and a conditional emissions reduction target of up to 70% by 2030, contingent upon international support. The country strengthened mitigation measures in the forestry and energy sectors and applied gender equality perspectives while revising the NDC. Adaptation and resilience areas include: agriculture, forestry, and other land use; Water; Transportation; and Health.</p> <p>The Government has also cited <b>a circular economy as a key instrument to pursue a low carbon development pathway</b>. In 2021, Lao PDR became only the third country to complete a comprehensive metabolic analysis process to help its greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation ambition, take stock of material stocks and flows, and move towards a circular economy.</p> <p>Looking forwards, <b>Lao PDR is expected to submit a revised NDC in 2025, ahead of COP30 and the Government of Lao PDR is prioritizing action areas, as set out in its NDC submission</b> as follow:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Capacity strengthening to establish a credible institution with direct access to climate finance.</li> <li>2. Ensuring that domestic and international finance is successfully acquired, utilized, and accounted for.</li> <li>3. Strengthening the overall strategy, coordination of NDC implementation and regulatory framework.</li> <li>4. Strengthening national technical capacity in mitigation and adaptation.</li> <li>5. Strengthening institutional capacities for monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) of the NDC.</li> <li>6. Strengthening capacity and systems for SDG environmental data reporting</li> </ol>					
<b>SDG 14 - Life Below Water</b>					
<b>(Overall progress - cannot assess as the sufficient data is low)</b>					
14.1	Reduce marine pollution of all kinds*				
14.2	Sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems				
14.3	Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification				
14.4	Fish stocks				
14.5	Conserve coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information				
14.6	Implementation of international instruments aiming to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing				
14.7	Conserve coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information				
14.a	Research budget allocated to research in the field of marine technology				
14.b	Small-scale artisanal fishing				
14.c	Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea				

SDGs and goal areas		To achieve 2030 SDG national target			
		On-track	Acceleration needed	Reverse trend	Insufficient data points
<b>SDG 15 - Life On Land</b> (Overall progress – less than 5% gap to reach the 2023 mid-point)					
15.1	Terrestrial & freshwater ecosystems				
15.2	Sustainable forests management				
15.3	Combat desertification				
15.4	Conservation of mountain ecosystems				
15.5	Loss of biodiversity				
15.6	Promote fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and promote appropriate access to such resources				
15.7	Wildlife trade				
15.8	Invasive alien species				
15.9	Biodiversity national target				
15.a	Mobilize and significantly increase financial resources to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ecosystems				
15.b	Mobilize significant resources to finance sustainable forest management and provide adequate incentives to developing countries to advance such management, including for conservation and reforestation				
15.c	Enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species				
<b>SDG 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institution</b> (Overall progress – regressing)					
16.1	Violence and related death rate				
16.2	Human trafficking				
16.3	Law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice				
16.4	reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat				
16.5	Corruption and bribery				
16.6	Effective institutions				
16.7	Inclusive decision-making				
16.8	Voting rights				
16.9	Provide legal identity for all, including birth registration				
16.10	Public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms				
16.a	Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation,				
16.b	Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development				
<b>SDG 17 – Partnership for the Goals</b> (Overall progress – regressing)					
17.1	Tax & other revenue collection				
17.2	Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitment				
17.3	Additional financial resources				
17.4	Debt sustainability				
17.5	Adopt and implement investment promotion regimes				
17.6	Science and tech international cooperation				

SDGs and goal areas		To achieve 2030 SDG national target			
		On-track	Acceleration needed	Reverse trend	Insufficient data points
17.7	Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms				
17.8	Capacity building for ICT				
17.9	Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the Sustainable Development Goals				
17.10	Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization				
17.11	Exports of developing countries				
17.12	Realize timely implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all least developed countries				
17.13	Enhance global macroeconomic stability				
17.14	Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development				
17.15	Respect country's policy space				
17.16	Partnership for Sustainable Development				
17.17	Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships				
17.18	National statistics availability				
17.19	Statistical capacity				
<p>Regional and international cooperation and integration and effective development agenda have been one an important agenda for the country as highlighted in the current 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP (2021-2025) and Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan (2015-2025), respectively.</p> <p>While Lao PDR has made <b>good progress in enhancing statistical capacity and ICT</b>, the country still faces significant challenges in overcoming limitations in government revenue, debt sustainability, effective development cooperation, diversified development finance landscapes, and export growth. <b>Addressing these challenges will require sustained efforts and innovative solutions</b> to ensure sustainable development in the country. Therefore, <b>key focuses, moving forward to accelerate efforts toward SDG 17</b>, include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Government revenue:</b> increasing domestic revenue through taxation, public-private partnerships, and other innovative mechanisms and strengthening public financial management systems and improving tax administration can also enhance revenue collection. In particular, there is a need to revisit the investment promotion measures to reduce tax exemption as in line with the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP Financing Strategy and STS.</li> <li>2. <b>Debt sustainability:</b> implementing fiscal discipline through budget transparency reducing government spending, and increasing revenue which can help reduce the debt burden.</li> <li>3. <b>Effective Development Cooperation:</b> reviewing the implementation of the Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan and strengthening the effectiveness of the Round Table Process including the relevance of Sector Working Groups</li> <li>4. <b>Diversifying development finance options</b> through innovative financing mechanisms and enhancing access to financing for SMEs and rural communities.</li> <li>5. <b>Diversifying exports</b> through promoting high-value products such as organic coffee, specialty rice, and organic fruits can enhance the country's export base.</li> </ol> <p>The 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) Financing Strategy adopted in 2023 outlines policy and frameworks to unlock finance for sustainable development in Lao PDR. Looking forward, it is crucial that <b>the various action areas of the Financing Strategy are effectively implemented with concrete results</b> to drive progress and achieve the country's development goals.</p> <p>In this regard, <b>statistical systems and M&amp;E capacities to monitor development progress needs to be improved, systematized, coherent, and synchronized the tracking of SDG implementation progress and the NSEDP</b></p>					

SDGs and goal areas		To achieve 2030 SDG national target			
		On-track	Acceleration needed	Reverse trend	Insufficient data points
<p><b>implementation progress.</b> This requires an effective coordination mechanism involving government stakeholders from various ministries at central and local levels, private sector players, development partners (traditional and non-traditional), civil society organizations, and non-governmental organizations and others in order to ensure coherence in policies across different dimensions for a meaningful and impactful outcome.</p>					
<p><b>SDG 18 - Lives Safe from UXO</b> (Overall progress – 40% gap to reach the 2023 mid-point)</p>					
18.1	Information and surveys				
18.2	Clearance related activities				
18.3	Victim assistance				
<p><b>The scale and impact of the UXO problem far exceeds the resources and capacities available to deal with it, particularly clearance capacity. Millions of UXO remain and thousands of hectares of confirmed hazardous areas remain to be cleared.</b></p> <p><b>The scale and scope of the issue lie well beyond the national capacity to cope, and support from development partners continues to be required.</b> The Lao PDR UXO Survey Procedures have already contributed to greater efficiencies in the sector and help accelerate clearance. <b>The Government of Lao PDR is prioritizing the following actions and strategies:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthening national capacity for coordination and efficiency.</li> <li>2. Ensuring the quality of operational data in the national database, in order to enable proper data analysis and a more robust evidence-based reporting.</li> <li>3. Developing management policy and procedures to "main-stream" UXO survivors into health, education, and employment services.</li> <li>4. Assisting line Ministries to take into account the impact of UXO in their planning and budgeting.</li> <li>5. Developing a comprehensive resource mobilization and fund-raising strategy, expanding beyond traditional donors.</li> <li>6. Continuing to strengthen the capacity of the Lao Army in humanitarian mine action.</li> <li>7. Identifying and promoting emerging technologies that will improve the performance and efficiency of operations.</li> </ol>					

## 2.1 Food Systems

The Government of Lao PDR has identified that the transformation of food systems in the country can serve as a potent catalyst for progress towards Sustainable Development Goals. While food systems are related to all the SDGs, they are closely connected to SDGs: 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), and 3 (Good Health and Well-being). This recognition underscores the pivotal role of food systems in advancing key development objectives, particularly in addressing poverty, hunger, and promoting health and well-being. By focusing on enhancing the sustainability and efficiency of food production, distribution, and consumption, Lao PDR aims to leverage food systems as a strategic tool for achieving significant advancements across these critical SDGs in coming years.

### SDG 1: No Poverty

- **Increased productivity:** By investing in sustainable and efficient agricultural practices, farmers can increase their yields and incomes, leading to poverty reduction in rural areas. This could involve providing access to better seeds, fertilizers, irrigation systems, and training.
- **Improved market access:** By connecting small-scale farmers to markets through improved infrastructure and farmer cooperatives, they can gain fairer prices for their produce, increasing their income and reducing vulnerability to poverty.
- **Rural development:** Investments in rural areas, such as education, healthcare, and sanitation, can empower farmers and create new economic opportunities, leading to poverty reduction and a more diversified rural economy.

### SDG 2: Zero Hunger

- **Enhanced food security:** A focus on sustainable agriculture can ensure a more reliable supply of nutritious food for all Lao citizens. This includes promoting crop diversification, reducing food waste, and investing in storage and transportation infrastructure.
- **Improved nutrition:** By promoting dietary diversity and access to affordable, nutritious foods, Lao citizens can experience better health outcomes and reduced malnutrition, particularly among children and vulnerable populations.
- **Climate resilience:** By adopting climate-smart agricultural practices, such as drought-resistant crops and water conservation techniques, Laos can become more resilient to climate change impacts that threaten food security.

### SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being

- **Reduced malnutrition:** Increased access to nutritious food can significantly improve the health of Lao citizens, particularly children and pregnant women. This can lead to a decrease in malnutrition-related illnesses and improved overall well-being.
- **Food safety:** Investments in food safety measures and regulations can reduce foodborne illnesses, improving public health and well-being.
- **Dietary diversity:** Promoting a wider variety of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in Laotian diets can help prevent diet-related chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease, contributing to a healthier population.

While the Government focuses on food systems transformation which helps accelerate progress on SDGs 1, 2, and 3, their influence extends across all other SDGs.

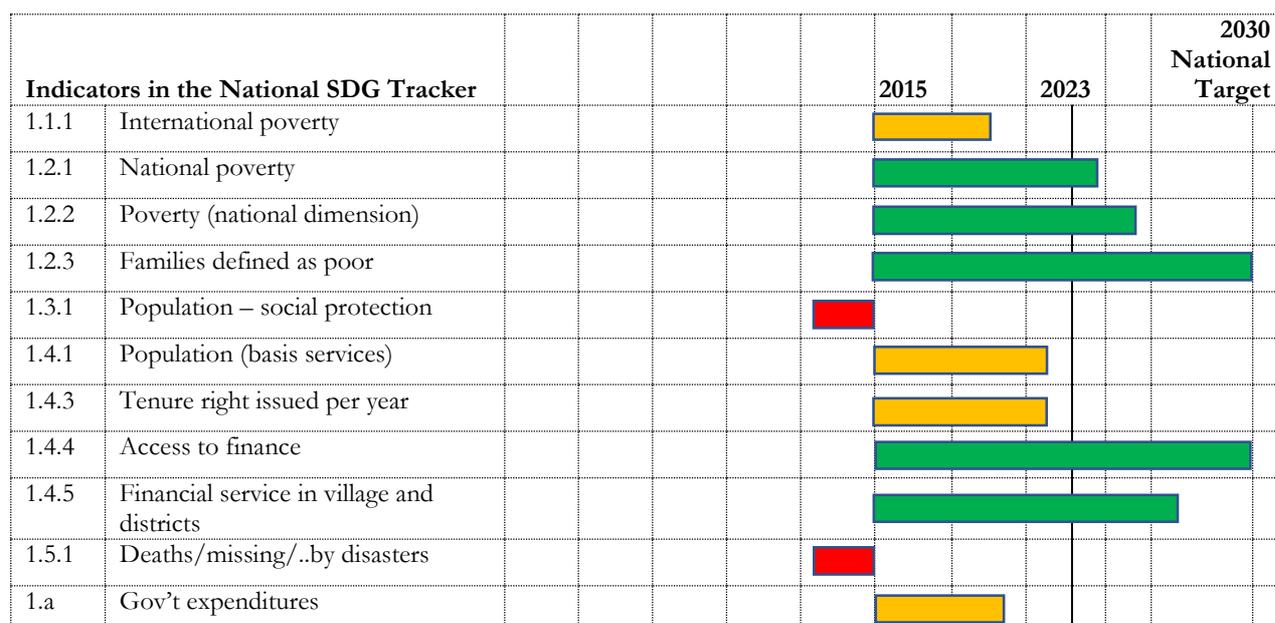
- **SDG 5 (Gender Equality):** Transforming food systems can promote gender equality by empowering women in agriculture, ensuring equal access to resources, and addressing gender-based barriers in the sector.
- **SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation):** Sustainable agriculture practices can contribute to the efficient use and management of water resources, which is crucial for achieving SDG 6.
- **SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy):** The development of renewable energy sources in the agriculture sector can support the transition to affordable and clean energy.
- **SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth):** Transforming food systems can create decent jobs, foster entrepreneurship, and contribute to economic growth, particularly in rural areas.
- **SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities):** Inclusive food systems can help reduce inequalities by providing opportunities for communities in vulnerable situation, such as smallholder farmers and rural communities.
- **SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production):** Sustainable food production and consumption patterns are at the heart of SDG 12, and food systems transformation can drive progress in this area.
- **SDG 13 (Climate Action):** Climate-smart agriculture practices and the promotion of resilient food systems can contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.
- **SDG 15 (Life on Land):** Sustainable land management and the protection of biodiversity are crucial for food systems transformation and the achievement of SDG 15.

**By taking a holistic approach to food systems transformation, the Government of Lao PDR aims to leverage the interconnectedness of the SDGs and create synergies that amplify progress across multiple goals.** This approach requires collaboration across different sectors, stakeholders, and levels of government to ensure that the benefits of food systems transformation are widely shared and contribute to the overall sustainable development of the country. In particular, the linkage between food systems, energy access, and environment/climate change underscores the critical need for sustainable practices, efficient energy use, and climate-resilient food production methods to ensure food security, nutrition, and environmental sustainability in the face of ongoing climate challenges.

## **SDG 1 – No Poverty**

**(Infographic to be added)**

**Figure 5 - Progress toward national targets - SDG 1 (No Poverty)**



Source: UNESCAP – Lao National SDG Tracker

(<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/unescap.statistics.division/viz/SDG-LAO-2024/Story>)

Note: Progress is only based on two-points data which are included in the Lao National SDG tracker

## 1. Poverty reduction

**Lao PDR has made noteworthy progress in poverty eradication**, with the proportion of persons (with consumptions) below that national poverty line falling from 33.5% in 2003 to 18.3% in 2018. Multidimensional poverty, which measures deprivations beyond money metrics, saw similar gains, falling from 33.1% in 2012 to 22% in 2018. The number of families identified as poor, according to the criteria established by the National Committee for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (NCRDPE), has shown a decline from 22.22% (2020) to 16.87 (2023).

**The pace of the decline in poverty, however, has not matched economic growth.** Between 2013 and 2018, 1% increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita led to only a 0.84% decrease in monetary poverty in Lao PDR. This is less than half the global average growth elasticity to poverty of 2.5%. The country's rising inequality, as indicated by the worsening Gini coefficient from 36.0 in 2013 to 38.8 in 2018, has hindered more rapid progress in poverty reduction.<sup>5</sup>

**Poverty continues to be a significant challenge with rural and remote areas facing the most severe impacts.** The share of poverty is higher in rural areas (23.8%) than in urban areas (7%), and the gap continues to increase due to a different pace in poverty reduction. Poverty has a higher incidence in the South and Central Provinces, among ethnic minorities and among households whose head has a low level of education. The majority of these households with low education levels belong to ethnic minorities, depend on agriculture to subsist, or suffer from the consequences of unemployment.

**The importance of rural development in poverty reduction** - While most provinces witnessed declining monetary and multidimensional poverty from 2013-2019, the proportion in poverty rose in Vientiane Capital and four other provinces. More modest reductions in poverty also have occurred among certain groups like urban residents, youth (15-24 years), Hmong-Iu Mien peoples, and other ethnic groups compared to the general population. Although rural poverty has declined

<sup>5</sup> More unequal countries experience a lower impact on poverty reduction, around 0.6%, while more equal nations see up to 4.3% reduction in poverty.

faster than in urban areas, it remains a pressing issue, with rural dwellers comprising nearly 90% of the poor while only 67% of total citizens.

**The COVID-19 pandemic has created significant uncertainty regarding poverty reduction.**

The economic impact of the pandemic has led to job losses, reduced incomes, and increased healthcare expenses for many households, potentially pushing more people into poverty. The recovery from COVID-19 has presented the Government with one of its most challenging tasks to date. The pandemic has exacerbated existing and social disparities, making it difficult for groups in vulnerable situations to recover and rebuild their livelihoods. Compared to the onset of the pandemic, incomes have improved in Lao PDR with rising economic activity and outward mobility in search of job opportunities within and outside the country. Purchasing power erosion from high living costs however are likely to limit further poverty reduction from 2023 onward. Upcoming poverty statistics, whether monetary or multidimensional poverty rates, are thus expected to show only marginal changes or a reversed trend from 2018 percentages.

**While the Government has implemented measures to mitigate the impact on poverty, such as economic stimulus packages and social assistance programs, the long-term effects on poverty levels are still unknown.**

The resumption of economic activity and the ability of the Government to support those most affected will play a crucial role in determining the trajectory of poverty reduction in Lao PDR post-COVID19. As such, the country faces uncertainty in its efforts to address the challenges of poverty in the aftermath of the pandemic. In particular, the Government continues to face the complex task of balancing economic recovery with social welfare and healthcare priorities, particularly in rural and remote areas. Strong and sustained efforts, both domestically and through international cooperation, are essential to address the long-term impacts of the pandemic on poverty and to support the most vulnerable populations in Lao PDR.

## **2. Social protection**

**Social protection in Lao PDR has been a priority for the government,** particularly in addressing poverty and supporting the population in vulnerable situations. The Government has demonstrated efforts to bolster social protection investments, with expenditures increasing modestly from 0.68% of GDP 2015 to 0.79% in 2022. However, setbacks from the pandemic and persisting inflationary pressures (with the 2022 inflation rate at 23%), limited investments in social protection (because of meagre government resources) pose ongoing challenges in sustaining efforts to eradicate poverty.

**In particular, the confined social protection framework in Lao PDR struggles to encompass a significant portion of irregular population and population employed in the informal sector.** This coverage gap is particularly acute for groups in situations of vulnerability, such as persons with disabilities, who face compounded challenges. Recognizing these disparities, the Government has expressed a commitment to fortify social security frameworks to alleviate the hardships faced by vulnerable populations.

**Social protection in the context of COVID-19 recovery is crucial for supporting vulnerable populations and ensuring their resilience in the face of ongoing challenges.** Given the economic and social disruptions caused by the pandemic, the Government has prioritised social protection measures to address the immediate and long-term needs of its citizens. In the wake of COVID-19, although limited coverage of support, the Government put greater efforts with its existing capacities on expanding and enhancing its social protection programs to provide targeted support to those most affected by the pandemic. This included measures such as cash transfers, food assistance, healthcare support, and unemployment benefits to mitigate the impact of job losses and income reduction. These are at the minimal level of support as the country has been facing a number of key challenges in implementing social protective schedules in the time of crisis like COVID-19. Some of them include limited fiscal space, targeting challenges, delivery mechanism, coordination and M&E. Therefore, the pandemic has revealed the importance of strengthening social protection systems to build resilience against future shocks. This involves

investing in social insurance, improving access to healthcare, and extending coverage to groups in vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, and those living in rural areas. In the context of COVID-19 recovery, the Government prioritizes efforts to promote inclusive and sustainable social protection, ensuring that no one is left behind.

### **3. Access to basic services**

**While Lao PDR has made significant progress in improving the basic services for its population in recent years, it is important to note that groups in most vulnerable situations have not experienced the same level of improvement.** For instance, divides are narrowing but also persisting in access to electricity. Progress in improved water sources across locations is still in favour of urban residents against those in rural areas. Access to finance in Lao PDR has been a crucial area of development in recent years. Efforts have been made to improve access to financial services, particularly in rural and remote areas where many people lack access to basic banking and financial resources. The Government has implemented initiatives to expand the reach of financial services, including banking, microfinance, and other financial products.

**The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated several issues with access to basic services in Lao PDR.** For healthcare access, the pandemic put additional strain on an already stretched healthcare system. Access to medical facilities, especially in rural areas, has been impacted due to lockdowns, travel restrictions, and the redirection of resources to COVID-19 response efforts. In terms of education: School closures and the shift to remote learning have highlighted disparities in access to education, particularly in rural and remote areas where internet and digital infrastructure may be limited. Many students have struggled to access remote learning resources, leading to learning gaps and educational inequalities. In addition, the economic fallout from the pandemic has affected access to basic services for many individuals and families, particularly those in vulnerable situations. Loss of income and livelihoods has made it difficult for some to afford essential services such as healthcare, education, and adequate nutrition. The importance of clean water and proper sanitation has been underscored during the pandemic, yet access to these basic services remains a challenge, especially in rural and remote areas. Proper hygiene practices including regular hand washing, have been difficult to maintain in some communities. Last but not least, the pandemic has highlighted the digital divide, with many individuals lacking access to reliable internet and digital resources for remote work, education, and healthcare services.

**Addressing issues of access to basic services will require targeted efforts across various sectors to fulfil** that the country's human rights obligations (on education healthcare, social protection, rule of law and others). The Government has prioritised the following key areas that need greater attention as they will guide related work and that Lao PDR will report on progress achieved through consultative and participatory mechanisms:

1. **Infrastructure development in rural and remote areas** such as clean water, electricity, and transportation infrastructure. This may involve building new infrastructure, upgrading existing facilities, and expanding service coverage.
2. **Accessing to quality of healthcare services and balancing healthcare services** including medical facilities, trained healthcare professionals, and essential medications to address healthcare disparities across different regions and population groups (income, ethnicity and others).
3. **Quality education for all children, including those in remote and communities in venerable situation.** This involves building schools, providing resources for teachers, and implementing programs to increase school attendance and retention rates.
4. **Expanding access to clean and sustainable energy sources,** such as solar power and other renewable energy technologies which can improve living standards and support economic development, particularly in rural areas.

5. **Improving access to affordable and reliable internet connectivity** which can enhance communication, information access, and economic opportunities for individuals and communities, especially in remote areas.
6. **Implementing targeted social protection programs and safety nets** which can help vulnerable populations access basic services, including food security, healthcare, and education.
7. **Ensuring that policies and governance structures are inclusive and responsive** to the needs of all segments of the population.
8. **Result based international cooperation** which can provide technical and financial support to address access to basic services in Lao PDR.

### 3. Resilience to disasters

As regards natural disasters, their occurrence is a function of the hazard, exposure, and vulnerability, which collectively determine the extent to which disasters affect the country and its people. Lao PDR is a country that is increasingly vulnerable to impacts of a range of natural disasters, primarily due to its geographical location and topography. **The increasing number of deaths, climate-induced internally displaced population, and damages from disasters in Lao PDR is a concerning trend.** Natural disasters such as floods, landslides, and droughts have been particularly impactful in the country. The rise in these statistics underscores the urgent need for comprehensive disaster risk management and resilience-building efforts.

**Achieving resilience to disasters in Lao PDR will require significant changes and improvements in various areas** and it requires a concerted effort, strong leadership, and a commitment to long-term sustainability. **To begin with, the Government and relevant stakeholders must prioritize disaster risk reduction measures.** This involves identifying and addressing vulnerabilities, implementing measures to reduce risks, and focusing on sustainable development practices that mitigate potential disaster impacts. Investing in resilient infrastructure is equally critical. This would involve constructing buildings and transportation systems that can withstand natural disasters, such as earthquakes or floods, and integrating resilient design principles into urban planning.

**Strengthening early warning systems is another essential component.** This requires the establishment of robust communication networks, the deployment of advanced technologies for monitoring and predicting disasters, and the implementation of effective response protocols. Enhancing community preparedness and response capabilities is also crucial. This involves educating and training local populations on disaster preparedness, establishing community-based early warning systems, and ensuring that emergency response mechanisms are in place and well-coordinated.

Furthermore, it is imperative to consider **the impacts of climate change in disaster risk management strategies.** Given the anticipated increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, adapting to climate change is essential. This is critical as disaster risks in Lao PDR are largely climate-related. As such, an urgent need is to work on climate adaptation. The work on National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and Early Warning for All (EW4A), which are under development, will help integrating climate-resilient practices into various sectors, such as agriculture, water resource management, urban development and others.

**Collaboration with international partners and the sharing of best practices** can also play a pivotal role in bolstering disaster resilience. Learning from the experiences of other countries and leveraging their expertise can provide valuable insights and support. By collaborating with nations that have successfully implemented disaster resilience measures, Lao PDR can benefit from their knowledge, resources, and technologies. This collaborative approach can foster innovation and the development of tailored solutions that are well-suited to the country's specific needs and challenges.

#### 4. Pro-poor policy framework and resources for poverty programs

**9<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2021-2025) and its Financing Strategy is a crucial framework designed to address poverty and enhance the well-being** of the most vulnerable members of society in Lao PDR. This plan encompasses a range of policies and programs aimed at reducing poverty, improving living standards, and promoting sustainable development. One of the key aspects of the plan is the allocation of resources to poverty alleviation programs. This includes targeted social assistance, access to basic services such as healthcare and education, and support for livelihood enhancement in rural and vulnerable communities. By dedicating resources to these initiatives, the plan aims to directly impact the lives of the poor and empower them to improve their circumstances. Additionally, the plan likely includes provisions for infrastructure development in underserved areas, which is essential for enhancing the living conditions of the poor. Investments in roads, water and sanitation facilities, and electricity access can significantly improve the quality of life for those living in poverty-stricken regions. Furthermore, the plan may involve social protection programs, such as cash transfer schemes and food assistance, which require dedicated resources to ensure their effectiveness in reaching and supporting those in need.

**Allocating resources for poverty reduction programs has indeed been a significant challenge for the Government of Lao PDR in recent years.** The country faces several obstacles, including limited fiscal capacity, competing development priorities, and the need to address infrastructure gaps and social welfare needs. Lao PDR, like many developing nations, struggles with budgetary constraints that affect the allocation of resources to poverty reduction programs. The Government has to balance various demands, including infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation, within limited financial resources. Additionally, external factors such as natural disasters, economic fluctuations, and the recent COVID-19 pandemic have further strained the government's ability to allocate sufficient funds for poverty reduction initiatives. Furthermore, the geographical and demographic challenges in Lao PDR, such as the dispersed rural population and limited access to basic services, have made poverty reduction efforts more complex and resource-intensive. This necessitates targeted and customized interventions, which can require additional financial resources. In response to these challenges, the Government of Lao PDR has been working to mobilize resources through partnerships with international organizations, development agencies, and the private sector. It has also been exploring innovative financing mechanisms and prioritizing the efficient use of available resources to maximize impact. Despite the challenges, the Government remains committed to poverty reduction efforts and has been striving to find sustainable solutions to ensure that resources are effectively channelled to benefit population groups in most vulnerable situations. The government's continued focus on poverty reduction reflects its recognition of the importance of addressing this issue for the overall development and well-being of its citizens.

**The Poverty Reduction Fund (PRF) is a crucial mechanism for targeted resources and the implementation of poverty reduction programs. However, it is important to focus on scaling up the Fund to ensure impact maximization in addressing poverty in the country.** Some strategies that can be employed to scale up the PRF and maximize its benefits for the poor:

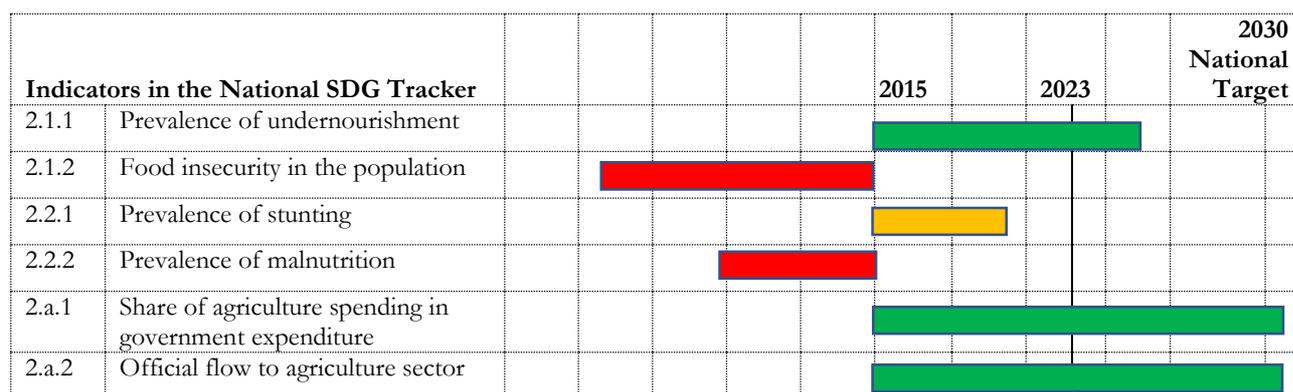
1. Securing additional funding through advocacy efforts, strategic partnerships, and the demonstration of the fund's impact on poverty reduction.
2. Expanding the geographic coverage of the Fund to reach more rural and remote areas where poverty is prevalent. This can be achieved by establishing project sites, partnering with local organizations, and leveraging existing networks to ensure that the fund's benefits reach a wider population.
3. Diversifying the Fund's interventions to address a wide range of poverty-related issues. This may include funding livelihood support initiatives, improving access to education and healthcare, promoting sustainable agriculture, and supporting small-scale infrastructure development in impoverished communities.

4. Building strong partnerships with local governments, civil society organizations, and community groups. These partnerships can help ensure that projects are tailored to local needs, effectively implemented, and sustained over the long term.
5. Embracing innovative approaches and leveraging technology by utilizing digital platforms for project monitoring, implementing climate-smart agricultural practices, and promoting access to clean energy solutions in rural areas.
6. Empowerment and participation of the poor in decision-making processes through community-driven development approaches, ensuring that the voices and priorities of the poor are central to the design and implementation of poverty reduction initiatives.

## **SDG 2 – Zero Hunger**

**(Infographic to be added)**

**Figure 6 - Progress toward national targets - SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)**



Source: UNESCAP – Lao National SDG Tracker

(<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/unescap.statistics.division/viz/SDG-LAO-2024/Story>)

Note: Progress is only based on two-points data which are included in the Lao National SDG tracker

## 1. Undernourishment and food security

The percentage of the population that was undernourished in Lao PDR was estimated to be around 4.7% in 2022. This indicates that **a portion of the population does not have access to enough nutritious food to meet their dietary needs**. While the prevalence of undernourishment in Lao PDR is declining, it remains a significant challenge, especially in rural and remote areas. In terms of food insecurity, the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale, stood at 34.1% in 2022, representing an increase from 29.4% in 2016. This rise indicates a concerning trend in food security including limited access to nutritious food, inadequate infrastructure for food distribution, and vulnerability to natural disasters. As such, food security is a major element within the national agricultural strategy primarily in response to the impacts of inadequate nutrition in the form of stunting, wasting, and child mortality. The outstanding challenge is to provide the diversity of diets including a wider range of protein sources and fresh fruits and vegetables for priority target groups.

**The lingering impact of the pandemic and persisting inflationary pressures threaten to heighten nutrition and hunger challenges.** Global estimates predict not only a rise in poverty due to the pandemic, but also a 14.3% rise in moderate or severe wasting among children under five. In Lao PDR, food insecurity is unevenly distributed, with low-income households and farm laborers most likely to be affected.

As such, **the Government is aiming for distribution of micronutrients and anthelmintic to children and postpartum mothers.** Over 70% of children 6-11 months have thus received vitamin A supplements. Further, efforts are underway to develop a national nutrition database and to strengthen information systems on nutrition in target provinces. The Government is also conducting research on food consumption, nutrition status, costs of food diversity etc. related to malnutrition in Lao PDR.

## 2. Malnutrition

**Malnutrition is a significant issue in Lao PDR, particularly among children and in rural areas.** Around 32.8% of children under the age of five in Lao PDR are stunted, as of 2022, indicating chronic malnutrition and its potential long-lasting effects on physical cognitive development. This rate has decreased slightly compared to 33% in 2017, but it remains high and indicates the continued challenge of addressing malnutrition in the country.

**Despite a robust food production in the country, hunger and nutrition are persisting issues, especially in rural areas where poverty is more prevalent.** Malnutrition is a persisting challenge. While stunting among children under-two has dropped from 42% in 2012 to 25.4% in

2018, wasting among children below five years old has risen (from 5.1% in 2012 to 9% in 2018 to 10.7% in 2022). Remote rural areas and the poorest households face higher stunting rates than counterparts from urban areas and rich households.

In addition to stunting, **there are also high rates of underweight and wasting among children in Lao PDR.** Approximately 23.3% of children under the age of five in Lao PDR are underweight, while around 10.7% suffer from wasting, indicating acute malnutrition. These concerning rates highlight the need for sustained efforts to address malnutrition and its associated impacts on child health and development.

**The prevalence of anaemia is also a concern, particularly among women and children.** Around 44% of children under the age of five and 46% of women of reproductive age in Lao PDR are affected by anaemia. This high prevalence of anaemia can have serious health implications, affecting cognitive development in children and increasing the risk of maternal and child mortality.

**The Government of Lao PDR has been actively addressing malnutrition through a range of initiatives.** These include promoting nutrition education, enhancing access to nutritious foods, implementing public health programs aimed at preventing malnutrition, and providing nutritional supplements to population in vulnerable situations. These initiatives are crucial in combating malnutrition and its associated health impacts, particularly among children and in rural areas.

**However, combating malnutrition and its associated impacts requires time and necessitates significant behavioural change.** This involves promoting dietary diversity, increasing awareness about proper nutrition, and encouraging healthy eating habits. Additionally, addressing malnutrition requires sustained efforts to improve access to nutritious foods, provide essential vitamins and minerals, and implement long-term public health programs aimed at preventing and treating malnutrition. These changes are essential for improving overall health and well-being, particularly among vulnerable populations.

### **3. Agricultural productivity**

**Accounting for 64% of employment (declining from 70% during 2010-2022), the agriculture sector is vital for inclusive growth and poverty reduction.** Achieving an average 3% growth in recent years, the sector has demonstrated remarkable resilience amid the onset of the pandemic. Agricultural production in Lao PDR is dominated by low-productivity smallholders, the majority of whom are poor. Most smallholders reside in the central region, particularly in Savannakhet (17.2%), Champassak (9.1%) and Salavan (6.9 %). Smallholder farmers face a wide range of supply-side challenges that affect their farm-level productivity and market participation. **But limited productivity, commercialization, and market links require attention to empower those reliant on agriculture.** Shifting toward commercialized agriculture introduces complex dynamics, including balancing business-focused changes with continuing family nutrition needs and integrating smallholders into commercialization, particularly in the agriculture export value chains. Strategies to heighten female empowerment must engage men regarding workload and nutrition. Adoption of emerging technologies in the agriculture sector also currently remains low.

**As of now, it is difficult to do a comprehensive assessment of agricultural productivity in Lao PDR during the post-COVID-19 period, as the situation is still evolving.** The post-COVID-19 period presents both challenges and opportunities for agricultural productivity in Lao PDR. The effectiveness of recovery efforts and the ability of farmers to adapt to the new normal will play a crucial role in shaping agricultural productivity in the coming years. Ongoing monitoring and assessment will be necessary to fully understand the impact of COVID-19 on agricultural productivity in Lao PDR.

**Some key factors and trends have been considered for the post COVID-19 to increase agriculture productivity.** In terms of recovery efforts, the Lao government has been implementing key initiatives to support agricultural productivity, including policy support,

infrastructure development, technology adoption, capacity building, market access facilitation, financial support, and diversification. While efforts are being made to boost agricultural productivity, the sector continues to face challenges such as labour shortages, disruptions in supply chains, input shortages, and financial constraints, which could impact productivity in the short term. Despite these challenges, farmers and agricultural stakeholders have been adapting to the new normal by embracing modern agricultural practices, technology adoption, and diversification to enhance resilience and productivity in the face of ongoing challenges. In addition, the demand for agricultural products and market dynamics have also been evolving in response to the changing consumer behaviour and global trade patterns, which could have implications for agricultural productivity in Lao PDR.

#### **4. Food Production Systems**

**Food production systems are primarily characterized by small-scale subsistence, with rice being the dominant crop** (rice covers more than 60% of the country's arable land). Rice production combined with other crops, such as maize, cassava, yams, taro, sweet potatoes, chillies, and leafy vegetables forms the traditional subsistence production system in the country. Rice production has experienced a slight decline, decreasing from 4.1 million tons in 2015 to 3.8 million tons in 2022, amid the impacts of disasters and the pandemic. During the period from 2018 to 2020, rice production has fallen to an average of 3.4 million tons, but it has shown some signs of recovery in 2021 and 2022. The Government has sought to achieve food crop production targets to meet domestic consumption and raw material needs. Strategies to attain rice production targets include encouragement, monitoring, and support from government organizations.

**The dominant actors of the food system have certain characteristics that shape the dynamics of food production, distribution, and consumption.** First, approximately 80% of the rural population still constitute subsistence farmers. These farmers, who heavily depend on rice-based agriculture, raise livestock and forage for wild foods from forests and rivers have poor and unbalanced diets. Second, for commercial agriculture, led by local and foreign investors, it has been promoted in recent years. The main import crops are coffee, cassava, maize and sugarcane, while tree plantations, such as those for growing rubber and fruit trees, are also expanding. Commercial livestock is increasing for domestic and export markets. Third, village collectors or traders are small operators, who act as market aggregators by buying agricultural products from farmers and selling them to large traders for domestic and export markets. Informal, small-scale operators engage in the aggregation, transportation, storage and distribution of food. Fourth, fresh and processed foods are imported via official importers and through illegal cross-border traders because of the extensive border shared with neighbouring countries. Fifth, the agro-processing sector is still nascent; only a few large-scale food processing industries, such as Beer Lao and Dao Coffee, employ more than 700 workers. This sector is dominated by numerous small-scale, food microenterprises with less than five employees per entity. Sixth, small and medium-scale supermarkets are increasingly penetrating cities, but informal wet markets remain a key source of food in the country, often providing nutritious foods, including fruits and vegetables. Safety standards, however, are rarely met in these open markets. Lastly, local consumers generally buy food from wet markets, while minimarkets and supermarkets are a new trend in large cities, especially for the growing middle-class. Most consumers are not concerned about the quality of food, which often does not meet food safety standards.

**During the past few years, the Government has been working with various partners on key entry points to trigger system transformative changes to food systems which encompass multiple dimensions: agriculture and forestry, health, education, and the environment.** It is essential to engage public, private, and civil society stakeholders as well as consumers at large. Business as usual is unsustainable, and the transformation requires strong political will, collaboration across stakeholders, and an accountability framework that includes upward and downward accountability. An effective coordination mechanism involving government

stakeholders from various ministries and line departments at central and local levels, private sector players, civil society organizations, and non-governmental organizations is needed to ensure coherence in policies across different dimensions for a meaningful and impactful outcome.

## 5. Investment in agriculture

**Lao PDR has recognized the importance of investing in the agricultural sector, which is a critical source of livelihood for the poor.** The allocation of the Government budget to agriculture has increased from 1.0% in 2017 to 1.5% in 2020. According to FAO estimates, the agriculture value added as a percentage of GDP has also risen from 16.2% to 16.5% during the same period. Furthermore, total official flows (disbursements as per the national record by Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry) for agriculture, measured in millions of constant 2021 USD, have increased from 75.9 in 2015 to 89.6 in 2021.

**The Government has taken significant steps to support investment in agriculture focusing on two key areas in recent years.** Firstly, there have been efforts to promote agricultural investment, such as organizing the first national investment forum for sustainable investment in 2022, with plans for regular events in the coming years. Additionally, Lao PDR has participated in global investment forums in 2022 and 2023, and developed tailored business incentive packages for investment in the agriculture and forestry sector. In addition, the Government has been promoting the National Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Responsible Investment linking to the ASEAN initiative. Furthermore, a one-stop service center within the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) has been established to facilitate investment in the sector. Secondly, regarding land use policies, the Government has implemented land use planning and zoning to ensure efficient and sustainable land utilization. This involves designating specific areas for agriculture, urban development, conservation, and industrial purposes, with the goal of balancing economic development with environmental conservation and social welfare. In addition, policies have been put in place to address land tenure issues, particularly concerning indigenous and local communities, with the aim of protecting their land rights and ensuring their participation in decision-making processes related to land use. Lao PDR has also been actively promoting sustainable land management practices, including reforestation, soil conservation, and watershed management. Efforts have also made to promote adoption of good agriculture practices and smart agriculture technologies. These efforts are crucial for maintaining ecological balance and preserving natural resources.

**Despite investments in agriculture and some progress in food security, persisting challenges are faced from inflationary effects arising from global headwinds to development and national macro-economic vulnerabilities.** Persisting inequality and geographic disparities, further intensified by the effects of COVID-19 and food inflation, underscore the need for multifaceted strategies to eradicate hunger sustainably. Investing in agriculture and nutrition interventions is essential, particularly supporting vulnerable children in early life.

**The legal and regulatory frameworks governing agricultural investment in Lao PDR are a complex, interconnected network of policies, visions, Party resolutions, strategic and implementation plans, laws, orders, decrees, and instructions.** Since responsible agricultural investment covers a wide range of topics – agriculture, forestry, land tenure, natural resource management, business, industry, economics, taxation, gender equality and others and there are many types of agriculture and forestry investments, spanning the mandates of multiple ministries, administrative levels and stakeholders, rectifying the situation was going to require a cohesive overarching framework. Therefore, further efforts are also needed for greater clarity in current frameworks, particularly paying attention to how different laws and regulations interact, and, importantly, ensuring they do not contradict each other, to support greater land tenure security for rural communities and a clear (and enforced) legal framework for investors.

## 6. Agricultural markets

**The agricultural markets play a crucial role driving the nation's economy, providing a source of income for a significant portion of the population.** In Lao PDR, the agricultural sector is largely characterized by subsistence farming, where small farmers primarily grow crops for their own consumption and local markets. As such, it is imperative to introduce measures that encourage smallholder farmers to diversify their crops and gain access to wider markets, thereby transitioning away from subsistence farming. In light of this, the Government has been actively exploring opportunities to expand its agricultural exports, particularly focusing on high-value products such as organic coffee, specialty rice, and organic fruits. The aim is to tap into international markets in neighbouring countries and beyond, thereby creating new avenues for agricultural trade and increasing the incomes of smallholder farmers. This strategic approach will not only enhance the agricultural sector's contribution to the economy but also uplift the livelihoods of farming communities.

**The primary destinations for Lao PDR' agricultural exports are its regional neighbours China, Thailand, and Viet Nam.** These three countries collectively receive over 90% of Lao PDR' agricultural exports. As all three nations have a growing middle-class population, there is a strong and increasing demand for high-quality agricultural products. Therefore, there is a huge potential for high end agriculture products that need growing regional demands. In recent years, Lao agricultural exports to China surged by 37% compared to 2016, with bananas comprising over half of the agricultural exports during that period. This growth was partly fuelled by Chinese investments in agribusinesses in the Northern provinces. Additionally, China is a significant market for Lao maize and rice exports, primarily utilizing the northern corridors (Laos-China Railway and the primary highway). There is substantial potential to increase exports to China, as the Government of Lao PDR has recently engaged in negotiations for the export of potential commercial crops to China. Agriculture exports to Thailand increased by more than 51 percent in 2020 compared to 2016. The primary driver of growth was cassava, accounting for more than 40% of total agriculture exports to Thailand between 2016 and 2019, and for 60% in 2020. Lao PDR also has untapped export potential to Thailand for maize, live bovine animals and unroasted coffee beans. Most agriculture exports passing through the western corridors (connecting Vientiane, Savannakhet and Pakse with Bangkok) originate in the south, while the northern and central regions contribute just modest volumes. Viet Nam is another important market for Lao agriculture exports, which doubled between 2016 and 2020, driven mainly by animal exports. Another major export is unroasted coffee, which accounts for 12% of Lao exports to Viet Nam, and more than two-thirds of total coffee exports. Viet Nam is also a potential market for cassava. Products passing through eastern corridors are mostly sourced from the southern and central regions, and export volumes are smaller compared to the northern and western corridors. Apart from these partners, Lao PDR also has a growing domestic market for agriculture products. The economic corridors will likely ease agri-food transactions within the country and help to meet the demand of the growing urban population. Even domestic connectivity, however, remains a major constraint for farmers in remote areas.

**The recent opening of the Laos-China Railway and the development of corridors with neighbouring countries are rapidly improving connective infrastructure in Lao PDR.** This transformation offers the country the opportunity to break away from isolation/land-locked country and become linked to other nations in the East Asia region, facilitating trade and integration. Furthermore, these trade connections provide an opportunity for Lao PDR to collaborate with agro-processing firms along the economic corridors to enhance its high-value agricultural production and processing value chains.

**To prepare and promote greater smallholder integration into regional and international value chains, key focuses that the Government will undertaking are five key areas** which are: i) strengthening horizontal and vertical coordination for small- holder inclusion; (ii) improving productivity and commercialization to help smallholders integrate into export value chains; (iii)

strengthening trade facilitation and Sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS)-related services to promote agriculture exports; (iv) improving last-mile connectivity with farms, and related logistics and trade facilitation services; and (v) promoting increased private sector investments.

## 7. Food price anomalies

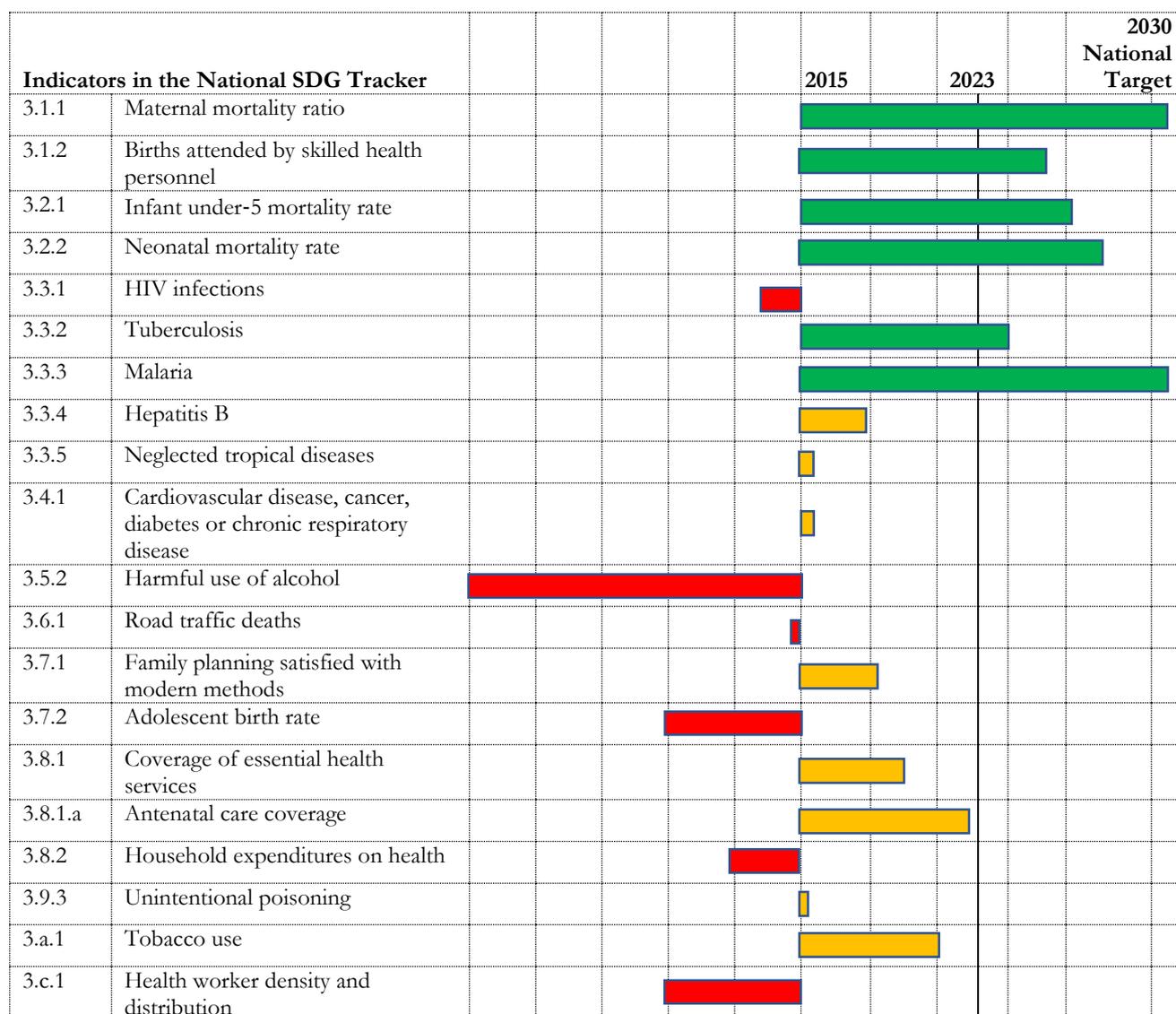
**The COVID-19 pandemic has caused widespread disruptions to economies and supply chains across the globe, including in Lao PDR. On top of this and already existing national challenges that the country has been encountering right before the pandemic, regional and international factors have also contributed to the increase in the cost of living and food prices in the country.** In recent years, the country has faced significant setbacks, including reduced agricultural production, logistical challenges in transporting goods, fluctuating currency exchange rates, and shifts in demand for specific food items. In particular, the national currency continues to lose value against foreign currencies, driving up the cost of many imported products that Lao consumers depend on. Average household incomes rose by 11.5% between May 2022 and May 2023, but year-on-year inflation stood at around 36% over the same period, while 54% of families reported unchanged or declining incomes. Furthermore, global economic uncertainty and trade disruptions have also impacted the availability and affordability of imported goods, further exacerbating the rise in living costs and food prices in Lao PDR. As a landlocked country, Lao PDR is particularly susceptible to these external influences, making it crucial for the Government and relevant stakeholders to address these challenges and implement measures to mitigate the impact on the population.

**As such, the Government has currently prioritized key measures like supporting domestic agriculture, implementing price stabilization mechanisms, and ensuring access to essential food supplies for communities in vulnerable situations.** In particular, the price monitoring system in Lao PDR (still at the early stage of development) is essential for tracking and analysing the prices of essential goods, including food items, across different regions and markets. At this stage, the Government focuses on collecting and assessing data on the costs of various food products, enabling the Government and relevant authorities to identify price trends, fluctuations, and potential anomalies. By closely monitoring prices, authorities can take timely and targeted measures to address any issues related to food pricing, such as implementing price controls, supporting local farmers, or adjusting trade policies. Additionally, the data obtained from these monitoring systems can inform decision-making processes and help in the formulation of effective policies to stabilize food prices and ensure food security for the population.

## **SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being**

**(Infographic to be added)**

**Figure 7 - Progress toward national targets - SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being)**



Source: UNESCAP – Lao National SDG Tracker

(<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/unescap.statistics.division/viz/SDG-LAO-2024/Story>)

Note: Progress is only based on two-points data which are included in the Lao National SDG tracker

## 1. Maternal and child mortality

**Maternal and child mortality in Lao PDR has seen great improvement over the past decades but it still remains a concern for the country.** From 2000 to 2020, the report estimates that the number of pregnant women who died per 100,000 live births dropped from 579 in 2000, to 126 in 2020 – a reduction of 78.7% – one of the fastest falling rates in the world. Lao PDR has also achieved significant improvements in quality of care during pregnancy, labour, newborn care and childcare including better nutrition. The focus on midwives as a group that can provide more than 80% of reproductive and maternal health care has borne fruit. From the LSIS 2023, the under-five mortality rate in Lao PDR was 28 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2022, down from 79 per 100,000 live births in 2012. The trend for neonatal and infant mortality rates has shared a similar picture. While this represents a substantial improvement, Lao PDR continues to face challenges in reducing child mortality and improving overall child health outcomes. The quality of healthcare remains the greatest challenge. Most maternal, newborn and child deaths are preventable with timely management by a skilled health professional working in a supportive environment.

**Essential to Lao PDR's progress has been an increase in the number and quality of midwives, nurses and other skilled birth attendants.** In particular, there has been a 38.3% increase in deliveries assisted by a skilled birth attendant between 2011 (41.5%) and 2023 (79.8%) and the ratio continues to improve in recent years. Equally important was the establishment of free maternal and child health services in 2010, later incorporated into the continuous expansion of the National Health Insurance (NHI) scheme in 2016.

**Although both maternal and child mortality ratios have dropped, it is still high and the country has not yet accurately measured the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on maternal and child health.** In particular, during this time, the world collectively struggled to ensure continuity of family planning and safe delivery services, with increases in maternal and newborn mortality as a tragic consequence. Intensified efforts are required to address setbacks, and collective efforts are needed to improve quality of care for all pregnant women, and ensure we reach those who struggle to access and afford care.

**The quality of healthcare in many developing countries, including Lao PDR, represents a significant challenge, particularly in the context of maternal, newborn, and child health.** Many deaths within these demographics are preventable through timely and effective healthcare interventions. For example, skilled attendance at childbirth, access to emergency obstetric care, and proper management of neonatal complications can significantly reduce maternal, newborn, and child mortality rates.

**To address these challenges and to move forward, implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan for Integrated Services on Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) 2021–2025 needs prioritization among priorities of the plan.** In particular, efforts are required to sustain past progress, overcome the setbacks of the COVID-19 pandemic, and ensure women, babies and children reach their full potential for health and well-being by making sure more invests in healthcare infrastructure, train and retain skilled health professionals, and ensure the availability of essential medical supplies and equipment. Additionally, community-based education and outreach programs can play a crucial role in raising awareness about maternal, newborn, and child health, encouraging timely healthcare-seeking behaviours, and promoting healthy practices within communities. By addressing these issues, it is possible to make significant strides in reducing preventable maternal, newborn, and child deaths in Lao PDR

## **2. Communicable diseases**

Communicable diseases continue to be a significant public health concern, posing challenges for the country's healthcare system and population. Some key communicable diseases prevalent in Lao PDR include:

- 2.1 *Malaria:* The grave threat of malaria has been almost eliminated. Incidence rate per 1,000 in Lao PDR and among the population living in areas where malaria transmission has fallen from 7.8 (2016) to 0.82 (2022). Efforts to control and prevent malaria include the distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets, indoor residual spraying, and the provision of antimalarial drugs. Annual blood examination rate (ABER) - Number of blood smears examined in a year in the total population under malaria surveillance 4 % (2016) to 11.3% (2022).
- 2.2 *Dengue fever:* Dengue fever is endemic in Lao PDR and poses a significant health threat, especially during the rainy season when mosquito populations increase. Significant dengue fever cases were reported in 2022 with the total number of cases around 32,000 increased from 1,400 cases in 2021 and 7,700 cases in 2020.
- 2.3 *Tuberculosis:* While the World Health Organization (WHO) reports a decrease in the incidence of tuberculosis (TB) from 175 cases per 100,000 population in 2015 to 143 cases per 100,000 population in 2022, data from the Ministry of Health paints a contrasting

picture, indicating an actual increase in TB incidence from 47 cases per 100,000 population in 2015 to 83 cases per 100,000 population in 2022. This discrepancy underscores the complexity of the TB situation in Lao PDR and highlights the need for targeted efforts in early detection, treatment, and prevention. The modest decline in TB incidence reported by the WHO suggests that while some progress has been made, the rate of improvement is not substantial. Conversely, the data from the Ministry of Health, indicating an increase in TB cases, indicates a more pressing need for intensified interventions. Given this mixed picture, it is evident that focused and strategic efforts are essential to address the TB situation effectively. Emphasizing early detection through improved diagnostic capabilities, enhanced training for healthcare professionals, and robust surveillance systems will be crucial in identifying and treating TB cases promptly. Furthermore, ensuring access to quality treatment, essential medications, and strengthening healthcare infrastructure are imperative to manage and mitigate the impact of TB. Prevention efforts should also be prioritized, including comprehensive vaccination programs, promoting infection control measures, and raising public awareness about TB.

2.4 *HIV/AIDS*: In 2022, the Lao PDR had an estimated 15,000 people living with HIV, in which 76% of people living with HIV were diagnosed, 77% of those diagnosed were on treatment, and 97% of those treated were virally suppressed - meaning the virus presence is so low, it is virtually undetectable. Estimated number of new HIV infections, number/per 1000 = 500-600 (0.08 per 1,000 pop) – 1,300-1,400 (0.18 per 1,000 pop). With its 10-year National Strategic Plan (2021-2030) and joining the Global Partnership for Action to Eliminate all Forms of HIV-related Stigma and Discrimination, Lao PDR has made solid progress in 2022 in reducing new HIV infections by 6% since 2010. This effort reflects the political commitment, evidence-based response and the community engagement of Lao PDR. In 2022, the Lao government invested USD 4.06 million in HIV response and in which 45% came from the domestic sources, commendable increase from USD 2.54 million HIV expenditure with only 7% contribution from domestic sources in 2021.

### 3. Non-communicable diseases & mental health

**Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, and chronic respiratory diseases are on the rise** in Lao PDR, driven by factors such as urbanization, changing lifestyles, and an aging population. This places a growing burden on the healthcare system and requires enhanced prevention and management strategies. From the WHO NCD report (2022), the total number of NCD deaths is 28,500 representing 65% of total deaths. In term of the probability of premature mortality from NCDs, rate stands at 27% which high compared to most neighbouring ASEAN countries (Thailand: 14%, Viet Nam: 21%, Cambodia: 23%, Myanmar 25%).

**Another NCD which has been gaining attention in recent years is eye health** which is a cross-cutting development issue and that improving access to eye health services will contribute to achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals. To help achieve SDG 3 Good Health and Wellbeing, the Ministry of Health adopted its first *National Strategic Plan for Eye Health (2021-2025)*, which sets goals and objectives to guide eye health program delivery across the country. This plan has been in part informed by national data collected in 2007 and 2017 through Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness (RAAB) surveys which were undertaken to determine the burden of blindness and vision impairment in Lao PDR for the purpose of planning for eye care services.

**In terms of mental health, Lao PDR does not have a specific mental health law and hence mental health is governed by the general public health law.** However, mental health policy was first substantively discussed and debated in 2007. Then in 2012, the Government adopted the National Mental Health Strategy (2020) which include the following components; (1) developing

a mental health component in primary health care, (2) involvement of users and families, (3) advocacy and promotion, (4) human right protection of users, and (5) equity of access to mental health services across different groups. However, the policy provides limited guidance and direction for community mental health services implementation, human resource development, and mental health services financing, research, quality improvement, and monitoring. Currently, there are two hospitals that provide mental health units, Mahosot Hospital and 103 Military Hospital, amassing over 28,000 cases. Therefore, looking ahead, there is a need to adjust and work on emerging key issues relating to mental health which need specific interventions rather than general public health ones.

**The challenges faced by NCDs and mental health in Lao PDR are multifaceted and they need to be addressed through coordinated and multi-sectoral approach.** One major obstacle is the pervasive fear of stigma, which has led to the concealment of these issues and prevented individuals from seeking the help and support they need. This has contributed to a lack of awareness and understanding about NCDs and mental health, resulting in misconceptions, and limited access to resources and services, particularly in rural areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges. Individuals with chronic diseases and underlying health conditions have been disproportionately impacted by the virus, highlighting the urgent need to invest in NCDs and mental health. The disruptions in health services during the pandemic have also exacerbated the burden of NCDs and mental health issues, as individuals have faced challenges in accessing care and support. Moreover, emerging evidence suggests that SARS-COV-2 infection is inducing spikes in heart and neurological conditions, adding another layer of complexity to the NCD and mental health landscape. To address the challenges relating to mental health, it is crucial to prioritize efforts on destigmatization. This can be achieved through public awareness campaigns, education initiatives, and community engagement to promote understanding, empathy, and support for individuals facing these health challenges. Additionally, there is a need to strengthen mental health services and resources, particularly in rural areas, to bridge the gaps in care and provide essential support to those in need. This may involve expanding mental health facilities, training healthcare professionals, and integrating mental health services into primary healthcare systems. On NCDs, the priorities to address the increasing burden of the NCDs include: 1) multi-sectoral actions to address the NCD risk factors and improve health promotion; 2) strengthening of service delivery capacity to provide optimal care for NCDs across the continuum of care across all the levels of service delivery; and 3) health financing to provide affordable, long-term care for the NCD patients.

In particular, **protecting young people, especially their mental health along with sexual and reproductive health is a priority.** Young people play an essential role in the sustainable national recovery from the pandemic. During 2021, over 120,000 adolescents and young people received counselling through hotline/helplines, outreach, on-site and online modalities, serviced by counsellors and youth volunteers. The demand is great and we hope to reach and respond to more youth.

#### **4. Substance abuse**

**Substance abuse is a growing concern in Lao PDR, particularly in urban areas and among certain vulnerable populations.** The only proxy indicator is the alcohol per capita consumption (Liters of pure alcohol, projected estimate, 15+ years of age) which is on the rise from 7.8 (2005) to 10.1 (2015) to 11.5 (2019). This is not enough to gain an overall picture of substance abuse in the country.

**The country faces some key issues related to substance abuse.** First, Lao PDR is a known transit route for the trafficking of illicit drugs, particularly opium and methamphetamines. This has contributed to the availability and accessibility of drugs within the country. Second, access to substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation services is limited in Lao PDR particularly in rural areas. This lack of resources hinders individuals struggling with substance abuse from receiving the support they need. Third, there is a significant stigma attached to substance abuse in Lao PDR,

which can prevent individuals from seeking help and support. Discrimination against those with substance abuse issues can further marginalize and isolate affected individuals. Fourth, there is a general lack of public awareness about the dangers of substance abuse and the availability of treatment and support services. This can contribute to a lack of understanding and support for individuals struggling with addiction.

**While efforts are being made to address substance abuse in Lao PDR, more comprehensive and sustained action is needed to address the complex challenges associated with this issue.** As such, the Lao government has declared drug prevention and control a “national agenda,” which calls for decisive action and the participation of multiple sectors to combat the current narcotics threat. This includes expanding treatment services, reducing stigma, and addressing the root causes of drug trafficking within the country and the region.

## **5. Road traffic accidents**

**Road traffic accidents in Lao PDR are alarmingly concerned and they are public health issues which have been regarded as a leading cause of injury and death in the country.** The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported that Lao PDR has one of the highest rates of road traffic accidents in the Southeast Asia region. Number of deaths from road traffic accidents a year per 100,000 population has gradually increased over the years from 13 (2001) to 14.9 (2015) to 15.9 (2019), 12.7 (2022). In 2022, the country recorded 6,440 road accidents, in which 1,333 people were seriously injured and 947 died.

**Key factors contributing to road traffic accidents** in Lao PDR include: 1. Poor road infrastructure: Many roads in Lao PDR are poorly maintained, with inadequate signage and lighting, which increases the risk of accidents, particularly at night. 2. Lack of enforcement of traffic: There is a lack of consistent enforcement of traffic laws, including speeding, drunk driving, and helmet and seat belt use. This contributes to a culture of risky driving behaviour. 3. High prevalence of risky driving behaviours: Speeding, drunk driving, and reckless overtaking are common on Lao PDR' roads, increasing the likelihood of accidents. 4. Limited access to emergency medical services: In many parts of Lao PDR, access to emergency medical services following a road traffic accident is limited, which can result in delays in receiving critical care.

Therefore, **to address the issues, the Government prioritises three key actions** which include: 1) applying the multi-sectoral collaboration/coordination to enforce the existing laws; 2) enhancing the infrastructure, and 3) improving awareness among the public.

## **6. Sexual and reproductive health**

**In Lao PDR, youth are particularly at risk as the country has the youngest population in Southeast Asia, high early marriage and maternal mortality rates, and the highest adolescent birth rates in the region.** These high rates reflect the disparities in wealth and health across the country. In addition, these rates indicate the lack of access to and quality of maternal healthcare services; youth-friendly services are particularly scarce. Young people seldom utilize sexual and reproductive health services and subsequently suffer from poor sexual and reproductive health. The main barriers preventing young people from accessing sexual and reproductive health services were related to cognitive accessibility (a lack of sexual knowledge and a lack of awareness of services) and psychosocial accessibility (feelings of shyness and shame caused by negative cultural attitudes to premarital sex, and the fear of parents finding out about visits to public sexual and reproductive health services, due to lack of confidentiality in the services and among health providers). With 50 official ethnicities and more than 200 ethnic sub-groups, it is especially important to consider the socio-cultural factors contributing to adolescent sexual and reproductive health.

**To expedite the implementation of the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Strategy and following the mid-term review in 2019, the Government has achieved significant strategic milestones.** In 2021, the Government endorsed the National Strategy and

Action Plan for Integrated Services on Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Adolescent and Child Health 2021–2025 to address gaps in the provision of equitable and quality services to the most vulnerable populations. Additionally, the Government has adopted the Noi Framework as a national response to address the challenges facing adolescent girls, focusing on advocacy, programming, and evidence generation to ensure their needs are integrated into the Lao Government’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation plans. The Government has also established systems to empower young people to address child marriage and adolescent pregnancy, including the integration of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) curricula at all education levels, provision of sexual health information and services, mental health and psychosocial support, and protection services for survivors of gender-based violence. Furthermore, a basic essential health package, including family planning and other healthcare services, as well as an essential medicines and equipment list for each level of the health system, has been available since 2018. The nationwide rollout of the Quality Assessment Improvement Module has been implemented in all provinces since 2019, focusing on two components: clinical quality and health system, including essential medicine and equipment, skilled human resources, the environment, and program management.

## 7. Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

**Essential service coverage has been on the rise in recent years.** Based on the WHO Global Health Observatory 2023, SDG 3.8.1 essential service coverage for Lao PDR was 52% in 2021 increased from 47% in 2015; based on the 2023 Ministry of Health of Lao PDR/Lao Statistics Bureau/WHO joint report on financial protection analysis, financial protection indicators (SDG 3.8.2) defined as “population with household expenditures on health greater than 10% and 25% of total household expenditure or income” were 8.4% (greater than 10%) and 4.1% (greater than 25%) in 2019, which was improved from 13.5% and 6.8% in 2013, respectively. However, these indicators were well below the ASEAN countries, suggesting clearly that more intensified investments should be made to achieve the government’s ambitious goals in achieving UHC and other health-related SDGs.

**The implementation of the Health Sector Reform Strategy (HSRS 2014 – 2025), which recognizes that delivering high quality health services and responding to growing and changing demands will require health system reforms, has been divided into three phases.** First and second phases are from 2014-2016 and 2016-2020, respectively, the country focused on delivering essential and quality health services to the population. The third phase from 2021–2025, the HSRS implementation has been focusing on achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in Lao PDR which is a priority for the Government to ensure that all citizens have access to essential health services without facing financial hardship.

**Health financing reform is the key to achieve the Government’s goal of universal health coverage.** Government’s investments in health sector have been facing real great challenges due to the current fiscal/economic crisis. Moving forward, key focuses for the Government are to ensure expanding health insurance coverage, reduce out-of-pocket payments for healthcare services and the development of mechanisms to pool funds for health services. The rollout and implementation of the National Health Insurance (NHI) scheme in the last few years is an essential component of the HSRS that has particular significance for health financing in Lao PDR. Population coverage was subsequently expanded to all provinces except Vientiane Capital in 2018, alongside the integration of other social health protection schemes such as free maternal and child health (MCH) services, the Health Equity Fund, targeting the poor, and the Community Based Health Insurance scheme into NHI in 2019. This transformation sought to remove financial barriers to equitable access to care. In 2022, 94.5% of the total population were covered by all social health protection schemes. However, the budget allocated to NHI by the Ministry of Finance is currently insufficient to cover the benefit expenditure of the NHI scheme.

**The 2023 Ministry of Health of Lao PDR/Lao Statistics Bureau/WHO joint report on financial protection analysis of the progress towards universal health coverage in Lao PDR by monitoring financial protection 2007-2019 suggests that the introduction of the NHI scheme in the country appeared to have a positive impact on financial protection and, partly, access to care (prior to COVID-19).** In particular, the introduction of the NHI scheme appeared to enable people to use formal health services more frequently, considering the share of (out-of-pocket) OOP payments on OPD care increased and the share of OOP payments on medicines decreased. This is consistent with the increases in GGHE-D and decreases in OOP payments over the last decade based on the Lao National Health Account Report for 2019. However, based on this review, as seen in the low share of the population that reported having health insurance in 2018/2019 (meaning low awareness of the scheme), **the Government will put more efforts to increase awareness of the NHI scheme to make the entitlement clear to the public.** Another issue concerning the NHI is on sufficient fund allocation for effective implementation of various milestones of the NHI. Currently, the NHI has been significantly underfunded and operated with deficit financing. In 2023, the budget shortfall of the NHI was estimated at LAK390 billion (US\$21 million), which is more than double its allocated budget of LAK180 billion. The delays in NHI fund transfer have been directly impacting the availability of medicines and supplies at health facilities, which would result in increased OOP for medicines. Therefore, **greater efforts will be putting on key strategies on the top of already existing strategies** that the Government has been implementing such as: 1) **prioritizing health insurance in the national budget** which can help ensure that sufficient funds are allocated for the sector - This involves identifying the most pressing health needs and allocating resources accordingly; 2) **encouraging private sector engagement in health insurance** to help increase funding for national health insurance - This includes promoting public-private partnerships, private health insurance companies, and other innovative financing mechanisms; and 3) **implementing health insurance reform** by focusing on key actions like streamlining health insurance programs, improving health insurance coverage, and enhancing health insurance benefits.

**In terms of access to care, the country has witnessed improvement over time as the financial and geographical accessibility of health care improved. However, there is room for improvement in terms of accessibility, availability, affordability and quality.** The poorest and the near-poor households sought care at a lower rate compared to the richest households. One in 10 of the poorest households did not seek care because of geographical barriers. From the Monitoring Household Survey report (June 2023), the proportions of households reducing health and education spending because of inflation is still high although the trend has been on the decline since COVID-19. Of those affected by inflation, 50.7% and 51.3% of households reported reducing education spending and health care spending respectively. Reductions in both expenditures were most common among low-income families. Therefore, the Government plans to look at some key specific initiatives to reduce geographical barriers such as, among others: mobile health Clinics; telemedicine; investing in the development of healthcare infrastructure in rural and remote areas; providing transportation support or subsidies for individuals in remote areas to travel to healthcare facilities, for critical medical needs; community health workers; financial Assistance; public-private partnerships; and health information campaigns. For improving the quality and availability of services which are critical to increase access to care, particularly for those in the poorer quintiles and people living in rural areas, clearer instruction will be made available to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the national policy on quality and safety, Dok Champa<sup>6</sup> (5 Goods 1 Satisfaction) in close coordination with relevant departments within MOH and various development partners under the Government's strong leadership. In particular, greater attention will also be given to expanding health coverage

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<sup>6</sup> Dok Champa focuses on a warm welcome, cleanliness, convenience, an accurate diagnosis, good and quick treatment, and satisfaction by the patient.

to those who are not in formal sector. The country has a large informal sector, which includes small-scale farmers, traders, and other self-employed individuals who do not have access to formal employment and, therefore, do not have access to formal health insurance.

**Although financial protection in Lao PDR has improved in recent years, there are still crucial areas that the Government needs to address, based on recommendations from the UHC progress review.** The Government could consider establishing a proper mechanism for providing financial support to poor and groups in vulnerable situations who face catastrophic health expenditure, as well as setting a ceiling on cumulative out-of-pocket (OOP) payments. Additionally, there is a focus on reviewing and enhancing appropriate financial protection mechanisms to strengthen primary health care and referral systems. Efforts are also being made to bolster co-payment exemption policies for the poor and to allocate resources more effectively to better target the needs of impoverished individuals. Furthermore, the Government could consider establishing policies for regulating the prices of medicines and mark-ups, as well as enhancing the usage of generic medicines.

## **8. Health impact of air pollution**

**Lao PDR typically experiences heightened air pollution particularly towards the end of its dry season, which spans from November to April annually.** This period sees an increase in practices such as waste burning, deforestation, and the burning of agricultural land, all of which are significant contributors to high air pollution levels. 2023 average Air Quality Index is 88 which is considered as moderate making Lao PDR ranked 21 out of 134 as the worst air quality. However, during the worst season, the Index ranged between 151-200 which is unhealthy. In term, PM2.5 concentration in Lao PDR, it is 5.9 times the WHO annual air quality guideline value. In the 2024 WHO Ambient Air Quality Database, the estimated air pollution, especially PM2.5 concentration in Lao PDR, was about 25.76 tons in 2022. Various sources contribute to air pollution, including urban and industrial sources as well as forest fires, vehicle emissions, and agricultural burning. Global Burden of Disease estimates that particulate matter pollution contributed to 210 million disability-adjusted life years and 6.4 million deaths in 2019. For Lao PDR, in 2021, the Air Quality Information from one sensor located in the heart of Vientiane Capital showed that there were 165 days considered unhealthy for sensitive groups, 100 days were unhealthy for everyone, and 10 days were in the very unhealthy range. This is serious for a small capital city with a population of less than one million people.

**The Government has been putting greater efforts on assessing and estimating economic costs of selected morbidity outcomes of exposure.** A consideration has been given to the new WHO project, called “Estimating the Morbidity from Air Pollution and its Economic Costs” (EMAPEC), to provide expert technical and advisory support on the adverse health effects of air pollution and the different morbidities it causes and estimate economic costs of selected morbidity outcomes of exposure to air pollution within a population. to air pollution within a population. A recent World Bank report (2021) on environmental challenges in Lao PDR reveals that pollution is a significant public health risk, contributing to one in five deaths and hindering economic growth. Air pollution both indoors and outdoors, particularly affects the 93% of households that use solid fuels for cooking, leading to an estimated 7,000 deaths annually from respiratory and heart diseases. Low-income and groups in vulnerable situations, especially women who spend more time indoors and are responsible for cooking, bear a disproportionate burden. Nearly all deaths related to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) are among children under five, and about 75% of the costs associated with lead exposure from its impact on young children. Furthermore, pollution exacerbates pre-existing health conditions, making people more susceptible to diseases like COVID-19. The report estimates that the health effects of pollution amount to around 15% of the country's GDP, causing premature deaths, illnesses, and limiting children's access to education and adults' productivity.

**To address the health impacts of air pollution, the Government discussed with various partners to focus its efforts on comprehensive and coordinated efforts which are required**

at various levels, including government policies, community initiatives, and individual actions. A consideration is an application of the Estimating the Morbidity from Air Pollution and its Economic Costs (EMAPEC) created by WHO. This will be an important step in establishing a methodology to estimate economic costs of selected morbidity outcomes of exposure to air pollution within a population. Together with this, some strategies to address the drivers and health impact of air pollution that the Government is focusing on include:

1. **Implementing Environmental Regulations:** enact and enforce stringent environmental regulations to control industrial emissions, vehicle pollution, and waste management. Discussions are ongoing on setting emission standards for industries, promoting cleaner energy sources, and regulating vehicle emissions.
2. **Promoting Clean Energy:** Encouraging the adoption of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydroelectric power can help reduce air pollution from fossil fuel combustion, leading to improved air quality and public health. In the 2021 update of its Nationally Determined Contribution, the country has set a conditional energy sector target to achieve 1 GW of total solar and wind capacity and 300 MW of biopower capacity by 2030 depending on the level of support it receives from developed countries.
3. **Improving Waste Management:** Strengthening waste collection and thereby reducing open burning is important. Therefore, proper waste management practices have been introduced and more efforts will be made in terms of national guidelines for recycling, composting, and safe disposal of hazardous waste which can help prevent pollution of soil and water sources, reducing the risk of waterborne diseases and environmental contamination.
4. **Addressing forest fires and agricultural waste burning** which is crucial to reducing the impact of air pollution on health in Laos. The government and other stakeholders must work together to implement effective solutions, including community engagement, technology and infrastructure development, and international cooperation.
5. **Enhancing public transportation and urban planning:** To encourage a shift from private vehicles to public transport, the city's bus service, the Vientiane Capital State Bus Enterprise (VCSBE), has been improving its services from the central bus station to other points in Vientiane. To help transform Vientiane into a sustainable city, the Lao PDR government is introducing a bus rapid transit (BRT) system linked to the VCSBE bus networks and other transport modes. In addition, through the Vientiane Sustainable Urban Transport Project (VSUTP), the Lao PDR government has found supportive allies that share the same goals—steering Vientiane away from its current unsustainable path.
6. **Public health education and empowering communities:** Public health campaigns are on the rise to raise awareness about the health impacts of pollution and to encourage behavioural changes that reduce exposure. This includes promoting the use of clean cooking fuels, avoiding outdoor activities during periods of high pollution, and embracing sustainable lifestyle practices. Simultaneously, the Government is working to implement monitoring systems to track air and water quality. Making this information readily available to the public can help increase awareness of pollution-related health risks and empower communities to take proactive measures.
7. **Cross border cooperation between neighbouring countries:** Air pollution has become worsened in recent years by seasonal crop burning, which has been choking much of mainland Southeast Asia. Countries also struggling with multiple forest fire that are exacerbating the situation. There have been number of initiatives and constructive approached to tackle transboundary haze pollution, including the Lao PDR-Thailand-Cambodia-Myanmar Cooperation at setting up a framework for negotiations to foster collaboration in addressing the issues.

## 9. Tobacco Control

**Tobacco use remains a significant challenge in Lao PDR.** Tobacco use causes lung cancer, heart disease, stroke and many other lethal impacts, while second-hand smoke harms smoker's family and friends. In 2018, WHO's Global Health Observatory Data Repository reported a tobacco use prevalence rate of 34.1% and tobacco use kills more than 6,700 people each year in the country. Percentage of age standardised prevalence of current tobacco use among person aged 15 and above – 2017 (12.5%), 2023 (3.5%) and male 65.7% (2017) 36.9% (2023).

Since becoming a Party to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in 2006, **Lao PDR has made significant progress on tobacco control, particularly in restricting tobacco advertising and e-cigarette availability and maintaining smoke-free spaces**, according to a new WHO report.<sup>7</sup> The recent decision by the National Assembly enforcing a complete ban on e-cigarettes, heated tobacco products, and shisha marks a significant milestone in protecting public health in the country. This move also positions Lao PDR as one of only over 30 countries globally that have implemented a comprehensive ban on e-cigarettes. Similarly, Lao PDR's passing of strengthened laws restricting tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship elevates the country to a "best practice level" in tobacco control. The legislation, approved by the National Assembly in 2021, bans tobacco product advertising at point of sale, free distribution, promotional discounts, and internet sales. Additionally, Lao PDR has achieved a "best practice level" in maintaining smoke-free indoor public places, workplaces and public transport. While compliance has improved in areas like restaurants, gaps remain and there has been a decline in people being completely smoke-free on public transport.

**While Lao PDR has made progress in tobacco control, significant challenges remain. Enforcement of tobacco control laws, illicit trade of tobacco products, and addressing cultural norms related to smoking continue to be areas of focus. The Investment License Agreement (ILA) on tobacco, set to expire in 2026, has important implications for the country.** The ILA outlines terms for foreign investment in the tobacco industry, offering incentives like tax breaks and duty-free imports. As the expiration date approaches, the Lao government has been intensifying efforts to address the ILA. A key priority is increasing tobacco tax collection to curb smoking and generate revenue for public health. Strengthening tobacco taxation is crucial, as Lao PDR has one of the lowest tobacco tax rates in Southeast Asia. Higher taxes can significantly reduce tobacco consumption, especially among youth and low-income groups. However, implementing effective tobacco taxation faces challenges. The tobacco industry often opposes tax increases and may exploit loopholes in the tax structure. Illicit trade can also undermine the impact of higher taxes. To address these challenges, Lao PDR needs a comprehensive tobacco tax policy aligned with WHO recommendations. This includes regular tax increases, closing tax loopholes, and strengthening tax administration and enforcement. Alongside tax measures, the government must enhance enforcement of tobacco control laws, particularly on smoke-free public places, tobacco advertising bans, and health warnings. Addressing cultural norms that normalize smoking is also essential

## 10. R&D for health

One of the outcomes from the implementation of the strategy on Promotion and Management of Health Research 2015–2020 is **the adoption of the first National Health Research Agenda for Lao PDR in 2022** and how the agenda contributes to institutional capacity of the Ministry of Health, in order to contribute to evidence-informed public health policy making. The agenda-setting process was highly transparent and thorough to ensure its purpose would momentum and support within the broader health network in Lao PDR. Based on this research agenda, the country has a better understanding of the research priorities in order to support the Ministry of Health

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<sup>7</sup> The ninth *WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic (2023)* tracks the progress made by countries in tobacco control since 2008.

in general and the Medical Research Council, in particular, in order to assign limited resources for research. This research agenda comprises of 11 prioritised research domains, 42 avenues and over 200 research questions. Health-seeking behaviour was ranked as the highest priority domain, followed by research to improve the health information system. Least value was ascribed to research strengthening mental health services.

Based on this recent development, the next steps and **how the research agenda being executed is critical for the Government**. By allocating resources to different research areas and working with different partners within and outside Lao PDR, the country can ensure that comprehensive and diverse studies are conducted to gather evidence on various health issues and challenges. This evidence forms the foundation for informed policy decisions, as it provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of different healthcare interventions, the prevalence of diseases, and the overall health status of the population. Therefore, strategic resource allocation is essential to support research efforts that contribute to evidence-based policy making and ultimately improve the healthcare system in Lao PDR.

## 11. Health workforce

To health address health workforce issues and other related matters, the Ministry of Health recently developed **the Human Resources for Health Development Strategy by 2030 to address the key priorities in enhance the health workforce** to achieve UHC and other SDGs by 2030. However, **human resource constraints in the health sector continue to be an issue of concern despite recent positive progress in some areas**. Although the distribution of health worker has been improved in the last few years (in 2018, 7.8 health workers per 1,000 urban population and 2.4 for rural areas and the distribution has changed in 2022 with 1.9 health workers per 1,000 urban population and 6.1 for that of rural areas), quantity and quality of health workforce continue to be critical areas that need greater attention. The trend of health workers per 1,000 population in Lao PDR has not improved since 2015 and it is on the downward trend decreasing to 2.7 (2021) from 3 (2018) and 2.9 (2015). A critical shortage of well-trained health workers, especially the qualified medical staff has escalated as medical doctors, nurses, and midwives with middle and high levels of education only accounted for less than 30% of total health workers. Health workers are still distributed unevenly among different provinces. In addition, maldistribution of health workers continues to exist among different health facility types (central hospitals, regional hospitals, provincial hospitals, district hospitals, and village health centers), with most being employed in district hospitals and provincial hospitals. Few health workers take positions in village health centers, which are mostly located in remote, mountainous, and hard-to-reach areas.

**Like many countries, an acute shortage of qualified health workers in remote and rural regions is a serious and widespread problem that is affecting Lao PDR severely**. As such the Government aims to apply a variety of interventions in different contexts and for different types of health workers to address the geographical imbalances of health workers. To come up with appropriate policies for recruitment and retention in rural and remote areas, discussions have been made within Ministry of Health in collaboration with other key ministries concerned and partners to look into details of the relative effect of monetary and non-monetary job attributes on health worker's employment decisions; incentive 'packages' based on different combinations of monetary and non-monetary job attributes; and the cost-effectiveness of these incentive packages.

**Addressing quantity and quality of health personnel is vital and critical in the context of population growth and its changing structure**. With the current trends, the total population of Lao PDR is projected to reach 8.1 million in 2030, representing a gain of almost 1 million people from now. Within this overall increase, the population and proportions of different age groups have wide variation, particularly those older than 65 years of age and females of reproductive age from 15-49 years. Therefore, to address the increasing population and changing population structure, an urgent task that the Government will undertake is to ensure the increased numbers of health care personnel (more than double of the current health personnel (around 12,000) who

are well trained to meet new demands. Village health volunteers are essential for providing primary healthcare services and health at the community level, especially in remote and rural areas in Lao PDR. Their role is crucial in ensuring that essential healthcare reaches underserved populations and in educating and empowering communities to improve their health and well-being. These workers often serve as a bridge between formal healthcare facilities and the community, making them a key component of the healthcare system, particularly in areas where access to healthcare is limited.

## 2.2 Energy access and affordability

**The energy sector is vital for Lao PDR to achieve sustainable development as it underpins economic growth, social development, and environmental sustainability.** The Government firmly believes that by investing in reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy sources, Lao PDR can ensure continued progress and prosperity for its citizens while preserving the environment for future generations. While the focus of this transition on SDG 7, the Government of Lao PDR is fully aware that investment in the energy sector in Lao PDR is a cross-cutting enabler that underpins progress across all SDGs, driving economic development, social well-being, and environmental sustainability. Some of key SDGs that are relevant for energy sector include:

### **SDG 1: No Poverty:**

Investment in the energy sector can create economic opportunities, generate employment, and stimulate economic growth, ultimately reducing poverty levels in Laos.

### **SDG 2: Zero Hunger:**

Access to reliable and affordable energy sources can enhance agricultural productivity, improve food security, and contribute to achieving zero hunger in Laos.

### **SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being:**

Reliable energy supply is essential for powering healthcare facilities, refrigeration for vaccines, and medical equipment, thus improving healthcare services and overall well-being.

### **SDG 4: Quality Education:**

Access to electricity is crucial for enhancing educational opportunities, enabling students to study after dark, powering schools, and facilitating e-learning initiatives, contributing to quality education outcomes.

### **SDG 5: Gender Equality:**

Energy access can empower women by reducing their time spent on labour-intensive tasks like collecting firewood and water, enabling them to engage in income-generating activities and education, thus promoting gender equality.

### **SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation:**

Energy investments can support water supply systems, water treatment plants, and sanitation facilities, ensuring access to clean water and sanitation services for all, aligning with SDG 6 objectives.

### **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth:**

Energy investments can create job opportunities, stimulate economic growth, and drive sustainable development, aligning with the objectives of promoting decent work and economic growth.

### **SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure:**

Energy infrastructure development and innovation in the energy sector can drive industrial growth, foster innovation, and enhance infrastructure, supporting SDG 9 objectives.

### **SDG 13: Climate Action:**

Transitioning to sustainable energy sources and reducing reliance on fossil fuels can contribute to mitigating climate change and promoting climate action in Laos.

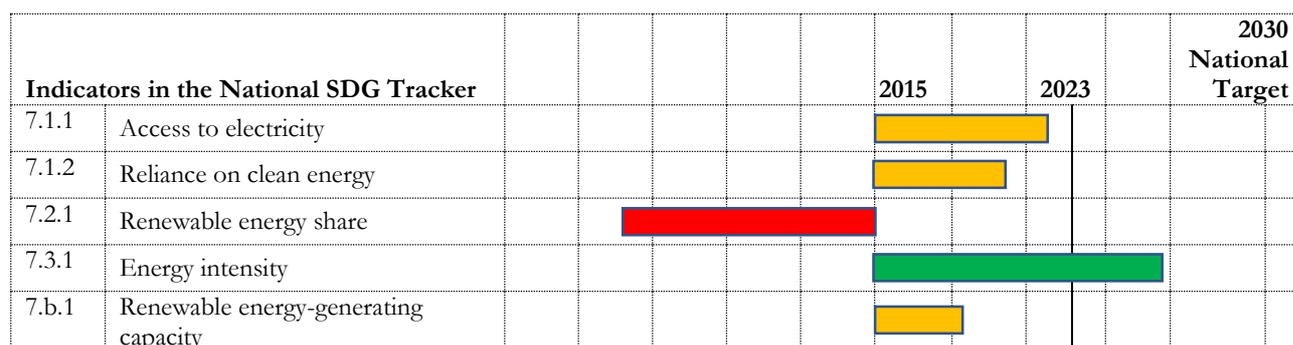
Keeping these in mind, to ensure greater contributions of the sector for sustainable development, the Government has been putting greater attention to some of key areas as follow:

1. **Economic growth:** A reliable and affordable energy supply is essential for powering industries, businesses, and infrastructure. By developing its energy sector, Lao PDR can support economic growth and create opportunities for investment, job creation, and overall prosperity.
2. **Rural electrification:** Access to electricity is a key driver of development, particularly in rural areas. By expanding the energy sector and reaching underserved communities, Lao PDR can improve living standards, stimulate economic activities, and reduce disparities between urban and rural areas.
3. **Environmental sustainability:** Lao PDR has significant potential for renewable energy, particularly in hydropower and solar energy. By prioritizing the development of clean energy sources, Lao PDR can reduce its reliance on fossil fuels, mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, and contribute to global efforts to combat climate change.
4. **Energy security:** Diversifying the energy mix and investing in domestic energy sources can enhance energy security for Lao PDR. By reducing its dependence on imported energy, the country can ensure a stable and reliable energy supply, mitigating the risks associated with external energy dependencies.
5. **Regional cooperation:** The development of the energy sector can facilitate regional energy cooperation, enabling Lao PDR to engage in cross-border energy trade and collaboration with neighbouring countries. This can enhance regional energy security, promote economic integration, and strengthen diplomatic ties with other nations.

## **SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy**

**(Infographic to be added)**

**Figure 8 - Progress toward national targets - SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy)**



Source: UNESCAP – Lao National SDG Tracker

(<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/unescap.statistics.division/viz/SDG-LAO-2024/Story>)

Note: Progress is only based on two-points data which are included in the Lao National SDG tracker

### 1. Access to energy services, clean fuels and technology

**Percentage of households with access to electricity from overall sources has been increased to 96.5 (2022) increasing by 2.8% for over five years** (2017 access to electricity rate was 93.7%). Taking this into consideration and the current pace of the energy sector development, access to electricity is estimated to have reached 100% of the population in urban and rural areas by 2030.

**Hydropower remains the dominant source, making up the majority of the country's electricity supply.** It is important to note that despite the significant contribution of hydropower, there are still rural and remote areas in Lao PDR that lack access to electricity. Therefore, the Lao government has been making efforts to extend the national power grid to rural and remote areas. This includes the construction of new transmission lines and the expansion of the electricity network to reach more communities. Percentage of households connected to the national electricity grid was 92.5 (2017) and the ratio is expected to rise in recent years.

**In terms of proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology for cooking, many households in Lao PDR still rely on traditional biomass for cooking, which poses health and environmental challenges.** There are initiatives to promote the adoption of clean cooking solutions, such as improved cookstoves and biogas systems, to reduce reliance on traditional fuels. Based on the National LSIS results, the proportion of the population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology for cooking has significantly improved from 0.2% in 2017 to 8.0% in 2023. Looking at the WHO Global Health Observatory, the situation has improved over the years with access and use of clean fuels for cooking by 9.3% of the people (2021) (increasing from 5.6% in 2015) which is far from the regional average of 74.4%. In rural areas, the rate is as low as 2.4% of the population.

**Based on the global Multi-Tier Framework of access to energy launched in 2015, the Government has been working with its partners on the way energy access is measured, going beyond the traditional binary measure of “connected or not connected” for electricity access, and “solid vs nonsolid fuels” for cooking.** The quality and reliability of access, particularly in rural areas, is the priority to ensure that households enjoy a minimum of Tier 3 level connection.<sup>8</sup> Achieving this will require substantial new investment, deployment of innovative technologies, and a wide range of interventions targeted for underserved

<sup>8</sup> Tier 3 connection - At least 8 hours of electricity per day is available (including at least 3 hours per evening), and capacity is sufficient to power medium-load appliances-such as a refrigerator, freezer, food processor, water pump, rice cooker, or air cooler (see table 1)-as needed during that time. In addition, the household can afford a basic consumption package of 365 kWh per year. Sources that can be used to meet these requirements include an SHS, a generator, a mini-grid, and the national grid.

populations. The success of such interventions largely depends on data and analytics availability of existing access gaps, and potential options to overcome them.

## 2. Share of renewable energy

**With abundant water resources, particularly in its rivers and tributaries, hydropower is a key component of renewable energy in the country.** As of 2022, hydropower accounted for approximately 80% of Lao PDR' electricity generation, making it the dominant renewable energy source in the country. Although the renewable energy capacity almost doubled from 641 kWh per capita to 1,143 kWh per capita, the renewable energy share in total final energy consumption has reduced from 51.7% in 2016 to 50% in 2021. Therefore, achieving 62.6% in 2030 will not be possible if the current trend continues.

**Apart from hydropower, the Government has implemented various initiatives to promote the development of solar energy, particularly in off-grid and remote areas where grid connectivity is limited.** There are also efforts to encourage the adoption of solar photovoltaic systems for residential and commercial use. Currently, there are around 25,000 households utilizing home solar systems (SHS) with a capacity ranging from 50 to 100 watts and 100 MW solar farm expected to be in full operation by 2025 and 4000 MW project is under feasibility study. While the share of non-hydro renewable energy sources is currently relatively small, the Government has expressed its commitment to diversifying the country's energy mix and increasing the contribution of other renewable sources. This includes exploring the potential for wind energy, biomass, and bioenergy to complement the existing hydropower capacity. Key project is Monsoon Wind Farm (600MW) which has been under development. It is Lao PDR's first and South-East Asia's largest wind power project under construction. In addition, there has been successful implementation of biofuels with a 5% blend (B5), signifying the inclusion of 5% bioethanol or biodiesel in conventional fossil fuels. The next target for the country is to increase this blend to B10, aiming to incorporate a 10% biofuel mix. This transition aligns with the government's efforts to reduce reliance on traditional fossil fuels and promote the use of renewable and environmentally sustainable energy sources.

**While the government believes that investment returns from mega projects will bring greater benefits to the development of Lao PDR, the current investment incentives and their impact on the country's development will need to be carefully analysed.** This will help the Government to ensure a more sustainable approach to investment incentives that rewards responsible and sustainable performance, promotes domestic capital and entrepreneurship, and ensures environmental protection and social cohesion.

## 3. Energy efficiency

**Lao PDR's energy intensity in 2020 was 4.33 MJ/USD2017 PPP. The overall trend is on the decline from 4.75 (2016) to 4.33 (2020).** However, the downward trend is only a margin posing a challenge to achieve the SDG7 target for energy efficiency which requires the energy intensity to halve by 2030 (a national target of 3.4 by 2030).

**Although Lao PDR is still in the early stages of its energy efficiency efforts, the government's commitment to promoting energy efficiency across various sectors bodes well for the country's sustainable development goals and its efforts to reduce carbon emissions.**

- In the industrial sector, the Government has introduced energy management programs and provided support for the adoption of energy-efficient technologies and practices. This includes promoting use of energy-efficient equipment, implementing energy management systems, and conducting energy audits to identify opportunities for improvement.
- In the transportation sector, efforts have been made to improve fuel efficiency and reduce emissions. This includes promoting the use of cleaner fuels, implementing vehicle emission

standards, and investing in public transportation infrastructure to reduce reliance on personal vehicles.

- In the residential and commercial sectors, the Government has launched public awareness campaigns to promote energy-saving practices and the use of energy-efficient appliances. Additionally, there have been initiatives to improve building energy efficiency through the implementation of building codes and standards.
- Furthermore, the Government has been working on enhancing energy efficiency in the power generation and distribution systems. This includes upgrading and modernizing power plants, improving transmission and distribution infrastructure, and promoting the use of smart grid technologies to optimize energy delivery.

**The Government published in 2016 the National Policy on Energy Efficiency and Conservation which sets a 10% reduction target in energy consumption by 2030 compared to the business-as-usual scenario.** The target is included in the country's first revision of its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to be submitted to the UNFCCC in 2020. The Lao Government is also implementing its National Green Growth Strategy (NGGS) approved in 2019, and the industrial sector was selected as a priority because of its importance for local economic & social development and environmental sustainability.

**To translate this national policy into actions, the Government has been actively working to overcome some key barriers for energy efficiency.** These include the lack of comprehensive information on electricity consumption patterns across different rate classes or end uses, as well as the limited capacity within the public and private sectors for effective planning and implementation. Additionally, there is a need for a more robust regulatory system, including clear strategies and targets, along with incentives to drive energy efficiency initiatives. Furthermore, there is a shortage of technical expertise and awareness among end-use customers regarding energy-efficient technologies and practices. This lack of understanding extends to the benefits of energy efficiency, which requires targeted efforts to raise awareness and educate both consumers and businesses about the advantages of adopting energy-saving measures. Addressing these barriers is essential to promoting a culture of energy efficiency and achieving sustainable energy consumption in Lao PDR.

#### **4. Moving Forwards**

Looking forward, energy sector will accelerate the current progress and pay greater attention to quality, reliability, and affordability to realise full benefits of the sector and some specific issues need further efforts are:

##### **4.1 Electricity access**

Both mini-grids and off-grid systems play a crucial role in expanding energy access, particularly in remote and underserved areas. They can also contribute to environmental sustainability by leveraging renewable energy sources and reducing reliance on fossil fuels. Additionally, they can improve energy resilience, particularly in areas prone to natural disasters or where the main grid is unreliable.

With mini grids and off-grids legally are allowed to operate in the country, many features of mini grids are not available. Therefore, it is important that framework for both mini grids and off grids is established taking into consideration of various issues like:

- Solar Hybrid Mini Grid Technology - programs which aim to develop solar hybrid mini grid systems or support the development of solar hybrid mini grid systems
- Geospatial Planning for Mini Grids - access to geospatial data through an online platform,
- Productive Uses and Community Engagement - a national or large-scale program to engage with communities who are about to receive mini grid electricity or who have just

recently received mini grid electricity, to increase awareness, uptake, and demand for electricity services

- Regulatory Authority for on tariff and technical and safety standards
- Existence of program leveraging private participation
- Financial support for low-income households

#### **4.2 Increasing access to clean cooking fuels and technologies**

With the prospect of electricity will reach most population across the country by 2030 and Lao PDR generates enough electricity largely from hydropower, the Government will work with partners to ensure the usage of different types of cooking stoves: electrical for urban and peri-urban areas, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and improved biomass cooking stoves for many households where access to electricity may not be as reliable as in urban areas. Specific issues that need further attention are:

- Awareness raising strategy to drive adoption of clean cooking solutions
- Geographical and demographical considerations
- Gender-based impact of cooking practices
- Last mile distribution strategy and its implementation

#### **4.3 Renewable energy**

Currently, there is no overarching NDC reduction target stipulated in the second NDC document published in March 2021. As such, the renewable energy share in the SDG scenario reflects the share that is projected based on the targets and ambitions stipulated in the National Power Development Plan 2020-2030 (Adopted in recent years). Taking the current share, strong government commitments and other measures into consideration, the Ministry of Energy and Mining (MEM) has set the target of the share of renewable energy in TFEC to 62.6% in 2030. This will require greater efforts in key elements of renewable energy.

The Government is committed to boost renewable energy by gradually ensuring a phase-down of coal use in favour of solar PV, biomass, and hydropower. While solar and biomass are still in the early stage of development, hydropower projects have rapidly expanded (more than 70 active dams and a few under planning and construction stages) in recent years as a renewable energy source to meet domestic demand and align with the country's ambitions to export electricity to neighbouring countries and the region for revenue generation.

In this regard, the Government has been putting great efforts into ensuring that hydropower development does not have negative impacts which requires careful planning, assessment, and mitigation measures. In particular, the importance of reducing the impact on ecosystems, communities and across borders (e.g., through MRC level coordination) is an important element for the country. The newly enacted Dam Safety Law (July 2022) is the key regulatory framework to ensure careful consideration for minimizing the negative impacts of hydropower development. To move forward, it is a matter of how to ensure that various key legal framework and planning considerations (environmental impact assessment, social impact assessment, mitigation measures, sustainable design and operation, stakeholder engagement and consultations and M&E) are carefully carried out to the highest standard for all hydropower projects. In particular, there is a need for a comprehensive review of the role and future of the hydropower sector by; looking at the current and future impacts of existing and planned dams; how many and which projects should go forward, and how construction and operation arrangements should be adjusted in the light of the social and environmental risks. Therefore, coordinated approach to the hydropower has been the key focus in moving forward. Special attention will be on effectively engagement of local communities in the hydropower sector by focusing on:

- Meaningful and inclusive engagement with local communities throughout the hydropower project lifecycle, from planning to implementation and monitoring. This involves consulting with communities, incorporating their feedback, and addressing their concerns.
- Developing and implementing equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms that provide tangible benefits to local communities affected by hydropower projects. Appropriate mechanism will be put in place in order to work out revenue sharing, employment opportunities, infrastructure development, and support for community development initiatives.
- Livelihood restoration programs to support communities whose livelihoods are impacted by hydropower projects. This may involve providing alternative livelihood options, skills training, and access to resources and markets.
- Ensuring that environmental and social impact assessments (ESIAs) are conducted in consultation with communities and that mitigation measures are developed and implemented in collaboration with them.
- Partnerships between hydropower companies, government agencies, and civil society organizations to promote community engagement and support sustainable development initiatives in hydropower-affected areas, and
- Monitoring and evaluation systems to track the effectiveness of community engagement efforts and the impacts of hydropower projects on local communities.

Some other specific issues which need to be considered in coming years include:

1. Support for renewable energy and financial and regulatory incentives
  - Long-term PPAs for renewable electricity production by large-scale producers
  - Electricity grid access and dispatch
  - Transport sector to adopt cleaner (biofuel, electric, hydrogen) powered modes of transportation
  - Financial and regulatory incentives like auctions for large producers and tariffs for small producers
2. Network connection and use (connection cost allocation policy, network usage and pricing and renewable grid integration)
3. Counterparty risk (payment risk mitigation, an incidence/outage recording system and measurements for service reliability)
4. Carbon pricing and monitoring (GHG emissions coverage under any carbon pricing mechanism and a monitoring, reporting and verification system for greenhouse gas emissions)

#### **4.4 Energy efficiency**

Energy efficiency is a critical aspect of Lao PDR' energy strategy, as it helps to reduce energy consumption, lower costs, and mitigate the environmental impacts of energy production and consumption. The country has implemented various energy-efficient measures, including

- Establishment of energy efficiency standards for various sectors, including buildings, industry, and transportation. These standards aim to reduce energy consumption and promote the use of energy-efficient technologies.
- Incentives to promote energy efficiency, including tax breaks, subsidies, and financial support for energy-efficient projects.
- Promotion of energy efficiency in key sector, for instance:

- Energy in infrastructure: use of energy-efficient lighting and appliances, and the promotion of green buildings.
- Energy in transportation: use of energy-efficient vehicles and the promotion of public transportation.
- Energy in industry: use of energy-efficient technologies and the promotion of renewable energy sources
- Energy in agriculture: use of energy-efficient irrigation systems and the promotion of organic farming practices.
- Energy in forestry: use of energy-efficient logging practices and the promotion of sustainable forest management.

However, achievement of the energy efficiency target is a challenging task for the Government. The Ministry of Energy and Mining sets the target of 3.4 MJ/US\$ which is much lower than the international target which is 4MJ/US\$. Energy efficiency had been in the wrong direction since 2011. However, it has started to go in the right direction since 2018. With this mixed picture of energy efficiency during the last decade, the Government stands firm to accelerate efforts to roll out energy efficiency measures across all sectors. Specific key focuses are:

1. Professional certification/accreditation programs mandated for energy efficiency activities
2. Mandates for large consumers' incentives for commercial and industrial consumers
3. Tracking and enforcement of obligations for public infrastructure
4. Utility consumer pricing and Information
5. National financial coverage mechanisms for energy efficiency activities in each sector
6. Minimum energy performance standards
7. Energy efficiency labelling schemes
8. Building energy information
9. Transport efficiency metrics

## 2.3 Digital connectivity

One of the priorities for the Government is on digital connectivity which is essential for Lao PDR to achieve sustainable development by driving economic growth, improving access to information and education, enhancing healthcare services, promoting good governance, and supporting environmental sustainability. By prioritizing digital connectivity, the Government firmly believes that it will help unlock new opportunities for development and create a more inclusive and resilient society.

Digital connectivity serves as a catalyst for industry, innovation, and infrastructure development by enabling the adoption of advanced technologies and smart solutions. Furthermore, it promotes partnerships and collaboration by connecting diverse stakeholders and facilitating joint efforts to address common challenges and pursue shared objectives. Therefore, the focus of this transition for achievement of sustainable development is on SDG 9 and SDG17.

Apart from these two goals that this section will focus on, the Government has acknowledged that investment in digital connectivity in Laos is a transformative enabler that can drive progress across all SDGs. For instance,

### **SDG 1: No Poverty:**

Digital connectivity can create economic opportunities, facilitate access to online markets, and empower individuals with digital skills, ultimately reducing poverty levels in Laos.

### **SDG 2: Zero Hunger:**

Digital technologies can enhance agricultural productivity, improve market access for farmers, and support food security initiatives, contributing to achieving zero hunger in Laos.

### **SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being:**

Digital connectivity enables telemedicine, e-health services, and health information systems, improving healthcare access and quality, thus promoting good health and well-being.

### **SDG 4: Quality Education:**

Access to digital learning platforms, e-books, and online educational resources can enhance educational opportunities, improve learning outcomes, and promote quality education for all in Laos.

### **SDG 5: Gender Equality:**

Bridging the digital gender gap through digital literacy programs and promoting women's participation in the digital economy can contribute to achieving gender equality in Laos.

### **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth:**

Digital connectivity can create job opportunities, support entrepreneurship, and drive economic growth by fostering innovation and expanding digital markets in Laos.

### **SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure:**

Investment in digital infrastructure and technologies promotes innovation, enhances industrial growth, and strengthens infrastructure development, aligning with SDG 9 objectives.

### **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities:**

Digital connectivity can reduce inequalities by providing vulnerable communities with access to digital services, information, and opportunities, thus promoting inclusivity and reducing disparities in Laos.

### **SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities:**

Digital technologies can improve urban planning, enhance public services, and promote sustainable urban development, contributing to building sustainable cities and communities in Laos.

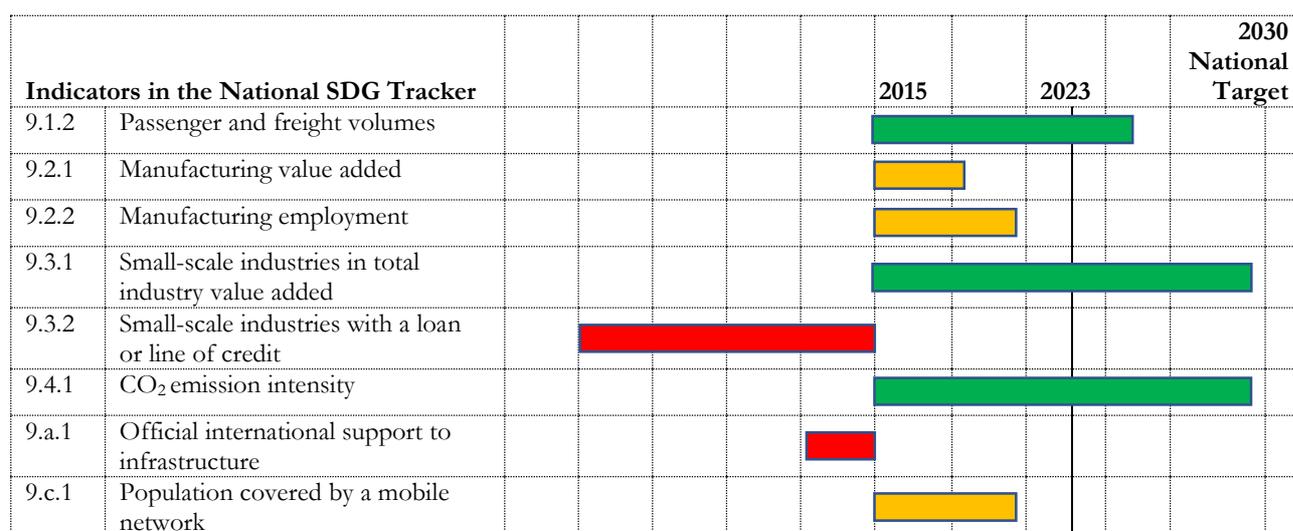
**SDG 13: Climate Action:**

Digital solutions can support climate action efforts by enabling data collection, monitoring environmental changes, and promoting sustainable practices, thus contributing to climate action in Laos

## **SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure**

(Infographic to be added)

**Figure 9 - Progress toward national targets - SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure)**



Source: UNESCAP – Lao National SDG Tracker

(<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/unescap.statistics.division/viz/SDG-LAO-2024/Story>)

Note: Progress is only based on two-points data which are included in the Lao National SDG tracker

## 1. Infrastructure development

**The passenger and freight volumes have been steadily increasing in recent years.** The growth of tourism and trade has led to an increase in the number of passengers and freight being transported within the country. The passenger volumes have been growing due to the increasing number of domestic and international flights (5 more flight routes operating in the country), as well as the development of road and railway infrastructure (1: the East-West Economic Corridor connecting five Southeast Asian countries, namely Lao PDR, Cambodia, Viet Nam, Thailand and Myanmar; 2: the high-speed train under the Belt & Road Initiative, and 3: highways and rail road links to sea ports in Viet Nam). The expansion of the tourism industry has also contributed to the rise in passenger volumes, with more people traveling within the country for leisure and business purposes. Similarly, freight volumes have been on the rise due to the growing demand for goods and products being transported within and outside of Lao PDR. The development of logistics and transportation infrastructure, such as ports, roads, and railways, has also contributed to the increase in freight volumes. Currently, there are five logistic companies with international standards operating in the country. 20 border-crossings throughout the county (Viet Nam: 9, Thailand: 8, China: 2 and Cambodia: 1) are currently in full operation. Overall, the passenger and freight volumes in Lao PDR are expected to continue growing as the country's economy and infrastructure continue to develop. With the logistic performance index which is on the rise (2.1 for 2016 and 2.4 in 2022), the growth presents opportunities for investment and development in the transportation and logistics sectors in Lao PDR. Therefore, more efforts will be needed to diversify financial resources for infrastructure development and investment to prepare the country's infrastructure for the future and support the nation's logistics services and connectivity to markets.

**With the development of infrastructure and logistic services in Lao PDR, the Government is placing special emphasis on ensuring that the benefits of sector development extend to the rural population.** This involves efforts to improve accessibility, connectivity, and transportation for rural areas, with the goal of fostering rural development and improving the overall quality of life for people living in these regions. Data on the rural population who live within 2 kilometres of an all-season road is currently not available. However, the proxy data used for this is a percentage of paved road network in the country. 17.8% in 2015 to almost 22.7 in 2022 and the target for 2030 is 29.9%.

## 2. Sustainable/inclusive industrialization

Lao PDR was ranked 103<sup>rd</sup> in the 2017 UNIDO Competitive Industrial Performance index (which analyses the ability of countries to competitively produce and export manufactured goods), while the Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) ranked the country at 154 (2020). **In recent years, Lao PDR has made significant strides in industrialization, with the Government focusing on diversifying the economy and reducing reliance on traditional sectors such as agriculture and natural resource extraction.** The country has been actively promoting industrial development through initiatives such as special economic zones, investment incentives, and infrastructure improvements to support manufacturing and industrial activities.

**Key sectors in Lao PDR' industrialization efforts include garment and textile manufacturing, food processing, and hydropower development.** Currently, the manufacturing value added as a proportion of GDP stands at 9.09% (2022) increased from 8.2% (2015). Manufacturing employment for both women and men is increasing as a proportion of total employment. The percentage increase for women is almost double, rising from 5.9% in 2015 to 10% in 2017, while the increase for men is almost 2 percentage points, rising from 4.3% in 2015 to 6.2% in 2017. This upward trend is expected to continue in the latest labour force survey conducted in 2023, with results pending validation. To move forward, the Government has sought to attract foreign investment and technology transfer to bolster industrial growth, with a particular emphasis on sustainable and environmentally friendly practices. Special focus will be on the need to enhance workforce skills, improve logistical and transportation infrastructure, and address regulatory and administrative barriers to industrial development. These areas of focus are important to prepare the country to graduate from the LDC status by 2026.

## 3. Small-scale industries access to finance

**The SMEs have played a vital role in Lao PDR's economic development, especially in the trade, manufacturing and service sectors.** As of 2022, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for 99.8% of all registered firms in Lao PDR, and around 82% of employment. Small-scale industries with a loan or line of credit increased from 6.7% to 25.7%, although the medium and high-tech industry value added remained stagnant at 3.8% of the total manufacturing value added. Although credit loans to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Laos are not expanding, it does not necessarily mean that SMEs are not reaching their full potential. Most SMEs are currently in a recovery phase, and careful consideration is being given to how to diversify their business models and approaches to improve their performance and competitiveness.

**The Government of Lao PDR's 9<sup>th</sup> National Social Economic Development Plan (9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2021-2025) incorporates Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) Development Plan 2021-2025 to help promote SMEs.** Improving SMEs' access to finance is vital. To this issue, the Government, in collaboration with financial institutions and international partners has implemented some key measures to improve SMEs' access to finance. Efforts have been made to diversify financial products and services offered to SMEs by banks and other institutions in line with the Lao PDR Financial Inclusion Roadmap 2018–2025 and the Strategic Plan for Capital Market Development 2016–2025. Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI) recently collaborated with Sacombank to provide loans intended to catalyse the growth of SMEs in Lao PDR. At present, business owners and farmers who apply for a loan must offer land or house as collateral before they are eligible for a loan. But under the new Nang Fa Fund, LNCCI will authorise the loan and act as guarantor, meaning that SMEs will not have to offer land or house to the bank.

**In addition, efforts for improving SME capacity in financial management and accounting practices and improving credit information coverage to financial institutions to better assess lending risks have been starting to be materialised in recent years.** Since 2017, the SME Service Centre (an independent organization dedicated to helping SMEs access training, information, and support) has significantly expanded its reach with offices now established in various parts of the country including Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Champasack, Savannakhet and

Oudomxay. The organization is actively planning to extend its presence into provinces across the in the near future. The establishment of the Department of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion has been a crucial milestone in supporting the government's efforts to promote SME development, particularly in terms of improving access to finance. Additionally, a feasibility for the development of micro-credit provisioning programs through micro-finance institutions is currently underway, with the aim of further boosting the development of SMEs in the country. Another crucial focus is on the application of digital tools to support SMEs during the COVID-19 period and recovery. Initial steps in this initiative involve introducing practical digital products and services into the market, as well as establishing a forum for emerging SMEs in Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Myanmar to facilitate knowledge transfer.

#### 4. CO<sub>2</sub> emission intensity

**Lao PDR was the world's 100<sup>th</sup> largest producer of yearly carbon dioxide emissions and contributed 0.07% of all global emissions.** In 2022, the country emitted 36.82m metric tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, or Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e. This represents an increase in emission from 2021 by 0.5%. However, from 2015 (23.21m metric tonnes), this represents a 37% increase. Of Lao PDR's total CO<sub>2</sub> emission, nearly all was emitted through land use change and forestry, with the agricultural sector producing the greatest share of methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O). The country, however, has the lowest CO<sub>2</sub> emission among the other countries in the region.

**Lao PDR's absolute CO<sub>2</sub> emission is closely linked to the size of its industry, forest coverage and agro-industry.** Current, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction plan (2015–2030) for the country encompasses of six key aspects: Forestry Strategy; Renewable Energy Development Strategy; Rural Electrification Programme; Transport-focused National Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA); expansion of the use of large-scale hydropower; and climate change action plans. The comprehensive approach outlined in the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction plan for Lao PDR has the potential to bring about significant reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the years to come. This would not only benefit the environment but also contribute to global efforts to combat climate change.

#### 5. Research and development

**The 2023 Global Innovation Index ranking of Lao PDR at 110 with a score of 18.3 out of 100 among 132 countries assessed aligns with the understanding that Lao PDR is at an early stage of development in research and development (R&D).** The low ranking and score reflect the challenges and limitations faced by Lao PDR in fostering innovation and advancing R&D capabilities. The focus on R&D expenditure and R&D personnel is consistent with the broader context of a nascent R&D environment in the country (Research and development expenditure as a percentage of GDP is 0.09 for 2019 (increasing from 0.02% in 2002) and 1,692 researchers (in full-time equivalent) per million inhabitants). These figures are far lower than other countries in the region. To improve its position on the Global Innovation Index and to advance its R&D landscape, the Government is committed to address various aspects beyond expenditure and personnel. Some key areas that the Government has been discussing with its key partners in recent years include enhancing research infrastructure, promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing among research institutions, facilitating transfer, and fostering an environment conducive to innovation and entrepreneurship.

#### 6. Access to ICT and the Internet

In 2022, proportion of the population covered by a mobile network is 97% (2G) (2015 – 98%), 82% (3G) (2015 – 65%) and 53% (4G) (2015 -5%). Mobile phone subscription rate in Lao PDR is around 81 percent, mobile broadband Internet is around 35% and fixed broadband around 3%. There are nine government services: video conferencing system, E-Office System, Government Email System, G-chat System, G-Share G-Drive System, LaoKYC, MTC Authen Wifi, G-Web platform and G-Net. Currently, there are four types of mobile applications in the country: payment service, lifestyle, delivery and entertainment. The number of internet users have significantly increased from around 2.7 millions in 2017 to almost 4.4 millions in 2022 (around 60% of the

population). Vientiane Capital and Xaysomboun have the highest percentage of internet users across the country, 81% and 90%, respectively while the lowest percentage of internet users (40%) is in Salavan.

**Lao PDR undertook Digital Maturity Assessment in 2022 in order to understand the Government's digital readiness level.** Overall, Lao PDR's maturity level is digitally nascent scoring 1.7 out of 5.<sup>9</sup> Lao PDR's scores and overview of key observations based on six pillars of the assessment are: 1) Technology and solutions (score: 1.8), 2) Policy and regulations (score: 2.2), 3) Skills and capacity building (score: 1.7), 4) User-centricity (score: 1.4), 5) Service definition and delivery (score: 2.0), and 6) Institutional framework and collaboration (score: 1.9). Lao PDR made good progress in two key pillars. First, policy and regulations as the Government has articulated a vision for the digital economy to grow from the current level of 3 percent to 10 percent of GDP by 2040. Its 10- year Digital Economy Strategy (2021-2030) and the 5-year National Digital Economy Development Plan (2021-2025) elaborate on the government's ambition. Second, service definition and delivery as the Government has implemented several digital initiatives as highlighted earlier. However, the country still needs a clear implementation roadmap and digital public service standards, and a digitalized procurement process for the development of e-services.

**Lao PDR's underperformance in digital assessment has contributed to its low rankings across other digital development indicators.** The World Economic Forum (WEF) 2020 report highlights that Lao PDR is lagging its peers. Increasing access to high quality, low cost, broadband services is critical to support the next phase of digital development in Lao PDR and to support improvements in its global competitiveness. At the current rate, it will be challenging for Lao PDR to promote digital transformation, to modernize its industry and take advantage of Industry 4.0. Mobile phone and broader internet accessibility will certainly contribute to the industrial/manufacturing sector's development and support the country's technological progress in the near future.

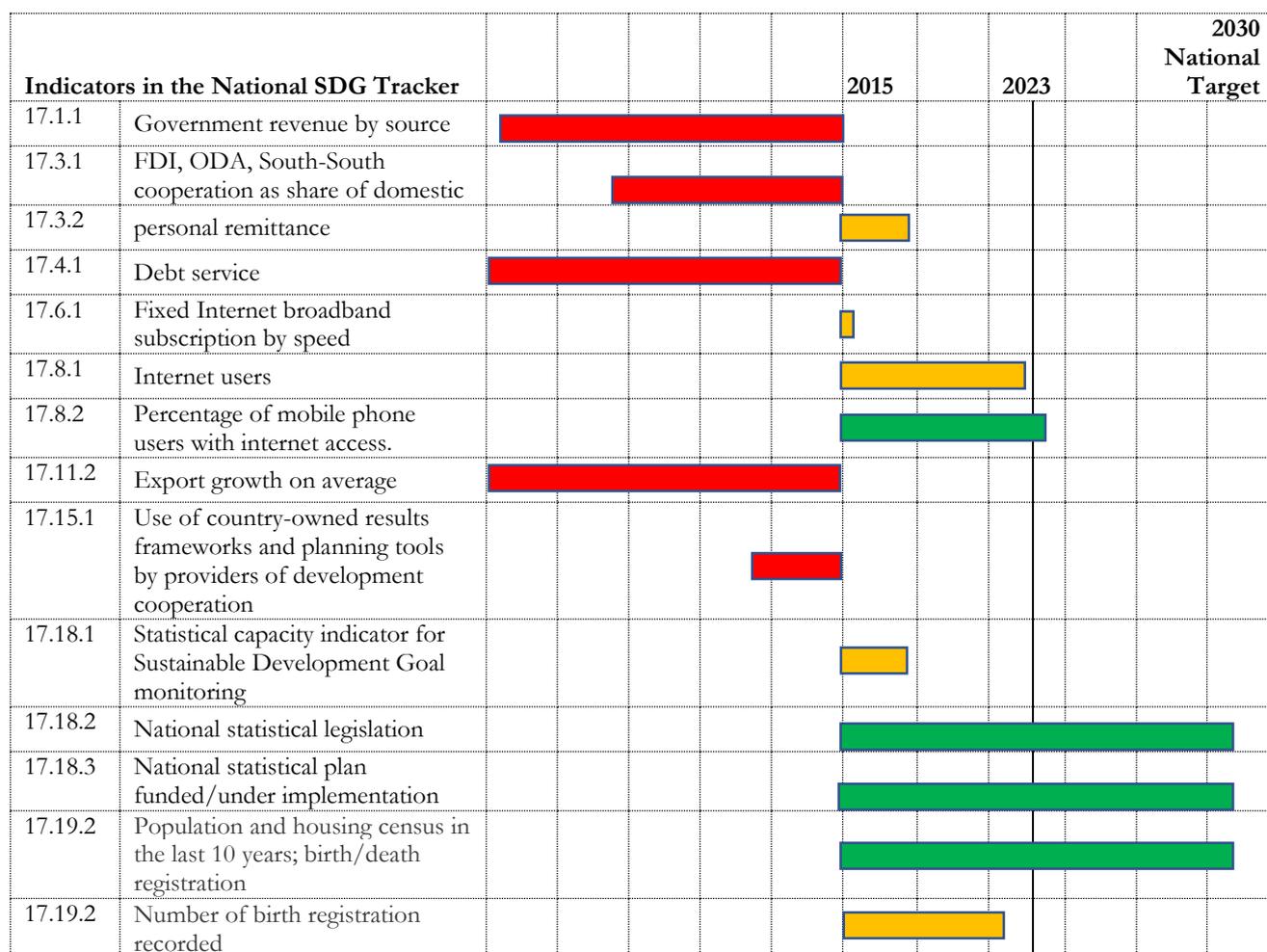
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<sup>9</sup> 1(Nascent), 2(Emerging), 3) Integrated, 4) Transformed, and 5 (Innovative)

## **SDG 17 – Partnership for the Goals**

**(Infographic to be added)**

**Figure 10 - Progress toward national targets - SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)**



Source: UNESCAP – Lao National SDG Tracker

(<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/unescap.statistics.division/viz/SDG-LAO-2024/Story>)

Note: Progress is only based on two-points data which are included in the Lao National SDG tracker

## 1. Government revenue

**Even before the outbreak of COVID-19, the revenue performance in Lao PDR was a matter of concern, with levels remaining notably low compared to regional and income standards.**

Total revenue declined from 20.2% to GDP in 2015 to 15.3% of GDP in 2019 as a result of declines in tax collection and foreign grants. Subsequently, it decreased to 13% of GDP in 2020, impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but then rebounded to 16.1% in 2022, partially due to support from inflation. In 2022, almost 80% of total revenue was collected through taxes, followed by non-tax revenues (16%) and grants (6%).

**Tax revenue has relied heavily on indirect taxes, particularly the value-added tax and excises.** Indirect taxes accounted for most tax revenue, with the value-added tax (VAT) and excises representing 29% and 25% of total tax revenue in 2018–2022, respectively. These are consumption-based taxes levied on the purchase of goods and services. Direct taxes averaged 23% of tax revenue in the same period and were almost exclusively derived from the corporate income tax (CIT) and the personal income tax (PIT). With this current status, to improve human development outcomes in long run, it is important to ensure reforming of the taxation system and investing in human development initiatives that benefit all.

**Tax revenue collection has not kept pace with economic activity, with collection reaching only about 60% of its full potential.** Tax revenue fell from 14% to 11% of GDP during 2014–2019, before falling to 9% in 2020 due to COVID-19. Although tax revenue recovered to 11% in 2022, the tax-to-GDP ratio is significantly below the recommended minimum international benchmark of 15%. Tax collection is reaching only about 60% of its full potential, indicating there is ample scope for policy and administration reforms to address key challenges, for instance, low tax rates, a narrow tax base, and low level of compliance and enforcement.

**The relative decline in tax revenue is mostly accounted for by the underperformance of the corporate income tax and value-added tax.** The poor performance of revenue collection has been observed across most types of tax. Corporate income tax (CIT) collection declined considerably since 2011, owing to steady reductions in the standard rate and widespread profit tax exemptions. Therefore, it is important to carefully assess the efficiency of profit tax exemption and consider reforming it to make it more efficient and effective in encouraging businesses to invest in the country. The VAT has declined since 2015, likely also affected by tax exemptions. COVID-19 had a considerable impact on economic activity and, thus, tax revenue. In 2020, revenue collection declined for most taxes, especially excises, although ‘other fees’ partly offset this trend. Since then, a recovery in consumption and imports has underpinned tax collection improvements, although this is also linked to the exchange rate depreciation and higher (domestic and import) prices. Nonetheless, VAT collection declined in 2022, largely due to the VAT rate reduction from 10 to 7%.

**To address these and to improve revenue mobilization, the Government plans to implement some key measures** as follow (i) restoring the VAT rate to 10%, which would immediately and efficiently raise at least 1% of GDP in additional revenue; (ii) revising the Law on Investment Promotion to curb tax incentives and thus broaden the tax base; (iii) reforming excise tax structures and increase rates (particularly on beverages, tobacco, and fuel) to generate additional revenue while supporting health, environmental, and social outcomes; and (iv) strengthening tax administration and compliance risk management by focusing on the administration of large taxpayers.

## **2. Multi-stakeholder partnerships for effective management of difference sources of development finance**

**The management of different sources of development finance involves two main aspects.** The first aspect is the identification and acquisition of diverse funding streams in quantitative terms to support the realization of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP. This includes seeking out and securing financial resources from various donors, financial institutions, and investors to meet the requirements of development initiatives. In particular, greater attention is on quality investment ensuring that benefits are equally distributed across stakeholders through mutual accountability framework. This is crucial for promoting sustainable development and reducing inequality. A tool for this purpose is a centralized database to capture and monitor the financial resources mobilized from various sources which is currently unavailable. While the Official Development Assistance (ODA) database, known as ODAMIS (ODA Management Information System), has been established to record ODA figures, efforts have been made to include data on domestic and international private finance, as well as other financial flows. However, due to capacity constraints and the complexity of integrating this central database with different platforms for tracking other financial flows, the comprehensive overview of development finance for the country has not been systematically monitored and reported.

**The second aspect involves qualitative measures ensuring that all stakeholders work together to advance partnerships for effective development cooperation in Lao PDR.** To this end, the VDCAP monitoring framework’s aim is not to monitor development outcomes, but it places emphasis on behaviour change in development co-operation efforts, which is in turn expected to contribute to the achievement of results as defined in the national development agenda

The mid-term review of the VDCAP (2015-2025) was carried out in 2022 to reflect on the successes and challenges during the last five years (2015-2020) within the framework of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP in order to identify what need to be done for further enhancing effective development cooperation in the country in light of the implementation of the new national socio-economic development plan (9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2021-2025).

**Based on this mid-term review of the VDCAP, the Government together with stakeholders across the development finance landscape in the country has prioritized among priorities to support the realisation of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP including the LDC graduation and Sustainable Development Goals and beyond.** First, effective development finance requires inclusive partnerships. An enabling environment encourages the active involvement of diverse stakeholders, such as governments, civil society, private sector, and international organizations, in decision-making processes related to development finance. This inclusivity ensures that the needs and priorities of all groups are taken into account, leading to more impactful and sustainable development outcomes. Second, transparency and predictability in development finance are crucial for fostering trust and accountability. Efforts will be made to enhance transparency by providing clear, accessible information about the allocation and utilization of development funds. Predictability in financing allows for better planning and implementation of development projects, as the country can anticipate and rely on the availability of funds over time. Third, harmonization and simplification of various sources of development finance are essential for efficient resource utilization. By aligning national procedures and requirements associated with accessing and managing development finance, efforts will be made to streamline processes and reduce administrative burdens, ultimately contributing to more effective and sustainable development outcomes. Lao PDR adopted the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP Financing Strategy in 2023 through application of the Integrated National Financial Framework (INFF) has been helping the country in moving toward effective management of different sources of development finance in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

### **3. Debt sustainability**

**During the period of 2017 to 2022, the volume of public and publicly guaranteed debt in Lao PDR more than doubled, reaching 112% of GDP from 52%.** This is a critical level and the country is facing sovereign debt distress. The sharp increase was driven by a combination of factors, including rapid debt accumulation (e.g., on-lending and guarantees to state-owned enterprises, deficit financing, and bond issuances to settle domestic expenditure arrears), the impact of COVID-19, natural disasters, global inflation, and a significant depreciation of the Lao kip against the dollar. Relative to the size of the Lao PDR's economy and the sources of financing available, the outstanding stock of public debt and the debt service payments due in coming years are significantly high. With the high debt burden, limited revenue collection, limited financing options, and low level of foreign currency reserves, the country has been facing sovereign debt distress.

**This situation has been constraining fiscal space, exerting pressure on the exchange rate, and jeopardizing banking sector stability.** With the high public debt repayments, a great challenge for the Government is on how to ensure the fiscal space available for critical development expenditures (e.g., education, health, and infrastructure). A rapid exchange rate depreciation is another issue that will need to be addressed in due course as the demand for foreign exchange is significantly increased which has in turn aggravated the external debt burden. The Government has also been paying great attention to financial sector. In particular, the exposure of commercial banks to public debt will need to be carefully handled.

**With all of these key challenges, the Government has taken some important measures with a view to restore macroeconomic stability and to reduce public borrowing in the short-term, while also ensuring that today's debt load does not impact the country's medium- to long-term productive potential.** Currently, fiscal consolidation and the reform of major state-

owned enterprises have been introduced. Government spending on public services will need to be carefully assessed and major companies will face tightened financial reporting obligations intended to improve Ministry of Finance oversight, especially of their borrowing. Some state companies, including those in the areas of aviation, trade and fuel, are to be converted into joint ventures with partners that could come from the private sector or overseas. At the same time, the Government has been working with support from key partners to modernize tax collection and revenue information systems and to find other ways to improve revenue collection, potentially including new taxes on land, property and products with negative health, environmental or social consequences. E-filing and e-payment systems and an improved value-added tax system are being developed for businesses. The Government is also negotiating with creditors to further defer and restructure its debt. About \$1.2 billion in debt payments that were due to key creditors between 2020 and 2022 have been deferred, providing much-needed liquidity support. In addition, the Government, in recent years, discussed with practitioners and experts from across the world to share national and subnational public debt management best practices. As a result, a consensus was made to put greater effort for a comprehensive and coordinated whole-of-government approach to public debt management. More will be done in coming years to help the country to move toward comprehensive debt restructuring. Work is on the way on amendments to strengthen the 2018 Public Debt Management Law and the development of a medium-term debt management strategy.

## **7. Technology and research cooperation**

**Lao PDR is strategically leveraging its post-COVID-19 recovery as an opportunity to drive the integration and acceleration of digital within its society.** The focus on digital connectivity aligns with the country's broader development objectives and reflects a recognition of the transformative potential of digital technologies in various sectors. The integration of digital connectivity is expected to have a far-reaching impact, encompassing areas such as education, healthcare, governance, commerce, and overall socio-economic development. By embracing digital connectivity, Lao PDR aims to enhance access to quality education through e-learning platforms, improve healthcare services through telemedicine and digital health records, and promote e-governance to increase transparency and efficiency in public administration. Furthermore, the acceleration of digital connectivity is envisioned to drive economic growth and innovation by fostering a conducive environment for digital entrepreneurship, e-commerce, and the adoption of digital financial services. This strategic approach also seeks to bridge the digital divide, ensuring that the benefits of digital connectivity reach all segments of society, including rural and underserved communities as more and more populations across the country have engaged themselves with various types of technology and digital services. For instance, the percentage of the population registered as internet users through landline and wireless has increased from 30% in 2015 to 58% in 2022. The same pattern has emerged with the percentage of mobile phone users with internet access increasing from 21% in 2015 to 58% in 2022.

**In terms of research cooperation, in recent years, Lao PDR has made some progress particularly in areas such as public health, environmental conservation, and agriculture.** The country has actively engaged in partnerships with international organizations, research institutions, and non-governmental organizations to address various socio-economic and environmental challenges. Some notable progress in research cooperation in Lao PDR includes:

- **Public health:** Lao PDR has collaborated with international health organizations and research institutions to address public health challenges, including infectious diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, and tuberculosis. These partnerships have led to the development of strategies for disease prevention, surveillance systems, and healthcare delivery improvements.
- **Environmental conservation:** Research cooperation in Lao PDR has focused on biodiversity conservation, natural resource management, and sustainable development.

Collaborative efforts have led to the documentation of ecosystems, wildlife protection initiatives, and the implementation of sustainable land use practices.

- **Agricultural research:** International partnerships have contributed to the improvement of agricultural productivity, farming practices, and food security. Research collaborations have led to the development of new crop varieties, soil conservation methods, and water management techniques, benefiting local farmers and communities.
- **Educational research:** Lao PDR has engaged in research cooperation with international academic institutions to enhance educational methodologies, curriculum development, and policy research. These collaborations have contributed to capacity building and the improvement of the quality of education in the country.

**As of now, there is no comprehensive database or centralized record that catalogues all research papers produced in Lao PDR.** The Lao Ministry of Science and Technology has information on research papers and publications related to scientific and technological advancements in the country. The Ministry's record shows the decline of research papers over time. However, research institutions and universities in Lao PDR may maintain their own databases or repositories of research publications. The National University of Lao PDR (NUL), as the country's premier academic institution, may have a record of research papers produced by its faculty and researchers. International databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and Scopus may also contain research papers authored by researchers from Lao PDR or in collaboration with international partners. These databases can provide access to a wide range of research papers across various disciplines. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on promoting research and academic publications in Lao PDR, which may lead to the establishment of a more comprehensive system for tracking and cataloguing research papers in the future.

## 8. Trade

In the context of SDGs, the focus is on three key issues: a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization; exports of developing countries; and duty-free market access for LDCs.

In recent years, Lao PDR has been actively engaging with the World Trade Organization (WTO) to further integrate into the global economy and strengthen its trade relationships. Some key developments in recent years related to Lao PDR and the WTO include:

- **Implementation of WTO commitments:** As part of its accession to the WTO, Lao PDR made commitments to liberalize its trade regime, reduce tariffs, and undertake reforms to align its trade policies with WTO standards. In recent years, Lao PDR has been working to implement these commitments, including the reduction of tariffs on various goods and services.
- **Technical Assistance and Capacity Building:** Lao PDR has been receiving technical assistance and capacity-building support from the WTO and other international organizations to enhance its ability to participate effectively in the global trading system. This includes training programs, workshops, and seminars aimed at strengthening the country's trade-related institutions and building the skills of government officials involved in trade policy and regulation.
- **Trade Policy Review:** Lao PDR undergoes periodic trade policy reviews by the WTO, which provide an opportunity for the country to present its trade policies and practices, as well as to receive feedback and recommendations from other WTO members. These reviews help Lao PDR to assess its trade-related challenges and opportunities and make necessary adjustments to its trade policies.
- **Trade Facilitation and Economic Integration:** Lao PDR has been working to improve trade facilitation measures and enhance its participation in regional and global value chains.

This includes efforts to streamline customs procedures, improve infrastructure, and harmonize trade regulations to reduce trade barriers and promote economic integration.

- **Dispute Settlement and Trade Negotiations:** Lao PDR has been building its capacity to engage in WTO dispute settlement mechanisms and participate in trade negotiations. This involves training officials in trade law and dispute resolution, as well as actively participating in negotiations on various trade-related issues at the WTO.
- **Trade digitalization to improve efficiency and effectiveness of trading across borders:** Lao PDR has made significant public investments in ICT facilities and automation but remain fragmented and piece meal-based, leading to an suboptimal utilization of these systems and redundancies.

**In terms of export growth in Lao PDR, the trend has been less than promising, with the data indicating a declining rate over time.** Lao exports have been facing several challenges that are impacting the country's ability to fully capitalize on its trade potential. One of the significant challenges is the limited diversification of Lao exports. The country's export base is heavily reliant on a few commodities, such as minerals, agricultural products, and hydropower. This narrow export base makes the country vulnerable to fluctuations in global commodity prices and demand, leading to less stable export growth. Infrastructure limitations also pose a significant obstacle to export growth. Inadequate transport networks, including roads and ports, can hinder the efficient movement of goods, adding to the cost and time required for exporting products. This can make Lao exports less competitive in the global market. Trade barriers and regulatory hurdles both domestically and internationally can also impede export growth. Non-tariff barriers, complex customs procedures, and differing regulatory standards in export destinations can create obstacles for Lao exporters, limiting their access to international markets. Furthermore, external factors such as global economic uncertainties, trade tensions, and geopolitical developments can impact Lao exports. Fluctuations in global demand, changes in trade policies of major trading partners, and disruptions in international supply chains can all affect the country's export performance. To address these challenges and improve export growth, the Government in recent years focuses its efforts on diversifying its export base, investing in infrastructure development, streamlining trade procedures, and enhancing market access through trade agreements and diplomatic efforts. Additionally, efforts to add value to its exports through processing and manufacturing activities can help increase the competitiveness of Lao products in the global market.

**Lao PDR currently benefits from duty-free market access through various trade agreements and preferential trade with several countries and trading blocs which will be affected by LDC graduation.** However, some mitigation measures have been highlighted in the Smooth Transition Strategy for the LDC graduation adopted by the Government in 2023. Some of the key arrangements that provide duty-free market access for Lao PDR include:

- **ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA):** As a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Lao PDR is part of the AFTA, which aims to promote regional economic integration and trade liberalization. Under AFTA, member countries, including Lao PDR, have reduced or eliminated tariffs on a wide range of goods traded within the region, providing duty-free access for qualifying products.
- **Generalized System of Preferences (GSP):** Many developed countries offer GSP programs that provide duty-free or preferential access to their markets for products originating from eligible developing countries, including Lao PDR. GSP schemes are designed to support the economic development of beneficiary countries by facilitating their exports through reduced tariff barriers.
- **Everything But Arms (EBA) Initiative:** The European Union's EBA initiative grants duty-free and quota-free access to the EU market for all products, except arms and ammunition, from the world's least developed countries (LDCs), including Lao PDR. This preferential

trade arrangement aims to promote the economic development and integration of LDCs into the global trading system.

- **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP):** As a signatory to the RCEP, Lao PDR stands to benefit from enhanced market access and reduced tariff barriers within the Asia-Pacific region. The agreement, which includes 15 Asia-Pacific countries, aims to deepen economic integration and promote trade and investment flows among member states.

**Duty-free market access under these trade arrangements enables Lao PDR to enhance its export competitiveness, expand market opportunities, and attract foreign investment.**

However, to fully capitalize on these preferential trade terms, Lao exporters must comply with the rules of origin, meet quality and standards requirements, and leverage these trade preferences to diversify their export base and maximize their trade potential. Additionally, continued efforts to improve trade facilitation, strengthen institutional capacity, and enhance the business environment will further support Lao PDR in leveraging duty-free market access for its economic development and trade expansion.

## **9. National statistical availability and capacity**

**In recent years, there have been efforts to improve the national statistical availability in the country.** The Lao Statistics Bureau has been working to enhance data collection, compilation, and dissemination processes to provide more accurate and timely statistics for decision-making and policy formulation. One significant development is the modernization of data collection methods. The Lao Statistics Bureau has been implementing new technologies and methodologies to improve the efficiency and accuracy of data collection, such as adopting electronic data collection tools and utilizing geospatial technology for better mapping and data visualization. Furthermore, there have been initiatives to strengthen the capacity of statisticians and data collectors through training programs and partnerships with international organizations and development partners. This has contributed to enhancing the skills and knowledge of personnel involved in statistical data collection and analysis. Efforts have also been made to enhance the accessibility of statistical information. The Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB) has been working to improve the dissemination of statistical data through its website and other digital platforms, making it easier for the public, researchers, and policymakers to access and utilize the information. However, challenges remain, including the need to address data quality, coverage, and timeliness, particularly in remote and rural areas. There is also ongoing work to ensure the transparency and reliability of statistical data, as well as to strengthen coordination among different agencies and organizations involved in data collection and analysis.

**Currently, Lao PDR's Statistical Capacity Index is 62.2 against a global average of 74.4.<sup>10</sup>**

With Lao PDR's Statistical Capacity Index at 62.2, it indicates the country's statistics are relatively lower compared to the global average of 74.4. This lower score indicates potential limitations in the availability and quality of statistical data, which is crucial for informed decision-making, policy formulation, and monitoring of social and economic development. Therefore, the implementation of the Strategy for the Sustainable Development of the National Statistical System 2016 – 2025 and the Vision by 2030 represents a strategic response to this challenge.

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<sup>10</sup> Statistical Capacity Index numbers shown on a scale of 0-100. 0 = Low level of resources, 100 = High level of resources.

## 2.4 Education

To achieve the SDGs, Lao PDR needs to significantly increase its investment in education, particularly in terms of allocating a higher percentage of its GDP to the sector. Among various key priorities, this investment will focus on improving **the quality of education, enhancing access to education for groups in marginalised situation, and developing the skills needed for the modern economy.**

### SDG 4: Quality Education

Investment in education is directly linked to SDG 4, which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". Lao PDR has made significant progress in expanding access to basic education, but improving the quality of education remains a challenge. Sustained investment in **early childhood education, primary education, and teacher development** is crucial to enhance learning outcomes and equip students with the necessary skills.

### Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth

Research shows that investing in quality education increases individual earnings by up to 10% for each additional year of schooling. It also leads to poverty reduction, with 9% lower poverty rates for each additional year of education among young adults. Moreover, each additional year of schooling raises average annual GDP by 0.4%. By investing in education, Lao PDR can boost its economy, reduce poverty, and achieve SDGs 1 (No Poverty) and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

### Health and Well-Being

Education plays a vital role in promoting good health and well-being (SDG 3). Educated individuals are more likely to make informed decisions about their health, access healthcare services, and adopt healthy behaviours. Investment in education, particularly in areas like sexual and reproductive health education, can contribute to better health outcomes for individuals and communities.

### Gender Equality

Investing in girls' education is crucial for achieving SDG 5 (Gender Equality). Providing equal educational opportunities for girls and women empowers them, enhances their skills, and increases their participation in the workforce and decision-making processes. Education also helps break the cycle of child marriage and early pregnancy, which disproportionately affect girls in Laos.

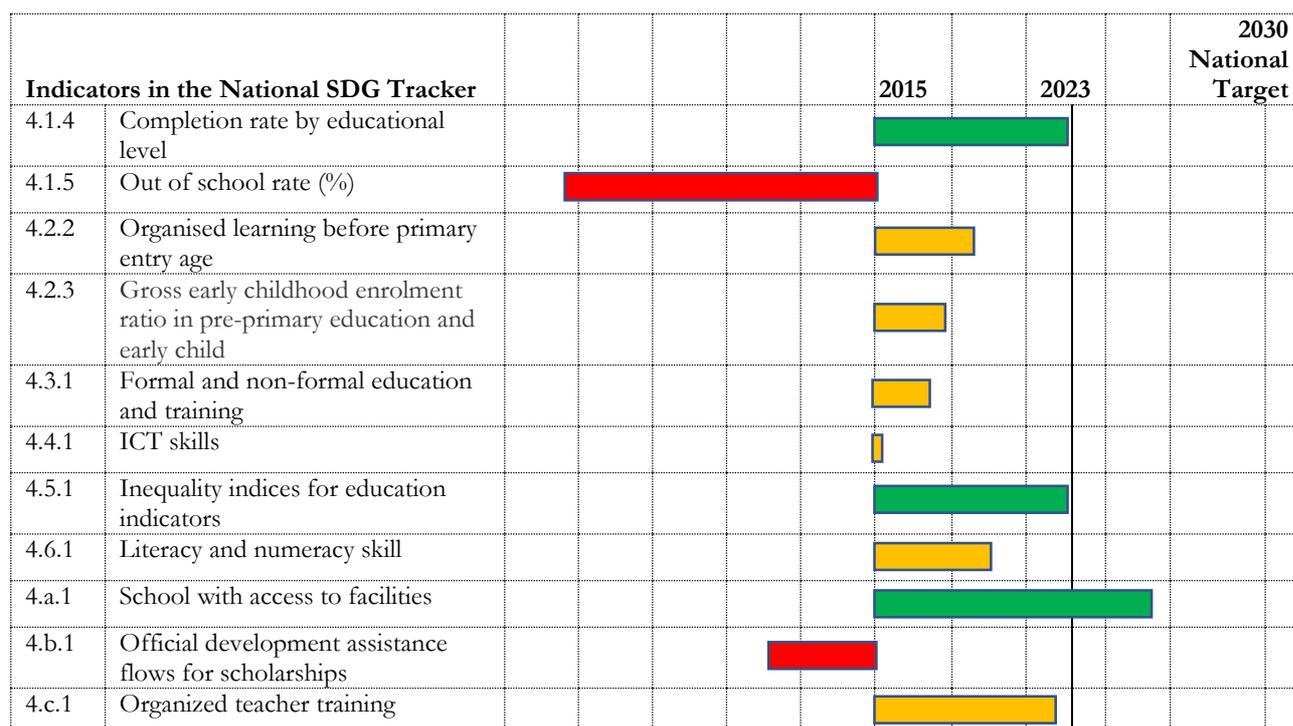
### Environmental Sustainability

Education is essential for promoting environmental awareness, sustainable practices, and climate action (SDG 13). By investing in environmental education and incorporating sustainability concepts into the curriculum, Laos can foster a generation of environmentally conscious citizens who can contribute to the protection and sustainable management of natural resources (SDG 15).

## **SDG 4 – Quality Education**

**(Infographic to be added)**

**Figure 11 - Progress toward national targets - SDG 4 (Quality Education)**



Source: UNESCAP – Lao National SDG Tracker

(<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/unescap.statistics.division/viz/SDG-LAO-2024/Story>)

Note: Progress is only based on two-points data which are included in the Lao National SDG tracker

### 1. Effective learning outcomes

**In Lao PDR, two key areas with sufficient data to show progress toward effective learning outcomes are completion by educational level and the out-of-school rate.** Firstly, the completion rate by educational level shows promising progress and is on track to meet the 2030 targets. This indicates that a significant number of students are successfully completing their education at various levels, which is a positive indicator of the effectiveness of the education system. This progress suggests that efforts to improve access to and quality of education in Lao PDR have been successful, and if sustained, the country is likely to achieve its educational attainment targets by 2030. It is vital to highlight that while the access to education has been improved over time, the quality education, particularly, primary education, needs greater attention with issues such as inadequate teacher training, outdated curricula, and limited resources. Primary education

**However, the second area that needs urgent attention is the out-of-school rate, which is showing a backward trend.** The data indicates that a significant number of children and adolescents are not enrolled in school, which is a concerning issue for the country's education system. The increasing out-of-school rate suggests that there are barriers preventing children from accessing education, such as poverty, geographical isolation, cultural factors, or lack of appropriate infrastructure and resources. In particular, the impact of inflation and kip depreciation on education is a significant concern. The regression in the right to access education can have long-term consequences for individuals and society as a whole. It is essential that the Government will put greater efforts to work with partners to address this issue and ensure that all individuals have access to quality education, regardless of their economic circumstances. Another concern is on out-of-school adolescents. From LSIS II (2028) and III (2023), there is an overall increased trend in OOS adolescents with a 19.9% increase in upper secondary level, 12.5% increase in lower secondary level and 3.4% increase in primary level. This trend is particularly alarming because it indicates that the country is not on track to achieve its learning outcome objectives, as outlined in the 2030 targets. To

address this challenge, urgent interventions are needed to identify and address the root causes of the increasing out-of-school rate. This could involve targeted policies and programs to improve access to education for groups in vulnerable situations, including rural communities, girls, children with disabilities, and ethnic groups. Additionally, efforts are required to ensure that the quality of education is maintained and schools provide a conducive learning environment for all students regardless of their backgrounds and status.

**Effective learning outcomes in Lao PDR can be achieved through a combination of factors.** Some key action areas that have been priorities through consultation with youth across the country are:

- **Reviewing laws and regulations across all sectors** by focusing on youth contributions and their benefits to create a supportive environment and platform for young people to participate in the policy making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Particularly, it is important to ensure multi-stakeholder engagement and systematic multi-sector approach to youth development and inclusive education for all.
- **Expediting digitalization for youth and comprehensively address multifaceted challenges such as school dropout, youth unemployment, clean energy, food systems and agriculture, and natural resource management** by utilization of technology and engaging the private sector through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP). By leveraging technology, such as e-learning platforms, digital skills training, and access to digital tools, we can empower young people with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in a rapidly evolving digital world. Furthermore, collaborating with the private sector through PPP can bring in resources and innovative solutions to support digitization efforts across various sectors. This collaboration can involve private providing mentorship, internships, and jobs for young individuals as well as investing in digital infrastructure for educational institutions and vocational training programs.
- **Focusing on social behaviour** by bringing in speakers or champions to inspire and educate young people. These speakers can serve models and provide career guidance, thereby contributing to the personal and professional development of the youth.
- **Establishing counselling centers** which can be a valuable resource for addressing the needs of individuals of the youth. Services could include: Counselling Services (mental health and sexual reproductive health issues, life challenges, and personal development, individual and group therapy, as well as specialized programs for specific needs such as addiction recovery, trauma support, and family counselling etc); Health Education and Wellness Programs; Mental Well-being Support; Soft Skills Training; Lifelong Learning Opportunities; and Community Engagement and Support.
- **Reviewing and adjusting the education curriculum** to be more practical, not just theoretical. Compulsory subjects and electives should be introduced to not only tertiary education but also secondary and high schools. This will allow lead time for kids to develop their interests in various different subjects which help prepare them for further education and what kind of potential employment that they would like to pursue.
- **Creating a more enriching and supportive environment for students in all backgrounds** to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally by focusing on raising awareness, promoting knowledge sharing, facilitating communication and interaction, and involving parents in the education system.
- **Reviewing and integrating existing technology in a creative, user-friendly, and appealing way to attract users, especially young people.** While government agencies develop and authorize online platforms, they often fail to reach and engage the youth, and

- **Enhancing and providing facilities** such as the school restaurants, classroom amenities, accommodation, and transportation for all students. This will increase accessibility, attract more enrolments, and prevent school dropouts.

**Addressing school dropouts in Lao PDR requires a comprehensive approach that tackles the root causes of the issue.** Based on key recommendations from youth consultation, some key priorities that youth propose include:

- **Community Engagement:** Engage with local communities to understand the reasons for school dropouts. This can involve working with parents, community leaders, and local organizations to address cultural, economic, and social barriers to education.
- **Access to Education:** Improve access to education by building more schools, especially in rural and remote areas. Additionally, providing transportation support for students living far from schools can help improve attendance rates. Other aspects of access to education will be prioritised. In particular, financial affordability is critical given the current fiscal/economic circumstance in Lao PDR. This may involve providing financial assistance to families, such as scholarships, subsidies, or conditional cash transfers, to help cover the costs of education. A proper mechanism will need to be in place to ensure how this can practically be done in an equitable manner.
- **Poverty Alleviation:** Implement programs to alleviate poverty, such as providing financial assistance, school meals, and scholarships to economically disadvantaged families. This can help ensure that financial constraints do not prevent children from attending school.
- **Quality of Education:** Enhance the quality of education by improving teaching standards, curriculum relevance, continuous professional development for teachers and the availability of educational resources. This can make the learning experience more engaging and valuable for students, reducing the likelihood of dropping out.
- **Support for At-Risk Students:** Identify at-risk students and provide targeted support, such as mentoring, tutoring, and counselling services. This can help address personal, academic, or behavioural issues that may lead to dropping out.
- **Parental Involvement:** Encourage parental involvement in their children's education through awareness programs, workshops, and parent-teacher associations. Engaged parents can provide better support for their children's education and encourage them to stay in school.
- **Vocational Training and Skill Development:** Provide alternative education pathways, such as vocational training and skill development programs, for students who may not thrive in traditional academic settings. This can provide opportunities for future employment and reduce the stigma associated with dropping out. Expand in and out of school Comprehensive Sexuality Programme, creating additional skills development opportunities for young people.
- **Data Collection and Monitoring:** Establish a robust data collection and monitoring system to track dropout rates and identify trends. This can help in designing targeted interventions and evaluating the effectiveness of programs aimed at reducing dropout rates.

## 2. Early childhood development

**Participation rate in organized learning has been increasing over time reaching 66.6% in 2023 (60.6% 2016).** Reaching the 90% target by 2030 is possible if critical steps are fully implemented as planned. However, more efforts are needed for gross early childhood enrolment ratio in pre-primary education and early child. The enrolment ratio in pre-primary education (less than 2 years old) is the concern as the ratio improved from 3.7% in 2012 to reach the highest of

5.23% in 2021. However, the ratio dropped to match the 2012 level in 2022. For students (3-4 years old), the trend shares the same situation with pre-primary school. To address these concerns, the Government of Lao PDR has taken several measures to promote early childhood development, recognizing the importance of investing in the well-being and future prospects of young children. Some of the actions taken by the Government include:

- **Policy Development:** The Government has developed policies and frameworks that prioritize early childhood development, aiming to create a supportive environment for children and their families. This includes the development of the National Plan of Action for Early Childhood Care and Development.
- **Expansion of Early Childhood Education:** Efforts have been made to expand access to early childhood education, including the establishment of preschools and childcare centers, particularly in underserved rural and remote areas.
- **Professional Development for Early Childhood Educators:** The Government has provided training and support for early childhood educators to enhance their skills in child development, curriculum planning, and creating nurturing learning environments.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** The Government has conducted public awareness campaigns to emphasize the importance of early childhood development, including the role of parents in providing a nurturing and stimulating environment for their young children.
- **Integration of Early Childhood Development into Health and Nutrition Programs:** Efforts have been made to integrate early childhood development components into healthcare services, nutrition programs, and early intervention services to promote children's physical, cognitive, and emotional development.
- **Collaboration with International Organizations:** The Government has collaborated with international organizations and development partners to leverage resources and expertise in promoting early childhood development initiatives.

### 3. TVET & tertiary education

**Participation rate of youth and adults in formal education, Non-formal education and training has declined from 38.5% in 2017 to 32.4% in 2022.** The participation rate for TVET was 6.2% in 2017 but the figure is not available for 2022. However, based on the labour force surveys 2017 and 2022, Lao PDR has witnessed a 25% increase in the number of workers with formal TVET qualifications in the labour force between 2011 and 2021. This shows the significance of TVET for the improvement of skills and employability of Lao workforce as articulated in the TVET Development Plan (2021-2025).

**The country has been working towards modernizing and expanding its TVET system to meet the demands of a rapidly changing economy and to address the skills gap in various sectors.** One key aspect of TVET development in Lao PDR is the expansion of vocational training programs to provide practical skills and knowledge that are in high demand in the labour market. This includes a focus on areas such as construction, agriculture, tourism, and information technology, among others. By equipping individuals with relevant technical skills, the Government aims to enhance their employability and contribute to the country's overall economic development. Furthermore, efforts have been made to improve the quality and relevance of TVET programs in Lao PDR. This includes aligning curricula with industry needs, enhancing the capacity of TVET instructors, and fostering partnerships with the private sector to ensure that training programs are responsive to the evolving needs of the labour market. Additionally, there has been a push to modernize TVET facilities and equipment to provide students with hands-on training that reflects real-world work environments. Another important aspect of TVET development in Lao PDR is the promotion of inclusive and equitable access to vocational training. This involves addressing

gender disparities in TVET participation, as well as expanding opportunities for populations in vulnerable situations to access quality technical education and skills training. The Government has also been working to strengthen the governance and management of the TVET system, including the development of relevant policies, regulations, and quality assurance mechanisms. This is aimed at ensuring that TVET institutions adhere to recognized standards and provide high-quality education and training.

**Lao PDR has also taking steps forward on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) which is a critical component of education that aims to empower young people with 21st-century skills and strengthen their agency, enabling them to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health and well-being.** CSE is a critical component of education in Lao PDR, particularly in the context of the country's development and rollout of a standalone comprehensive CSE curriculum. The development and rollout of a standalone comprehensive CSE curriculum is essential for ensuring that young people receive accurate and comprehensive information about their sexual and reproductive health and well-being.

**In addition, Lao Youth Union (LYU) and Lao Women Union (LWU) have been recently engaging in the vocational trainings for young people across gender groups in various parts of the country.** The involvement is at the early stage but evolving over time. Some of key features of these trainings b, designed to be sustainable, with a focus on long-term impact and self-sufficiency, rather than short-term gains, include:

- Vocational training focusing on skills development and employment opportunities.
- Gender equality by providing equal opportunities for young people of all genders to develop their skills and pursue their career aspirations.
- Youth empowerment designed to empower young people with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in their chosen careers, promoting their overall development and well-being.
- Employment opportunities helping young people to become self-sufficient and contribute to the country's economic growth.
- Community engagement engaging with local communities to identify the needs and priorities of young people, ensuring that the training programs are relevant and effective.
- Partnerships collaborating with other stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector companies, and international organizations, to provide training and support to young people.
- Curriculum development designed to be flexible and adaptable, allowing young people to choose from a range of courses and specializations that align with their interests and career goals.
- Inclusive approach designed to be inclusive, catering to the needs of young people with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

**In terms of tertiary education, Lao PDR has recognized the importance of reforming its tertiary education system to address the country's development needs and improve the quality of higher education.** Some key initiatives in the reform of tertiary education in Lao PDR include:

- **Quality Assurance and Accreditation:** Efforts have been made to establish a system of quality assurance and accreditation to ensure that higher education institutions meet national and international standards. This includes the development of criteria for program accreditation, institutional evaluation, and the establishment of quality assurance agencies to monitor and assess the performance of universities and colleges.

- **Curriculum Revision:** Tertiary education reform in Lao PDR has involved revising and updating the curriculum to ensure its relevance to the needs of the labor market and the country's development priorities. This includes integrating practical skills training, promoting critical thinking, and incorporating new and emerging fields of study to align with industry demands.
- **Strengthening Research and Innovation:** The Government has emphasized the importance of research and innovation in tertiary education. Efforts have been made to enhance research capacity, promote collaboration between academia and industry, and create incentives for faculty and to engage in research activities that contribute to national development goals.
- **Internationalization of Higher Education:** Lao PDR has sought to internationalize its higher education system by promoting partnerships with foreign universities, encouraging student and faculty exchanges, and adopting international best practices in teaching, learning, and research. The aim is to enhance the global competitiveness of Laotian universities and provide students with international exposure and perspectives.
- **Professional Development of Faculty:** Tertiary reform initiatives have focused on improving the qualifications and professional development of faculty members. This includes providing opportunities for advanced training, promoting continuous professional development, and supporting faculty research and publication activities.
- **Infrastructure and Technology Upgrades:** Investment in infrastructure and technology upgrades has been a priority in the reform of tertiary education in Lao PDR. This includes the modernization of facilities, improvement of ICT infrastructure, and the integration of technology into teaching and learning to enhance the overall educational experience.
- **Promoting public-private partnerships** to strengthen linkages between training and access to employment: This can lead to the development of innovative training programs and employment opportunities that cater to the needs of both employers and employees.

#### 4. ICT Skills for employment

**The development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills is crucial for enhancing employability and driving economic growth.** Within five years from 2017 to 2022, the percentage of youth (15-24) with ICT skills significantly decreased within five years. In 2017, only 7.3% of the female youth had ICT skills (11.6% for male). In 2023, percentages of female and male marginally decreased to 7.2% and 8.3%, respectively. Although the trend is slightly decreased over time, the Government has put greater efforts in implementing key initiatives to develop ICT skills for employment in the country. Some key initiatives include:

- **ICT education in schools:** The Government has been promoting the integration of ICT education into the national school curriculum to ensure that students are equipped with basic ICT skills from an early age. This includes teaching fundamental computer skills, digital literacy, and basic programming concepts.
- **Vocational training in ICT:** Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions have been offering specialized programs in ICT, providing students with practical skills in areas such as software development, network administration, and database management.
- **Industry partnerships:** Collaboration with private sector organizations and industry partners has been instrumental in developing ICT skills for employment. These partnerships often involve the design of training programs that are tailored to the specific needs of the industry ensuring that graduates are equipped with the skills demanded by employers.

- **ICT certification programs:** The promotion of industry-recognized certifications, such as those offered by technology vendors or professional organizations, has been encouraged to validate the skills of ICT professionals and increase their employability.
- **Entrepreneurship and innovation:** Efforts have been made to foster an entrepreneurial mindset and encourage innovation in the ICT sector. This includes providing training in technology entrepreneurship, start-up incubation programs, and support for tech-based start-ups and SMEs.
- **Digital literacy and awareness programs:** Initiatives to improve digital literacy among the general population have been implemented, aiming to ensure that people have the necessary skills to navigate the digital world and take advantage of employment opportunities in the digital economy.

## 5. Equal access to education

**Despite making significant progress towards achieving gender parity in education, Lao PDR still faces various challenges in ensuring equal access to education for all segments of the population.** While the female/male gender parity indices for gross enrolment in primary and secondary are close to reaching parity (0.97 (2021) and 0.95 (2021), respectively), there are a number of issues that hinder equal access to education in the country (Gender Parity Index (GPI) for upper secondary schools (0.8 (2021)) is still far behind but improving and the parity has widened among non-Lao Tai ethnic groups). One of the primary challenges is the availability and quality of education, particularly in rural and remote areas. In Lao PDR, the distribution of educational resources and infrastructure is often uneven, with urban areas benefiting from better-equipped schools and more qualified teachers. This disparity in resources can limit the educational opportunities for children in rural and remote areas, affecting both girls and boys and contributing to an overall lack of equal access to education. Additionally, socioeconomic factors play a significant role in hindering equal access to education in Lao PDR. Children from lower-income families, ethnic groups, and communities in vulnerable situations often face barriers to attending school, including the cost of schooling, lack of access to transportation, and the need to contribute to family income through labour. These challenges disproportionately affect segments of the population, leading to unequal educational opportunities and outcomes. Furthermore, the quality of education in Lao PDR remains a concern, as it impacts the overall effectiveness of the education system. Issues such as teacher shortages, inadequate training, and limited access to learning materials can affect the quality of education provided, ultimately impacting the learning outcomes for students, regardless of their socioeconomic background or location.

**To address these challenges and ensure equal access to education for all, the Government has prioritised its actions on addressing the disparities in educational resources and infrastructure between urban and rural areas.** More efforts have been made to improve the quality of education, provide targeted support for communities in vulnerable situations and address socioeconomic barriers to schooling are also crucial. Additionally, the Government has prioritised its resource allocation for investing in teacher training and professional development (percentage of trained teachers in primary school is 97.5% in 2022), as well as promoting inclusive and culturally relevant curricula. Some key action areas that have been making visible progress in recent years include:

- **Expansion of educational facilities:** The Government has prioritized the construction and renovation of schools in remote areas, aiming to improve access to education for children living in these communities. This includes building new schools, expanding existing facilities, and providing essential resources such as classrooms, furniture, and materials.
- **Teacher deployment and support:** Efforts have been made to deploy and support teachers in rural and remote areas to address shortages and ensure that students have access to qualified educators. This may involve providing incentives for teachers to work in rural

schools, offering training and professional development opportunities, and addressing logistical challenges related to teacher deployment. Teachers training on CSE content should be accelerated to inculcate basic life skills among adolescents.

- **Infrastructure development:** The Government has invested in improving infrastructure in rural and remote areas, including road networks, transportation systems, and student villages in rural areas. These efforts aim to facilitate access to schools and educational resources for children living in rural and remote areas, reducing barriers to attendance and improving overall educational opportunities.
- **Community engagement and empowerment:** The Government has worked to engage local communities in the development and management of initiatives, empowering them to take an active role in improving educational access and quality. This may involve collaborating with community leaders, parents, and local stakeholders to identify and address specific challenges related to educational resources and infrastructure.
- **Targeted financial support:** The Government has allocated resources and funding to support educational initiatives in rural and remote areas, aiming to reduce financial barriers to access and improve the overall quality of education. This may include providing scholarships, subsidies for school-related expenses, and financial incentives for families to prioritize their children's education.

## 6. Adult literacy & numeracy

**There has been a significant improvement in adult literacy in Lao PDR.** The literacy rate for 2022 reached 88%, marking a 3.3% increase from 2015. The rise in the overall literacy rate reflects the efforts made to enhance educational opportunities and accessibility. **However, disparities between male and female literacy rates remain considerable, with a gap of approximately 9% (92% for males and 83% for females).** This is a clear disparity that needs to be addressed. This gap may be due to various factors, including cultural norms, socioeconomic inequalities, and limited access to education for women and girls. To address this issue, the Government has implemented targeted initiatives aimed promoting gender equality in education. This involves measures such as providing scholarships and financial support specifically for girls, creating safe and inclusive learning environments, and challenging traditional gender roles that may hinder female access to education. Additionally, more efforts have been made to empower women and promote their active participation in decision-making processes which can contribute to narrowing the gender literacy gap.

**Another concern, despite the overall progress, is a high rate of adult illiteracy, particularly in rural and remote areas.** A number of adults, especially women and those from ethnic groups, lacked basic literacy and numeracy skills, which limited their opportunities for employment, participation in community development, and engagement in social and political activities. However, in recent years, there has been a concerted effort by the Government with support from various partners to improve adult literacy in rural and remote areas. **Some of the key developments and initiatives include:**

- **Literacy programs:** The Government has implemented adult literacy programs, including the Non-Formal Education (NFE) program, which aims to provide basic education to adults who missed out on formal schooling. These programs offer flexible learning opportunities, including evening classes and community-based education, to accommodate the needs of adult learners.
- **Community-based initiatives:** Non-governmental organizations and community-based groups have been actively involved in promoting adult literacy and numeracy at the local level. These initiatives often focus on empowering women and groups in vulnerable situations through literacy and numeracy training, as well as promoting community development.

- **Improved access to educational resources:** Efforts have been made to increase access to educational materials and resources for adult learners, including the development of localized learning materials in different languages and the provision of learning aids to support adult literacy and numeracy programs.
- **Integration of literacy into development projects:** Literacy and numeracy training have been integrated into various development projects, such as agricultural and vocational training programs, to enhance the practical relevance of adult education and improve livelihood opportunities for participants.

**As a result of these efforts, there has been a noticeable improvement in adult literacy and numeracy rates in Lao PDR.** While specific data may vary, there has been an increase in the number of adults acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills, particularly in rural and communities in a vulnerable situation. These improvements have had positive impacts on the socio-economic well-being of individuals and communities, contributing to poverty reduction and social inclusion. Despite these advancements, challenges persist, particularly in reaching remote and isolated populations, producing teaching and learning materials needed to support students from various ethnic groups learning Lao, addressing gender disparities, and sustaining adult education programs. Continued investment in adult literacy and numeracy, along with a focus on inclusive and community-driven approaches, will be essential to further improve the educational outcomes for adults in Lao PDR

## 7. Education facilities

**The Government has been paying great attention to ensure that majority schools have adequate education facilities across the country.** Percentage of schools with access to electricity has on the rise increasing from 37.3% in 2016 to 62.6% in 2023. Percentage of schools with access to sanitation facilities increased from 54.1% in 2020 to 76.3% in 2023.

**In 2022, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) launched the Lao PDR Education and Sports Management Information System (LESMIS)** as a digital platform that will provide access to all key education data in Lao PDR in an integrated manner to help inform policies to improve learning outcomes among Lao children. LESMIS will act as a centralized data management platform providing instantaneous access to all key education data, which has become especially important in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Prior to the development of LESMIS, the MoES was using multiple data management systems run by different education departments, which made it difficult for data to be used to its full potential and occasionally led to an overlap in data requests right down to the district and school level.** LESMIS will help address this challenge and will also be accessible online and as an application from the central level down to schools. LESMIS is designed to provide a fully coherent management information system for the entire education sector and as such, is a game changer for education data management in Lao PDR.

**It is important to acknowledge that the LESMIS will continue to grow and that there are still additional education information systems to be added to the platform.** In particular, there is a need to have a centralized and systematic data collection in LESMIS to assess the availability of essential resources and infrastructure in schools. These resources include access to electricity, internet for educational purposes, computers, adequate sanitation facilities such as toilets, handwashing facilities, adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities, and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) facilities meeting national standards. The absence of a centralized and systematic approach to data collection on these crucial aspects means that there is a limited understanding of the current infrastructure and resources in schools across the country. This information gap hinders the ability to effectively plan and implement targeted interventions to address any shortcomings and improve the learning environment for students. Centralized and systematic data collection is essential for understanding the disparities in resource availability

between different regions and types of schools, as well as for identifying areas where interventions are most urgently needed. Additionally, it enables the Government and relevant to allocate resources more effectively and make informed policy decisions based on the specific needs of schools. Without comprehensive data on the availability of electricity, internet access, computers, sanitation facilities, and resources for students with disabilities, it is challenging to address the disparities and ensure that all schools provide a safe and conducive learning environment for students. Therefore, the establishment of a centralized and systematic data collection mechanism is crucial to inform evidence-based policies and interventions aimed at improving educational infrastructure and resources in Lao PDR .

## 8. Scholarships

**The Government has priorities scholarships as crucial for supporting poor students in Lao PDR, particularly those from rural and remote areas.** These scholarships can help to bridge the gap in access to education and provide opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to pursue higher education. Therefore, scholarships/stipends for poor primary, secondary students, and TVET and Higher Education/university level will be the key focus in coming years. In particular, managing scholarships/stipends for poor students is a complex task, requiring careful planning, coordination, and execution. In addition, numerous students have been awarded scholarships to study abroad, covering a wide range of disciplines and academic fields. These scholarships are crucial for providing students with opportunities to access high-quality education and gain valuable skills and knowledge that can be beneficial for the country's development.

**However, there is a noticeable gap in effectively leveraging the expertise and experience of students who have received scholarships to study abroad and in the country for the purpose of contributing to Lao PDR' development and capacity-building.** One of the key reasons for this gap is the absence of comprehensive programs or initiatives that facilitate the integration of scholarship recipients into the country's workforce and development projects. Upon their return, these students often face challenges in finding suitable employment opportunities that allow them to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills. As a result, there is a risk of underutilizing the potential of these individuals and their capacity to contribute to the country's progress. Furthermore, there is a need for stronger coordination and collaboration between scholarship providers, educational institutions, and government agencies to ensure that returning scholars are effectively integrated into the country's development agenda. This could involve establishing mentorship programs, creating job placement initiatives, or facilitating partnerships between scholarship recipients and relevant organizations or industries. Additionally, the development of policies and strategies that specifically focus on harnessing the expertise of returning scholars is essential. These policies could include incentives for scholars to engage in research and innovation, support for entrepreneurial endeavours, or opportunities for them to contribute to policy development and implementation in their respective fields. Moreover, there is a need to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for scholarship programs to assess the impact of the knowledge and skills acquired by scholarship recipients and their subsequent contribution to the country's development. By doing so, it will be possible to identify gaps and areas for improvement in the utilization of returning scholars and to inform future strategies for maximizing their potential contributions.

## 9. Qualified teachers

**In Lao PDR, there has been significant progress in ensuring that a high percentage of teachers have completed a teacher-education program, with an average of around 98% currently meeting this criterion.** Several initiatives have been implemented to improve the quality of teachers and enhance the education system. Some of these initiatives include:

- **Teacher Training Programs:** The Government has focused on providing comprehensive training programs for teachers to enhance their pedagogical skills, subject knowledge, and

classroom management techniques. These programs aim to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools across the country.

- **Curriculum Development:** Efforts have been made to develop a modern and relevant curriculum that aligns with international standards and best practices. This includes updating teaching materials, textbooks, and educational resources to ensure that teachers have access to high-quality and up-to-date materials to support their teaching.
- **Professional Development Opportunities:** The Government has provided opportunities for teachers to engage in continuous professional development, workshops, and seminars to stay updated with the latest teaching methodologies and educational trends. This ongoing training helps teachers to improve their skills and stay current with best practices in education.
- **Recruitment and Retention Incentives:** although retention policy is still at the early stage of development, the Government has been putting greater efforts on attracting and retaining high-quality teachers by offering benefits, and career development opportunities. Incentives such as scholarships for further education, promotion pathways, and recognition for outstanding performance have been put in place to motivate teachers and improve retention rates. Special programs have been implemented to support volunteers' teachers working in remote and rural areas. This includes providing additional trainings, housing and living allowances, and career advancement. However, more need to be done in this area to ensure increased numbers of qualified teachers.

**The country has set a target to achieve 100% trained teachers by 2030, indicating a strong commitment to improving the education system. However, it is essential to recognize that merely having a high percentage of trained teachers does not automatically guarantee high-quality education.** The focus must shift towards ensuring that the quality of teacher training and the skills and competencies of teachers are of a high standard in order to truly enhance learning outcomes and address the rising issue of school dropouts. While the quantity of trained teachers is a positive indicator of investment in education, the quality of teacher training is crucial for effective classroom instruction. Quality teacher training should encompass not only subject knowledge but also pedagogical skills, classroom management techniques, and the ability to cater to diverse learning needs. It is imperative to provide ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers to continually enhance their skills and stay abreast of best practices in education. Furthermore, addressing the quality of teachers is essential for improving learning outcomes and reducing school dropout rates. Quality teachers can create a conducive and engaging learning environment, cater to the individual needs of students, and provide support to at-risk students, ultimately reducing the likelihood of dropout. Additionally, quality teachers can inspire and motivate students, fostering a love for learning and improving overall educational attainment. In order to achieve the goal of 100% trained teachers and simultaneously ensure high-quality teacher training, the Government and educational authorities will put greater efforts on investing in comprehensive teacher training programs, establish rigorous accreditation standards for teacher education institutions, and implement robust systems for monitoring and evaluating teacher performance. Additionally, initiatives to attract and retain high-quality teachers, such as competitive salaries, career advancement opportunities, and supportive working conditions, are essential for building a strong and motivated teaching workforce.

## **2.5 Jobs and social protection**

Three SDGs (SDG 5, SDG 8 and SDG 18) have been selected to be highlighted under this transition. However, by focusing on job creation, economic growth, and strengthening social protection systems, Laos can address poverty, improve health and education outcomes, and promote inclusive development, all of which are crucial for achieving all SDGs.

### **Jobs and Economic Growth**

Creating decent jobs and promoting economic growth are essential for reducing poverty (SDG 1) and achieving full and productive employment (SDG 8). By investing in job creation, skills development, and supporting entrepreneurship, Laos can boost its economy, provide income security, and improve living standards for its citizens.

### **Social Protection and Poverty Reduction**

Social protection plays a vital role in reducing poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion throughout the life cycle. Laos has developed a National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) that aims to provide basic social protection services, including health insurance, social security, and social welfare, to all Lao people in an equitable, adequate, effective, and sustainable manner by 2030. Strengthening social protection systems contributes directly to SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Since the last VNR, Lao PDR has made important policy and political commitments in social protection, including the design and implementation of the first largescale social assistance program and the development of a social registry. The social assistance program, named Helping Hand, started implementation in 2021 and it is a conditional cash transfer that targets pregnant women and children under two with the objective of promoting uptake of antenatal and nutrition services in four northern provinces of the country. The social registry has a nation-wide coverage and it was established to serve as a tool for inclusion and will support government programs and services to identify and reach poor and vulnerable individuals or households across the country.

### **Health and Well-Being**

Access to quality healthcare is a fundamental human right and a key component of social protection. The NSPS aims to strengthen health insurance schemes to ensure effective access to quality healthcare without financial hardship for all Lao people. This contributes to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 18 (Mine Action) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), as women and girls often face greater barriers in accessing healthcare services.

### **Education and Skills Development**

Social protection can also support education and skills development, which are crucial for achieving SDG 4 (Quality Education). The NSPS includes provisions for providing allowances to students from poor families and vulnerable groups, as well as supporting vocational training and skills development for the working-age population. Investing in human capital development enhances employability and contributes to economic growth.

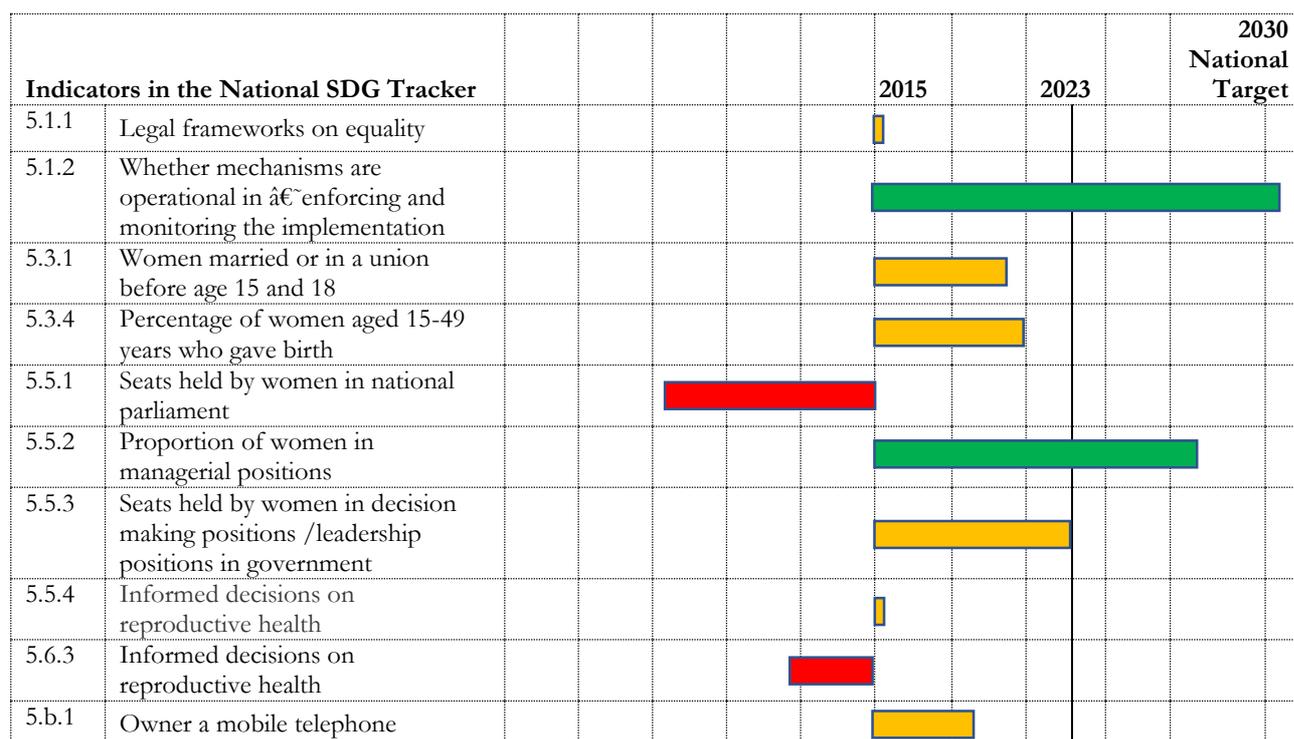
### **Partnerships and Means of Implementation**

Achieving the SDGs requires strong partnerships and effective means of implementation (SDG 17). Laos has recognized the importance of development partnerships and has outlined its plans in the Vientiane Declaration on Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (2016-2025). The government has also adopted the financial strategy to identify the most appropriate financial resources and how to tap into those resources for meeting the national development agenda including the SDG targets.

## **SDG 5 – Gender Equality**

**(Infographic to be added)**

**Figure 12 - Progress toward national targets - SDG 5 (Gender Equality)**



Source: UNESCAP – Lao National SDG Tracker

(<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/unescap.statistics.division/viz/SDG-LAO-2024/Story>)

Note: Progress is only based on two-points data which are included in the Lao National SDG tracker

### 1. Discrimination against women & girls

Lao PDR currently has three legal/regulatory frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex: 1) the Law on the Development and Protection of Women; 2) the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women and 3) the Law of Lao Women’s Union. In 2021, UN Women assessed the strength of the Government’s legal frameworks on gender equality and women empowerment in Lao PDR with score of 79.5%.<sup>11</sup> Some other related legal frameworks to promote the status and participation of Lao women in the socio-economic development of the country in recent years include:

- Law on Gender Equality, Law on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Children and Law on Anti-Trafficking in Persons
- Legislations that incorporated provisions of CEDAW such as the amended Constitution of the Lao PDR in 2015, specifically on Article 35 and Article 37, which define that all Lao citizens are equal before the law irrespective of their gender, social status, education, beliefs and ethnicity, and Lao citizens of both genders enjoy equal rights in the political, economic, cultural and social fields and in family affairs.
- Law on State Budget - Article 6 (11) on the principles of the State budget’s expenditure, stipulating that the expenditure of the State budget shall ensure gender equality. As such, the Government has instructed all Ministries and Ministries equivalent and provinces to have gender focal points working closely with Planning Departments across the Government at all levels. This area of work is still at the early stage and more need to be done to ensure greater linkage between national, sectoral and provincial planning and budgetary with taking gender equality into great consideration.

<sup>11</sup> The strength ranges from 0 (weak) -100% (strong) based on four criteria: 1)

- Health Care Law highlighting a duty of the Government to ensure that all citizens, societies and communities have access to equal, full, equitable and quality health care services in order to be able to effectively contribute to the protection and development of the country.
- PM's instruction to relevant ministries to formulate various directives, decrees and documents to concretize the contents of laws related to gender equality and disseminate the information vertically from the central to the local governments.

**In the past few years, there has been remarkable progress in developing legal frameworks and implementing various key interventions to promote women's rights.** The 10<sup>th</sup> CEDAW Report submitted to CEDAW in 2023 recognises the positive impacts and progress the Government's law reforms and policies have made on advancing women's rights, including mainstreaming CEDAW principles in many policy frameworks such as the 9<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan and the RMNCAH Strategy, as well as enshrining CEDAW in targeted laws and policy such as the National Plan of Action on Gender Equality. It also tracks progress of Lao PDR to afford rights to women and girls in all their diversity, address discriminatory stereotypes and gender roles, combat gender-based violence and human trafficking, and promote women's participation in political and public life as well as equal access to education, healthcare, employment, social and economic benefits, and family life of women and girls.

**However, the implementation of these laws is not yet effective, particularly in remote areas where resources for raising awareness and capacity building are limited.** Additionally, technical legal terms may not be translated correctly into dialects spoken by ethnic groups with low proficiency in the Lao language. Therefore, the Government has taken some key initiatives to address the root causes of gender inequality and promotes empowerment and equal opportunities.

- **Education and awareness:** Promote education and awareness programs that challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes. This can include school-based programs, community workshops, and media campaigns to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.
- **Access to education:** Ensure that girls have equal access to education and vocational training. This can involve building and improving schools in rural areas, providing scholarships for girls, and addressing cultural barriers to girls' education.
- **Economic empowerment:** Support programs that provide women with access to economic opportunities, including entrepreneurship training, microfinance, and access to markets for their products.
- **Healthcare and reproductive Rights:** Ensure that women and girls have access to quality healthcare services, including reproductive health care and family planning, to support their well-being and autonomy.
- **Political participation:** Encourage and support women's involvement in political leadership and decision-making at all levels of government.
- **Support for victims of discrimination:** Provide support services for women and girls who have experienced discrimination, including legal aid, counseling, and shelters for survivors of gender-based violence.
- **Engage men and boys:** Promote the involvement of men and boys in the fight for gender equality, challenging harmful attitudes and behaviours that contribute to discrimination against women and girls.
- **Strengthening institutions:** Work with line ministries (at central and provincial levels), civil society organizations, and community leaders to strengthen institutions that promote gender equality and enforce laws protecting women's rights.

**The List of Issues has recently been published by the CEDAW Committee, to which Lao PDR is scheduled to respond to in September- October 2024.** The List of Issues recognises the remaining challenges to be addressed, including information on measures taken to strengthen justice and GBV, access to sexual and reproductive health, combating early marriage, GBV and trafficking, and ensure gender parity in employment, education, and decision-making positions. Therefore, the following sections highlight key progresses and measures paving the way for the Government's response to CEDAW toward the last quarter of 2024.

## **2. Violence against women & girls**

**Gender-based violence is a pervasive issue in Lao PDR that the Government has identified as a priority for action.** Despite its prevalence, many cases of gender-based violence in the country go unreported. This indicates a significant gap in addressing and preventing such incidents, and highlights the need for increased awareness, support, and effective measures to address domestic violence within the country.

**Since the country's first-ever national survey on violence against women - the first Lao National Survey on Women's Health and Life Experiences in 2014** based on nearly 3,000 interviews with women across the country, the Lao Government places great importance on concrete actions on addressing violence against women and challenging negative attitudes and beliefs that are used to justify such violence:

- Enforcement of Law on Preventing and Combating of Violence Against Women and Children
- Integration of survey on attitude towards domestic violence against women into LSIS. The results from LSIS 2016/2017 showed that a significant percentage of women and men believed that domestic violence was justified, with 29.5% of women and 16.2% of men feeling that it was acceptable for husbands to hit or beat their wives. However, the situation has improved significantly since then, with only 12.5% of women and 10.6% of men believing that a husband is justified in beating his wife in various circumstances in 2023. This significant decrease in the percentage of people who believe that domestic violence is justified is a positive trend and indicates that societal attitudes towards domestic violence are changing for the better. The results also show that there has been a significant transformation in attitudes towards domestic violence in Lao PDR over the past decade, with a decrease from over 58% of women and 49.1% of men believing that husbands were justified in perpetrating physical violence against their spouse in 2011-2012 to the current levels. Therefore, the integration of this survey into LSIS will provide valuable insights into the attitudes and beliefs of the population towards domestic violence and will help to identify areas where further intervention and education are needed.
- Putting in place implementation arrangements for the National Plan of Action on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Women and Violence Against Children; the National Plan on Elimination of Child Labour; Vision for Development of Lao Women 2030, Strategic Development Plan for Lao Women 2025 and the Five-Year Lao Women's Development Plan (2021-2025)
- Appropriate protection and responses have also been in place. 16 offices for Counselling and Protection of Women and Children across 16 provinces and 1 in Vientiane Capital have been operationalized to provide psychological, legal, and health counselling for women and children who are victims of physical, sexual and other forms of violence. The Centre also provides temporary shelter, telephone hotline and subsistence for victims, facilitates legal actions against abusers, provides short-term skills training, and refers cases for further management and rehabilitation to appropriate institutions. Ministry of Justice has also been setting up 14 legal aid offices across 8 provinces to provide access to justice to the citizens free of charge.

- The Government of Lao PDR has recognized that promoting primary prevention is a crucial strategy in reducing violence against women. This approach involves addressing the root causes of violence and aiming to prevent it from occurring in the first place. One of the primary methods for achieving this is through awareness raising, which involves educating the public and engaging male village elders in the communities to be as change agents for prevention of violence against women and girls.

**In term of child protection, the Government of Lao PDR gives priority to child protection by assigning the Ministry of Justice to revise and amend the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children to ensure that Lao children are protected, especially protection children from all forms of violence.** The historic ban on corporal punishment across Lao PDR was announced at an event on International Day to End Corporal Punishment of Children in April 2024. The ban makes Lao PDR the 66<sup>th</sup> state worldwide and the first in ASEAN to fully protect children from all forms of violent punishment.

**Lao PDR has curbed violence against children through enhanced coordination and preventive and responsive measures in homes, schools, online spaces, and communities.** The 2023 Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS III) highlights a decrease in violent discipline, with the percentage of children aged 1-14 experiencing physical punishment dropping from 77% to 62%. Additionally, the amended Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children was enacted in August 2023 and implemented in December, underscoring Lao PDR's commitment to align with the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action for the Elimination of Violence Against Children 2016-2025.

### 3. Early marriage

**Another critical concern is forced marriage. 30.4% of young women aged 20-24 (2022 – the rate is declining from 35.4% in 2012) were married before age 18.** Although Lao family laws prohibit marriage of children under the age of 18, one in every three Lao girls are married before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and one out of fifteen are married before the age of 15. Data suggests that these practices are more prevalent in certain ethnic groups. Higher rate of early marriage contributes to a higher adolescent birth rate of 89 births per 1,000 girls 15-19 years, which is the highest in the South-East Asia region.

**One specific initiative to address early marriage in Lao PDR is the "Let's Act Together to End Early and Forced Marriage" program,** which focuses on a multi-sectoral approach to create sustainable and lasting change to end early and forced marriage in the country. Some of key initiatives include:

- **Comprehensive sexuality Education:** The program promotes comprehensive sexuality education in schools to raise awareness about the negative impact of early and forced marriage on girls' health, education, and overall well-being. It aims to empower young girls with knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their reproductive health and rights.
- **Community engagement:** The initiative works closely with community leaders, parents, and local influencers to change social norms and attitudes towards early marriage. This involves organizing community dialogues, workshops, and awareness campaigns to foster discussions on the importance of delaying marriage and supporting girls' education.
- **Economic empowerment:** The program provides vocational training and income-generating opportunities for young women to enhance their economic independence. By increasing their economic prospects, the initiative aims to reduce the financial pressures that often lead to early marriage.
- **Access to health services:** The initiative focuses on improving access to sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning and maternal health care, for young

girls and women. This includes training healthcare providers and community health workers to deliver youth-friendly services.

- **Data and research:** The program also emphasizes the importance of data collection and research to better understand the prevalence and drivers of early marriage in different communities. This evidence-based approach helps tailor interventions to specific needs and challenges.

#### 4. Unpaid care and domestic work

**Percentage of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work stands at 46.2% (female: 48.9% and male: 37.2%) based on the latest LECS (2018). There is a clear gender disparity when it comes to unpaid care and domestic work.** Girls are typically expected to take on more household chores and caregiving responsibilities compared to boys. This unequal distribution of responsibilities has a significant impact on the lives of both boys and girls. Girls in Lao PDR are often expected to help with cooking, cleaning, caring for younger siblings, and other household tasks from a young age. This can limit their opportunities for education, as they may have less time for schoolwork and extracurricular activities. Additionally, the burden of unpaid care work can hinder girls' ability to pursue higher education or employment opportunities, perpetuating gender inequalities and limiting their economic empowerment.

**On the other hand, boys in Lao PDR are generally not expected to participate as much in unpaid care and domestic work.** This can perpetuate traditional gender norms and expectations, reinforcing the idea that caregiving and household responsibilities are primarily the domain of women and girls. As a result, boys may miss out on developing important life skills related to caregiving and household management, and may carry these gendered expectations into their adult lives. Efforts to address this imbalance in unpaid care and domestic work in Lao PDR include initiatives that promote gender equality and challenge traditional gender roles. These efforts seek to encourage boys and men to take on a more active role in household tasks and caregiving responsibilities, while also supporting girls and women in balancing their care work with education and employment opportunities. Ultimately, promoting equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work between boys and girls is crucial for achieving gender equality in Lao PDR and creating a more equitable society. This requires challenging traditional gender norms and promoting the value of caregiving and household responsibilities for both boys and girls.

#### 5. Women in leadership

**Women leadership, although at par and even surpassing averages in neighbouring countries, is still distant from gender equity.** More than a fifth of posts in parliament are held by women, and even a bigger share is held by women in provinces. Between 20% to 30% of leadership positions across the Government bureaucracy (i.e. deputy division chiefs, division chiefs, deputy director-general, director-general) are also held by women. At village chief level, the percentage has been on the rise moving from 2.7% (2016) to 13.9% (2023).

Although women's representation in leadership positions has been relatively low, particularly in the political sphere, **there have been efforts to promote gender equality and increase women's participation in decision-making roles** by focussing on:

- Increasing the proportion of LWU members who are educated in political theory, constitutions, laws, treaties, international agreements relating to the development and protection of women, gender equality, and national traditions and culture, to 80 percent
- Increasing LWU membership to 70% of women of 15 years of age and older; expand a LWU committee network to cover 20% of all business units in the private sector;
- LWU conducts a campaign on “women’s three goods” linking with the 3-builds directive implementation in 14 provinces to raise awareness on early marriage, school dropout and continue supporting girls’ and boys’ education; promote women to take up 20% of leading

management-level positions (at village level, 10 percent; at district level, 20%; at provincial and capital level, 20%);

- Encouraging women to take up to 30% of the management-level positions at central level, especially in the organizations where women officials account for more than half of all officials;
- Increasing the proportion of female members of the 9<sup>th</sup> National Assembly to 30%;
- Increasing the proportion of female students graduating from secondary school to 85 percent;
- Achieving gender equality in services such as education, health and social welfare;
- Increasing the proportion of poor women with vocational education, skills and stable employment to generate income;
- Developing the LWU Fund for women's development and family support;
- Creating opportunities for women and children to access the legal system more widely

## 6. Reproductive health access & rights

**The average number of children per woman in Lao PDR has fallen from 3.2 in 2011 to 2.5 in 2022.** The average adolescent birth rate has decreased from 94 to 74 per 1,000 between 2011 and 2022 with clear disparities between urban (42) and rural (136) areas, level of education (176 for no education/early childhood education compared to only 3 for higher level education). Among other factors, this generally demonstrates that families, especially in the urban area, have started to be more aware of family planning and concerned about quality child raising. Based on the latest LSIS (2022), 74.9 Percentage of women at reproductive age (15-49) who have their need for family planning satisfied with appropriate methods.

**Lao PDR held its first-ever national family planning conference in May 2017** to address the importance of family planning in fulfilling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the conference, the Lao Government has expressed its commitment in the financial contribution to the procurement of contraceptives. In addition, Lao PDR has made policy and political commitments, including the revision of the country's Reproductive Health Policy to promote an enabling environment for family planning and develop a national information, education and communication (IEC) and behaviour change communication (BCC) strategy on family planning.

**Since this first family planning conference, the Government of Lao PDR formally announced on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2024 the launch of Lao PDR's Family Planning 2030 commitment** for a future where family planning and sexual and reproductive health choices and means are accessible to all. The National Commitment to Family Planning 2030 is a significant milestone in Lao PDR's efforts to accelerate progress towards the achievement of universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights by 2030. It aligns with Lao PDR commitment to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and builds on the government's policies, programs and progress over the past thirty years, since the adherence of Lao PDR to the ICPD in 1994.

**Under Family Planning 2030**, Lao PDR is committed to: i) Improving access to adolescent and youth-responsive health systems for contraceptive use; ii) ensuring the availability of quality and safe Youth Friendly Services and family planning information and services to decrease the unmet need for family planning among adolescents and young people aged 15 to 24 years old to 12% by 2030; iii) Increasing the availability of contraceptives and reproductive health commodities from 53% to 100% while ensuring no stock out; and iv) increasing the family planning fund to support the availability of commodities at the lower level.

However, antenatal care in Lao PDR still requires great attention although there has been an improvement in the last few years. From the latest LSIS (2023), the percentage of women age 15-49 years with a live birth in the last two years who were attended during their last pregnancy that led to a live birth at least once, four times and eight times by a skilled health provider is 89.8% (78.4%-2017), 71.6% (62.2%-2017) and 20.4% (15.3%-20217), respectively. Among these females, a major improvement was made as 52.5% (29.2% in 2017) had their blood pressure measured and gave urine blood samples during that last pregnancy that led to a live birth. In 2019, Lao PDR launched the Helping Hand social assistance program which promotes the uptake of antenatal services and participation in BCC activities that promote improved pre-natal care. The program targets women from poor households in the four provinces of the country. The Government will be expanding this policy to six new provinces by 2025.

**Early marriage remains widely accepted, particularly in the rural areas, leading to high numbers of teenage pregnancies, which can delay the socio-economic development of Lao DPR in many aspects.** As per the LSIS (2023), 30.4 percent of girls before the age of 18 years are already married or in union. The proportion of girls in the same age group in rural areas who are already married is as high as 27.1 percent. The problems of early marriage and adolescent pregnancy are prioritized under the Noi approach and the Noi 2030 framework aims at monitoring the progress towards addressing. Addressing the problems of early marriage and adolescent pregnancy would require multi-sectoral, comprehensive and coordinated efforts.

## 7. Equal economic rights

**The number of women (15+) joining the workforce in Lao PDR has increased gradually over the years due to the increase in the education attainment by women and the increasing availability of information about the job markets.** The labour force participation rate among females is 56% and among males is 63.2% for 2023. However, the survey revealed that the wage difference between men and women still prevails in the formal sector. For instance, according to the admin data from Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (2023), in industry sector, average gross monthly income of male employees, including cash and in-kind payments and incomes from secondary jobs is 34% higher than that of female employee.

**Many women still join the informal sectors and lower skills industries such as retail and services, which makes them not entitled to relevant employment benefits and social protections.** A study on the Situation of Women Market Vendors in Vientiane Capital conducted in 2017 by UN Women is the first survey of its kind in Lao PDR to understand more about the predicaments and situational analysis of Lao female market vendors. The survey revealed that women represent more than 90% of vendors in fresh food markets across the country earning between LAK 100,000 – 500,000 (USD 12 – 62) on a daily average. The study provides insightful input to one aspect of the informal sector predominantly engaged by women.

**However, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on women's economic rights in Lao PDR.** The country's economy, like many others, has been affected by the pandemic, leading to widespread job losses, reduction, and economic instability. Women, particularly those in vulnerable and informal sectors, have been disproportionately affected. Many women in Lao PDR work in sectors such as tourism, hospitality, retail, which have been severely impacted by the pandemic. As a result, numerous women have lost their jobs or faced reduced working hours, leading to financial insecurity and challenges in supporting themselves and their families. Women make up a significant portion of the informal economy in Lao PDR, engaging in activities such as small-scale trading, agriculture, and handicraft production. The restrictions imposed due to the pandemic, including lockdowns and limitations on market activities, have disrupted these informal livelihoods, impacting women's ability to generate income. The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities in access to resources for women, particularly in rural areas. Limited access to financial services, markets, and agricultural inputs has hindered women's economic empowerment and ability to sustain their livelihoods. The economic impact of the pandemic has also affected

women's ability to access education and healthcare Many girls and women have had to forgo due to financial constraints, while limited access to healthcare services has impacted their overall well-being and ability to participate in the workforce.

## 8. Technology for women empowerment

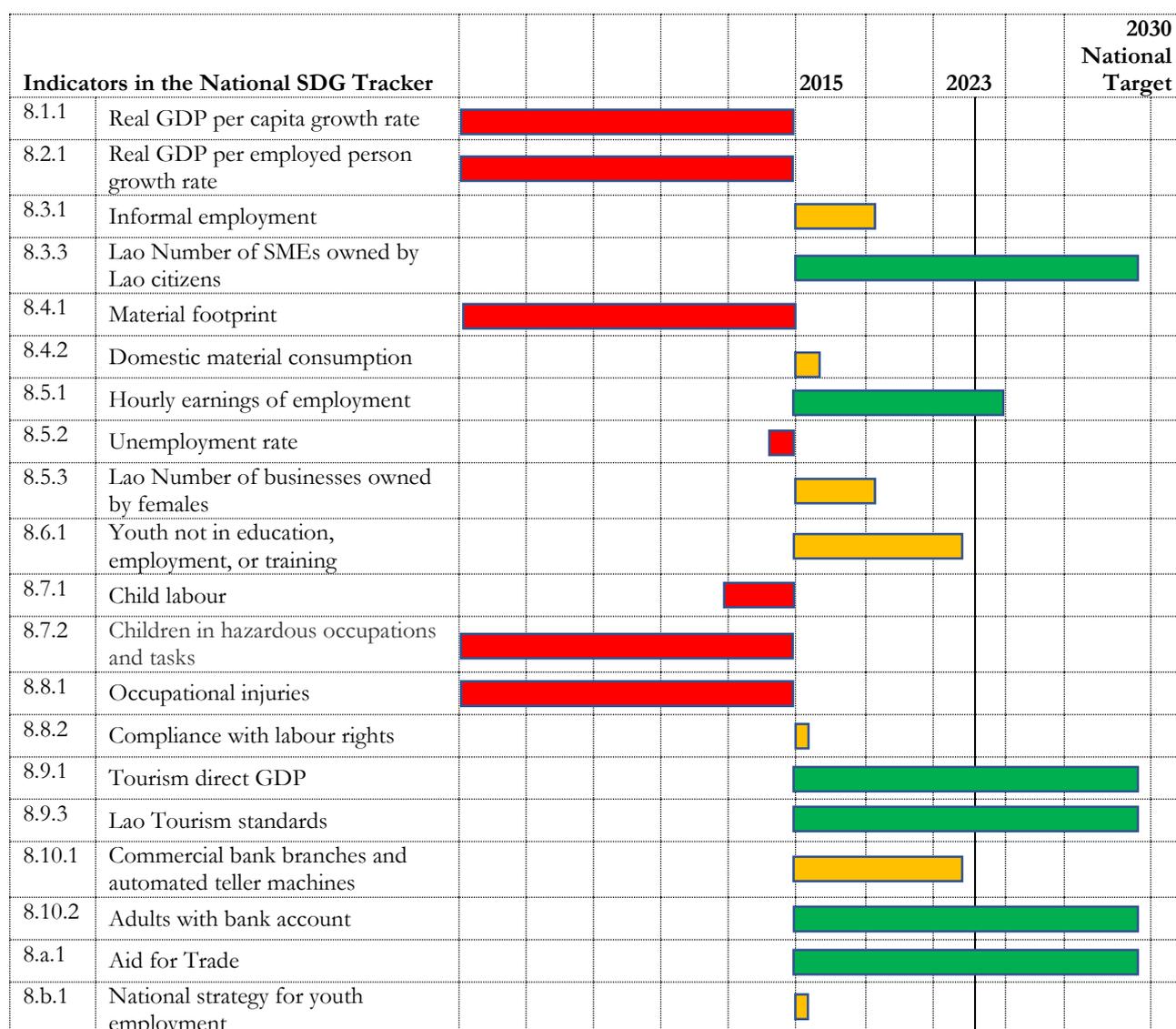
**Number of registered females as mobile phone users per 100 population has increased from 73.1 (2017) to 79.3 (2022).** In recent years, while there is no dedicated platform to empower women through technology, there has been progress leveraging technology for women empower in the country for instance:

- **Digital literacy programs:** Efforts have been made to improve women's digital literacy and access to technology. Various organizations and government initiatives have been providing training programs to equip women with the skills to use digital tools and access information.
- **Mobile banking and financial inclusion:** The expansion of mobile banking services has improved financial inclusion for women in rural and remote areas. By using mobile phones for financial transactions, women have gained greater control over their finances, access to credit, and the ability to engage in economic activities.
- **E-commerce and entrepreneurship:** Women in Lao PDR are increasingly using digital platforms to sell products and services, creating entrepreneurship. This has been supported by initiatives aimed at providing women with the necessary skills and resources to start and grow their businesses online.
- **Access to information and services:** Technology has facilitated greater access to information and services for women, particularly in areas such as healthcare and education. Mobile apps and online platforms have been developed for women with information on maternal health, family planning, and educational resources. Hotlines have been provided by LWU at Vientiane Capital unit for all genders to seek assistance in issues related to reproductive health, family planning, relationship, drug abuse and violence, encouraging them to make informed decisions.
- **Advocacy and awareness:** Technology has also been utilized to advance advocacy efforts for women's rights and gender equality. Social media and online platforms have been used to raise awareness about women's issues, share success stories, and mobilize support for women's empowerment initiatives. The hotline operated by the National Assembly since 2014 is one of the formal channels for Lao citizens, including males and females to express their opinions and concerns to matters affecting them.

## **SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth**

(Infographic to be added)

**Figure 13 - Progress toward national targets - SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth)**



Source: UNESCAP – Lao National SDG Tracker

(<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/unescap.statistics.division/viz/SDG-LAO-2024/Story>)

Note: Progress is only based on two-points data which are included in the Lao National SDG tracker

## 1. Economic growth and impact of COVID19

**The Lao PDR experienced rapid economic growth in the 2000s and 2010s.** GDP growth averaged 7.2 percent per year in the period 2000-2019, making it one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. **Nonetheless, growth gradually decelerated from 8.0 to 5.5 percent between 2013 and 2019, largely due to emerging structural constraints.** The impact of COVID-19 further slowed down growth to 3.3 percent in 2020, slightly increased to 3.5% in 2021, 4.4% in 2022, and 4% in 2023. **The economy of Lao PDR has gradually recovered from COVID-19 in 2022 and 2023** which has been significantly supported by the official opening of the country and the focus on the implementation of the National Agenda to address economic and financial difficulties (2021-2023), particularly the promotion of the domestic production as a potential alternative to replace imports, promote exports, which created favourable conditions for the growth rate of its gross domestic products (GDP) in 2022 and 2023.

**Before the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, the contribution of hydro- power, construction and wholesale and retail sectors have played a significant role to GDP**

**growth, but gradually weakened.** At the same time, the growth of the agriculture sector was affected by the impact of natural disasters in addition to low productivity. Therefore, the road to recovery and restoring per capita economic growth in Lao PDR is likely to be gradual and may require sustained efforts and international support. Although economic activities have resumed in most sectors, the overall situation poses real challenges and difficulties for most families trying to rebuild livelihoods that were affected by the pandemic. Therefore, the most important task for the Government looking forward is concrete steps and measures in ensuring sustainable and inclusive economic growth which requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses various social, economic, and environmental factors. Putting greater efforts on labour market and productivity is critical taking into the current situation of labour shortage and low productivity in key economic sectors. Therefore, the follow key focuses among various priorities from now till 2030 include:

- **Focusing on diversifying Lao economy beyond natural resource extraction**, such as hydropower and mining, to promote sustainable growth. Tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, and services will be the main focus for the road to recovery to create more employment opportunities and reduce reliance on a single industry. This will require a well-educated, healthy and skilled workforce that can only emerge as a result of high-quality education, and well-funded health insurance and social programmes. Therefore, it is important to ensure increased expenditure on health, education and social protection
- **Improving investment, access to education and vocational training** is crucial for enhancing the skills and productivity of the workforce. This can help reduce poverty, inequality, and improve the overall competitiveness of the economy.
- **Investing in rural infrastructure, agricultural technologies, and market access** can help improve the livelihoods of rural communities and reduce poverty.
- **Encouraging sustainable agricultural practices, environmental conservation, and responsible natural resource management** can help preserve the country's natural resources and promote long-term economic stability.
- **Improving access to financial services and markets**, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and rural communities, can help stimulate entrepreneurship, job creation, and economic diversification.
- **Ensuring access to healthcare, social protection programs, and affordable housing** can help reduce poverty, improve living standards, and promote inclusive growth.
- Implementing policies that **promote good governance, transparency, and accountability** can help reduce corruption, improve the business environment, and attract more investment.
- **Collaborating with neighbouring countries and international organizations** can help Lao PDR access new markets, technology, and investment, as well as share best practices in sustainable development. This include harnessing skills and experience of workers in and out country to contribute to the economic growth through skills and technology transfer.

## 9. Labour productivity & innovation

**The median labour productivity in Lao PDR is a cause for concern, as it is lower than that of its neighbouring countries such as Cambodia and Viet Nam.** At USD 4,600, it is 10% lower than Cambodia and less than half of Viet Nam. This indicates that the value added per worker in Lao PDR is significantly lower compared to its regional counterparts. The percentage of growth in labour productivity is also on the decline (5.7% in 2015 to -0.6 in 2022), largely due to the impact of COVID-19, high inflation, and comparatively low wages. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted economic activities, leading to reduced productivity across various sectors. Additionally, high inflation can erode the purchasing power of workers' wages, leading to reduced

motivation and productivity. The combination of these factors has led to a situation where many workers are opting to seek employment in neighbouring countries, where they can earn higher wages.

**This trend of workers leaving the country in search of higher wages could have long-term negative effects on the economy of Lao PDR.** The loss of skilled and productive workers to other countries can hinder the country's ability to develop and compete in the global market. It also leads to a brain drain and a decrease in the domestic workforce, which can further impact productivity and economic growth. To address this issue, the Government has put in place key policies and initiatives to improve labour productivity and retain skilled workers. This includes investing in education and vocational training to enhance the skills of the workforce, creating a more conducive business environment to attract investment and create higher-paying jobs, and implementing measures to address inflation and improve wages. In addition, there is an attempt on classification of appropriate skills in accordance to the labour market demands and mutual skills recognition in the country of origin and destination.

#### **10. Formalization of SMEs**

**The declining proportion of own-account workers contributing family workers in employment in Lao PDR from 80.8% in 2015 to 65.2% in 2022 signifies a significant shift in composition of the labour within the country.** The decrease in the proportion of these types of workers in total employment suggests a shift towards formal wage employment and possibly a more modernized economy. This shift may be indicative of economic development and structural changes within the country's labour market. This change has been driven by some key factors, including the modernization of the economy, increased urbanization, and the growth of formal sector employment. As the economy develops, there may be an increasing demand for skilled labour, leading to a shift away from own-account and family labour towards wage employment. Additionally, the decline in the proportion of own-account and family workers could also indicate a move towards greater economic diversification and the emergence of new industries and sectors within the country. This shift may be supported by government policies aimed at promoting formal employment and improving labour market conditions. However, it is important to consider the potential implications of this shift. While formal wage employment may offer benefits such as job security and social protections, it may also lead to challenges such as increased competition for formal jobs and a potential decrease in entrepreneurship and small-scale enterprises.

Although the number of SMEs owned by Lao citizens, with Lao citizens as the majority shareholders, has seen a significant increase from 2,235 in 2015 to 6,771 in 2023, **there has been a concerning decline in the percentage of financing and loans issued to these SMEs**, dropping from 30.9% in 2015 to 14.6% in 2021. This has significant implications for the country's economic development and the growth potential of SMEs as they are facing difficulties in accessing the necessary financial resources to grow and develop their businesses. A variety of factors include limited access to credit, stringent lending criteria, and a lack of collateral or credit history. Moreover, this trend signals a shift in the priorities of financial institutions and lenders towards larger enterprises or other types of investments. Therefore, the Government has been working with its partners to address the challenges facing SMEs in accessing financing and loans. Detailed information has been discussed under SDG 9.

#### **11. Full employment & decent work**

The significant decrease in the overall unemployment rate in Lao PDR from 9.7% in 2017 to 2.4% in 2022 is undoubtedly a positive trend. It suggests a strong effort in the country's economic stability and the creation of job opportunities. However, labour force participation rate in Lao PDR has been declining over the years, which also contribute to the decline in unemployment. This decline is largely due to the increasing number of discouraged workers and out-migration. In addition, it is crucial to acknowledge that the unemployment rate remains disproportionately higher among the 20-29 age group, indicating persistent challenges in securing employment for

young people. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the global economy experienced severe disruptions, and Lao PDR was not immune to impact. The pandemic led to a spike in unemployment rates, with the figure reaching almost 20% at its peak. This sharp increase in unemployment further exacerbated the existing challenges faced by young people in the labour market. The pandemic-induced economic downturn likely had a disproportionate impact on younger workers who may have been more vulnerable to job losses, particularly in sectors heavily affected by restrictions and shutdowns, such as tourism, hospitality, and retail. The high unemployment rate among the 20-29 age group is concerning for several reasons. Young people entering the workforce need stable employment to build their careers, gain financial independence, and contribute to the country's economic development. Persistent challenges in securing employment may lead to long-term negative effects, including delayed career advancement, reduced earning potential, and decreased overall economic productivity. Therefore, while the overall decrease in unemployment is a positive development, the higher unemployment rate among young people, particularly during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, underscores the need for targeted policies and programs to address the specific challenges faced by youth in accessing meaningful and secure employment opportunities. Cross labour mobility within the ASEAN countries for job opportunities need greater attention to ensure safe migration pathways for youth seeking employment outside the country.

The informal sector plays a significant role in the country's economy, with approximately 35% of the population being employed in this sector. When informal engagement in the formal sector is included, the rate increases to 86.4% in 2022, highlighting the prevalence of informal work in. Moreover, women are disproportionately represented in the informal sector compared to men. Traditional employment often fails to provide young people with opportunities to break the cycle of poverty, with 37% of youth experiencing underutilized labour, meaning they are not fully meeting their need for employment. This reflects the challenges young people face in actively participating in the labour market. Employment opportunities vary greatly between urban, rural, and off-road locations, as well as between genders. There is also a mismatch between the skill sets of youth and the jobs available, compounded by low educational attainment. Disparities in employment are evident, with women being employed at a younger age compared to men. Adolescents and youth in rural areas encounter various challenges in accessing employment, including a lack of labour market information, limited experience, and pressure from socio-cultural conditions and family expectations, making it difficult for them to secure jobs. Youth migration is prevalent, with 87% of youth migrating to other countries for economic reasons. However, many of these migrants only remain abroad for a short period, and there are inadequate safeguards for their health and legal status. Additionally, there is a risk of human trafficking, particularly for young women who may be vulnerable to exploitation in neighbouring countries.

Migration patterns in Lao PDR are complex, including inbound and outbound flows of migrant workers. Thailand is the largest destination for Lao migrants, driven by its nearby location and wage differentials. The monthly minimum wage in Lao PDR since 1 October 2023 is Lao Kip (LAK) 1,600,000 (about USD77), and the Thai minimum wage is triple this amount. This wage differential has been further exacerbated by the devaluation of the LAK since late 2021. Migrant workers in Thailand are predominantly employed in domestic work, construction, manufacturing, agriculture and entertainment, mainly in neighbouring border provinces or larger cities. Financial remittances from migrant workers are an important source of income in Lao PDR. Personal remittances received as a percentage of GDP increased from 2.5% (2015) to 3.2% (2022).

The Government has put special attention to develop quality skilled labour to meet the needs of socio-economic development through initiatives such as the development of 32 national skills standards. However, in the period 2017–2021, despite the increased attention to labour skill development, there have only been minor improvements in labour efficiency to date. Public and private investment in skills development is still limited, and often without focus on specific occupational development in strategic growth areas. Skills development and workforce supply

have not been able to meet the needs of key sectors, such electricity and mining, that are main contributors to economic growth.

More than half of Lao PDR's population is under 25 years, indicating a youthful demographic profile. The ratio of the working-age population to dependents (children and older persons) is expected to decline from 61% in 2015 to 47% in 2045. This shift is attributed to a decrease in the population below 14 years of age, despite an increase in the population of individuals aged 65 and older. However, it will take several decades before the country experiences a significant overall aging of the population. In the coming years, if the cohorts of adolescents and youth reaching working age are healthier and better educated, they have the potential to significantly contribute to the labour force. This could lead to higher levels of labour force participation and increased wages compared to previous generations. Ultimately, this could help accelerate the transition to a more productive and competitive economy for Lao PDR, providing an opportunity for realization of the demographic dividends.

## **12. Youth NEET (Not in Employment, Education, Training)**

Lao PDR currently faces limited opportunities for its young population, particularly in terms of productive work and educational advancement, a situation that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, 22% of the labour force in Lao PDR comprised of youth (ages 15-24), and the youth unemployment rate currently stands at 18.2% (15.5% for females and 20.8% for males). Furthermore, the NEET (not in employment, education, training) rate is at a staggering 42.1% (44.9% for females and 39.1% for males), which is more than twice the global average. Persistent barriers, such as the lack of care services, policies, and women's disproportionate unpaid care responsibilities, have contributed to preventing women from entering and remaining in education, training, and the labour market. Additionally, the predominantly informal economy in Lao PDR has led to significant decent work deficits for employed youth. Specific challenges for youth entering the labour market in Lao PDR include a lack of labour market information and job search experience, skills mismatch, and limited access to diversified working experience and capital, lack of knowledge about safe migration, access to formal recruitment process, and high recruitment cost. As a result, many youths, especially those with low skills, migrate to other Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries for employment, with Thailand being a major destination. The adoption of the Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy (2021-2030) in 2022 provides a framework for the country to address various key challenges to harness the full potential of youth.

## **13. Child & forced labour<sup>12</sup>**

The significant decrease in the percentage of children aged 5-17 engaged in child labour in Lao PDR, from 42.8% in 2017 to 23.1% in 2023, is a positive development that reflects efforts to combat this issue. However, the situation of child and forced labour in Lao PDR remains complex and has drawn international attention due to ongoing challenges in completely eliminating these practices. The reduction in child labour can be attributed to various initiatives and interventions, including government policies, international cooperation, and civil society efforts. These efforts have focused on increasing access to education, raising awareness about the negative impacts of child labour, and improving enforcement of labour laws. Additionally, economic growth and development in certain sectors have provided alternative opportunities for families, reducing the reliance on child labour for income generation. Despite these positive trends, challenges persist in fully eradicating child and forced labour in Lao PDR. Economic disparities, lack of educational opportunities, and the prevalence of traditional practices in rural areas continue to contribute to

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<sup>12</sup> Child labourers are defined as children involved in economic activities or in household chores above the age-specific thresholds. While the concept of child labour includes exposure to hazardous working conditions, and this is collected in MICS and was previously included in the reported indicator, the present definition, which is also used for SDG reporting, does not include children who are working under hazardous conditions

the persistence of child labour. Furthermore, the enforcement of labour laws and regulations, especially in informal sectors and remote regions, remains a challenge for the Lao government.

#### **14. Labour rights & safe working environment**

Number of cases of fatal and non-fatal occupational injury reported has steadily increased over the years from 40 reported cases in 2015 to 982 reported cases in 2023. This is a significant increase which needs closer attention. The Lao government has taken several measures to ensure labour rights and promote a safe working environment in the country. Some of these measures include:

- **Legislation and regulations:** The Lao government has enacted laws and regulations to protect the rights of workers, including provisions for minimum wage, working hours, and occupational safety and health. These laws are aimed at ensuring that workers are treated fairly and have access to safe and healthy working conditions. This include bi-lateral labour agreements and regional labour legislative framework to promote and protect Lao workers rights.
- **Ratification of International Labour Standards:** Lao PDR has ratified international labour standards and conventions, demonstrating its commitment to upholding fundamental labour rights as outlined by international labour organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO).
- **Enforcement and compliance:** The Government is responsible for enforcing labour laws and regulations to ensure that employers comply with labour standards and provide a safe working environment for their employees. This may involve inspections, monitoring, and penalties for non-compliance.
- **Capacity Building and Training:** The Government, with the support of international organizations and NGOs, provides training and capacity building programs to raise awareness about labour rights and occupational safety and health. This includes educating workers and employers about their rights and responsibilities in the workplace.
- **Collaboration with International Partners:** The Government collaborates with international organizations and NGOs to receive technical assistance, support, and expertise in promoting labour rights and safe working environments. This collaboration involves capacity building, advocacy, and the exchange of best practices.
- **Public Awareness and Advocacy:** The Government engages in public awareness campaigns to inform workers about their rights and to encourage them to report any violations. Additionally, it may work with workers' organizations and civil society to advocate for improved labour rights and safe working conditions.
- **Dialogue with Employers and Workers' Organizations:** The Government facilitates dialogue and cooperation between employers and workers' organizations to address labour issues, negotiate labour standards, and promote a harmonious working environment in order to address multiple associated health risks due to poor working and living conditions.

#### **15. Sustainable tourism**

Before the outbreak of COVID-19, the Lao tourism sector had rapidly grown and increasingly contributed to economic growth. It is estimated that the tourism sector accounts for about 14 percent of GDP alone in 2017. Number of foreign visitors and revenue generated from the tourism sector have been on an increasing trend. In 2019, almost 4.8 millions of international visitors made a visit to Lao PDR and tourism earned USD 934 millions of foreign exchange that Lao PDR needs to finance the trade deficit. It ranked third after mineral exports (USD1.43 billion) and electricity exports (USD1.32 billion). However, during the time of COVID-19, a large reduction in the number of international visitors resulted in the income loss of approximately USD 700-800 million. It is also estimated that between 30,000-40,000 staff in the tourism sector are laid

off and take a leave without pay. The COVID-19 outbreak has had a devastating effect on the tourism industry, causing the number of international tourists to decrease by 74%. Thus, the impacts have further disrupted businesses in the sector and deprived 70-80% of the total revenue.

In 2023, tourism earned USD 957 millions recovered from 2022 revenue from tourism which was USD 264 millions. Therefore, during the recovery period, the Government had adopted a Tourism Recovery Road-Map in order to offer possible solution methods in order to restore the tourism industry of Lao PDR to its normal state in the upcoming years between 2021 to 2025.

Ensuring sustainable tourism is the key and it involves a multi-faceted approach that considers environmental, social, and economic factors. The Government has put more efforts on some key strategies to promote sustainable tourism in Lao PDR which include:

- **Community involvement:** Encouraging community participation and empowering local communities in tourism development and decision-making processes. This can help ensure that tourism benefits are shared more equitably and that local traditions and cultures are respected and preserved.
- **Environmental conservation:** Implementing and enforcing regulations to protect natural resources, wildlife, and landscapes. This may include promoting responsible tourism practices, such as waste management, energy conservation, and sustainable transportation options.
- **Cultural preservation:** Promoting and preserving traditional arts, crafts, and cultural heritage. This can involve supporting local artisans, promoting cultural events, and educating visitors about the importance of respecting local customs and traditions.
- **Responsible tourism practices:** Encouraging tour operators and businesses to adopt sustainable and responsible tourism practices. This includes promoting eco-friendly accommodations, supporting local businesses, and offering authentic cultural experiences.
- **Education and awareness:** Educating tourists, local communities, and industry stakeholders about the importance of sustainable tourism practices. This can help raise awareness about the impact of tourism on the environment and local communities and encourage responsible behaviour.
- **Capacity building:** Providing training and support for local communities and businesses to develop sustainable tourism initiatives. This can include training in hospitality, guiding, and sustainable resource management.
- **Government policies and regulations:** Implementing and enforcing regulations and policies that promote sustainable tourism practices. This can include zoning regulations, environmental impact assessments, and guidelines for responsible tourism development.
- **Collaboration with stakeholders:** Encouraging collaboration and partnership between government agencies, local communities, tourism industry stakeholders, and non-governmental organizations to develop and implement sustainable tourism initiatives.

## **16. Access to financial services**

The financial sector in Lao PDR is in transition from state dominant to private sector playing a larger role. The financial sector has traditionally been dominated by the large, state-owned commercial banks and the sector has grown rapidly in recent years, with new institutions established, new products and services introduced and there is much more competition. Nevertheless, the small population and low population density limits the number of financial institutions that can sustainably offer formal financial services. Dominant state-owned commercial banks include Banque pour le Commerce Extérieur Lao (BCEL), the Lao Development Bank (LDB) and Agricultural Promotion Bank (APB). However, there is an increasing number of private banks, which includes joint ventures between private investors and state entities, domestic

privately-owned banks, and subsidiaries and branches of foreign banks. The share of state-owned banks in the market has been shrinking as new competitors have entered. Banks are mostly focused on urban areas. Besides normal banking (deposit-taking and credit) services, banks also provide a low-cost over-the-counter money transfer service, and act as agents for cross-border money transfer operators such as Western Union and MoneyGram.

However, about 20% of Lao adults use informal financial services. Many adults, 81.5 % of the total (2019), use formal financial service (having a savings account). Informal financial services therefore is an important part of economy, particularly those in rural and remote areas and the reason for its high usage rate is due to limited capacity of formal services and access to formal services is still arduous, for instance require many documents, takes time to get approval, require to have collateral and others.

To address this, efforts have been made to improve access to financial services for its population. Some of the key initiatives and developments include:

- **Microfinance Institutions:** The Government has encouraged the growth of microfinance institutions (MFIs) to provide financial services to rural and underserved populations. MFIs offer small loans, savings accounts, and other financial services to individuals and small businesses, helping to expand access to financial resources in remote areas.
- **Banking Sector Development:** The Government has taken steps to strengthen the banking sector and expand the reach of formal financial institutions. This has involved efforts to improve banking infrastructure, expand branch networks, and promote financial inclusion.
- **Mobile Banking and Digital Financial Services:** The adoption of mobile banking and digital financial services has been promoted to reach rural and remote communities where traditional bank branches are not readily available. This has enabled people to access financial services through their mobile phones, including mobile money transfers, bill payments, and savings accounts.
- **Financial Literacy Programs:** Efforts have been made to improve financial literacy and education among the population. Financial literacy programs and initiatives aim to empower individuals with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about managing their finances, accessing credit, and utilizing financial services.
- **Regulatory Reforms:** The Government has introduced regulatory reforms to promote financial inclusion and expand access to financial services. This includes measures to reduce barriers to entry for financial service providers, establish consumer protection regulations, and create an enabling environment for innovation in financial technology (fintech).
- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Collaboration between government agencies, international organizations, and private sector stakeholders has been fostered to support financial inclusion initiatives. This collaboration aims to leverage resources, expertise, and technology to expand access to financial services in Lao PDR .

## **SDG 18 – UXO and Mine Actions**

(Infographic to be added)

**Figure 14 - Progress toward national targets - SDG 18 (Lives Safe from UXO)**

Indicators in the National SDG Tracker		2015	2023	2030 National Target
18.1.1	Number of reported UXO casualties			
18.1.2	Percentage of population in contaminated villages with information on Confirmed Hazardous Areas in their village			
18.2.1	Percentage of high priority hazardous areas remaining to be cleared			
18.2.2	Number of villages defined as 'poor' with Confirmed Hazardous Areas remaining to be cleared			
18.3.1	Proportion of registered active age UXO survivors unable to earn sufficient income with access to basic income security			
18.3.2	Percentage of registered UXO survivors mainstreamed into health, education and employment service			

Source: UNESCAP – Lao National SDG Tracker (<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/unescap.statistics.division/viz/SDG-LAO-2024/Story>)

Note: Progress is only based on two-points data which are included in the Lao National SDG tracker

Lao PDR is the most heavily bombed country in the world in terms of per capita. Until now, clearance of cluster munition remnants in Lao PDR has still not finished and it has serious consequences for people's lives. The clearance of cluster munition remnants in Lao PDR has been an ongoing and challenging process. Efforts by local and international organizations, including the Lao government, non-governmental organizations, and demining teams, have been crucial in identifying and safely removing these hazardous remnants.

However, due to the vast extent of contamination and the complexities involved in clearance operations, progress has been slow, and significant areas still uncleared. The presence of UXO has had severe and lasting consequences for the people of Lao PDR. It has resulted in thousands of casualties, including deaths and injuries, particularly among rural communities, where farming and livelihood activities are often hindered by the presence of unexploded ordnance.

From 1996 to April 2024, more than 1.9 million UXO devices were cleared from 86,568 hectares of land, making agricultural land safe for farmers and freeing up other areas for development. Of this number, 1,125,275 were cluster bombs, 4,641 were large bombs, and 2,535 were land mines, while 773,204 other types of munitions were also located and detonated.

In terms of mine risk education, people in 4,229 villages were made aware of the dangers posed and the need for caution. From 2015 to 2023, assistance was provided to 2,846 (394) people who were victims of UXO-related accidents.

Non-technical surveys were carried out from 2011 to 2023 in 2,867 villages, while technical surveys took place from 2010-2023 in 1,876 villages. Some 199,482 hectares of land were confirmed to be affected by cluster bombs.

Looking forward, although UXO clearance activities have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the UXO sector has taken this opportunity to work remotely and ensure the continuity of work by focusing on assessments and drafting the UXO National Strategic Plan "Safe Path Forward III" for 2021-2030. This new 10-year strategy for the UXO sector is a crucial step towards ensuring the long-term sustainability of UXO work in Lao PDR. The new strategy will also help

Lao PDR implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially SDG 18 on mine action, and increase the contribution of the UXO sector to overall socio-economic development.

The presence of UXO has impeded the country's development, as it limits the potential for land use, infrastructure development, and economic growth. The clearance of cluster munition remnants is a critical and ongoing humanitarian effort in Lao PDR, requiring sustained support and resources. In addition to clearance operations, addressing the impact of UXO on affected communities involves providing risk education, victim assistance, and support for livelihood recovery. International support and cooperation have been pivotal in these endeavors, as Lao PDR continues to work towards mitigating the far-reaching effects of the bombings and building a safer future for its citizens.

Looking forward, the Government of Lao PDR is prioritizing the following actions and strategies:

1. Strengthening national capacity for coordination and efficiency.
2. Ensuring the quality of operational data in the national database, in order to enable proper data analysis and a more robust evidence-based reporting.
3. Developing management policy and procedures to "main-stream" UXO survivors into health, education, and employment services.
4. Assisting line Ministries to take into account the impact of UXO in their planning and budgeting.
5. Developing a comprehensive resource mobilization and fund-raising strategy, expanding beyond traditional donors.
6. Continuing to strengthen the capacity of the Lao Army in humanitarian mine action.
7. Identifying and promoting emerging technologies that will improve the performance and efficiency of operations.

## 2.6 Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollutions

Climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution are interconnected environmental challenges that significantly impact the achievement of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Laos.

### **Climate Change:**

Lao PDR is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, with natural hazards posing significant risks to the population and the environment. Climate change affects various sectors, including agriculture, water resources, and infrastructure, threatening livelihoods and economic stability.

Addressing climate change is crucial for achieving multiple SDGs, such as SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). Climate-resilient strategies are essential to protect vulnerable communities and ecosystems.

### **Biodiversity Loss:**

Lao PDR is one of the biodiversity hotspot of the world, but human activities, such as deforestation, land conversion, and infrastructure development, contribute to biodiversity loss. Loss of biodiversity impacts ecosystem services, food security (SDG 2), and human well-being (SDG3).

Protecting biodiversity is essential for achieving SDGs related to life on land (SDG 15), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), and clean water and sanitation (SDG 6). Preserving biodiversity ensures the sustainability of ecosystems and supports sustainable development.

### **Pollution:**

Pollution, including air pollution from burning of firewood and charcoal, slash-and-burn agriculture, land and water pollution from inadequate waste management, agrochemicals, and industrial pollution (notably from the mining sector), poses significant environmental and health risks in Laos. Open defecation, inadequate sewerage facilities, and waste burning contribute to pollution.

Addressing pollution is critical for achieving SDGs related to clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), and good health and well-being (SDG 3), amongst others. Improving waste management, reducing pollution, and enhancing environmental quality are essential for human health and ecosystem sustainability.

### **Interconnected Impact on SDGs:**

Climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution have cascading effects on various SDGs, including poverty reduction, health, education, and economic growth. These environmental challenges exacerbate vulnerabilities, hinder sustainable development, and threaten the well-being of communities.

Mitigating climate change, conserving biodiversity, and addressing pollution are essential for achieving the SDGs in Laos. Sustainable environmental management practices, conservation efforts, and pollution control measures are key to promoting a healthy environment and sustainable development.

The Government of Lao PDR has been exploring options to move towards a more sustainable economic model to address the challenges of environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, pollution, and rising emissions that have accompanied its current reliance on natural resource extraction and economic growth.

### **Unsustainable Development Patterns**

Laos has historically relied on resource-based development, with foreign direct investment (FDI) targeting natural resource sectors like mining, hydropower, and large-scale agriculture. This has led

to significant environmental degradation, with factors like forest land conversion for agriculture, urban sprawl, and infrastructure expansion contributing to a 7% decline in forest cover between 1990 and 2020. Unregulated investments have also caused issues like village displacement and land grabbing.

### **Shift Towards Green Growth**

To address these challenges, Laos has adopted a National Green Growth Strategy, a 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP Financing Strategy with a dedicated chapter on green and climate finance, and is working to steer its economy towards a greener pathway. The government recognizes that its economy rests heavily on natural resources and that threats to these assets demand well-designed interventions that can yield long-term results.

### **Opportunities for Sustainable Development**

Laos has an opportunity to reset its development trajectory in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Green growth offers the best opportunity for sustainable and inclusive recovery, as well as longer-term, resilient development. The country can accelerate its transition to greener growth by implementing proven interventions to reduce environmental health risks, protect natural resources, bolster food supply and the rural economy, and respond to increased natural disasters.

**To achieve a more sustainable economic model, the Government has been putting an emphasis key actions as follow:**

1. Prioritize investments in natural resource sectors that can directly and positively impact poverty reduction and sustainable development
2. Strengthen regulations and enforcement to ensure that investments contribute to the country's development while mitigating social and environmental risks
3. Promote sustainable practices in key sectors like agriculture, forestry, and energy to reduce emissions, protect biodiversity, and minimize pollution
4. Invest in green infrastructure and technologies to support sustainable urbanization and climate resilience
5. Engage stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society, in implementing green growth strategies and promoting sustainable development

## **SDG 13 – Climate Actions**

**(Infographic to be added)**

**Figure 15 - Progress toward national targets - SDG 13 (Climate Action)**

Indicators in the National SDG Tracker		2015	2023	2030 National Target
13.1.1	Death/missing/affected by disasters			
13.2.2	Greenhouse gas emissions			

Source: UNESCAP – Lao National SDG Tracker

(<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/unescap.statistics.division/viz/SDG-LAO-2024/Story>)

Note: Progress is only based on two-points data which are included in the Lao National SDG tracker

Measurement issues: On resilience and adaptive capacity, the global indicators cover the impact of disaster, and the establishment of disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies and plans of action. Lao PDR’s national and subnational DRR systems will need to be strong on resilience and adaptive capacity and have clear timelines and action points to facilitate robust monitoring. Targets promotes the integration of climate change measures into national policies, strategies, and planning. The NDC lists five priority sectors for climate action – agriculture, forestry, health, water, and transport/urban development. Lao PDR will report on the progress of its Intended NDC implementation, which also includes progress on commitments under the National Adaptation Programme of Action and the National Strategy on Climate Change. Qualitative reviews will be required to assess the integration of mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning into Lao PDR's education curricula at primary, secondary, and tertiary level. Therefore, the data provided in this Lao National SDG Tracker capture only quantitative two-entry data points. It does not cover the overall picture of the SDG 13. The narrative under this sector tries to unpack progress and key issues relating to this SDG13.

## 1. Climate change policies

The Government is actively working towards enhancing climate resilience and has managed thus far to keep the number of people affected from disasters, especially climate-related ones, at a minimum. Efforts to enhance resilience and adaptive capacity in Lao PDR involve a combination of measures, including investments in disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, sustainable natural resource management, and inclusive development policies. International cooperation and support from development partners are also critical in strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity in the country.

At the policy level, climate change adaptation has been integrated into high-level policy frameworks, including the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2016 – 2020), National Green Growth Strategy to 2030, and sectoral strategies such as the Ten-Year Natural Resources and Environment Strategy 2016–2025, a Urban Development Strategy to 2030, Agriculture Development Strategy to 2025 and Vision to 2030, and Strategy on Climate Change and Health Adaptation 2018 – 2025 and action plan 2018 – 2020.

The 2019 Decree on Climate Change sets out principles, measures and regulations to prevent, protect and reduce potential impacts of climate change on lives, properties, environment, biodiversity and infrastructure. Lao PDR is especially at risk from disasters triggered by climate related hazards. The country’s vulnerability from climate change is increased by the heavy reliance on natural resources and this growth model makes it even more vulnerable to climate change. The country is seeing an increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods, with consequent negative impacts on its water resources. The impact of disasters in Lao PDR generates large costs for the Government, businesses, and households, with estimated losses for Lao PDR from flood events ranging from 2.8% to 3.6% of GDP.

To address the critical issue of climate change, the Government is implementing the National Determined Contribution (NDC) and developing the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) & Net Zero Emission Plan 2050 to work towards the goal of zero greenhouse gas emissions. The Government is also promoting renewable energy projects, use of electric vehicles, and waste recycling initiatives. Policies on green growth and sustainable natural resource management aim to

build climate resilience and mitigate emissions. Some of other key climate change policies and actions include:

- National Adaptation Action is being developed to address the country's vulnerabilities to climate change. The plan focuses on adaptation measures, disaster risk reduction, and climate change mitigation across various sectors, including agriculture, water resources, and energy.
- Prioritizing the development of renewable energy sources, such as hydropower, solar, and wind energy, to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. The Government has introduced policies to promote investment in renewable energy projects and to increase the share of renewable energy in the national energy mix.
- Forest and land management: Given the importance of forests in carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation, Lao PDR has implemented policies and programs to promote sustainable forest and land management. These initiatives aim to reduce deforestation, promote reforestation and afforestation, and strengthen community-based natural resource management.
- Climate resilient agriculture: The Lao government has been promoting climate-resilient agricultural practices to enhance food security and livelihoods in the face of climate change. Key priorities include the adoption of climate-smart agricultural techniques, improved water management, and development of drought and flood-resistant crop varieties.
- Disaster risk reduction and preparedness: Given the country's vulnerability to natural disasters exacerbated by climate change, Lao PDR has been strengthening its disaster risk reduction and preparedness measures. This includes the development of early warning systems across the country, infrastructure resilience, and capacity building for disaster response and recovery, particularly at the community level.

## **2. Circular Economy**

In 2021, Lao PDR decided to bypass linear carbon-intensive economic growth, and became only the third country to complete a comprehensive metabolic analysis process to help raise country's greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation ambition, take stock of material stocks and flows, and move towards a circular economy. The assessment identified 17 possible circular economy intervention areas. These included six enabling interventions that support the 11 sector-specific interventions offering most of the GHG mitigation and sequestration potential. Sector-specific interventions include increasing wood-based construction to reduce the construction sector's carbon footprint, improving livestock efficiency, prioritising active, shared, public and electric transport, and reducing food loss.

Based on this analysis, Lao PDR can become net carbon neutral by 2040 by adopting a circular economy approach. With the measures proposed in the NDC, it can reduce its GHG footprint from 106 to 58 million tCO<sub>2</sub>e/year in 2040. The circular GHG mitigation interventions can reduce it further to net zero. Most of the circular mitigation and sequestration potential lies in wood-based construction, improving livestock efficiency, prioritizing active, shared, public and electric transport and reducing food losses. By adopting circular economy strategies within Lao PDR, the country would also reduce the import of carbon-intensive products.

In addition to adopting a metabolic analysis, the Government carried a detailed policy analysis and development of a community of practice that engaged the private sector with policymakers for the creation of a long-term low-carbon development strategy. Therefore, these have given Lao PDR an opportunity in its next NDC update to outline a clear strategy for deploying circular economy GHG interventions that could ensure net-zero carbon emissions by 2040.

Transitioning to a circular economy will involve a fundamental change in the current economic model. It will require the country to shift to a system in which materials are used such that they

can be cycled indefinitely and on the smallest scale possible. Durable products are designed to last longer and used more intensively, and development and wellbeing are decoupled from the use of natural resources. Lao PDR has a unique opportunity to lead low-carbon development in Southeast Asia. In doing so, it can create additional benefits for surrounding countries. For example, GHG emission reductions from Lao's circular economy transition for foreign trade partners are estimated to be approximately 2.2mtCO<sub>2</sub>e/year.

Important lessons can be drawn from Lao example. For instance, bringing local and international private sector stakeholders and policymakers together within a community of practice to collaborate enabled it to overcome potential barriers. Additionally, the country will need to cooperate closely with trade partners to ensure circularity is embedded across whole value chains.

### **3. Climate change awareness**

Lao PDR currently lacks comprehensive evidence base about how human mobility patterns will respond to climate change disruptions, human exposure to mobility-related climate hazards. However, climate change awareness in Lao PDR has been growing in recent years, with the government, civil society organizations, and international partners working to increase understanding and action on climate-related issues. Some the key efforts to raise awareness about climate change in Lao PDR include:

- Education and outreach: The Government and various organizations have been implementing education and outreach programs to raise awareness about climate change among the general population, as well as specific target groups such as farmers, local communities, and government officials. This includes workshops, training sessions, and educational materials to inform people about the impacts of climate change and how they can contribute to mitigation and adaptation efforts.
- Media and communication: Efforts to raise awareness about climate change in Lao PDR also include media campaigns, television and radio programs, particularly community radio programs across the country, and other communication initiatives to disseminate information about the causes and effects of climate change, as well as potential solutions. This helps to reach a wider audience and engage people in discussions about climate-related issues.
- Community Engagement: Civil society organizations and local communities in Lao PDR have been actively involved in raising awareness about climate change at the grassroots level. This includes community-based projects, awareness-raising events, and the promotion of sustainable practices that can help mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- International Partnerships: Lao PDR has been collaborating with international organizations and partners to raise awareness about climate change, its impact on human rights, and access resources for capacity building and technical assistance. This includes participation in international climate conferences, workshops, and knowledge-sharing initiatives.
- Explore comprehensive climate mobility solutions based on: i) well-managed migration including labour migration pathways as a positive adaptive strategy in devastating climate impacts; ii) loss and damage linked to disaster displacement can be reduced and addressed by anticipating and preparing for an increase in scale, scope and frequency of disasters and including climate risks in humanitarian responses and durable solutions to end displacement; and iii) promoting sustainable development measures, building community resilience and preventing and reducing disaster risks can help people adapt to climate impacts and offer them the choice to stay with dignity and in safety in their areas of origin.

### **4. UNFCCC commitments**

Lao PDR is committed to fulfilling its obligations under the UNFCCC and takes monitoring and reporting on climate change seriously. The country's efforts to develop robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms are crucial for tracking progress, identifying challenges, and informing future climate policies and actions. As such, Lao PDR was the first country in ASEAN to submit its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in September 2015. Building on national development and environmental protection policies, the country aimed to make full use of existing institutional capacity and financial resources, and embed NDC targets in existing policies and planning.

In May 2021, the Government of Lao PDR submitted the revised NDC with the following targets:

- ⇒ An unconditional emissions reduction target of 60% by 2030, relative to the baseline scenario.
- ⇒ A conditional emissions reduction target of up to 70% by 2030, contingent upon international support.
- ⇒ Achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

The NDC covers mitigation measures in the forestry, energy, transportation, urban development, waste management, water resources, agriculture, and public health sectors.

### **Progress and achievements**

- ⇒ Lao PDR has made notable progress in implementing its NDC:
- ⇒ Increasing its hydropower capacity to over 4,500 MW in 2018, abating around 13,000 ktCO<sub>2e</sub>/year.
- ⇒ Achieving a rural electrification rate of 93.79% by 2018.
- ⇒ Expanding forest cover to 58% of land area by 2015.

The country has also developed a National Adaptation Plan and incorporated gender equality perspectives into its NDC revision.

### **Challenges and support needs**

However, Lao PDR faces several challenges in fully implementing its NDC:

- ⇒ Securing sufficient financial resources, particularly for conditional mitigation measures estimated to cost around \$4.8 billion.
- ⇒ Strengthening institutional and technical capacity for measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV) of emissions.
- ⇒ Enhancing coordination among various government agencies and stakeholders.
- ⇒ Addressing data gaps and improving data collection, processing, and management for GHG inventories.

To overcome these challenges, Lao PDR requires further support from the international community in the form of:

- ⇒ Financial assistance for implementing mitigation and adaptation measures.
- ⇒ Technical support for MRV systems, GHG modelling, and carbon trading.
- ⇒ Capacity building for government agencies on climate change policy design and implementation.
- ⇒ Assistance in mainstreaming climate change into national and sub-national policies.

Looking forwards, the Government of Lao PDR is prioritizing action areas, as set out in its NDC submission as follow:

1. Capacity strengthening to establish a credible institution with direct access to climate finance.

2. Ensuring that domestic and international finance is successfully acquired, utilized, and accounted for.
3. Strengthening the overall strategy, coordination of NDC implementation and regulatory framework.
4. Strengthening national technical capacity in mitigation and adaptation, and
5. Strengthening institutional capacities for monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) of the NDC.

## **Chapter 3 – Key national and sectoral/cross sectoral development frameworks to help accelerate the achievement of SDGs by 2030**

### 3.1 Overall national policies and sectoral interventions

In the years following the 2021 Voluntary National Review on the implementation of sustainable development goals (SDGs), Lao PDR has faced significant challenges that have tested the country's resilience and development progress. Macroeconomic instability has been undermining economic growth and threatening development prospects. Fiscal, external, and financial imbalances have fuelled macroeconomic instability, with a sharp exchange rate depreciation and high inflation severely affecting households and businesses. The debt accumulation and limited revenue collection have also contributed to the current macroeconomic instability. On the top of these, the impacts of repeated and unprecedented shocks, such as natural disasters, public health crises, and economic disruptions, have exacerbated vulnerabilities and pushed back the trajectory of sustainable development.

Lao PDR has taken steps to not only manage the impact of various shocks, but- within the limited resources available- to plant the seeds with increasing synergy and coherence for a more resilient development path going forward. The key national policies that will guide this journey toward 2030 include:

- **National Agenda on Addressing Economic and Financial Difficulties**, which aims to tackle the underlying causes of the difficulties including macroeconomic instabilities.
- **The Financing Strategy for the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP** that did not exist for previous generations of the NSEDP and aims to tackle some key economic vulnerabilities and prevent their re-emergence.
- **The Resilience Framework**, built through an open consultative process to identify the most important actions to increase national resilience to future shocks. These reflections would likely not have happened had the country not learned lessons from recent shocks.
- **The Smooth Transition Strategy for LDC Graduation**, with a clear focus not only on a 'smooth' graduation (i.e. not disruptive at the graduation date), but also 'sustainable' and 'quality' with a longer-term focus on being able to maintain progress.
- **The First Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy (2021-2030)** was developed through a consultative process, engaging the youth reference group, line ministries, civil society organizations, international agencies and development partners. It provides guidelines on facilitating the education, employment, protection, leadership and participation of adolescents and young people comprehensively. The solutions recommended in this strategy are evidence based, practical and inclusive.

At sectoral and cross-sectoral level, as per the list below, various strategies have been revised and adjusted taking into consideration of current national, regional and global circumstance.

#### List of key sectoral and cross-sectoral development policy frameworks

1. Health sector reform strategy
2. Education and Sports Sector Development Plan
3. National Nutrition Plan of Actions
4. National Plan of Action on Nutrition
5. National Digital Economy Development Vision (2021-2040), 10-Year National Digital Economy Development Strategy (2021- 2030) and 5-Year National Digital Economy Development Plan (2021-2025),
6. Agriculture Development Strategy
7. National Action Plan on Transition toward Food Systems Transformation

8. The Strategy for the Sustainable Development of the National Statistical System 2016 – 2025 and Vision by 2030
9. Infrastructure and rural development
10. National Strategy on Climate Change
11. National Strategy for the Advancement of Women e\
12. National Social Protection Strategy
13. National Policy on Energy Efficiency and Conservation
14. Labour force development
15. Tourism and Hospitality Roadmap
16. Strategic Action Plan for Private Sector Development
17. Protection of National Traditions and Cultures
18. Public Service Improvement
19. Legal Sector/Rule of Law
20. Sustainable Consumption and Production Roadmap of Lao PDR 2022-2025, the Vision 2030

These national and sectoral development policy frameworks are key to translating the vision of inclusive and sustainable development by leaving no one behind into reality. The roll-out of these strategies and action plans at all levels of the Government, in the coming years, will facilitate and unlock various pathways for advancing the national development agenda toward 2030. Implementation of these sectoral and cross-sectoral development frameworks need integrated approach taking into consideration of the limited human capital and financial resources. Therefore, greater interlinkages between different sectors and the national development framework is much needed. To do so, it is important to prioritize the most critical sectors and initiatives, focusing on those that have the greatest potential for impact and are most aligned with the country's development goals. Pathways to action areas highlighted under Chapter 4 of this VNR will be used to guide prioritization and synergies across various sectors.

## 3.2 Fostering Partnerships

Meaningful partnerships create synergies for the 2030 Agenda through combined skills, resources, and outreach capacities. Lao PDR will work to actively strengthen engagements across a diverse set of actors in the policy ecosystem to accelerate progress on the SDGs. Beyond traditional bilateral and multilateral partners, Lao PDR intends to expand collaborations with philanthropic foundations, impact investors, universities, and technology firms. Such ties could provide innovative financing mechanisms, research capacities and technical expertise to tackle systemic gaps. Multi-stakeholder partnerships allow leveraging complementary strengths towards shared goals.

Constructive participation of civil society organizations lends localized insights on contextual interventions and community mobilization for greater traction. Structured consultations via online platforms and offline workshops foster transparency and keep citizen voices integral to policy decisions impacting them. This is especially important for groups in vulnerable situations to articulate priorities and concerns.

Lao PDR recognizes that partnerships with the media raises public awareness on development issues and ensures accountability. Collaborations with think tanks, academics and researchers support evidence-based policies. The private sector remains crucial for service delivery,

infrastructure development and employment generation. But most partnerships require nurturing trust, open communication, and shared value creation for endurance.

The national SDG Secretariat intends to further guide the line ministries in accelerating sector-specific targets, resolving implementation obstacles and monitoring performance with evidence through more frequent consultations. Sub-national SDG acceleration units similarly require capacities to tailor global and national roadmaps to local contexts and drive localized innovation. In particular, more efforts will be made to fill in data gaps to better inform policy.

Institutional reinforcement must target statistical systems, M&E capacities, and grievance redressal mechanisms crucial for planning, tracking progress and upholding accountability. Mainstreaming SDGs into planning warrants moving from siloed interventions towards coordinated solutions spanning multiple agencies.

Mapping interlinkages between goals and targets using tools like causal loop diagrams can highlight trade-offs and co-benefits for integrated policymaking. More disaggregated data can inform targeted policies and programs focused on equity and inclusion. Ultimately, diverse partnerships allow pooling complementary resources, knowledge, and outreach for accelerated solutions. But they require open communications, aligned incentives and sustained efforts to build trust.

### **3.3 Leaving No One Behind**

The commitment to leave no one behind is central to the 2030 Agenda's pledge of reaching segments of society in a vulnerable situation first. The application of the LNOB principle is crucial, given the country's diverse and economically disadvantaged population. However, the analysis of LNOB in Lao PDR is still in its early stages. This suggests that there is a need for more in-depth and comprehensive research to fully understand the extent of exclusion and marginalization within the country. This involves identifying and addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by different groups, such as ethnic groups, women, young people, elderly, people with disabilities, migrants, and those living in remote or rural areas.

All SDGs touch lives of groups living in vulnerable situations in one way or another. Therefore, rather than introducing the groups most at risk of being left behind under each SDG, this VNR 3 intends to provide priority actions and an update on what have been done since the publication of VNR 2 prepared in 2021 where measures for the benefits of groups living in a vulnerable situation and ensure their contribution to the development of Lao PDR throughout the country were stated.

#### **1. Women and girls**

As stated under SDG 5 (Gender Equality), women's employment remains precarious, with few women in leadership positions and women taking on five times more unpaid domestic and care work than man on average, discriminatory gender norms remain, continuing high rates of maternal mortalities and adolescent pregnancies, gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against women (VAW) remains prevalent, while access to essential and quality sexual and reproductive health services and legal aid is limited. Women with intersecting deprivations are more likely to be left behind.

The Government strives for a future where every girl can fulfill her full potential and contribute meaningfully to our nation's development. As such, the Government has renewed its commitment to advancing gender equality and protecting the rights of women and girls in Lao PDR by strengthening governance, investing in education and empowerment, and mobilising communities to challenge harmful norms and practices.

The Lao Women's Union's and the NCAMWC will put greater efforts to deepen its partnership with partners focusing on the eradication of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy as a pathway to empowering girls and women. The ongoing national study on the drivers of child marriage and

adolescent pregnancy will be pivotal in developing evidence-based and context-specific strategies for eliminating child marriage in Laos.

In addition, emphasis is on 1) legal reforms and initiatives to improve gender equality budgeting and women's empowerment, 2) implementing legal and policy frameworks related to gender equality and combating violence against women and girls, and 3) Investing in women's and girls' life skills and expanding life-saving support to survivors of violence.

## **2. Children, Adolescents and youth**

Lao PDR has a young population, with one-third below 15 years old and half below 24 years old. The country has made significant progress in protecting and promoting child rights. However, children, adolescents, and youth, especially those with overlapping and intersecting deprivations, are still vulnerable. Stunting, violence against children (VAC), limited access to health, clean water and child-friendly services, early marriages, adolescent pregnancies, school drop-outs, limited learning – throughout life starting from early childhood – and economic opportunities are issues that need to be addressed to meet children's holistic development and wellbeing needs. If addressed, they would support realisation of the benefits of the demographic dividend. To ensure the realisation of the benefits of the demographic dividend in Laos, the Government has been prioritising the following strategies which will be the focus for the remaining years toward 2030:

- Investing in Education and Skills Development: Invest in education and skills development programs that cater to the needs of the young population, focusing on vocational training, entrepreneurship, and innovation
- Encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation by providing support for start-ups, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and promoting a culture of innovation and risk-taking
- Fostering a business-friendly environment by simplifying regulations, reducing bureaucracy, and providing incentives for investment and entrepreneurship.
- Developing human capital by investing in education, healthcare, and social services, focusing on the needs of the young population
- Promoting social inclusion by addressing poverty, inequality, and social exclusion, ensuring that all segments of society have access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities
- Developing a strong and effective government that is accountable, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the population, ensuring that policies and programs are implemented effectively
- Fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship by promoting a culture of risk-taking, encouraging experimentation, and providing support for start-ups and SMEs, and
- Developing a strong and effective healthcare system that provides access to quality healthcare services for all segments of society, focusing on the needs of the young population.

## **3. Older persons**

In 2020, the share of population older than 65 in Laos amounted to about 4.3%. It was forecasted that 7.6% of the population in Laos would be aged 65 years and older by 2040. While family members and community function as a safety net, there is no state-funded coherent and multifaceted response to the problems faced by older persons, who are more vulnerable, for example to COVID-19.

The Lao Government is always concerned with the health and living conditions of senior citizens and retirees. The Lao National Policy for the older people approved a decade ago focusing on: healthcare (treatment and recovery), protection and welfare, education and data and information provision, income enhancement, and encouraging the older people to participate in social activities by transferring knowledge to the young generation. However, there are number of challenges, which includes the lack of comprehensive legislation regarding older adults, and limited data on the older population, including health conditions, diseases, poverty and vulnerabilities. Therefore, new approaches will be needed to dealing with healthcare, workforce and retirement issues, living arrangements and intergenerational relations. Pathways for the action include:

- Establishing community-based healthcare services, including health education, disease prevention, and treatment, to ensure that elderly individuals have access to healthcare services close to their homes.
- Establishing a social security system that provides financial support to elderly individuals, including pensions and other forms of assistance.
- Fostering community engagement and social interaction among elderly individuals through community-based initiatives and social programs.
- Promoting education and awareness about the importance of intergenerational relations and the needs of elderly individuals, including through public awareness campaigns and community outreach programs.
- Building the capacity of healthcare providers, social workers, and other professionals to support elderly individuals and address their needs.

#### **4. People with disabilities**

In Lao PDR, more than 160,000 (2.77%) people live with a disability among the population aged over 5 years. Disability prevalence in Lao PDR is higher in remote geographical areas (3.33% in rural areas without roads, 2.86% in rural areas with roads, 2.48% in urban areas), and higher among diverse ethnic groups. Persons with disabilities aged over 10 had significantly lower labour participation and higher unemployment compared to persons without disabilities, in both rural and urban areas. Youth and Women with disability were particularly excluded from the education, vocational training and workforce.

Since ratifying in 2009, the Government of the Lao PDR has made noteworthy achievements in implementing the Committee on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) Convention, including through the amended 2015 Constitution, Law on Persons with Disabilities, and several other laws and policies on education, healthcare, legal aid, and employment. In 2016, the Government of Lao PDR submitted to the Committee on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) the initial National Report on the measures taken to implement and monitor the progress towards the full realization of the rights of persons with disabilities at the country level.

People with disabilities have been involving in the VNR (Voluntary National Review) process. Some of key activities include:

- **Participation in the VNR Development Process:** representatives from Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) participated in the youth consultation, CSO network consultation, inception Meeting and Stakeholder consultation as listed in the section 1 of this VNR (Table 2) – providing feedbacks on the draft report and ensuring that the perspectives and experiences of persons with disabilities were taken into account in the development of the report.
- **Technical inputs come from two key reports**

- In 2022, the CRPD Committee reviewed the Lao PDR’s implementation of the CRPD Convention for the first time. Based on this review, the Government has been working toward the development of a feasible and measurable CRPD National Action Plan (NAP) to implement the CRPD Concluding Observations.
- Disability Monograph 2020: The Disability Monograph was developed to provide national and local stakeholders with disaggregated disability data. This report was based on data from the 2015 Population and Housing Census (PHC) and included information on the prevalence of disabilities, causes of disability, and demographic characteristics of persons with disabilities.

## 5. Ethnic communities

To ensure ethnic groups’ full participation and service delivery, the Government has set Lao national targets of promoting solidarity and equality between multi-ethnic people in the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP. All sectors and provinces have included ethnic communities into their public investment programmes and development projects. Public awareness has been evolving through nation-wide roll out of the community radio (translation of key messages, broadcasting and production of relevant materials into Lao ethnic languages) on various development issues ranging from education, to health (in particular COVID-19 and recovery), infrastructure, agriculture, governance, UXO and others. The Government has also required, as per recommendations from the first and second VNRs, 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP mid-term review and others, production of statistical data disaggregated not only by gender but also by different segment of population. Looking forward, key action areas that need great attention are:

- Engaging with ethnic communities through participatory approaches, such as community-led planning and decision-making processes, to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are addressed,
- Developing cultural sensitivity and understanding among development practitioners and policymakers to effectively engage with ethnic communities and address their specific needs,
- Providing capacity-building programs for ethnic community leaders and members to enhance their skills and knowledge in areas such as sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, and entrepreneurship,
- Ensuring that ethnic communities have access to resources, including financial, technical, and logistical support, to enable them to participate in sustainable development initiatives, and
- Fostering partnerships between ethnic communities, government agencies, and other stakeholders to leverage resources, expertise, and networks to support sustainable development initiatives

## 6. Migrants

Lao PDR is a large source country of workers abroad, mainly to Thailand. Poverty, and social norms coupled with lack of employment opportunities in Lao PDR and the pull of better life elsewhere drive demand for migration. The Migration Profile exercise done in 2023 gave the opportunity to identify strengths, challenges, gaps and opportunities pertaining to the Government of Lao PDR. Based on recommendations from this migration profile exercise, looking forward, the Government has prioritized three broad areas synchronizing the three key findings of the exercise:

- Awareness of migration–development linkages is growing among government and non-government actors. However, there is still an overall lack of capacity, expertise and

financial resources to understand the linkages between migration and development, beyond labour migration.

- Data collection and analysis have improved over time. For instance, the Lao LFS became a reference in the region. There is still a lack of data, including those that can be disaggregated by migratory status and can serve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There is also a lack of diversity and often quality in available data in several areas of migration, such as labour migration, environmental migration, irregular migration and forced displacement.
- Various government actors oversee migration-relevant issues, making the portfolio of migration highly fragmented and collecting siloed migration-related data.

## **7. LGBTQ+**

In Lao PDR, there are currently no laws that specifically prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. While the government recognizes LGBTQ+ individuals in the Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS Prevention (Ministry of Health), there are no laws that fully protect or recognize LGBTQ+ people. Consequently, there are no clear procedures, mechanisms, or measures in place to address and report discrimination, harassment, or violence based on a person's sexual identity and/or gender expression. Additionally, there is limited available data on the nature and scope of problems that LGBTQ+ people are experiencing in the country.

However, recent government-led initiatives, such as the National Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy and the integration of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in all educational settings, have opened up space for community-based organizations to raise awareness about the complexities of being LGBTQ+ in Lao PDR. These efforts could potentially pave the way for greater inclusion and recognition of LGBTQ+ individuals in the country.

## **8. People living with HIV**

In Lao PDR, only 62% of children living with HIV are on treatment. About half of pregnant women living with HIV in Lao PDR did not access prevention of mother-to-child treatment services last year resulting in 30% of HIV transmission rate from mothers to children. It is estimated that at least one young adult becomes infected with HIV every day. 72% of total new HIV infections are among key populations (female entertainment workers, gay men and other men who have sex with men, transgender women, people who use and inject drugs) and their sexual partners. Increasing proportion of new HIV infections are among men and boys; they accounted for 68% all new HIV infections in 2022.

Stigma and discrimination against PLHIV are still high, largely due to limited understanding. The integration of antiretroviral treatment in the health care system remains a challenge, especially since the health care system still does not have universal coverage. To help address these issues and to work on HIV preventions, treatment and control, looking forward, the Government prioritises the following action areas:

- Public awareness campaigns and education programs can help to dispel myths and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS, reducing stigma and discrimination. This can be achieved through various channels, such as television, radio, and social media, as well as through community-based initiatives and outreach programs.
- Community engagement and participation are crucial for addressing stigma and discrimination. This can be achieved by involving local communities in the development and implementation of HIV/AIDS programs, ensuring that their needs and concerns are addressed, and fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.
- Providing support services, such as counseling, testing, and treatment, can help to reduce stigma and discrimination by ensuring that people living with HIV/AIDS have access to the

care and support they need. This can be achieved through the establishment of community-based organizations and the provision of financial and logistical support.

- The media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and attitudes towards people living with HIV/AIDS. Therefore, it is essential to promote positive and accurate representations of people living with HIV/AIDS in the media, reducing stigma and discrimination through media campaigns and outreach programs.

## 9. Other groups living in venerable situations

These include farmers with limited access to land, unskilled and unemployed workers, unpaid workers, persons at risk of statelessness, internally displaced persons, populations in informal settlements and urban sprawl and others. The Government fully recognise these groups and put greater efforts to ensure that no one is left behind from the national development agenda. The mid-term review of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP which was recently concluded, the recommendations from the first and second VNR, and other analytical reports highlight various key actions to address multi-sectoral issues of these groups. The Government takes careful approach on what needs to be done as there is no one size fits all formula. All issues need time, energy, resources and commitment. Therefore, the Government will do its best to the best capacity to take “Leave No One Behind” agenda forward with the spirit of solidary, unity and equality.

## 10. LNOB Analysis

With an update and priorities moving forward for various groups living in a vulnerable situation, the Government intends to explicitly produce more and better-quality disaggregated data, undertake vulnerability assessments, institute participatory monitoring and design targeted interventions addressing geographical, income-based, gender, disability, ethnic and other exclusions.

To achieve a full comprehensive analysis of LNOB in Lao PDR, it will be necessary to invest more time and resources, in particular, finance, capacity building, and technology in data collection, research, and engagement with affected communities. This may involve conducting surveys, interviews, and participatory assessments to gather insights directly from groups living in a vulnerable situation. It also requires the involvement of local organizations, government agencies, international partners, civil societies, private sector, communities themselves to ensure a holistic and inclusive approach.

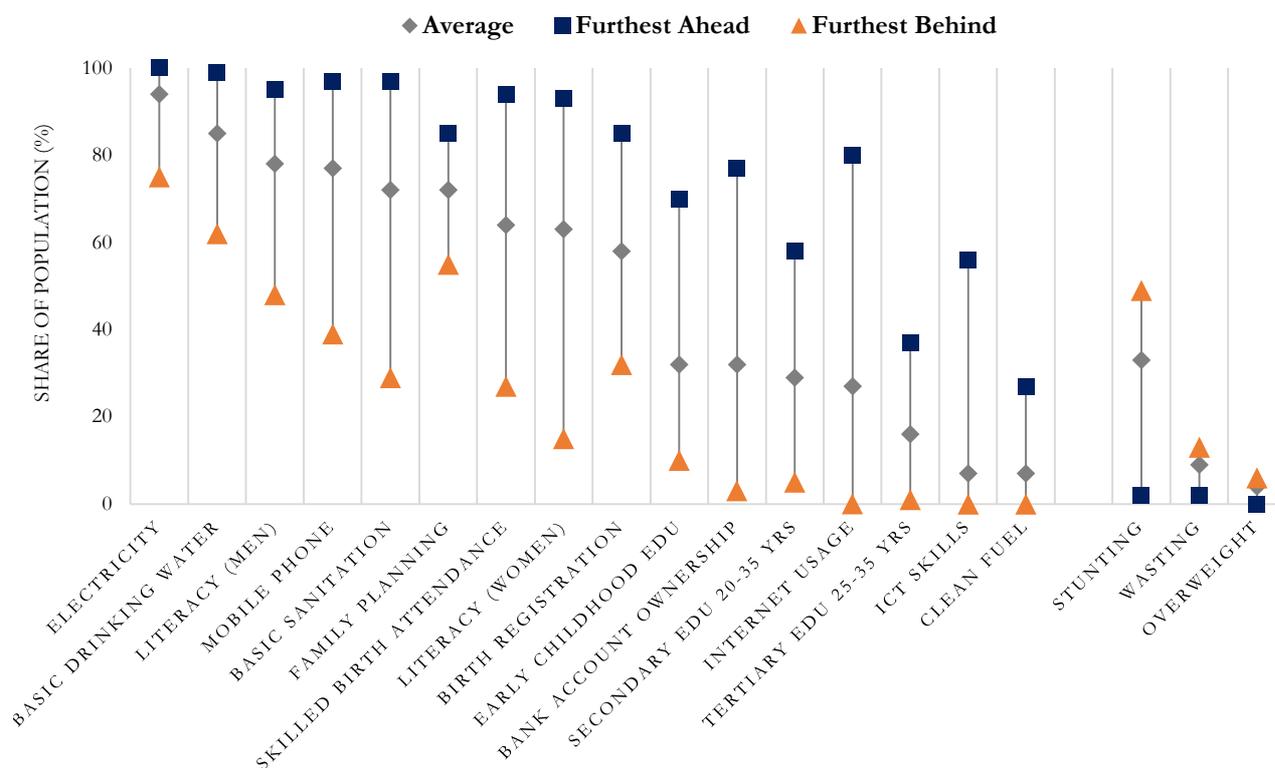
As a start, the Government took an initiative with support from the UNESCAP to produce an overview of inequality of opportunity in Lao PDR by demonstrating the gaps between furthest behind and furthest ahead groups in some SDG indicators with available disaggregated data from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) (2017).<sup>13</sup> Figure 16 below provides an overview of inequality of opportunity in Lao PDR by demonstrating the gaps between furthest behind (orange) and furthest ahead (blue) groups in 19 SDG indicators spanning SDGs 1-8, 16 and 17 as of 2017.

Gaps were particularly high in internet usage, literacy among women, bank account ownership, access to basic sanitation, access to skilled birth attendance and early childhood education. For instance, while 80 per cent of the furthest ahead individuals used the internet in the past 3 months preceding the survey, virtually no one in the furthest behind groups used the internet. Similarly, while 97 per cent of the furthest ahead households had access to basic sanitation, less than one-third among the furthest behind households had access to basic sanitation in 2017. Notably, gaps and overall prevalence is lower in child malnutrition (SDG 2.2) except for stunting.

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<sup>13</sup> Please note that MISC 2023 results are available at macro level. However, disaggregated data/micro data covering various elements of population like income group, geography/location, ethnicity etc...have not been published during the time pf VNR 3 preparation.

**Figure 16 - An overview of gaps in selected SDGs**

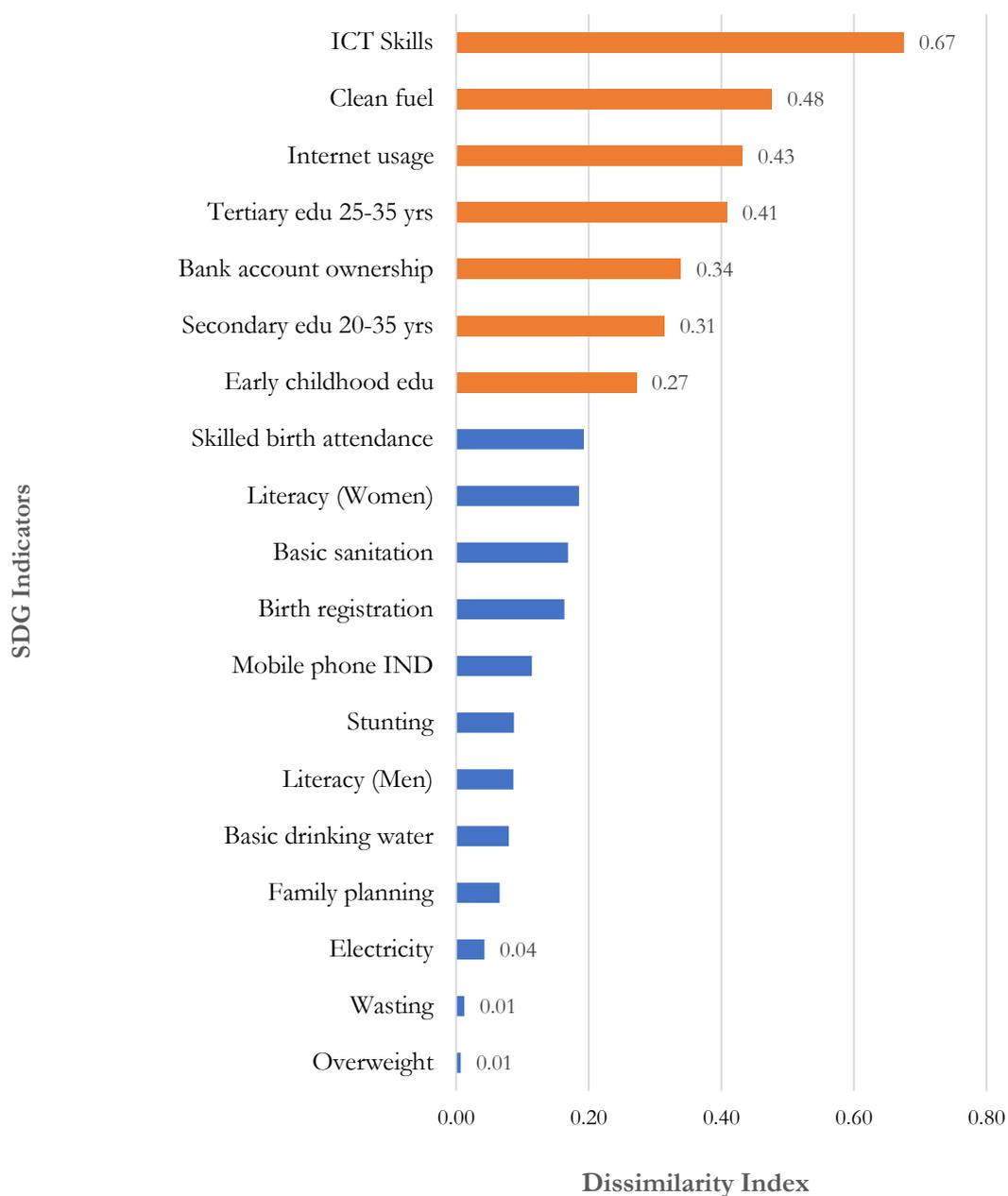


Notes: ESCAP elaborations based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2017) of Lao PDR available on <https://lnob.unescap.org/>

Based on this analysis, it is important that macro data has given overall picture of SDGs in Lao PDR. However, greater attention will be given to how various segments of population have been better off in moving forward together as a nation. For instance, a key message from this exercise is that in recent years, most of the SDG indicators experienced progress on average at national level. However, in many instances, the furthest behind could not catch up to the average households. The case of access to electricity is worth mentioning as access more than doubled among the furthest behind households (i.e. poorer and lower educated households) which helped furthest behind get much closer to the national average. Poverty and low education often intersect with rural residence to identify the furthest behind in various SDG indicators.

Figure 17 below offers an alternative measure of inequality of opportunity using the same data. The Dissimilarity Index (D-Index) measures how different groups - such as women, poorer households, or rural residents - fare in terms of access to a certain opportunity, or how different groups disproportionately experience a certain barrier. Like the Gini coefficient, the D-Index ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 indicates no inequality, and 1 indicates that the entire access to a service is reserved to a specific group of people with shared circumstances (e.g., men from urban areas). Inequality of opportunity is usually considered low when D-index ranges below 0.10. The SDG indicators marked in orange have relatively high inequality as D-index is higher than 0.20. Consequently, Figure 3.2 suggests that having ICT skills among youth (SDG 4), accessing clean fuels (SDG 7) and using the internet (SDG 17) are the top three most unequal SDG indicators in Lao PDR as of 2017. This implies that different population groups as defined by their contingent circumstances such as sex, age, education and location, among others, have highly diverse group averages relative to the national average.

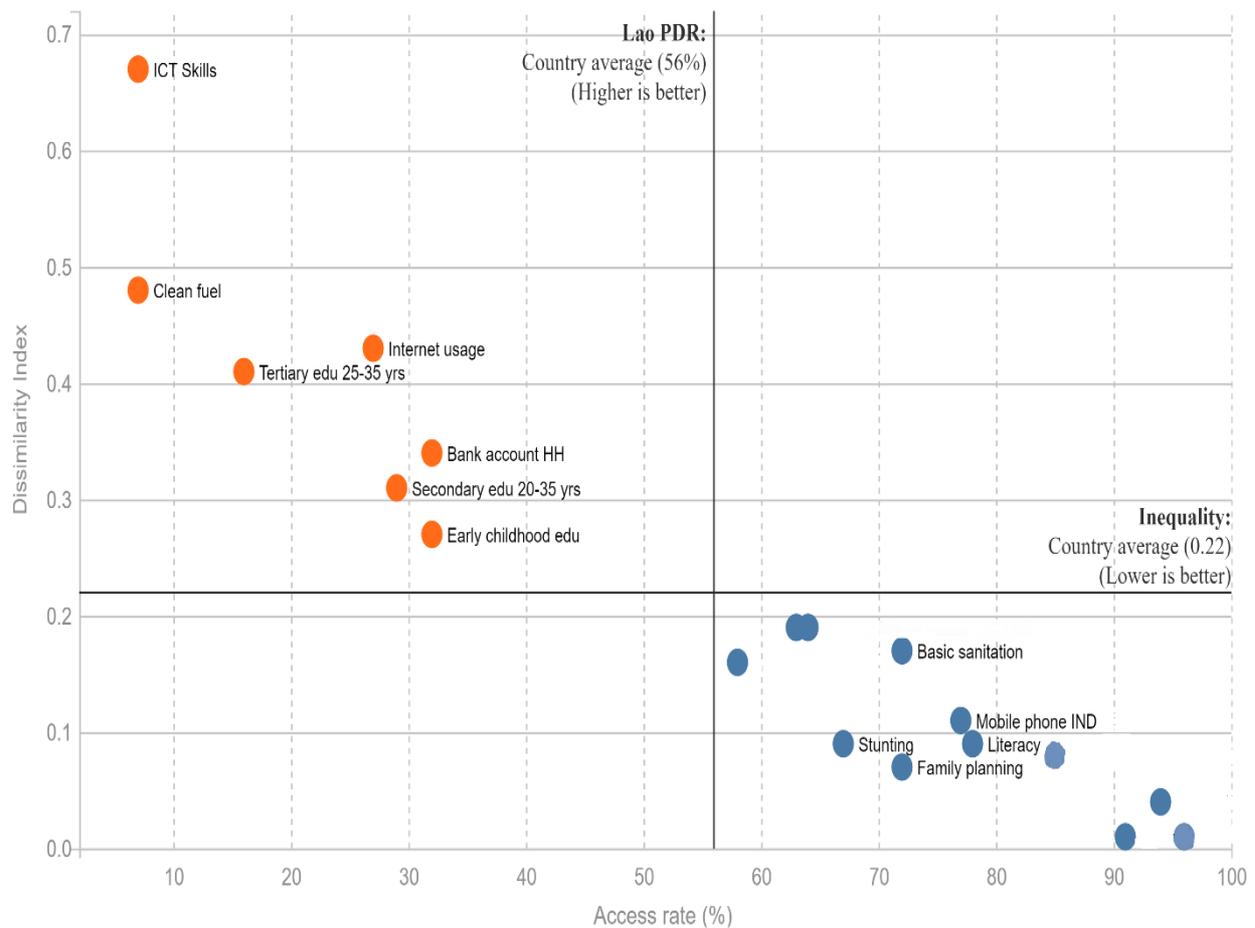
**Figure 17 - Inequality in SDGs by Dissimilarity Index**



Notes: ESCAP elaborations based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2017) of Lao PDR available on <https://lnob.unescap.org/>

Figure 18 below brings average access rates for SDGs together with inequality therein. While SDG indicators in the bottom-quadrant (marked in blue) are in a relatively good position with on average higher access rate and lower inequality, the SDG indicators on the upper-left quadrant require policy prioritization, as they are leaving large segments of the society behind. By expanding access in an inclusive manner across the provinces, the orange merged SDGs can move to bottom-right quadrant over time.

**Figure 18 - Overview of SDGs by Access and Inequality**



Notes: ESCAP elaborations based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2017) of Lao PDR available on <https://lnob.unescap.org/>

Figure 16, 17 and 18 demonstrates the commitment by the Government to further analyse the progress of SDGs in the country by not only focusing overall goals as a whole but also going deeper to identify groups in a vulnerable situation. This includes efforts to improve the quality and disaggregation of data in key indicators across different dimensions like geography, income, sex, education, disability status, ethnicity, and other factors. With more and better-quality data, evidence-informed policies and programs can be designed that specifically target and reach the excluded. Currently, there is a wealth of existing data and analysis from various human right mechanisms like CEDAW, CRPD, CRC, and others that can meaningfully contribute to a LNOB analysis. A commitment to join the dots between the work of human rights bodies have done and the work of development actors would be a critical step going forward. It would enable a prompt, tailored, and robust analysis that could inform targeted and effective policy-making in the spirit on delivering on the LNOB promise. The Government expects that this LNOB analysis will give clearer overviews with updated information by the time of VNR4 preparation which will be carried in 2027.

## Chapter 4 – Ways Forward

The primary responsibility for realizing the potential of development efforts and implementing various strategies in Lao PDR lies with its decision-makers who are in a position to set the direction and priorities for the country's development agenda. It is important that greater efforts are translated into actions in order to allocate resources, and create policies that will drive progress and improvement in various sectors such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and economy. This requires making informed choices, mobilizing domestic resources, and creating an environment conducive to sustainable development.

While decision-makers in Lao PDR bear the primary responsibility, the success of these efforts would also require sustained and committed engagement from international partners. These partners can provide valuable support in terms of financial resources, technical expertise, and capacity building. For instance, in the context of LDC graduation, international partners can assist Lao PDR in meeting the criteria for stability and progress across various fronts. This support can significantly contribute to the successful transition of Lao PDR to a more developed status.

Furthermore, given the vulnerability of countries like Lao PDR to major disruptive shocks beyond their control, such as climate change and economic downturns, international collaboration becomes even more critical. International partners can help Lao PDR build resilience, mitigate the impact of external shocks, and adapt to changing circumstances. This can involve supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, providing financial assistance during economic crises, or offering expertise in disaster risk reduction.

The crises of our time, whether they are environmental, social, health, economic, or conflict-related, all have local dimensions. This means that the responses to these crises must be localized to effectively address the specific needs and challenges of communities. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its ambitious goals and targets, can only achieve its transformative potential if it is fully realized at the local level.

Placing communities at the center of sustainable development is the ultimate goal in order to empower them to take action and participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Local actions and monitoring mechanisms play a vital role in accelerating the six key transitions outlined in the 2030 Agenda. These transitions include areas such as energy, urban development, consumption and production patterns, food and agriculture, water and sanitation, and biodiversity and ecosystems.

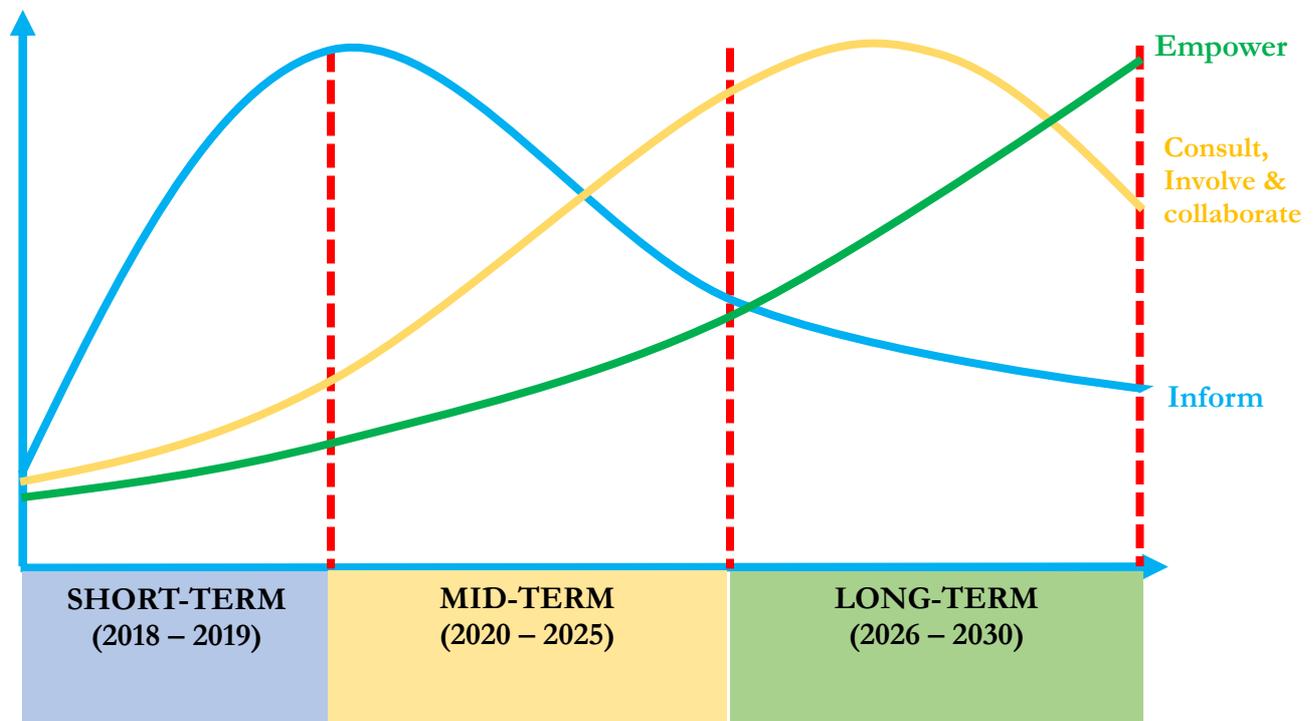
This VNR3 (2024) provides clearer overview of the SDG progress building on the work done for VNR1 (2018) and VNR 2 (2021) where trend of various SDG indicators have now emerged. In particular, there is a consensus across SDG focal points and national and international stakeholders that overall, none of the 18 SDGs have met the mid-points (2023) of the SDG national targets, indicating that a need for greater work to be done across all areas of sustainable development.

As stated in the first and second VNRs, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (SDG roadmap in case of Laos) has been carried out through the greater national, sectoral and provincial stakeholder engagement (or SDG Stakeholder Engagement - SSE). The figure 19 highlights three phrases of SDG implementation in Lao PDR.

- **Short-term phrase was the time of VNR 1 (2018)** focusing on descriptive analysis (more about informing various stakeholders across the country on SDGs and coordination, reporting and monitoring mechanism).
- **Mid-term phrase has been the time of VNR2 (2021) and VNR3 (2024)** focusing on trend and track analysis (consensus made on national SDG targets based on proper baselines, identification of national interventions and trend and track of various SDG indicators have emerged).

- For next steps from this VNR 3 (2024), it will be long-term phrase (VNR 4 (2027) and Final VNR (2030)) focusing on greater empowering and effective implementation on various national, sectoral and provincial development frameworks through meaning consultations and involvement of not government, development partners but also civil society, private sector, local communities themselves and other stakeholders. Informing about SDGs and their importance will still be the case but it will be at the minimal level.

Figure 19 - Stakeholder engagement for the SDGs' implementation



**Inform:** The level of SDG awareness and understanding is still relatively low among many stakeholders. Hence, informing is appropriate in the short-term strategy of SSE as building a solid base of understanding of SDG is crucial for other levels of engagement.

**Consult, Involve & collaborate:** The stakeholders and the objectives of each SSE have to be clearly identified so that relevant levels of stakeholder engagement can be adopted.

**Empower:** With the context of Lao PDR and taken into account of its development trajectory, only some activities can be taken in the hand of the public to decide.

To ensure greater empowering and effective implementation of various national, sectoral and provincial development frameworks and as a follow-up from this VNR 3(2024) and under the SSE framework highlighted above, some of key next steps for SDG implementation in Lao PDR toward 2030 include:

1. **National and sectoral policy frameworks - Agenda 2030, NSEDP, LDC graduation and**
  - Strengthening of links between Agenda 2030 and 10<sup>th</sup> NSEDPs (2026-2030) building on the conclusion of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP (2021-2025), with focus on transition and graduation from Least Developed Country status and restoring macro-economic stability.

- Implementation of a smooth transition strategy for LDC graduation as a follow up from the CDP LDC 2024 review.
- Synchronization of the implementation of Sectoral development frameworks in line with 10<sup>th</sup> NSEDP M&E framework and financing strategy

## **2. Horizontal and vertical integration**

- Prioritizing and sequencing the national SDG indicators, particularly those linked to LDC graduation and green growth which have already been integrated into the NSEDP process.
- Ensuring clearer division of labour in monitoring and reporting progress of SDG indicators integrated in the national M&E framework (10<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and sectoral ones)
- Continued promotion of inter-sectoral collaboration, inter alia through the Round Table Process - Forming/strengthening issue-based coalitions to address critical issues affecting a number of SDGs as highlighted in this VNR
- Strengthening of the institutional arrangements for SDG implementation, in particular the National SDG Secretariat, with Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Planning and Investment and Lao Statistics Bureau as main institutions - Further strengthening of partnership across sectoral line ministries, provinces, development partners, private sector, civil society, other stakeholders.
- Enhancing financial and capacity support to local authorities to integrate sustainability criteria and agenda into their work using existing mechanisms such as the Sam Sang Policy.

## **3. Data and statistics**

Statistical systems and M&E capacities to monitor development progress needs to be improved, systematized and coherent as well as synchronizing the tracking of SDG implementation progress and the NSEDP implementation progress. This requires an effective coordination mechanism involving government stakeholders from various ministries at central and local levels, private sector players, development partners (traditional and non-traditional), civil society organizations, and non-governmental organizations and others in order to ensure coherence in policies across different dimensions for a meaningful and impactful outcome.

- Mapping out the next steps to the next Voluntary National Review (VNR4-2027 and Final VNR-2030) - high quality, disaggregated data is essential to ensure equitable progress against goals and targets.
- Continuing working on the SDG open platform and SDG Tracker and creating a better link with the current national database and other relevant systems.
- Facilitate work of Lao Statistics Bureau in partnerships with national and international partners to support SDG monitoring and reporting - while surveys and censuses provide important data for majority of SDG indicators, quality administrative data will be needed for some of them and the process of collecting administrative data will need to be strengthened.

## **4. Integrated Financing**

- Reinforcing the better links between national budget and national planning using the 2030 Agenda as a driving force.
- Key priority under each transition and SDGs highlighted under this VNR will help inform the focused implementation of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP financing strategy, and costing exercise and development of the 10<sup>th</sup> NSEDP financing strategy.

- Ensuring better alignment of international development cooperation and other development finance and empowering the private sector to participate more fully in the sustainable development agenda.
- Making financing for SDGs/ NSEDP a regular part of the Round Table dialogue. It is important to have strong links between discussion on different types of partnerships, and discussions on different types of finance. Having an overview of the overall resource envelope and the characteristics of different flows is crucial for formulating long-term strategies on the best and most catalytic use of ODA and other types of international public finance.

## **5. LNOB analysis**

- Further analyse the progress of SDGs in the country by not only focusing overall goals as a whole but also going deeper to identify groups in a vulnerable situation. This includes efforts to improve the quality and disaggregation of data in key indicators across different dimensions like geography, income, sex, education, disability status, ethnicity, and other factors. With more and better-quality data, evidence-informed policies and programs can be designed that specifically target and reach the excluded.
- Join the dots between the work of human rights bodies that Lao PDR has rectified like CEDAW, CRPD, CRC, and others and the work of development actors to enable a prompt, tailored, and robust analysis that could inform targeted and effective policy-making in the spirit on delivering on the LNOB promise.

## **6. Partnerships with Private Sector**

- Prioritizing measures that ensure macroeconomic stability. The NSEDP has a financing gap that is expected to be filled by investments and loans. This will only happen if Lao PDR has macroeconomic stability and offers a safe place for investment.
- Strengthening private sector participation and improving the business environment needs to be based on rule or law and international commitments, including the ILO conventions. Stability of Lao PDR is major asset to attract investments.
- Accelerating measures to market Lao PDR as a place for investment and actively search for investors from abroad. These could use Lao PDR and its Special Economic Zones as hubs to access ASEAN markets. The Lao Chambers of Commerce, the Ministry of Planning and Investment, and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce will cooperate in marketing Lao PDR to potential investors, and
- Revitalization of Lao Business Forum and its link with sectoral private sector engagement and investments and greater link to the national planning process (NSEDP) and national development cooperation forum (Round Table Process and Sector Working Group)

## **7. Partnerships with civil society and citizens**

- Involvement of authorities from provinces, districts, and villages in both implementing and reporting/monitoring SDG indicators
- Build capacity at province, district and village level to understand and implement SDGs. Engagement of Lao citizens and civil society will help ensure no one is left behind.
- Promoting participation at the village level and actively involve people in the SDG mobilization process. People need to be engaged as partners. Rather than being done to people, or for people, development needs to take place with people, involving people at every stage. The Lao citizens have the best sense of what their needs are, have resources to help achieve the SDGs, and can help monitor progress, and

- Continuing to include civil society representatives in consultations and institutional arrangements for SDG implementation and monitoring. Key recommendations from civil society as highlighted in the introduction provide solid foundations for the Government’s efforts toward achievement of SDG goals and targets by 2030.
- Involvement of youth and volunteers in a systematic way to implement and monitor the progress of SDGs will ensure the participation and contribution of all partners in the society to achieve the SDGs.

8. **Focusing on pathways of key action areas (From VNR3 toward 2030).** Strategically, this VNR provides pathways for priority action areas from now till 2030. Summary of these pathways as per Table 5 is a result from various VNR3 consultations across Government Ministries and Ministries equivalent including those at the provincial levels.

**Table 5 - Summary of pathways for priority action areas from VNR3 toward 2030**

<b>Transitions and SDGs - Pathways to key actions toward 2030</b>	
<b>Food Systems</b>	<p><b>SDG 1 (No poverty)</b></p> <p>While <b>the country has made noteworthy progress in poverty reduction</b> with the proportion of persons with consumptions below that national poverty line falling, reaching 2030 national target will not be possible at the current rate as the current overall progress is still far from the mid-point (2023). <b>Greater efforts are needed in four key areas</b> in order to accelerate the country progress towards achieving the 2030 national target for poverty reduction.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Social protection</b> by strengthening social assistance programs, health insurance, and education support and focusing on building resilience among vulnerable groups, such as children, women, and the elderly, by providing targeted support and services.</li> <li>2. <b>Access to basic services</b> such as healthcare, education, and sanitation by prioritising investments and improving the quality and efficiency in addressing poverty.</li> <li>3. <b>Resources for poverty programs</b> by allocating sufficient budgetary resources, leveraging international aid, and mobilizing private sector support and building partnerships with civil society organizations and rural communities.</li> <li>4. <b>Building resilience among rural and remote communities</b> to disasters and shocks by providing targeted support and services to enhance their ability to adapt to climate change and natural disasters.</li> </ol>
	<p><b>SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)</b></p> <p>Lao PDR has made significant progress towards achieving zero hunger, with <b>declining rates of undernourishment and stunting</b>. However, <b>undernourishment, food security, and malnutrition remain pressing challenges</b>, particularly in rural and remote areas. The Government has been actively addressing these issues through various initiatives, including increasing investment in agriculture and promoting nutrition education. Despite these efforts, <b>concrete actions are necessary to transform food systems through a multi-sectoral approach</b> to ensure:</p>

## Transitions and SDGs - Pathways to key actions toward 2030

1. **Nutritious food for all** by promoting sustainable agriculture practices, improving food distribution networks, and increasing awareness about proper nutrition,
2. **Sustainable agriculture productivity and sufficient food production/distribution/consumption** through modern practices, technology adoption, and diversification,
3. **Livelihood and employment** by promoting commercialized agriculture, improving market links, and providing training and capacity-building programs, and
4. **Resilience to climate change and disasters** through climate-resilient agricultural practices, early warning systems, and disaster risk reduction measures.

To achieve these goals, a multi-sectoral approach is necessary, involving government agencies, private sector, civil society, and local communities. This will require **sustained efforts to address the root causes** of undernourishment, food insecurity, and malnutrition, as well as ongoing **monitoring and evaluation** to track progress and identify areas for improvement.

### SDG 3 (Health and Well-Being)

While Lao PDR has made **significant progress in improving health outcomes** in recent years, with **reductions in maternal mortality ratio, infant under-5 mortality and neonatal mortality rates, tuberculosis and malaria cases, and increased birth attendance by skilled health personnel**, some challenges persist in achieving the goal of ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all. **Particular attention needs to be focused** on addressing:

1. **Non-Communicable Diseases and Mental Health** which are on the rise and require long-term care and management.
2. **Substance abuse**, particularly the use of alcohol and tobacco which is a growing concern and requires a comprehensive approach that includes education, prevention, and treatment programs.
3. **Road traffic accidents** - a significant cause of morbidity and mortality, particularly among young people.
4. **Sexual and reproductive health** which need greater investments in education, training of health workers, and the provision of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services.
5. **Universal Health Coverage** which requires sustained investments in healthcare infrastructure, training and retention of healthcare workers, and the implementation of effective health financing mechanisms.
6. **Impact of pollution** including air pollution, water pollution, and soil contamination which requires investments in environmental protection, waste management, and the promotion of sustainable practices.

## Transitions and SDGs - Pathways to key actions toward 2030

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. <b>Research and development</b> for the health sector which faces challenges in allocating sufficient resources and requires sustained investments and promotion of collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and healthcare providers.</li> <li>8. <b>Health workforce training, recruitment, and retention</b> as well as the implementation of effective strategies for equitable <b>distribution of healthcare workers</b>.</li> <li>9. <b>A comprehensive and integrated approach</b> that addresses the social determinants of health, promotes healthy behaviours, and strengthens the healthcare system.</li> <li>10. Sustained efforts to <b>improve healthcare access, infrastructure, workforce, financing, and policy, as well as collaboration with various stakeholders</b>, including the government, civil society, and development partners.</li> </ol> <p>To address these challenges and achieve the goal of ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all, the Government is committed to implement a comprehensive and integrated approach that addresses the social determinants of health, promotes healthy behaviours, and strengthens the healthcare system. This will require sustained efforts to improve healthcare access, infrastructure, workforce, financing, and policy, as well as collaboration with various stakeholders, including the government, civil society, and development partners.</p>
<b>Energy Access and Affordability</b>	<b>SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy)</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Economic growth:</b> A reliable and affordable energy supply is essential for powering industries, businesses, and infrastructure. By developing its energy sector, Lao PDR can support economic growth and create opportunities for investment, job creation, and overall prosperity.</li> <li>2. <b>Rural electrification:</b> Access to electricity is a key driver of development, particularly in rural areas. By expanding the energy sector and reaching underserved communities, Lao PDR can improve living standards, stimulate economic activities, and reduce disparities between urban and rural areas.</li> <li>3. <b>Environmental sustainability:</b> Lao PDR has significant potential for renewable energy, particularly in hydropower and solar energy. By prioritizing the development of clean energy sources, Lao PDR can reduce its reliance on fossil fuels, mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, and contribute to global efforts to combat climate change.</li> <li>4. <b>Energy security:</b> Diversifying the energy mix and investing in domestic energy sources can enhance energy security for Lao PDR. By reducing its dependence on imported energy, the country can ensure a stable and reliable energy supply, mitigating the risks associated with external energy dependencies.</li> <li>5. <b>Regional cooperation:</b> The development of the energy sector can facilitate regional energy cooperation, enabling Lao PDR to engage in cross-border energy trade and collaboration with neighboring countries. This can enhance regional energy security, promote</li> </ol>

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	economic integration, and strengthen diplomatic ties with other nations.
<b>Digital connectivity</b>	<p><b>SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure)</b></p> <p>Lao PDR has made marginal progress in advancing SDG 9 with notable improvements in transport infrastructure (particularly in rural areas) and regional connectivity. The majority of the rural population now live in villages with all-weather road access. Regional transport linkages have improved connectivity to neighbouring countries, leading to increased intraregional trade and tourism. The length and quality of the road infrastructure still needs improvement, especially in rural areas, while urban areas need better transport infrastructure and services.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Sectors in industrialization efforts include garment and textile manufacturing, food processing and hydropower development.</b> This requires incentive packages (a careful approach is needed and it will not have impact of government recollection - tax exemptions will be discouraged as in line with the 9th NSEDP Financing Strategy and the STS) to attract domestic and foreign investment and technology transfer to bolster industrial growth, with a particular emphasis on sustainable and environmentally friendly practices.</li> <li><b>SMEs and micro- small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are major employers but their productivity is relatively low.</b> SMEs and MSMEs are hampered by skill shortages and the lack of access to technology, finance, and markets. Small (and registered) firms in Lao PDR consider access to finance as one of their three major obstacles for business growth.</li> <li><b>Private partnership, skilled researchers and collaboration between academia and industry</b> which will help advance various efforts of the Government’s initiatives in promoting R&amp;D (among others, for instance, establishment of Research Institutions in various fields, such as agriculture, natural resources, and technology, the development of a national innovation strategy and the establishment of innovation hubs, promoting entrepreneurship and start-ups).</li> <li><b>Climate-resilient infrastructure</b> focusing on: different mix of transport (not only road but rail and air transport) for the movement of good and people; Hydro power plants’ safety and standards; maintenance of irrigation systems and water supply and quality; access to communication by rural population; private sector investment in infrastructure, and disaster risk reduction and management</li> <li><b>Digital transformation</b> by implementing the 5-Year National Digital Economic Development Plan (2021-2025) for the realization of the country’s 20- Year National Digital Economic Development Vision (2021-2040), including 10-Year National Digital Economy Strategy (2021-2030).</li> </ol> <p><b>SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals)</b></p> <p>Regional and international cooperation and integration and effective development agenda have been an important agenda for the country as</p>

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	<p>highlighted in the current 9th NSEDP (2021-2025) and Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan (2015-2025), respectively.</p> <p>While Lao PDR has made <b>good progress in enhancing statistical capacity and ICT</b>, the country still faces significant challenges in overcoming limitations in government revenue, debt sustainability, effective development cooperation, diversified development finance landscapes, and export growth. <b>Addressing these challenges will require sustained efforts and innovative solutions to ensure sustainable development in the country.</b> Therefore, key focuses, moving forward to accelerate efforts toward SDG 17, include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Government revenue:</b> increasing domestic revenue through taxation, public-private partnerships, and other innovative mechanisms and strengthening public financial management systems and improving tax administration can also enhance revenue collection. In particular, revisit the investment promotion measures to reduce tax exemption as in line with the 9th NSEDP Financing Strategy and STS.</li> <li>2. <b>Debt sustainability:</b> implementing fiscal discipline through budget transparency reducing government spending, and increasing revenue which can help reduce the debt burden.</li> <li>3. <b>Effective Development Cooperation:</b> reviewing the implementation of the Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan and strengthening the effectiveness of the Round Table Process including the relevance of Sector Working Groups</li> <li>4. <b>Diversifying development finance options</b> through innovative financing mechanisms and enhancing access to financing for SMEs and rural communities.</li> <li>5. <b>Diversifying exports</b> through promoting high-value products such as organic coffee, specialty rice, and organic fruits can enhance the country's export base.</li> </ol> <p><b>The 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) Financing Strategy</b> adopted in 2023 outlines policy and frameworks to unlock finance for sustainable development in Lao PDR. <b>Looking forward, it is crucial that the various action areas of the Financing Strategy are effectively implemented with concrete results to drive progress and achieve the country's development goals.</b></p> <p><b>In this regard, statistical systems and M&amp;E capacities to monitor development progress needs to be improved, systematized, coherent, and synchronized with the tracking of SDG implementation progress and the NSEDP implementation progress.</b> This requires an effective coordination mechanism involving government stakeholders from various ministries at central and local levels, private sector players, development partners (traditional and non-traditional), civil society organizations, and non-governmental organizations and others in order to ensure coherence in policies across different dimensions for a meaningful and impactful outcome.</p>
<p><b>Education</b></p>	<p><b>SDG 4 (Education)</b></p>

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	<p><b>Education reforms and policy changes have helped improve the quality of education and enrolment in Lao PDR</b> throughout the years. In particular, efforts to increase school enrolment have been effective in primary enrolment and there has been an improvement in education facilities and equal access to education across segments of population. However, quality of education remains a major concern and there is an urgent need to address some key challenges:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>High dropout rates, particularly at the lower levels of education</b></li> <li>2. <b>Participation in some form of early childhood education (ECE)</b> which is important for primary school readiness and learning. However, after years of increasing enrolments, there has been decrease in public enrolments.</li> <li>3. <b>Production of skilled workers</b> which has been reduced with significant declines in enrolments in secondary education, TVET, and TE</li> <li>4. <b>Gradual but significant decline in the teacher workforce</b> which is placing additional pressure on the education system</li> <li>5. <b>Student learning outcomes and teacher competency</b> which have implication for the development of human capital, necessary for transitioning to a modern and high growth economy.</li> <li>6. <b>Basic literacy and mathematics knowledge and strengthening content knowledge of teachers</b> are greater priorities for use of limited development funds.</li> <li>7. <b>Education budget allocation as a share of the national budget, and as a percentage of GDP</b> to meet the 18% benchmark set in the education law.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Job and Social Protection</b></p>	<p><b>SDG 5 (Gender Equality)</b></p> <p>Lao PDR has achieved <b>noticeable progress</b> towards gender equality and empowerment of women. <b>Three areas</b> of progress include (1) the formulation of <b>legal frameworks</b> that provide an overarching architecture for the effective implementation of advancement of women’s rights, (2) the <b>improved health care and service</b> to serve the medical needs for women and (3) the <b>better education attainment</b> by women. However, from now till 2030, key focuses among priorities include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Gross enrolment ratio for girls and boys</b> as there are still significant disparities in education between boys and girls and girls are more likely to drop out of school.</li> <li>2. <b>Women employment</b> particularly in the formal sector with increased social protection and benefits.</li> <li>3. <b>Healthcare, particularly in terms of maternal and reproductive health</b> which is higher than the regional average.</li> <li>4. <b>Economic empowerment</b> particularly in terms of access to financial services and ownership of assets.</li> <li>5. <b>Gender-Based Violence</b> in term physical or sexual violence and emotional abuse.</li> </ol>

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6. **Implementation and enforcement of regulatory frameworks/policies** as there are still gaps and inconsistencies in their implementation and resources are still limited.
7. **Awareness** about gender equality and the importance of promoting gender equality in all aspects of life.

### SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)

The Lao PDR experienced rapid economic growth in the 2000s and 2010s, with GDP growth averaging 7.2% per year from 2000 to 2019. This growth was driven by various factors, including the country's strategic location, natural resources, and government policies aimed at promoting economic development. However, the growth rate gradually decelerated from 8.0% to 5.5% between 2013 and 2019 due to emerging structural constraints which include, among others, infrastructure development, human capital, institutional framework, and macroeconomic management. The impact of COVID-19 further slowed down growth to 3.3% in 2020, slightly increased to 3.5% in 2021, and 4.4% in 2022 but then decline to 3.7% (2023).

With the situation before and after COVID-19, the economic growth has been largely resource-driven and capital-intensive, but not broad-based and inclusive generating sufficient productive employment. Labour productivity grew significantly in recent years, but remains limited and without sufficient impact on the agriculture and fishery sectors, which account for about 70 percent of employed persons. Therefore, to ensure economic growth translates into decent work in the country and accelerate progress for SDG8, the Government of Lao PDR prioritises the following action areas:

1. Encouraging **inclusive growth** by focusing on sectors that create decent jobs and promote social cohesion. This includes promoting **agriculture sector productivity** and increased earnings for farm workers, **investing manufacturing, and green tourism & services**, as well as **supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurship** which are on the rise. by providing access to financing, business training, and mentorship. This includes implementing policies that promote SME growth, and support MSME development are more related to improving the business environment, strengthening public-private dialogue, and strengthening the SME Fund
2. Developing **human capital** by investing in education and training programs that enhance skills and competitiveness. This includes vocational training, apprenticeships, and lifelong learning initiatives. The skills gap in the labour force will be urgently addressed. To meet the market demand for medium- and high-skilled workers, especially within the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), special efforts will be needed to upgrade education and training for young people, improve labour skills, raise national skills standards, and promote mutual recognition of qualifications.
3. Focusing on **demographic transition** as the large numbers of young people entering labour market. This will include work on two key issues: 1) strengthening **labour market information systems** to better understand labor market trends, skills demand, and job

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vacancies and 2) encouraging **entrepreneurship** by providing access to financing, business training, and mentorship for aspiring entrepreneurs (this includes supporting start-ups, innovation hubs, and entrepreneurship programs)

4. Strengthening **social protection systems** to ensure that workers have access to essential social protection, including healthcare, pension schemes, and unemployment benefits. At the same time, there is a need for promoting **decent work standards** by enforcing labor laws and regulations, ensuring fair wages, and protecting workers' rights. This includes implementing the current policies that support fair labor practices, such as minimum wage standards and occupational health and safety regulations.
5. Promoting **gender equality in the workplace** by addressing gender-based discrimination, ensuring equal pay for equal work, and creating a supportive environment for women to thrive in their careers. This includes implementing policies that support work-life balance and parental leave.
6. Addressing **informal employment** by developing a strategy to formalize informal employment and provide support for informal workers to transition to formal employment. This can help improve working conditions, access to social protection, and overall job quality.

### **SDG 18 (Lives Safe from UXO)**

The scale and impact of the UXO problem far exceeds the resources and capacities available to deal with it, particularly clearance capacity. Millions of UXO remain and thousands of hectares of confirmed hazardous areas remain to be cleared.

The scale and scope of the issue lie well beyond the national capacity to cope, and support from development partners continues to be required. The Lao PDR UXO Survey Procedures have already contributed to greater efficiencies in the sector and help accelerate clearance. The Government of Lao PDR is prioritizing the following actions and strategies:

1. Strengthening national capacity for coordination and efficiency.
2. Ensuring the quality of operational data in the national database, in order to enable proper data analysis and a more robust evidence-based reporting.
3. Developing management policy and procedures to "main-stream" UXO survivors into health, education, and employment services.
4. Assisting line Ministries to take into account the impact of UXO in their planning and budgeting.
5. Developing a comprehensive resource mobilization and fund-raising strategy, expanding beyond traditional donors.
6. Continuing to strengthen the capacity of the Lao Army in humanitarian mine action.

**Transitions and SDGs - Pathways to key actions toward 2030**

	<p>7. Identifying and promoting emerging technologies that will improve the performance and efficiency of operations.</p>
<p><b>Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss and Pollution</b></p>	<p><b>SDG 13 (Climate Actions)</b></p> <p><b>Lao PDR was the first country in ASEAN to submit its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)</b> to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in September 2015. Building on national development and environmental protection policies, the country aimed to make full use of existing institutional capacity and financial resources, and embed NDC targets in existing policies and planning.</p> <p>In May 2021, after becoming the first ASEAN country to pledge the net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 at the 2020 Climate Ambitions Summit, <b>the Government of Lao PDR submitted its revised NDC</b> including this net-zero goal, along with an unconditional emission reduction target of 60% by 2030 relative to the baseline scenario, and a conditional emissions reduction target of up to 70% by 2030, contingent upon international support. The country strengthened mitigation measures in the forestry and energy sectors and applied gender equality perspectives while revising the NDC. Adaptation and resilience areas include: agriculture, forestry, and other land use; Water; Transportation; and Health.</p> <p>The Government has also cited <b>a circular economy as a key instrument to pursue a low carbon development pathway</b>. In 2021, Lao PDR became only the third country to complete a comprehensive metabolic analysis process to help its greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation ambition, take stock of material stocks and flows, and move towards a circular economy.</p> <p>Looking forwards, Lao PDR is also expected to submit a revised NDC in 2025, ahead of COP30 and Lao PDR is also expected to submit a revised NDC in 2025, ahead of COP30 and <b>the Government of Lao PDR is prioritizing action areas, as set out in its NDC submission</b> as follow:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Climate change policies: Efforts to enhance resilience and adaptive capacity in Lao PDR involve a combination of measures, including investments in disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, sustainable natural resource management, and inclusive development policies</li> <li>2. Circular economy: Transitioning to a circular economy will involve a fundamental change in the current economic model. It will require the country to shift to a system in which materials are used such that they can be cycled indefinitely and on the smallest scale possible</li> <li>3. Climate change Awareness: Comprehensive evidence base about how human mobility patterns will respond to climate change disruptions, human exposure to mobility-related climate hazards.</li> <li>4. Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)</li> </ol>

## Transitions and SDGs - Pathways to key actions toward 2030

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Capacity strengthening to establish a credible institution with direct access to climate finance.</li><li>• Ensuring that domestic and international finance is successfully acquired, utilized, and accounted for.</li><li>• Strengthening the overall strategy, coordination of NDC implementation and regulatory framework.</li><li>• Strengthening national technical capacity in mitigation and adaptation, and</li><li>• Strengthening institutional capacities for monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) of the NDC.</li><li>• Strengthening capacity and systems for SDG environmental data reporting.</li></ul>
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## Chapter 5 – Conclusion

Passing through the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, **the Lao PDR's 3<sup>rd</sup> VNR arrives at a critical juncture, coinciding with the country's mid-term review of the 9th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan-NSEDP (2021-2025) and the Committee for Development Policy (CDP)'s 2024 Triennial Review of the Lao PDR's graduation from the Least Developed Countries status.** This VNR focuses on both Trend and Track Analysis, examining progress and status of all 17 SDGs and One National SDG18 “Lives Safe from UXO” while analysing more in-depth 11 key selected SDGs, which are revolved around Six Transitions: Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs guided by UNSDG. Its main context reflects the national planning cycle, the assessment of the national strategies, policies, plans and budgets in alignment with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and key focuses for the country to accelerate the implementation as part of the decade of action and its re-commitment at the SDG Summit in September 2023.

**While there have been positive strides in some SDG indicators, it is clear that deviations from the desired trajectory and regression are evident in many areas.** This situation is particularly concerning as Lao PDR's population is going through a rapid demographic transition. The young population profile of the country provides a unique and time-limited opportunity for Lao PDR to utilize the demographic window of opportunity and boost the economic growth and development. The choices and investments made in the current decades are crucial in shaping the future and realizing the long-term potential of the country. In light of these challenges, it is essential for Lao PDR to reassess its strategies for achieving the SDGs and prioritize actions that build resilience, promote inclusive and sustainable development, and address the vulnerabilities exposed by recent shocks.

**Lao PDR continues implementing the SDGs through its national and sectoral development plans using various financing sources identified in 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP Financing Strategy.** The Government is committed to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditure, as shown by the localized indicators for effective, accountable and transparent institutions under SDG 16 and by the NSEDP Outputs on fiscal and monetary policies, integrated development planning and budgeting, and the quality of investment. Together, these will help to strengthen planning, budgeting, and budget monitoring systems, review the allocation of domestic public revenue against national priorities, and increase core social sector allocations to address social inequalities.

**Given the Lao PDR's vulnerability to external shocks, such as climate change and economic downturns, international collaboration becomes even more critical.** Development partners can help build resilience, mitigate the impact of shocks, and adapt to changing circumstances. This should involve supporting climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts, providing financial assistance during economic crises and supporting disaster risk reduction.

**Extra efforts are still required in planning and coordination to reach the poorest and most left-behind groups.** Collaboration and coordination needs to improve both horizontally across line ministries, and vertically between central and local levels, so that interventions converge to reach the poorest and most left behind groups. Recognizes that sustainable development is not a one-size-fits-all solution and that localized strategies are essential for addressing the diverse and complex challenges. SDG implementation goes beyond the realm of official authorities and requires the active engagement and participation of all segments of society at various levels. The implementation of the SDGs is essential for ensuring that *no one is left behind* in the pursuit of sustainable development. By prioritizing local development, we can work towards creating more inclusive and equitable societies where everyone can benefit from progress and prosperity.

**Administrative data systems in many goal areas still need strengthening.** As Lao PDR moves forward with the SDGs and implements its national development plans (NSEDP and sectoral plans), enhanced support is needed to strengthen the information systems of ministries, particularly in the areas where these cannot yet produce robust and disaggregated data on the localized SDG indicators.

**The focuses and priorities highlighted in this VNR3 (2024) provide strategic framework to guide the development of Lao PDR in moving forward after the setback from the COVID-19 amid multi-challenges across various areas.** Narratives highlighted in various sections of this VNR allows the Lao PDR to share best practices, practical policies and local interventions at the global level. Therefore, the upcoming 10<sup>th</sup> NSEDP is critical to translate these key priorities into measurable actions at national, sectoral and provincial levels.

**Ownership and commitment are the key in moving forward.** The primary responsibility for realizing development goals and strategies in the Lao PDR lies with its government at all levels. Multi-stakeholder engagement and participation of whole-of-government and whole-of-society are crucial to make informed policies, translate commitment into actions and mobilize sufficient resources so as to drive progress and improvement in various sectors such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and economy.

**Placing communities at the center of sustainable development entails their actions and participation in policy-making processes that affect their lives.** As outlined in the 2030 Agenda, with its ambitious goals and targets, we can only achieve its transformative potential if it is fully realized at the local level. Thus, local actions play a vital role in advancing the six key transition pathways crucial for delivering the SDGs in Lao PDR toward 2030.

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## **Statistical Annex**

**Historical Data (2015-2023) and 2030 Targets on National SDG Indicators**

**SDG 1 – 13 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owner – Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry**

**Note**

- Number of SDG indicators in total = 13.
- However, sequence no.13 is divided into two indicators.
- Therefore, as an easy reference for the SWGr owners, **total number of SDG indicators that need to be reported against is 14.**

SDG Implementation (SDGi) Owners				
MAF	BOL	MOF	MOLSW	MONRE
5 indicators	2 Indicators	1 Indicator	3 Indicators	3 Indicators
1.1.1	1.4.4	1.a.2.a	1.3.1	1.4.3
1.2.1	1.4.5		1.5.1	1.5.2
1.2.2			1.a.2.b	1.5.6
1.2.3				
1.4.1				

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
1.1.1 Percentage of population living below the international poverty line (US\$2.15/day) – in 2022, this was shifted from \$1.90 to \$2.15 - a change from dollars given in 2011 prices to that given in 2017 prices.	National	2013	10.9	%	MAF	Survey - LSB (LECS)			7.1						0	
	Male		10.9						7.2				0			
	Female		10.9						7.1				0			
	Urban		2.3						2.2				0			
	Rural		14.4						9.5				0			
	<15Y		15.4						9.9				0			
	15-64		8.6						6				0			
	65+		10.5						5.4				0			
1.2.1 Percentage of population living below the national poverty line	National	2013	24.6	%	MAF	Survey - LSB (LECS)			18.3						15.6	
	Male		24.7						18.5				12.4			
	Female		24.6						18.2				12.3			
	Urban		7.9						7				4			
	Rural		31.4						23.8				15.7			

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
	<15Y		32.6						24.3						16.3	
	15-24		22.7						19.7						11.4	
	25-64		18						12.4						9	
	65+		22.1						15.1						11.1	
	Lao-Tai		14.6						10.8						7.3	
	Mon-Khmer		48.1						33.2						24	
	Chine-Tibet		25.7						17.9						12.8	
	Hmong-Iumien		45.2						38.5						22.6	
	Other Ethnic groups		33.5						28.1						16.8	
1.2.2 Percentage of children who are multi-dimensionally deprived according to national definitions	National	2013	33.1	%	MAF	Survey - LSB (LECS)			22						17.1	
	Male		33.2						22					16.6		
	Female		33						21.8					16.5		
	<15Y		44.5						29.8					22.3		
	15-24		28.7						22.2					14.4		
	25-64		24.2						15.4					12.1		
	65+		29.1						19.2					14.6		
	Urban		42.5						22					21.3		
	Rural		9.9						28.9					5		
	Lao-Tai		19.5						12.3					9.7		
	Mon-Khmer		61.5						39.6					30.8		
	Chine-Tibet		64.1						34.9					32.1		
	Hmong-Iumien		57.4						44.6					28.7		
	Other Ethnic groups		43.2						30.7					21.6		

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
1.2.3* Percentage families defined as poor by National Committee for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (NCRDPE), Lao PDR	National	2015	6.6	%	MAF	Admin - MAF	6.5	5.9	5.3	5.2	22.22	21.25	18.77	16.87	5.6	Note 1.1
							Based on Decree 309					Based on Decree 348				
<p><b>Note 1.1</b> - The admin data follows the household poverty criteria as specified under Decree 309 covering one criterion. However, this Decree has been updated to become Decree 348 covering six criteria for household poverty. Analysis of this SDG indicator highlights declining trend from 2020 to 2023. However, 2030 target for this indicator was set as a follow up from VNR2 in 2022 at 5.6% based on Decree 309. Therefore, a proposal is to change the 2030 target using Decree 348 as a reference. In order to do so, a consideration needs to be made on the yearly reduction of household poverty which is around 1%. Therefore, if the progress speed remains the same and no other major shocks, the 2030 target for this SDG indicator could be around <math>9.87\% = 16.87\%</math> (current household poverty) <math>- 1\%</math> (yearly reduction rate) <math>\times 7</math> (number of years from 2024-2030)</p>																
1.3.1 Percentage of population covered by Social Protection Schemes:																
Social State Enterprise	National	2015	2.8	%	MOLS W	Admin - MOLSW	3	3.4	4.9	3.5	3.7	4	4.31	6.83	6	Note 1.2
Social State			12.7				15.6	13	13.3	10.79	10.83	6.65	4.3	8.72	6.62	
Health Community & Poor			15.2				18.8	79.2	72.9	73.9	84.18	78.43	78.59	61.36	85	
Insurance			1				1.3	1	1	1	0.78	1.22	0.27	-	1.3	
<p><b>Note 1.2</b> - The data for 2023 was submitted after the final update which means that the overall progress may potentially change as a result of further updates. Therefore, it is important to consider that the current status and progress may be subject to revision as more recent information becomes available.</p>																
1.4.1 Percentage of population living in households with access to basic services:																
- Access to secondary education	National	2017	83.1	%	MAF	Survey - LSB (LSIS)		83.1							95.6	

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress		
- Access to health service	National		74.3		MAF	Survey - LSB (LSIS)		74.3							85.4			
- Access to improved water	National		83.9						83.9									96.5
	Urban		96.7						96.7									100
	Rural		78.3						78.3									100
	Lao-Tai		91.5						91.5									100
	Mon-Khmer		67.5						67.5									100
	Hmong-Mien		78.1						78.1									100
	Chinese-Tibetan		80.2						80.2									100
	Other Ethnic groups		76.6						76.6									100
	I quintile (poorest)		58.4						58.4									100
	II quintile		75.1						75.1									100
	III quintile		89.0						89.0									100
	IV quintile		97.4						97.4									100
	V quintile		99.8						99.8									100
- Access to micro-finance services	National									-								100
- Access to electricity	National		93					93						96.4	100			
	Urban		99.5					99.5							100			

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
- Access to roads in all seasons	Rural		90.1					90.1							100	
	National		83.4					83.4							95.9	
1.4.3* Number of certificates for tenure rights to land issued per year	National	2016	76,847	Number	MONRE	Admin - MONRE	78,729	117,772	132,286	153,020	97,398	97,293	129,898	191,286	320,000	Note 3
<p><b>Note 3:</b> It is being proposed to move to 1.3, as it is viewed as one the social protection measures that align with objectives and goals of social security.</p>																
1.4.4* Ratio of (a) bank accounts and (b) financial institution/micro finance account held by adult population (18 years old and above) as compared to total population	National	2015														
(a) Bank accounts			33.4		BOL	Admin - BOL	36.82	39.95	39.9	50.51	38.15	44.67	53.05		52.2	
(b) Financial institution/micro-finance account		2.4					2.57	3.04	2.92	3.5	3.31	3.85	3.95		3.85	
1.4.5* Percentage of (a) villages and (b) districts having:																
(a) Villages																
- Bank branches or service units					BOL		-	-	-	2.91	4.37	4.46	4.45		3.85	
- Microfinance institutions (All types)		1.5			Admin - BOL		1.5	1.7	1.65	1.65	1.84	1.79	2		3.88	
(b) Districts																
- Bank branches or service units										82.43	98.64	98.64	99.32		100	

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
- Microfinance institutions (All types)			28.4				28.37	31.75	32.43	31.08	35.81	35.81	39.18		37.8	
1.5.1 Persons per 100.000 population directly affected by natural disasters	National	2015		per 100,000	MOLSW	Admin - MOLSW										
- Dead			0.1				0.07	0.14	0.91	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.13	0	0	
- Injury			0.38				0	0	0.02	0.22	0.09	0.22	0.13	0	0	
- Missing			0				0	0	0.37	0.09	0.04	0	0	0	0	
- Homeless			1.37				0	0	0.05	0	0	0	1.41	0	0	
1.5.2 Percentage of cost of damages affected from natural disaster to GDP				% of GDP	MONE											
1.5.6* The number of national advance warning centers and the number of meteorological and hydrological parameters measuring institutions that have been improved and activated.				No.	MONE											Note 4
Meteorological station									58		8		23		45	
Hydrological station									105		29		11	8	25	
Seismic data measuring station										17		17				
Rain gauge station													32			
Total																
<p><b>Note 4:</b> Please provide more specific information about the input needed, and transform the data an accumulated number to ensure a comprehensive and thorough representation of the information. This will enable a more complete and accurate understanding of the data in its entirety.</p>																

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
1.a.2.a General government expenditure on		2016														
(a) Health																
- % of total government expenditure			6.12	% of gov exp	MOF	Admin - MOF	6.12								12	
- % of GDP			1.51	% of GDP			1.51									
(b) Education																
- % of total government expenditure			12.59	% pf gov exp	MOF	Admin - MOF	12.59								17	
- % of GDP			3.1	% of GDP			4.24								4	
1.a.2.b General government expenditure on social protection																

**SDG 2 – 11 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owners – Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Ministry of Health**

**Note**

- Number of SDG indicators in total = 11.
- However, SDGi sequence no.18 is divided into two indicators.
- Therefore, for an easy reference of the SWGr owner, **total number of SDG indicators that need to be reported against is 12.**

SDGi Owners		
MAF	MOH	MOIC
5 indicators	6 Indicators	1 Indicator
2.1.2	2.1.1	2.c.1
2.1.4	2.1.3	
2.3.1	2.2.1	
2.a.1	2.2.1.a	
2.a.2	2.2.3	
	2.2.4	

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall process
2.1.1 Percentage of prevalence of undernourishment in the population	National	2015	6.7	Percent	MOH	FAO estimate (FAO Statical pocket book)	5.9	5.6	5.3	5.4	5.1	4.7	4.7		2.9	
2.1.2 Percentage of prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)	National	2015	29.4	Percent	MAF	FAO estimate (FAO Statical pocket book)	29.4	29.4	29.4	29.4	31.8	34.1	34.1		27.1	
2.1.3* Percentage of population consuming less than the minimum dietary energy requirement of 2100 cal/day/person according to the Food Poverty Line defined by the Government	National	2013	20.1	Percent	MOH	Survey - LSB (LECS)									10	

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall process
2.1.4* Food production (in tons):	National															Note 1
- Rice		2015	4,102,000	in 1,000 kg	MAF	Admin - MAF	4,148,800	4,055,409	3,279,110	3,534,499	3,506,812	3,660,050	3,781,580		4,717,300	
- Sweet corn			384,712				284,500	236,825	168,875	178,250	156,199	167,999	170,930		324,513	
- Vegetable			1,683,405				1,690,900	1,370,040	1,337,375	1,466,850	1,450,706	1,437,781	1,486,667		1,935,916	
- Meat and fish			1,361,065				1,383,455	1,537,735	1,145,690	439,000	465,500	485,480	507,644		1,565,225	
<p><b>Note 1:</b> Please thoroughly verify the accuracy of the data pertaining to "sweet corn" from the MAF annual report, and also ensure the precision of the information regarding "meat and fish". Additionally, carefully examine the target highlight that is marked in red to confirm its alignment with the intended objectives and goals of the report.</p>																
2.2.1 Prevalence of stunting among children under 5 years of age	National	2015	35.5	Percent	MOH	Base line - Lao Child Anthropometry Assessment Survey: Add-On to the 2015 National Immunization Survey, Final Report, February 2016 and updated data is based on LSIS		33				30.2 (ADB)		32.8	20	
2.2.1.a* Prevalence of stunting among under 2 years old (for Lao PDR's commitment to SUN 1000 days programme)	National	2015	42	Percent	MOH	Base line - Lao Child Anthropometry Assessment Survey: Add-On to the 2015 National Immunization Survey, Final Report, February 2016 and updated data is based on LSIS		25.4							9.3	
2.2.3* Prevalence of wasting among children under 5	National	2012	5.1	Percent	MOH	Survey - LSB (LSIS)		9						10.7	5	

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall process
2.2.4* Prevalence of overweight among children under 5	National	2015	2.5	Percent	MOH	Base line - Lao Child Anthropometry Assessment Survey: Add-On to the 2015 National Immunization Survey, Final Report, February 2016 and updated data in 2017 and 2022 is based on LSIS		3.5						2.8	2.5	
2.3.1 Agricultural value added per labour unit in US\$				US\$	MAF											
2.a.1 Share of agricultural spending in government expenditures, where agriculture includes crops, livestock, fisheries, productive forestry, and hunting sectors		2017	1.02	% pf gov exp	MAF	Admin- MOF		1.02	1.44	2.01	1.49				2.1	
2.a.2 Total official flows (official development assistance plus other official flows) distributed to the agriculture sector in US\$		2015	75.9	US\$	MAF	OECD database	83.8	96	110.8	102.8	103.8	89.6	74.08		101.1	
2.c.1 Availability of food price list		2015	39	Unit (list)	MOIC	Admin- MOIC	39	39	39	98	98	98	98	98	115	

**SDG 3 – 27 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owners –Ministry of Health**

**Note**

- **Number of SDG indicators in total = 27.**
- However, SDGi sequence no.41 is divided into three indicators and SDGi no.42 is divided into two indicators.
- Therefore, for an easy reference of the SWGr owner, **total number of SDG indicators that need to be reported against is 30.**

SDGi Owners	
MOH	MOPS
29 indicators	1 Indicator 3.6.1

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 population	National	2015	206	per 100,000	MOH	Baseline Survey - LSB (PHC); Admin -MOH for other years	196	185	72	70			64		70	
		2016	49			HMIS/DHIS2/MOH	48.6	83.4	72.3	68.4	66.4	60.8	64.1	43.2		
3.1.2 Proportion of birth attended by skilled health personnel	National	2012	41.5	Percent	MOH	Survey - LSB (LSIS)			64.4					79.8	90	
						HMIS/DHIS2/MOH	57.4	64.8	68	69	73	79	80.6	85.1	90	
3.2.1 Under-five mortality rate per 100,000 population	National	2012	79	per 100,000	MOH	Survey - LSB (LSIS)		46						28	25	
						WHO estimates	51.5	49.4	47.5	45.8	44.1	42.5				
						Admin - MOH	15	18	18	17	13.5	43 (WB)				
						HMIS/DHIS2/MOH	15	18	18	17	13.5	14.3	14.8	13.4		

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress		
3.2.2 Neonatal mortality rate (28 days old) per 100,000 population	National	2012	32	per 100,000	MOH	Survey - LSB (LSIS)		18						12	10			
						Admin - MOH	6.8	7.4	7.4	6.9								
						HMIS/DHIS2/MOH	47	45	36	96	111	83	83					
3.2.3* Infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births	National	2012	68	per 100,000	MOH	Survey - LSB (LSIS)		40						25	12			
						Admin - MOH	13.1	15.6	15.8	14.4	12.2	12.8	13	11.8	12			
						HMIS/DHIS2/MOH	13.1	15.6	15.8	14.4	12.2	12.9	13.2		12			
3.3.1 Estimated number of new HIV infection, number/per 1000 by sex, age and key populations group	National	2015	0.08	per 1,000	MOH	Admin - MOH	0.15	0.14	0.14	0.13	0.13	0.12	0.18		0			
	Male																	
	Female																	
	Age group 1																	
	Age group 2																	
	Age group 3																	
	Other characteristic																	
3.3.1.a Percentage of people with diagnosed HIV sustained ART	National	2015	32	Percent	MOH	Admin - MOH	39	47	50	56	78	75	77		100			
3.3.2 Incidence of TB (all forms) per 100,000 population per year	National	2016	175	per 100,000	MOH	WHO Global Tuberculosis Report 2022	175	168	162	155	149	143			107			
						HMIS/DHIS2/MOH	47	44.7	36.4	95.7	110.5	83.4	83					
3.3.3 Malaria incidence rate per 1,000 in Lao PDR and among the population living in areas where malaria transmission occurs	National	2015	4.9	per 1000	MOH	Admin – MOH with support from WHO	7.8	5.6	4.2	0.94	0.49	0.54	0.82		0			

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress	
- Number of blood smears examined in a year in the total population under malaria surveillance % (ABER)	National			Percent	MOH	HMIS/DHIS2/MOH	4	3.8	4.1	8	8	8.8	11.3		0		
3.3.4 Percentage of infants receiving three doses of hepatitis B vaccine	National	2012	55.5	Percent	MOH	Survey - LSB (LSIS)		60.8						61.3	77.1		
						HMIS/DHIS2/MOH	55.7	63.2	69.9	71.3	71.8	77.9	77.9		95		
3.3.5 Number of people (in thousands) requiring treatment and care for any one of the NTDs targeted by the WHO NTD Roadmap and World Health Assembly resolutions, and reported to WHO	National	2015	2,183,066	1,000 persons	MOH	Admin - MOH	2,206,011	1,953,002	2,031,804	225,689	205,253	215,029			0		
3.4.1 Mortality of cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease for 30-70 years old	National	2015	27.1	Percent	MOH	Admin - MOH	27			26.8 (ADB)					0		
3.5.2 Harmful use of alcohol, defined according to the national context as alcohol per capita consumption (aged 15 years and older) within a calendar year in litres of pure alcohol)	National	2015	10.1	Percent	MOH	Admin - MOH		10.7		11.5					8.6		
3.6.1 Number of deaths from road traffic accidents a year per 100,000 population	National	2015	14.91	per 100,000	MOPS	Admin - MOPS	16	15.25	14.18	15.91	14.25	11.32	12.72		6.06		
Number of deaths from road traffic accidents a year per total population		2015	995	Projected total population	MOPS	Admin - MOPS	1086	1053	995	1134	1031	831	947		498		
	Male		21.9	per 100,000						25.9							11
	Female		8.5	per 100,000								9.7					

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress	
3.7.1 Percentage of women of reproductive age (aged 15-49) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods	National	2012	61.3	Percent	MOH	Survey - LSB (LSIS)		71.7						74.9	100		
	Urban		56.9					66.6						100			
	Rural		62.9					74.1						100			
- FP: IUD coverage	National			Percent	MOH	HMIS/DHIS2/MOH	8.2	8.8	8.8	8.9	8.8	8.9	8.6				
- FP: Implant coverage							3.1	4.4	6.1	6.9	8.6	9.8	9.1				
- FP: Condom coverage							5.5	6.1	5.5	4.4	3.9	4.1	3.9				
- FP: Depose (Injectable)							38.8	37	33.3	30.3	32.3	29.5	30.8				
- FP: Single pill coverage							12.9	13.2	14.6	20	13.5	14.3	15.1				
3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate per 1,000 women																	
- Aged 10-14	National	2012	1.28	per 1,000 women	MOH	Survey - LSB (LSIS)		2.57							0.9		
	Urban																
	Rural																
- Aged 15-19	National	2012	94.4					83.4						89.0	53.1		
	Urban		44					42									
	Rural		114					101									
3.8.1.a Coverage of essential health services:																	
Prevention:																	
- % Antenatal care coverage (at least 4 visits)	National	2015	52	Percent	MOH	Admin - MOH	56.1	62.2	68.1	70.4	72.3	71.2	73.4			100	
- % Antenatal care coverage (at least 4 visits)						HMIS/DHIS2/MOH	56.5	59.6	68.3	70.6	72.3	71.4	73.7				
3.8.1.b Coverage of essential health services:																	

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
Prevention:																
- % Measles & rubella (MR) coverage (%) among 9-12 months old children		2015	80	Percent	MOH	Admin - MOH	78.1	88.1	91.8	88.9					100	
- EPI: MCV 1 coverage (Annualized)						HMIS/DHIS2/MOH	78.1	88.1	91.8	88.9	85.1	79.1	81.6			
3.8.1.c Coverage of essential health services:		2015	88			Admin - MOH	86	89							100	
Treatment:																
- % of tuberculosis cases detected under DOTS				Percent	MOH											
- % of tuberculosis cases cured under DOTS						88.6	87.2	90.8	90							
- TB - DOTS-2b: percentage of treatment success of tuberculosis patients who were discovered: - confirmed to be infected, and returned again in the total number of registered treatment during the reporting period.				Percent	MOH	HMIS/DHIS2/MOH	88.6	87.2	90.8	90	60.7					
3.8.2.a Out of pocket health expenditure as % of total health expenditure		2014	39	Percent	MOH	Admin - WHO		42.9							20	
3.8.2.b Out of pocket health expenditure per capita (US\$)		2015	23.8	US\$			25.3	28.3	27.7							<40
3.9.2 Estimated deaths/year attributable to unsafe water, unsafe sanitation and lack of hygiene (diarrhea only)		2016	11					72	72							
3.9.3 Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning		2015	0.6							0.6					0	
3.a.1 Percentage of age standardized prevalence of current tobacco use among persons aged 15 and above	National			Percent	MOH											
	Female	2017	12.5					12.5						3.8	0	
	Male	2017	65.7				Survey - LSB (LSIS)		65.7						36.9	0

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress		
3.a.2* Percentage of prevalence of current tobacco use among adolescent age 13-15 years (Total)	National			Percent	MOH	Survey - LSB (LSIS)									0			
	Female	2017	0.3					0.3										
	Male	2017	8.3					8.3										
3.b.2 Total net official development assistance disbursed to the basic health sectors		2015	57.6	Million US\$	MOH	Admin - OECD	49											
3.b.3 Percentage of health facilities with essential medicines available based on MOH essential drug list				Percent	MOH													
3.b.4* Total net official development assistance for health as % of total health expenditure				Percent	MOH													
3.c.1 Health workers per 1,000 population	National	2015	2.9	per 1,000 population	MOH	NHSR 2014-2015			3		2.92	2.72			3.2			
- Urban	Urban										7.8				1.91			2.2
- Rural	Rural										2.4				6.07			7
- Doctors											0.8			0.42	0.06			0.5
- Nurses											1.2			0.79	0.66			0.8
- Midwives														0.22	0.53			0.6
- Doctors									Health Personal HPIMs/MOH					0.42	0.4875			
- Nurses														0.79	0.8599			
- Midwives														0.22	0.2719			
3.d.1 Lao PDR adopts International Health Regulations (IHR) capacity and health emergency preparedness: Yes/No					MOH	Admin - WHO												

**SDG 4 – 19 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owners – Ministry of Education and Sports**

**Note**

- Number of SDG indicators in total = 19.
- However, SDGi sequence no 65 and 66 is divided into two indicators, respectively.
- Therefore, for an easy reference of the SWGr owner, total number of SDG indicators that need to be reported against is 21.

SDGi Owners	
MOES	MTC
20 Indicators	1 Indicator 4.4.1

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress			
4.1.1 Percentage of students (i) in grades 2 and 3 primary education, (ii) at the end of primary education ( grade 5), and (iii) at the end of lower secondary education achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics																			
- Reading (Grades 2 and 3 primary education)	National				MOES	LSIS								16.2					
	Female		34			Admin-MOES									66				
	Male																		
- Reading (Grade 5)	National	2019	2			SEA-PLM 2019: Regional Learning Assessment				2							24.7		
	Female		3								3				24.7				
	Male		2								2				24.7				
- Reading (End of lower secondary)	National						???											52	
	Female																	52	
	Male																	52	
- Mathematics (Grades 2 and 3 primary education)	National						LSIS					7.9					19.7	24.4	
	Female		18					Admin-MOES					8.6						42
	Male												7.9						

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress		
- Mathematics (Grade 5)	National	2019	7.9			SEA-PLM 2019: Regional Learning Assessment				7.9					27.1			
	Female		8.6										27.2					
	Male		7.9										27.3					
- Mathematics (End of lower secondary)	National					???				7.9							32	
	Female										8.6							32
	Male										7.9							32
4.1.2* Administration of a national representative learning assessment (i) in grades 2 and 3 primary education, (ii) at the end of primary education ( grade 5), and (iii) at the end of lower secondary education																		
(i) in grades 2 and 3 primary education			83.4		MOES	Admin-MOES									87.6 (LSIS)	99.8		
(ii) at the end of primary education ( grade 5)			53.5													56.2(LSIS )	78.6	
(iii) at the end of lower secondary education			31.1													37.4(LSIS )	57.4	
4.1.3* Gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education																		
- primary education		2015	103	Percent	MOES	Admin - MOES	103	105	105	101	100	97.5	97.7		100			
- lower secondary education			59				70.4	72.6	71.8	71.6	71.6	70.2	68.3		75			
- upper secondary education			39.9				42.7	45.2	44.9	52	52.1	47.7	44.7		60			
4.1.4* Completion rate by sex																		
- Primary	National	2017	83.4	Percent	MOES	Survey – LSB (LSIS)		83.4							87.6	99.8		
	Female		83.4															
	Male		83.5															

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
- Lower Secondary	National	2017	53.5	Percent	MOES	Survey – LSB (LSIS)		53.5					58 (WB)	56.2	78.6	
	Female		52.9									58 (WB)				
	Male		54.2									58.1 (WB)				
- Upper Secondary	National	2017	31.1	Percent	MOES	Survey – LSB (LSIS)		31.1						34.7	57.4	
	Female		30.6													
	Male		31.6													
4.1.5* Out of school rate (in %) for children of primary school age, lower secondary school age, and upper secondary school age, by sex																
(a) Primary Age	National	2017 (2015)	10.4 (1.4)	Percent	MOES	Survey – LSB (LSIS) (ADMIN Data from LESMIS)	1.4	10.4 (1.3)	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.3	2	13.8	1	
	Female		10.6 (1.7)				1.7	10.6 (1.5)	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.4	2.2	12.3		
	Male		10.1(1.2)				1.2	10.1(1.0)	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.7	15.0		
(b) Lower Secondary Age	National	2017 (2015)	16.6 (17.4)	Percent	MOES	Survey – LSB (LSIS) (ADMIN Data from LESMIS)	19.8	16.6 (18)	19.1	20.3	19.5	21.4	24.1	29.1	8.6	
	Female		18 (18.1)				20	18 (18.6)	19.4	20.3	19.6	21.5	23.9	29.3		
	Male		15.2 (16.7)				19.5	15.2 (17.4)	18.8	20.3	19.4	21.3	24.3	28.8		
(c) Upper Secondary Age	National	2017 (2015)	38.1 (42.6)	Percent	MOES	Survey – LSB (LSIS) (ADMIN Data from LESMIS)	38.4	38.1 (39.6)	40.5	38.4	41.4	41.8	43.7	58.0	26.5	
	Female		41.8 (46.3)				42	41.8 (42.6)	43.3	42	43.9	44.3	50.4	58.0		
	Male		34.8 (38.8)				34.8	34.8 (36.7)	37.7	34.8	38.8	39.2	46.9	58.0		

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress	
4.1.6* Percentage of children over-age for grade in primary education and lower secondary education																	
- Primary	National	2015	16.7	Percent	MOES	Admin - MOES		14.2	12.7	10.6		7.1	6.4		4.2		
- Lower Secondary	National		26.2					28.4	24.1	9.2		16.4	14.1		2.8		
- Primary	National	2013	24.7			Survey - LSB (LECS)			14.7								
	Female		23.0						14.1								
	Male		26.1						15.3								
- Lower Secondary	National		22.0						11.94								
	Female		16.8						9.88								
	Male		26.7						13.92								
4.2.2 Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age) by sex	National	2016	60.6	Percent	MOES	Admin – MOES and LSB Population Projections	60.6	62.4	66.9	69.2		70.6 (ADB)		66.6 (LSIS)	90		
	Female																
	Male																
4.2.3* Gross early childhood enrolment ratio in pre-primary education and early childhood education development by sex																	
- 0-2 years old		2015	3.7		MOES	Admin – MOES and LSB Population Projections	4.1	4.4	4.7		5.2	5.23	3.7				
-3-4 years old			31.5				37.3	41.4	45		49.9	50.69	46.6				

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress					
4.3.1 Participation rate of youth and adults in formal education, Non-formal education and training in the last 12 months by sex																					
National	National	2017	38.5	Percent	MOES	Survey - LSB (LFS)		38.5					32.4		42.3						
- 15 - 24	Female		35.6					35.6				30.6		40							
	Male		41.5					41.5				34.2		44.7							
- 25 - 54	National		0.7					0.7				4.4		5.7							
	Female		0.7					0.7				4.2		5.5							
	Male		0.8					0.8				4.5		5.9							
- 55 - 64	National		0.5					0.5				4.1		5.4							
	Female		0.6					0.6				3.7		4.8							
	Male		0.3					0.3				4.4		5.7							
4.3.2* Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education	National							Percent	MOES												
4.3.3* Participation rate in technical-vocational education programmes (15-24 years-old)	National		2017				6.2	Percent	MOES	Admin – MOES and LSB Population Projections		6.2									
	Female						5.1					5.1									
	Male	7.2			7.2																
4.3.4* Percentage lower secondary/upper secondary school graduates enrolled in vocational & training school, by sex																					
- Lower secondary school enrolled	National	2017	0.5	Percent	MOES	Admin – MOES and LSB Population Projections		0.5													
- Upper secondary school enrolled			6.5					6.5													

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress			
4.4.1 Percentage of youth (15-24) with ICT skills by type (level) of skill, by sex																			
- At least one of 9 computer skills	National	2017			MTC	Survey - LSB (LSIS)													
	Female		7.3								7.3				7.3	80.8			
	Male		11.6								11.6					8.3	80.5		
- ARSP: Using basic arithmetic formula in a spreadsheet	National																		
	Female		5.4								5.4								
	Male		5.9								5.9								
- CMFL: Copying or moving a file or folder	National																		
	Female		6								6								
	Male		7.1								7.1								
- COPA: Using copy and paste tools to duplicate or move information within a document	National																		
	Female		6.4								6.4								
	Male		7.8								7.8								
- EMAIL: Sending e-mails with attached files	National																		
	Female		3								3								
	Male		3.6								3.6								
- EPRS: Creating electronic presentations with presentation software	National																		
	Female	3.2						3.2											
	Male	4.1						4.1											
- INST: Connecting and installing new devices	National																		
	Female	1.3						1.3											
	Male	3						3											
- PCPR: Writing a computer program using a specialized programming language	National																		
	Female	0.6						0.6											
	Male	0.9						0.9											

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress			
- SOFT: Finding, downloading, installing and configuring software	National																		
	Female		3.3					3.3											
	Male		6.5					6.5											
- TRAF: Transferring files between a computer and other devices	National																		
	Female		4.6					4.6											
	Male		6.4					6.4											
4.5.1.a Female/Male Gender parity indices for gross enrolment:																			
- Primary	2015	0.97		MOES	Admin – MOES	0.97	0.98	0.98		0.98	0.98	0.98		1					
- Lower Secondary		0.95				0.95	0.95	0.96		0.97	0.97	0.98		1					
- Upper Secondary		0.88				0.91	0.91	0.91		0.9	0.91	0.93		1					
4.5.1.b Female/Male for completion:																			
- Primary	2017	1		MOES	Admin – MOES		1			1.03	1.02	1.02		1					
- Lower Secondary		0.94					0.94			1.02	1.02	1.02		1					
- Upper Secondary		0.91					0.91			1.01	1	1.01		1					
4.6.1.a Percentage of adult (15 years old and above) population reporting ability to read and write by sex	National	2015	84.7		MOES	Survey – LSB (PHC)							88 (UN data)		95				
	Female		79.4										83 (UN data)						
	Male		90										92 (UN data)						
4.6.1.b Percentage of youth 15-24 years old reporting ability to read and write																			
- Age 15-19 years	National	2015	93.3		MOES	Survey – LSB (PHC)									100				
	Female		90.5												100				
	Male		94.8												100				
- Age 20-24 years	National		91.6												100				
	Female		89.2												100				
	Male		94												100				

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress			
4.7.2* Percentage of universities, TVET and teacher education institutions with sustainable campus					MOES														
4.a.1 Proportion of schools with access to																			
- Electricity	Primary			Percent	MOES	Admin – MOES	37.3			50.1807	54.058	57.65	59.3	62.6	100				
	Secondary					LESMIS						87	87.7	89.1	100				
	Lower Secondary					Admin – MOES	72.2			81.3809	83.7702	79.34					100		
	Upper Secondary						89.0			93.0445	94.7368	95.5982					100		
- The Internet for pedagogical purposes (percent of school)			61.1															75	
(primary)			24.7															30	
(lower high school)			43.4															80	
(upper high school)			68.1															80	
- Computers for pedagogical purposes																			
- With adequate sanitation facilities (toilets) segregated by sex	Primary												54.1	84.24	76.27			100	
	Secondary										84		88.94		100				
	Lower Secondary											89.1			100				
	Upper Secondary											100			100				
- With hand washing facilities, as per national standard																			
- With adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disability						???													
- With WASH facilities meeting national standards	Primary											82.65	57.17		100				
	Secondary												69.39		100				
	Lower Secondary					???						88.9			100				
	Upper Secondary											100			100				

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
4.b.1 Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships by sector and type of study (in million 2021 USD)		2015	12.6	Million US\$	MOES	OECD	11.8	7.9	11.7	12	11.9	8.4			25	
4.c.1 Percentage of teachers having completed teacher-education programme “trained teachers”																
- Primary	National	2015	98.4	Percent	MOES	Admin – MOES	97.5	97	97	96.9	98.8	99.1	97.5		99.8	
	Female		98.1				97.2	96.7	96.7	96.4	98.6	98.9	97.2		99.8	
	Male		98.7				97.8	97.4	97.4	97.5	99.1	99.3	97.8		100	
- Lower Secondary	National		99.5				96.5	94.7	94.8	98.1	99.5	99.7	96.5		99.9	
	Female		99.6				96.7	95.2	95.2	98.1	99.5	99.7	96.7		99.9	
	Male		99.4				96.2	94.2	94.2	98.1	99.4	99.6	96.2		99.9	
- Upper Secondary	National		99				98.8	98.4	98.4	97.6	99.5	99.7	98.8		99.9	
	Female		-					98.1	98.1	97.5	99.5	99.7			99.9	
	Male		-					98.7	98.7	97.7	99.5	99.6			99.9	

**SDG 5 – 19 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owners – Lao Women Union (LWU)**

SDGi Owners	
LWU	MTC
18 Indicators	1 Indicator 5.b.1

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex		2016		Percent	LWU	Admin-LWU										
Area 1: overarching legal frameworks and public life			60				60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	100	
Area 2: violence against women			88.88				88.88	88.88	88.88	88.88	88.88	88.88	88.88	88.88	100	
Area 3: employment and economic benefits			77.77				77.77	77.77	77.77	77.77	77.77	77.77	77.77	77.77	100	
Area 4: Marriage and family			90.9				90.9	90.9	90.9	90.9	90.9	90.9	90.9	90.9	100	
Overall			79.48				79.48	79.48	79.48	79.48	79.48	79.48	79.48	79.48	100	
5.1.2* Whether mechanisms are operational in ‘enforcing and monitoring’ the implementation of legal frameworks for each area of law		2015	Yes (3 laws/ framework)		LWU	Admin-LWU	Yes									
5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15-49 years subject to physical and/or sexual violence by any partner in the last 12 months by type and five-year age group		2014	6	Percent	LWU	Survey (Lao National Survey on Women’s Health and Life Experiences 2014)									0	

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subject to physical violence, sexual violence and emotional violence by someone else who is not their partner have access to services (health, social services and justice)				Percent	LWU											
5.2.3* Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subject to physical violence, sexual violence and emotional violence by someone else who is not their partner have access to services (health, social services and justice)				Percent	LWU											
5.2.4* Percentage of women and girls aged 15 years and older subject to GBV by any partner satisfied with the services (health, social services and justice)				Percent	LWU											
5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18		2012		Percent	LWU	Survey-LSB (LSIS)										
- Before age 15	8.9						7.1				6.1	0				
- Before age 18	35.4						32.7			30.4	25					
5.3.3* Adolescent pregnancy as percentage of total pregnancy (18 years and below)				Percent	LWU											
5.3.4* Percentage of women aged 15–49 years who gave birth:		2012		Percent	LWU	Survey-LSB (LSIS)										
- By age 15	3.6						3				1.9					
- By age 18	19.4						18.2		17.4	15.4						
% of women aged 20-24 years who gave birth:		2012		Percent	LWU	Survey-LSB (LSIS)										
- By age 15	2.5						2.3			1.9						
- By age 18	18.2						18.4			18.9						

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
5.4.1 Percentage of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work:	National	2018	46.2	Percent	LWU	Survey-LSB (LECS)			46.2							
	Female		48.9						48.9							
	Male		37.2						37.2							
5.5.1 Percentage of women in National Assembly:				Percent	LWU	Admin-MOHA										
	National	2016	27.5				27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	22	22	30			
	Provincial	2018	31.4				31.4	31.4	31.4	31.4	30.5	30.5	50			
5.5.2 Percentage of women in decision making positions /leadership positions in government sector by central, province and district in the following positions:					LWU											
	- Deputy Division Head	2016	23	Percent		LWU	Admin-MOHA	22.96	24.05	25.3	26.5	26.9	28.1	28.4	37.7	
	- Division Head		17.8					17.79	18.55	19	20.8	20.8	21.9	22.5	30.8	
	- Deputy Department General		16					16.03	16.54	17.5	19.3	19.6	19.6	20.8	29.6	
	- Department General		15.3					15.26	14.84	15.2	16.8	16.3	18.2	19.3	26.2	
	- Deputy Minister															
	- Minister															
5.5.3* Percentage of women being: (1) the village chief and (2) the deputy village chief		2016		Percent	LWU	Admin-MOHA										
	- The village chief		2.7				2.7		2.4		3.4	2.7	13.94	4.4		
	- The deputy village chief		11.6				11.6		11.8		15.1	15.03	15.27	21.1		
5.6.2 Existing laws and regulations that guarantee women aged 15-49 access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education					LWU	Admin-LWU										
5.6.3* Percentage of women at reproductive age (15-49) who have their need for family planning satisfied with appropriate methods	National	2017	79	Percent			LWU	Survey-LSB (LSIS)		79.0					74.9	
	Urban		78.7			78.7										
	Rural		79.2			79.2										

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall process
5.a.1 Percentage of women where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control					LWU											
5.a.2 The legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control					LWU											
5.b.1 Number of registered females as mobile phone users per 100 population		2018	73.1	per 100 population	MTC	Survey-LSB (LSIS)		73.1					79.3		100	
5.c.1 Existing systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment					LWU	Admin-LWU/and UN Women Data Hub	Dost does not meet requirement		targeted to turn into "Approaches requirements" or "Fully meets requirements"							

**SDG 6 – 12 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owners – Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment**

**Note**

- Number of SDG indicators in total = 12.
- However, SDGi sequence no.90 is divided into two indicators.
- Therefore, for an easy reference of the SWGr owner, **total number of SDG indicators that need to be reported against is 13.**

SDGi Owners		
MONRE	MOH	MPWT
7 indicators	4 Indicators	2 Indicators
6.3.2	6.1.1	6.1.1.b
6.4.3	6.2.1	6.a.1.a
6.4.4	6.2.2	
6.5.1	6.3.1	
6.5.2		
6.6.2		
6.a.2		

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress	
6.1.1.a Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source (well and stream – Nam Lin and Nam Badan)	National	2015	59.9	Percent	MOH	Survey-LSB (PHC, LSIS)		56							42.8		
	Urban		69					63.4						62.8			
	Rural		38					38.7						41.7			
6.1.1.b Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source (pipe water – Nam Pa Pa)	National	2017	15.3	Percent	MPWT	Survey-LSB (PHC, LSIS)		15.3						25.9	52.2		
	- Rural	Urban	2015				5		14.6					27.2			
	- Urban	Rural	2015				56		58.3					58.3			
			2016				21.24		21.24	24.28		23.07	25.04	25.83	25.02		24.78
			2016				1,441,645	Number	1,441,645	1,676,164		1,644,000	1,811,000	1,896,000	1,862,643		1,869,863

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall process	
6.2.1 Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility:	National	2015	73.1	Percent	MOH	Survey-LSB (PHC, LSIS, LECS)		73.8		82.1			83.5		94.4		
	Urban		93.8					94.1				100					
	Rural		62.3					64.9				88.7					
6.2.2* Proportion of population practicing open defecation:	National		24.3					23.9				16.8					
	Urban		4.4					4.2				3.9					
	Rural		34.7					32.6				29.8					
6.3.2 Quality of water in the bodies of water					MONRE	Admin-MONRE											
6.4.3* Percentage of water use from bodies of water					MONRE	Admin-MONRE											Note 1
<p><b>Note 1:</b> In 2021, an agreement on Water Use was drafted, and the issuance of use permits was completed for 2 companies, with ongoing research for 3 other companies. In 2022, the plan is to conduct research for the issuance of water use permits to 5 companies. However, there seems to be a mismatch between the input data provided and the SDG indicator intended to be collected. Further clarification is needed to align the data with the specific SDG indicator. Additionally, the source of this information should be identified, and it is likely that the data could be collected from the Department of Water Resources within the MONRE.</p>																	
6.4.4* Data on drought area					MONRE	Admin-MONRE											
6.5.1 Number of river basins with water resource management plan												3	7	12			
6.5.2 Number of trans-boundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation (input data seem unmatched with SDG indicator intend to collect, further clarification needed as well as identify the data source, this information might collect in the Department Water Resources/MONRE)																	
<p><b>Note:</b> In 2021, the approval of the hydropower development strategy in the catchment area was finalized. In 2022, plans are in place to conduct local and regional consultation meetings regarding the pre-consultation process for the hydropower development project in Xanakham and PhuNoi, in collaboration with relevant sectors.</p> <p>The input data seem unmatched with SDG indicator intend to collect, further clarification needed as well as identify the data source, this information might collect in the Department Water Resources/MONRE)</p>																	
6.6.2* Two water areas boundary management plan: Beung Kietngong and Xechamphone		2015	0	Percent	MONRE	Admin-MONRE							100				

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
6.a.1.a Net official development assistance and official aid from all sources for the water & sanitation sector (million US\$):					MPWT	Admin-MPWT										Note 2
- Total		2015	114,826	million US\$				33.8	63.7	72.8	81.9	77	75.4			
- Water (pipe water – Nam Pa Pa)																
-Total expenditure for the water sector (Nam Pa Pa)																
	<p><b>Note 2:</b> The input data provided by the MONRE includes information about funds raised for water resource projects in 2021, totalling 22 billion Kip for 4 projects. Additionally, in 2022, there are plans to complete the initial draft of the management plan for the Nam Peh catchment area, as well as the plan for the Nam Peh National Integrated Water Resource Management Demonstration Park. However, it is noted that the input data is descriptive and may be more suitable for VNR3 content rather than for VNR data collection. Further clarification is needed to align the data with the specific indicators for the VNR. It is essential to ensure that the data collected is in line with the requirements for VNR reporting.</p>															
6.a.2* Number of projects and value on water resources				Number	MONRE	Admin-MPWT										

**SDG 7 – 6 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owner – Ministry of Energy and Mine (MEM)**

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress	
7.1.1 Percentage of households with access to electricity from overall sources:	National	2017	93.7	Percent	MEM	Survey-LSB (LSIS)		93.7						96.5	100		
	Urban		99.5					99.5						100			
	Rural		90.9					90.9						100			
		2015	90.51			Admin-MEM (Energy and mine statistic report)	92.05	92.46	93.79	94.02	94.29		95.32		100		
7.1.2 Percentage of households with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology	National	2017	0.2				Survey-LSB (LSIS)			0.2						7.5	
	Urban		0.6							0.6							
	Rural		0							0							
	National	2015	5.6				WHO Global Health Observatory	6.2	6.8	7.3	7.9	8.6	9.3				
	Urban		14.7					15.9	16.7	17.8	18.9	20.1	21.1				
	Rural		1.4					1.5	1.7	1.8	2	2.2	2.4				
7.1.3* Percentage of households connected to the national electricity grid:	National	2017	92.5			Admin-MEM		92.5					96.5				
	Urban																
	Rural with road																
	Rural without road																
7.2.1 Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption		2016	51.7			Admin-Energy Balances, UN Statistics Division	51.7	50.6	50.2	48.72	49.9	50.01 (WB)			62.6		
7.3.1 Energy intensity level of primary energy (ratio between energy supply and gross domestic product) (MJ/US\$2017 PPP)			4.75				MJ/US\$ 2017 PPP	4.75	4.9	4.7	4.35	4.33				3.4	
7.b.1 Investments in energy efficiency as a percentage of GDP and the amount of foreign direct investment in financial transfer for infrastructure and technology to sustainable development services						Admin-MEM										Note 1	
<b>Note 1:</b> Incorporate regional benchmark data and seek further review and input from the MEM to ensure the relevance and accuracy of the data included in VNR4.																	

**SDG 8 – 19 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owner – Ministry of Labour and Social Welfares (MOLSW)**

SWGi Owners				
MOLSW	BOL	MOIC	MOICT	MPI
8 indicators	2 Indicators	4 Indicators	3 Indicators	2 Indicator
8.3.1	8.10.1	8.3.2	8.9.1	8.1.1
8.5.1	8.10.2	8.3.3	8.9.2	8.2.1
8.5.2		8.5.3	8.9.3	
8.5.4		8.a.1		
8.6.1				
8.7.1				
8.7.2				
8.8.1				

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress	
8.1.1 Real GDP per capita growth rate		2015	5.7	Percent	MPI	Survey-LSB (Department of Economic Statistics, National Accounts)	5.4	5.3	4.8	1.8	0.4	-1.8	-22.1		5.6		
8.2.1 Percentage of growth in labour productivity (GDP/per person employed, constant 2015 US dollar)			5.7		MPI	Admin-ILO Model	5.5	5.4	4.4	3.6	-1.1	0.1	-0.6		2.9		
8.3.1 Proportion of own-account workers and contributing family workers in total employment, by sex	National		80.8		MOLSW	Survey-LSB (PHC; LFS)		66.5						65.2		56.8	
	Female		86.6						72.5					72.7		49.3	
	Male		75.4						61.2					58.9		56.7	
8.3.2* Percentage of financing and loans issued to SMEs			30.9		MOICT	Admin-MOIC	23.4	22.3	20.2	18.1	19.45	14.63	1.2		5	None	
<b>Note 1:</b> The significant decrease in data from 14 to 1.2 can be attributed to the rapid decline loans provided to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).																	

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress		
8.3.3* Number of SMEs owned by Lao citizens (with Lao citizens as the majority shareholders)			2.235	Number	MOIC	Admin-MOIC	2537	2667	2829	3966	-	4372	6036	6771	3200			
8.5.1 Average hourly earnings of female/ male employees, by sector, age group and persons with disabilities					MOLSW											Note 2		
	Total	2017	45.2	Percent	Survey LFS								45.4					
	Male		45.9												45.8			
	Female		44.2													44.9		
Agriculture (Unit: thousand Kip?)	Total	2016	5.729	Kip	MOLSW	Admin-MOLSW	5.729	8.677	14.579	15.813	7.204	9.896	13.845	13.845	19.162			
	Female		5.206				5.206	7.885	12.248	14.369	6.546	8.992	12.581	12.581	17.413			
	Male		6.492				6.492	9.832	17.520	17.918	7.418	10.190	14.256	14.256	19.731			
Industry (Unit: thousand Kip?)	Total		6.250				6.250	16.713	14.271	16.979	8.705	9.201	16.635	16.635	23.851			
	Female		4.567				4.567	12.213	10.428	13.407	7.910	7.361	12.156	12.156	16.824			
	Male		6.894				6.894	18.435	15.741	17.728	8.963	9.474	18.349	18.349	25.396			
Services (Unit: thousand Kip?)	Total		13.021				13.021	18.194	15.616	17.088	6.307	6.250	13.027	13.027	18.678			
	Female		11.542				11.542	16.127	14.842	16.147	4.731	5.680	11.547	11.547	15.981			
	Male		14.010				14.010	19.575	15.802	18.385	7.494	6.435	14.016	14.016	19.399			
<b>Note 2:</b> The unit of measurement for the indicator is missing, making it difficult to quantify and track progress accurately. It is essential to review the indicator's ownership within the context of the SDGs to ensure that it aligns with the overall framework and objectives.																		
8.5.2 Unemployment rate (% of labour force):	Total	2015	2.1	Percent		Survey-LSB (PHC, LFS)		9.4					2.4		1.4			
Female	Female		2.1					10.7				1.9		1.4				
Male	Male		2.1					7.8				2.8		1.3				
	Urban	2010	3.2							5.4					2.8		2.3	
	Rural		1.4					12.4				2.2		1				
	15 to 24 years old		3.1					18				5.2		2.2				
	25 and over		1.9					7.5				1.8		1.4				
	Lao-Tai	2017	9							9					2.2		2	
	Mon-Khmere		14.1					14.1				2.6		2.3				

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
	Hmong-Emien		5.2					5.2					3.1		2.7	
	China-Tibet		4.3					4.3				0		0.9		
	Other Ethnic Group		4.6					4.6				2.1		1.8		
	Person with Disability		3.6					3.6				0.3		0.3		
	Person with no disability		9.7					9.7				2.4		2.1		
8.5.3* Number of businesses owned by females		2015	10,592	Number	MOIC	Admin-MOIC	11,586	11,855	11,572	15,061	12,849	12,646	18,076		16,500	Note 3
	<p><b>Note 3:</b> The data submitted for 2023 was received after the final update, which means that the overall progress may be subject to change for the further update. The original goal was to achieve a 70% participation rate from the total number of businesses, which equated to 16,500 businesses.</p>															
8.5.4* Informal employment rate	Total	2015	83.8	Percent	MOLSW	Survey-LSB (LFS)		82.7					86.4		41.9	Note 4
	Female		88.8					85.9				85.5		42.4		
	Male		78.8					79.9				87.5		39.4		
	<p><b>Note 4:</b> I propose moving this into section 8.3.1 as it is also related to informal employment indicators. This will for a more comprehensive discussion of informal employment and its impact within this section.</p>															
8.6.1 Percentage of youth (aged 15-24) not in education, employment or training		2015		Percent	MOLSW	Survey-LSB (PHC)										
	Total		18.5					16.1				5.2		9.25		
	Female		8.4					7.8				5.4		4.22		
	Male	10.1		8.3				5		5.03						
	Total (M+F)	2017	42.1			Survey-LSB (LFS)		42.1					29.1		37.8	
	Female		44.9					44.9				31.5		41.8		
	Male		39.1					39.1				26.7		35.7		
	Urban		25.4					25.4				19.9		27.8		
	Rural	48.4		48.4				33		43.3						
8.7.1 Percentage of children aged 5-17 engaged in child labour	Total	2010	15			Survey-LSB (2010 Child Labour Survey and LSIS)		42.8					25.9	23.1	21.4	
	Female		17					43.2				21.6				

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
	Male		13					42.4							21.2	
	Urban		4.2					33.5							16.8	
	Rural		11.9					45.8							22.9	
8.7.2* Number of children aged 5-17 engaged in prohibited hazardous occupations and tasks, by sex and age		2010	130.137	Number	MOISW	Survey-LSB (LSIS)		3671 (LSIS II)					66000 (LFS and Child Labor 2022)		195.000	
8.8.1 Number of cases of fatal and non-fatal occupational injury reported during the reference year		2015	40			Admin-MOISW	174	161	249	189	266	256	1.235	982	-	
8.9.1 Revenue from tourism (million US\$)		2015	725	million US\$	MOICT	Admin-MOICT	724	648	811	934	213		264	957	909	
8.9.2 Employment in tourism industries as a proportion of total employment and growth rate of employment:	Total															
	Female															
	Male															
8.9.3* Establishment of Tourism standards (1=to be adopted and implemented)																
(a) Lao PDR clean tourist city standard		2015	0				0	0	0	1	1	1	1		1	
(b) Lao PDR tourist attraction rating standard			0				0	0	0	1	1	1	1		1	
(c) Lao PDR homestay standard			0				0	0	0	1	1	1	1		1	
(d) Lao PDR community-based tourism standard			0				0	0	0	1	1	1	1		1	
8.10.1 Number of .... per 100,000 adults					BOL											Note 5
(a) Automated teller machines (ATMs);		2015	25.6	per 100,000 adults	BOL	Admin-BOL	26.62	27.9	28.38	29.54	29.57	30.66	30.38		35.5	
(b) Commercial bank branches			2.2				2.3	2.4	2.5	2.5	-	-	-		3.7	
(c) Bank service units			11.7				12	12.5	12.3	12.2	-	-	-		13.7	
<b>Note 5:</b> This indicator might be considered to include the digital payment information in the context the VNR4 report, providing insight into the usage, adoption, and impact of digital payment methods within the specified framework or context.																
8.10.2 Percentage of adults (18 years old and above) (Total/ Female/ Male):					BOL											Note 6
(a) Having a Savings Account		2015	54	Percent	BOL	Admin-BOL	60.75	65.41	64.84	81.46	61.01	70.97	83.65		80.9	

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
(b) Having used banked products/services offered by commercial			3.3				3.42	3.44	3.48	3.25	2.27	3.06	2.45		4.54	
(c) Having used services offered by financial Institution/Microfinance			1.4				2.41	2.19	2.57	4.77	2.16	4.51	4.57		3.6	
<p><b>Note 6:</b> The review of indicator definitions in VNR4 is crucial to guarantee that the current indicators are relevant and aligned with the goals. The Bank of Laos advises considering the removal of this particular indicator, as it bears similarity to indicators 1.4.5.a and 1.4.5.b.</p>																
8.a.1 Mean number of days to clear import (proposed to replace by the official indicator "Total official aid")		2015	26	Days	MOIC	Admin-MOIC	9.20	9.60	9.6	3.00	2.5	2.5	2.1	2.1	2	

**SDG 9 – 13 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owner – Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MOIC)**

**Note**

- Number of SDG indicators in total = 13.
- However, SDGi sequence no.127 and 137 are divided into two indicators, respectively.
- Therefore, for an easy reference of the SWGr owner, **total number of SDG indicators that need to be reported against is 15.**

SWGi Owners				
MOIC	BOL	MTC	MPI	MPWT
4 indicators	1 Indicator	4 Indicator	2 Indicators	4 Indicators
9.2.1	9.3.2	9.5.1	9.a.1.a	9.1.1.a
9.2.2		9.5.2	9.a.1.b	9.1.1.b
9.2.3		9.b.1		9.1.2
9.3.1		9.c.1		9.1.3

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall process
9.1.1.a Share of the rural population who live in villages with all-weather road access					MPWT											
(a) Total road network (Km) – Not key indicator – information for record		2015	56,331	km		Admin-MPWT	58,885	59,942	59,800	58,254	58,287	58,876	59,646		63,674.1	
(b) Paved road network (Km) – Not key indicator – information for record			10,022				10,395	10,974	10,764	12,617	13,029	13,523	13,523		19,044.6	
(c) Percentage of paved road network – not key indicator – information or record			17.8	Percent			17.7	18.3	18.0	21.7	22.4	23.0	22.7		29.9	
9.1.1.b Share of the villages with and without all-weather road access:	National			Percent				18.2								
	Urban															
	Rural															

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
9.1.2 Passenger volumes (million passenger-km)[1]																
(a) Road (Head count - Thousand)		2015	59.106			Admin-MPWT	63.139	65.430	72.400	77.763	79.871	83.217	81.033	177.235	372.103	
(b) Rail (Head count - Thousand)			38		30.8		32	32	38	2		1.400	2.722			
(d) Waterways (Head count - Thousand)			1.752		1.972		3.964	4.091	3.848	3.024	980	1.376	1.980			
9.1.3* Freight/goods volumes (million ton-km)[2]																
(a) Road (thousand ton –total)		2015	5.127			Admin-MPWT	5.172	5.795	6.012	6.443	6.668	6.931	7.463	16.097	13.438	
(b) Rail (thousand ton –total)			-					4	0	2.239	4.720					
(c) Air (thousand ton –total)			4		3		4	6	6	2	1	2	2			
(d) Waterways (thousand ton –total)			2.966		3.372		2.763	2.823	2.651	2.441	269	326	244			
9.a.1 Mean number of days to clear import (proposed to replace by the official indicator "Total official aid")																
(a) percentage of GDP		2015	7.0			LSB Department of Economic Statistics	6.64	6.35	6.74	7.47	7.27	6.42	6.13	5.50	10	
(b) Per capita																
(a) percentage of GDP			8.2			UNIDO National Accounts Database. Available at <a href="https://stat.unido.org">https://stat.unido.org</a>	7.89	7.71	7.71	7.80	8.53	8.49	8.75		16	
(b) per capita			173.6	Percent	MOIC		176.4	181.4	189.8	199.6	221.9	225.4	234.2		347.2	
9.2.2 Manufacturing employment as a percentage of total employment	Total	2010	5.07			Survey-LSB (LFS)	-	7.96	-	-					10.14	
	Female		5.89					10							11.78	
	Male		4.25			Survey-LSB (LFS)		6.18							8.5	
	???	2015	3.08			Admin-MOIC		6.28					5.02	4.16	6.16	
9.2.3* Growth rate of new enterprises registered		2016	10.9			Admin-MOIC	10.9	2.2	-0.8	34.7	-10.94	-4.36	41.70	19.28	52	
9.3.1 Percentage share of SMEs in total industry value added		2015	8.59			Admin-MOIC	8.10	7.30	7.70	8.24	8.10	7.84	8.14	7.33	7.00	

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
9.3.2 Percentage of small-medium enterprises (SMEs) with a loan or line of credit)					BOL		-	-	-	-	-	36.52	26.91		48.7	Note 1
<p><b>Note 1:</b> Proposed to include the total amount of SME loan in the VNR4. The inclusion of the total amount of SME loans in the VNR4 would provide valuable into the support and investment in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within a country</p>																
9.5.1 Research and development expenditure as a percentage of GDP (Increase government budget on investment in development science and technology to 2% by 2025)					MTC					0.09						
9.5.2 Researchers (in full-time equivalent) per million inhabitants (Increase number of researchers to 120.1 per million inhabitants by 2020)				per million inhabitants	MTC					1.692						
9.a.1.a Total value of ODA earmarked for infrastructure projects		2015	156.2		MPI	SDG Global Database sourced from OECD DAC Database	105.2	163.1	176	132.1	101	90.9			312.4	Note 2
<p><b>Note 2:</b> The further indicator review is necessary because the current policy changes have the potential to impact the data and trend. As policies change, it is likely that there will be shifts in the indicators being measured, which could alter the overall trend.</p>																
9.a.1.b Total value of Foreign direct investment (FDI) earmarked for infrastructure projects					MPI											
9.b.1 Percentage of medium and high-tech industry value added in total value added (Increase value added from technology and revolution to 1 % of total value added)					MTC											
9.c.1 Percentage of population covered by a mobile network, regardless of use, disaggregated by technology:				Percent	MTC	Admin-MTC				95	96	96	97		100	
	2G	2015	98	Percent	MTC	Admin-MTC	98	94	94	95	95	95	97			
	3G		65				69	78	78	82	82	-	82			
	4G		5				7	9	43	43	50	-	53			

**SDG 10 – 8 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owner – Ministry of Planning and Investment (LSB)**

**Note**

- Number of SDG indicators in total =8.
- However, SDGi sequence no.146 is divided into two indicators.
- Therefore, for an easy reference of the SWGr owner, **total number of SDG indicators that need to be reported against is 9.**

SDGi Owners						
BOL	MOF	MAF	MOLSW	MOPS	MOHA	MPI
1 Indicator 10.5.1	1 Indicator 10.a.1	2 Indicators 10.2.1 10.2.2	2 Indicators 10.4.2 10.7.1	1 Indicator 10.7.1.a	1 Indicator 10.7.1.b	1 Indicator 10.1.1

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
10.1.1 Percentage of annualized growth in real per capita consumption:	Total	2018	4.5	Percent	MPI	LECS-LSB										
	1st Quintile		3.3													
	2nd Quintile		3.3													
	3rd Quintile		3.7													
	5th Quintile		5.5													
10.2.1 Percentage of people living below 50% of median income		2013	13.4		MAF				10.3						8.0	
10.2.2* Percentage of households living below 50% of median income			9.9						7.3						6.0	
10.4.2* Labour share of GDP in terms of social protection transfers (contributory unemployment insurance)					MOLSW	Admin- MoLSW	208	1,071	1,818	1,789	9,858	33,855	27,421	4,826		Note 1
<b>Note 1:</b> The data for a specific indicator in VNR3 is unclear, and there is also a lack of definition for the unit of measurement. This indicates that a thorough review of the indicator is needed in order to clarify and improve the data measurement process.																

10.5.1 Number of laws and related regulations revised toward compliance with international standards by Bank of Lao PDR:		2017	4		BOL	Admin-BOL	-	4	4	5										
- Payment System Law			Approved																	
- Law on Bank of Lao PDR			Started																	
- Law on Commercial Bank			Started																	
- Securities Law			-																	
10.7.1 Recruitment cost borne by employee as a percentage of yearly income earned in country of destination		2015	0.05		MoLSW	Admin-MoLSW	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05		0.05	0.03				0.03			
10.7.2.a Number of well-managed international / cross-border migration policies that Lao PDR has implemented		2016	2		MOPS	Admin-MOPS	2	2	2	2										
10.7.2.b Number of well-managed internal migration policies that Lao PDR has implemented		2015	2		MOHA	Admin-MOHA	2	2	3	4	4	1	1							
10.a.1 Share of tariff lines applied to imports into Lao PDR with zero-tariff		2016	8,994 billion Kip or 50.79% of imports without zero tariff		MOF	Admin-MOF											70.79			

**SDG 11 – 13 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owners – Ministry of Public Work and Transportation (MPWT)**

SDGi Owners		
MOICT	MONRE	MPWT
3 indicators	6 Indicators	4 Indicators
11.4.2	11.3.3	11.1.1
11.4.3	11.6.1.a	11.1.2
11.4.4	11.6.2	11.2.1
	11.b.1	11.5.2
	11.b.3	
	11.b.4	

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress	
11.1.1 Proportion of urban population living in inadequate housing		2014	30.4	Percent	MPWT	UN Habitat	27		23.6		21.8				17.8		
11.1.2* Proportion of rural population living in inadequate housing																0	
(a) Province				Number													
(b) Route																	
11.3.3* Number of provinces with Integrated Spatial Planning (ISP)/development of green and clean guideline for villages and schools					MONRE	Admin-MONRE									3,000		
11.4.2* Number of national natural, cultural and historical sites (Total)	Total	2015	1,957	Number	MOICT	Admin -MOICT	2,104	2,094	2,208	2,199					2,500	Note 1	
	Natural sites		1,145				1,194	1,184	1,318	1,314			1,500				
	Cultural sites		534				628	632	596	591			1,000				
	Historical sites		278				282	278	294	294			500				
	<b>Note 1:</b> The data for a specific indicator in VNR3 is unclear, and there is also a lack of definition for the unit of measurement. This indicates that a thorough review of the indicator is needed in order to clarify and improve the data measurement process.																

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress		
11.4.3* Number of natural, cultural and historical tourist attractions		2017	817	Number	MOICT	Admin -MOICT	-	-	809	-					1,000			
11.4.4* Number of UNESCO World Heritage sites		2015	2				2	3	3	4							10	
11.5.2 Direct disaster economic loss in relation to GDP, including disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services		2016	85.8	Number	MPWT	Admin -MPWT										Note 2		
	<p><b>Note 2:</b> It appears that there is a duplication of data between indicator 11.5.1 and 1.51 in the VNR3 report. This indicates a need for clarification and potential correction to ensure accurate reporting. Additionally, for indicator 11.5.2, which relates to "Direct disaster economic loss in relation to GDP, including disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services," there is a lack available data.</p>																	
11.6.1.a Percentage of solid waste regularly collected and with adequate final discharge with regard to the total waste generated in Vientiane Capital				???	MONRE	Admin-MONRE												
11.6.2 Annual mean concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM 2.5 µg/m³)		2015	23.51	µg/m³		Admin-MONRE												
						ADB Key Indicator Database	26.23	22.64	22.73	24.18								
11.b.1 Percentage of district governments with local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with Sendai Framework				???														
11.b.3* Number and value of projects on climate change adaptation				???		Admin-MONRE												
11.b.4* Number of provinces with disaster risk reduction strategies and action plans				???														

**SDG 12 – 9 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owners – Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment**

**Note – Number of SDG indicators in total = 9.**

- However, SDGi sequence no.168 is divided into two indicators.
- Therefore, for an easy reference of the SWGr owner, **total number of SDG indicators that need to be reported against is 10.**

SDGi Owners			
MAF	MOES	MOICT	MONRE
1 indicator 12.3.1	1 Indicator 12.8.1	3 Indicators 12.b.1.a 12.b.1.b 12.b.2	5 Indicators 12.1.1 12.2.2 12.4.1 12.4.3 12.5.1

SDG indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDG Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	20230 target	Overall progress		
12.1.1 Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) national action plans or SCP mainstreamed as a priority or target into national policies					MONRE	???							1 (ADOPTED; plan up to 2025)					
12.2.2 Domestic material consumption per capital and per GDP																		
- tons		2015	96,317,607	tons		LSB Environment Statistics Department	12,889,648	108,194,785	115,290,164	103,197,760	98,292,414					96,317,607		
- kg/usd			7.7	kg/usd				8.4	7.7	7.8	6.9	6.6					7.7	
- tons per capita			14.4	tons per capita				16.6	15.7	16.4	14.5	13.6					14.4	
- per capita			12.0	per capita		WESR / Global Material Flows Database	13.6	13.7	14.0	14.3						12.0		
- metric ton			85,428,254	metric ton				97,114,637	98,401,548	102,000,000	105,000,000						85,428,254	
12.3.1 Food Loss index					MAF													

SDG indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDG Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	20230 target	Overall progress	
12.4.1 Volume of hazardous waste produced in Vientiane Capital					MONRE												
12.4.3* Volume of general waste generated in 12 provinces																	
12.5.1 Percentage of waste reuse compare to total waste in Vientiane capital																	
12.8.1 Primary and secondary curricula integrated sustainable development in:					MOES												
- Primary Teacher Education Programmes																	
- Secondary Teacher Education Programmes																	
12.b.1.a Lao PDR Action Plan for Pakse Declaration on ASEAN Roadmap for Strategic Development of Ecotourism Clusters & Tourism Corridors:					MOICT												
- Adopted																	
- Implemented																	
12.b.1.b Develop national sustainable tourism assessment tools					MOICT												
- Adopted			0			Admin-MOICT	0	0	0	1						5	Note 1
- Implemented			0				0	0	0	1						5	
12.b.2* Disseminate and raise awareness on saving power, reducing and repurposing of using plastic for stakeholders in tourism sector		2015 2015 2015	0		0		0	1	2							5	
	<b>Note 1:</b> The data unclear further reviewed needed from SDG owner																

**SDG 13 – 7 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owners – Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment**

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress	
13.1.1 Number the injured and fatalities from disaster																	
(a) Affected	Total	2015	66,500	Number	MONRE	Admin-MoLSW	24,301	262,499	649,493	767,771	175,184	44,420	221,062				
	Female		28,165				13,001	111,719	258,120	406,918	85,204	21,882	109,076				
	Male		38,335				11,300	150,780	391,373	360,853	89,980	22,538	111,986				
(b) Death	Total		7				5	10	64	27	27	13	10				
(c) Injury	Total		26				-	-	2	16	7	17	10				
(d) Missing	Total		-				-	-	26	7	3	0	0				
(e) Homeless	Total		92				-	56	3,717	-	0	0	105				
	Female		-				-	-	1,802	-	-	-	-				
	Male		-				-	-	1,915	-	-	-	-				
13.1.3 Number of districts with disaster risk reduction strategies and action plan								Number	MONRE							27	
13.2.2* Reporting on Lao PDR's National Adaptation Plan (NAP)																Note 1	
<b>Note 1:</b> Tracker is using a proxy from FAO “Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from agriculture”. It is recommended to use this because there are not many indicators in Goal 13 with data.																	
13.3.1 Number of schools and villages that received information dissemination on disaster and climate change					MONRE	Admin-MoNRE									50% of the total number of school		
13.3.3* Number of provinces with capacity to report on the situation of climate change		2015	18	Number			18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18		18 (all provinces )	
13.a.1 Number and value of the projects that apply climate change adaptation																50% of total projects	
13.b.1 Number of provinces and districts with projects on climate change																18 (all provinces )	

**SDG 14 – 3 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owners – Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry**

**Note – Number of SDG indicators in total =3.**

- However, SDGi sequence no.179 is divided into three indicators.
- Therefore, for an easy reference of the SWGr owner, **total number of SDG indicators that need to be reported against is 5.**

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress		
14.4.1 Number of fish conservation zone (fish stock and indicator is not clear)		2016	885		MAF	Admin-MAF							970		1,255			
14.6.1 Development and implementation of national plan of action (NPOA) to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in line with the International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IPOA-IUU)		2016	No															
14.b.1.a Existence of instruments that specifically target or address the small-scale fisheries (SSF) sector		2016	3						3	3	3	4	4	4	4		5	
14.b.1.b On-going specific initiatives to implement the SSF Guidelines									3	3	3	4	4	4	4			
14.b.1.c Existence of mechanisms enabling small-scale fishers and fish workers to contribute to decision-making processes		2015	4						4	4	4	4	4	4	4		5	

**SDG 15 – 12 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owners – Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry**

**Note**

- **Number of SDG indicators in total = 12.**
- However, SDGi sequence no.182, 189, and 190 are divided into two indicators, respectively.
- Therefore, for an easy reference of the SWGr owner, **total number of SDG indicators that need to be reported against is 15.**

SDGi Owners	
MAF	MPI
12 indicators	3 Indicators
15.1.1	15.a.1.a
15.1.2	15.a.1.b
15.2.1.a	15.b.2.a
15.2.1.b	
15.3.1	
15.4.1	
15.5.1	
15.7.1	
15.8.1	
15.9.1	
15.b.2.b	
15.c.1	

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
15.1.1 Percentage of forest area as a percentage of total land area		2015	58	Percent	MAF	Survey-MAF				62	62		62		70	
15.1.2 Percentage of land area covered by National Protected Areas, provincial and district protected areas		2012	28.5	Percent		Admin-MAF				34	34					49.7
15.2.1.a Production forest area with certification in hectares (e.g., FSC, FLEGT)		2015	81,600	hectares	MAF	Admin-MAF				110,000	110,000				200,000	

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress				
15.2.1.b Forest area with management plans in million hectares		2016	15.1	million hectares		Survey-MAF				15.8	15.8				16.5					
15.3.1 Percentage of rural villages reporting land degradation:																				
- Light		2011	36	Percent	MAF	Admin-MAF				36						18				
- Moderate			22										22							11
- Severe			5										5							2,5
15.4.1 Proportion of land area under protection		2017			MAF						20.27	20.27					28,5			
15.5.1 Number of species threatened with extinction			210	Number							136	165					105			
15.7.1 Proportion of traded wildlife that was poached or illicitly trafficked (total wildlife seizures to total wildlife traded/export permits issued)					MAF															
15.8.1 Adoption of national legislation relevant to the prevention or control of invasive alien species																				
15.9.1 Progress towards biodiversity national targets, as reported by NSEDP																				
15.a.1.a Net official development assistance provided for biodiversity/ ecosystems (US\$)					MPI		Admin-MPI													
15.a.1.b Public expenditure on biodiversity/ecosystems																				
15.b.2.a* Net official development assistance provided for forestry/forest development (US\$)																				
15.b.2.b* Public expenditure on forestry/forest development					MAF	Admin-MAF														
15.c.1 Proportion of traded wildlife that was poached or illicitly trafficked																				

**SDG 16 – 21 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owners – Ministry of Home Affairs**

**Note**

SDGi Owners					
LWU	MOF	MOFA	MOHA	MOJ	MOPS
4 indicators	4 Indicators	2 Indicators	4 Indicators	3 Indicators	4 Indicators
16.1.3	16.6.1	16.8.1	16.6.2	16.3.3	16.1.1
16.2.1	16.6.3	16.a.1	16.7.1	16.3.4	16.2.2
16.2.3	16.6.4		16.7.3	16.3.5	16.3.2
16.2.4	16.6.5		16.9.1		16.10.1

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress			
16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population		2017	0.02		MOPS	Admin-MOPS	-	0.02	0.04										
16.1.3 Proportion of population i(aged 13 -17) subjected to (in the previous 12 months)					LWU														
(a) physical violence	Total	2015		Percent	LWU	Survey-LSB: VACS													
	Male		8.2																
	Female		6.6																
(b) sexual violence in the previous 12 months	Total																		
	Male		6.2																
	Female		4.1																
16.2.1 Percentage of children (1-17) who reported having been subject to physical violence over the past year	Total	2015		Percent	LWU	Survey-LSB: VACS													
	Male		7.4																
	Female		8.2																
16.2.2 Number of victims (detected/undetected) of human trafficking per 100,000 population (Total)	Total			number of cases per year	MOPS	Admin-MOPS		44	12	14	10	25							

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress	
- Male	Male			number of cases per year	MOPS	Admin-MOPS (to double check)											
- Female	Female																
16.2.3 Percentage of young women and men aged 18-24 who experienced sexual abuse by age 18 (Total)	Total	2015	9.5	Percent	LWU	Survey-LSB: VACS											
	Male		12														
	Female		7.3														
16.2.4* Percentage of children who reported having been subject to emotional violence over the past year (Total)	Total	2015	9.8	Percent	LWU												
	Male		9.6														
16.3.2 Unsented detainees as a percentage of overall prison population		2017	34.5	Percent	MOPS	Admin-MOPS		34.5	54.3								
16.3.3* Ratio of cases (disaggregated by type) successfully enforced and monitored by Ministry of Justice to total cases submitted by courts (review and double check the data of 2022)	Total	2015		Number	MOJ	Admin-MOJ			7,466	10,491	8,403	5,764	7,154				
	Criminal		13,940				14,444	17,075	5,260	7,854	6,477	4,458	5,683				
	Civil		6,229				6,365	6,615	2,186	2,637	1,926	1,306	1,462				
16.3.4* Number of people using the services provided by the legal aid offices nationwide		2016	25,971				25,971	31,077	13,193	25,203	37,254	29,501	2,036				
16.3.5* Number of cases logged with village mediation committee nationwide			4,746	4,746	3,900	8,412	3,518	2,534	4,192	2,778							
16.6.1 Primary government expenditures as a percentage of original approved budget, disaggregated by sector (or by budget codes or similar)		2015	84.9	Percent	MOF	Admin-MOF											Note 1
<b>Note 1:</b> Proxy using global data estimated by the World Bank. Recommend keeping it in the analysis.																	
16.6.2 Accountability framework applied at selected district level to capture and use citizens feedback on provision of basic services					MOHA	Admin-MOHA	0	0	0	4		4					
16.6.3* Number of days after the start of financial year when public planned budget becomes publicly available		2015	20	Days	MOF	Admin-MOF											

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
16.6.4* Number of months after the end of the financial year when annual budget execution report becomes publicly available (proper value needed)		2015	Before 30 November													
16.6.5* Number of months after the end of the financial year when audited budget execution report becomes publicly available			Before 30 June													
16.7.1 Share of women as a percentage of public institution employees		2015	44.79	Percent	MOHA	Admin-MOHA	45.4	45.87	46.01	46.5	46.89	42.17	47.45	47.49	50	
16.7.3* Public institution employees disaggregated by ethnic groups			177,381					176,048	183,680	184,161	169,149	178,821	176,151	175,058	172,341	
16.8.1 Percentage of members and voting rights of Lao PDR in international organizations			139,249		MOFA	Admin-MOFA	135,721									
16.9.1 Percentage of children under 5 whose births have been registered with a civil authority (Total)	Total	2017	73	Percent	MOHA	Survey - LSB (LSIS)		73						65.0		
	Girls		73.1					73.1								
	Total	2015		Person		Admin-MOHA							30.39			
	Boys		82,128			Admin-MOHA (Birth registration)	61,746	61,416	70,732		84,832	88,681	108,043			
	Girls		14,042			Admin-MOHA (Death registration)	17,157	15,646	19,238		42,311	20,839	21,194			
16.10.1 Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping and disappearance in the previous 12 months					MOPS	Admin-MOPS										
16.a.1 Existence of independent national human rights institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles					MOFA	Admin-MOFA										

**SDG 17 – 20 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owners – Ministry of Planning and Investment and Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

**Note**

- **Number of SDG indicators in total = 20.**
- However, SDGi sequence no.221 and 231 are divided into two indicators, respectively.
- Therefore, for an easy reference of the SWGr owner, **total number of SDG indicators that need to be reported against is 22.**

SDGi Owners						
BOL	MOF	MOFA	MOHA	MOIC	MTC	MPI
1 indicator 17.3.2	3 Indicators 17.1.1 17.1.2 17.4.1	1 Indicator 17.16.1	2 Indicators 17.19.2.b 17.19.3	1 Indicator 17.11.1	7 Indicators 17.6.1 17.6.3.a 17.6.3.b 17.6.2 17.8.1 17.8.2 17.8.3	7 Indicators 17.3.1 17.5.1 17.15.1 17.18.1 17.18.2 17.18.3 17.19.2.a

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress
17.1.1 Total government revenue (by source) as a percentage of GDP (/ loans)																
- Domestic revenue		2015	20.2		MOF	Admin-MOF	16.4	16.3	16.2	15.3	13.0	15.0	16.1			
- Grants			16.3	15			14.6	14.3	13.6							
- Loans			3.9	1.4			1.7	1.9	1.7							
17.1.2 Percentage of expenditure financed by domestic revenue (the input data seem incorrec the percentage should not be over 100, and unit is not clear)		2016	160.6						160.6	143.3	149.4	146				

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress		
17.3.1 Foreign direct investments (FDI), official development assistance (ODA) and South-South Cooperation (SSC) as % of total domestic budget amounts:		2015	1,267,747,571		MPI	Admin-MPI	4,515,413,212	1,695,990,817	1,046,170,477	1,046,170,477					increase	Red		
- (US\$) FDI/ODA/ SSC																		
- % FDI/ODA/ SSC																		
- Delivery on the VD-CAP: Qualitative review																		
17.3.2 Personal remittances, received (% of GDP) in US\$		2015	2.5	Percent	BOL	Admin-BOL	2.4	2.6	2.4	2.2	1.89	2.29	3.2			Yellow		
17.4.1 Total debt service as % of exports of goods, services and primary income					MOF							8.4 (ADB)				Grey		
17.5.1 Number of investment promotion regimes that Lao PDR has adopted and implemented				Number	MPI											Grey		
17.6.1 Number of science and/or technology cooperation agreements and programmes between countries, by type of cooperation (Increase number of agreements with other countries and international organisations to 100 agreements and implementing 80% in 2020)		2015		Number	MTC	Admin-MTC			0.93	1.22	1.67	2.05	2.21				Yellow	
17.6.2 Fixed Internet broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, by speed:		2015	36	Percent		Admin-MTC	38	40	43	49	51	60	60					
		2015	0.21	Percent		From ITU	0.35	0.39	0.64	1.06	1.68	2.03			100			
- 256 kbit/s or less				Unit?			8.085	7.555	24123	10050	8898	8692	7435					
- 2 Mbit/s to less than 10 Mbit/s				Unit?			478	7.505	29806	66110	97860	113264	145.702					
- 10 Mbit/s or above				Unit?			23	19	1577	3323	6.830	16.813	26.908					
17.6.3.a* Number of research projects/papers (increase number of research projects in national and ministerial levels to 250 projects in 2025)		2015	63	Number		Admin-MTC	46	16	18	18								Red

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress	
17.6.3.b* Number of research papers published in regional and international journals (increase number of research publications to 250 copies in national and regional levels in 2025)		2015	28	Number		Admin-MTC	22	23	18	24							
17.8.1 Percentage of individuals using the Internet	Total	2015	36	Percent	MTC	Admin-MTC	38	40	43	49	51	60	60		95		
	Male						19	26									
	Female							28									
	Total																
	Male	2017	28.5					Survey -LSB (LSIS)		28.5							61.0
	Female	2017	27.9							27.9							57.0
17.8.2* Percentage of population registered as internet users through landline and wireless		2015	30			Admin-MTC	39	42	45	50	53	57	58				
17.8.3* Percentage of mobile phone users with internet access.		2015	21				30	37	47	50	53	57	58				
17.11.1 Export growth in average		2016	15.1		MOIC	Admin-MOIC	15.07	15.19	10.87	8.39	5.02	21.72	9.37	2.08	10		
17.15.1 Extent of use of country-owned results frameworks and planning tools by providers of development cooperation					MPI											Note 1	
<b>Note 1:</b> Using global data estimated by UNDP and OECD based on inputs from the country focal point. Recommend keeping it in the analysis.																	
17.16.1 Lao PDR commits to reporting progress in multi-stakeholder development effectiveness monitoring frameworks that support the achievement of the sustainable development goals					MOFA												
17.18.1 Proportion of SDG indicators adopted by Lao PDR that are produced with full disaggregation when relevant to the target, in accordance with the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics					MPI												

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDGi Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall progress		
<p><b>Note 2:</b> Proxy data, these are part of the Statistical Performance Indicators compiled with the indicator by the World Bank.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Sources performance index (Statistical Performance Indicators Pillar 4)</li> <li>• Data Infrastructure performance index (Statistical Performance Indicators Pillar 5)</li> </ul>																		
17.18.2 Adoption of national statistical legislation that complies with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics		2010	Yes	Yes/No	MPI	Admin-LSB		Yes										
17.18.3 Establishment/ Implementation of Lao PDR national statistical plan			Yes					Yes										
17.19.2.a Completion of at least one population and housing census in the last 10 years		2015	Yes				Yes	Yes										
17.19.2.b Number of birth registration recorded:	Total	2015	82,128	Number	MOHA	Admin-MoHA	61,746	61,416	70,732	83,284	84,832	88,681	108,043					
	Female		35,930				31,217	30,180	35,324	42,319	43,105	42,767	53,389					
	Male		46,198				30,529	31,236	35,408	40,965	41,727	45,914	54,654					
17.19.3* Number of death registration recorded:	Total	2015	14,042	Number	MOHA	Admin-MoHA	17,157	15,646	19,238	21,267	42,311	20,839	21,194					
	Female		5,637				7,339	6,719	8,173	8,758	17,397	9,247	9,251					
	Male		8,405				9,818	8,927	11,065	12,509	24,914	11,592	11,943					

**SDG 18 – 6 Indicators**  
**SDG Reporting Owners – Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

SDG indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDG Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 target	No.
18.1.1 Number of reported UXO casualties (disaggregated by age group and sex)		2015	42	Number	MOFA	Admin-MoLSW/NRA	60	41	24	25	33	56	20	47	<10	
(a) Injured	Total		33				50	37	21	16	24	43	15	36		
	Male adult		15				18	12	4	5	11	11	7	12		
	Male child		16				24	8	8	4	9	15	5	13		
	Female adult		1				3	11	4	2	2	9	3	7		
	Female child		1				5	6	5	5	2	8	0	4		
(b) Death	Total		9				10	4	3	9	6	13	5	11		
Male adult	Male adult		6				2	3	2	8	6	5	3	4		
Male Child	Male child		2				8	0	1	1	1	6	2	4		
Female adult	Female adult		1				0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2		
Female Child	Female child		0				0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1		
18.1.2 Percentage of population in contaminated villages with information on Confirmed Hazardous Areas in their village (disaggregated by age group, sex and persons with disabilities)	Total		2015				0.233	Percent	MOFA	Admin-MoLSW/NRA	0.3	0.31	0.21	0.18	0.18	
	Male	0.434		0.57	0.37	0.25	0.26				0.56	0.13	0.13	0.23		
	Female	0.032		0.07	0.26	0.17	0.1				0.08	0.02	0.02	0.11		
18.2.1 Percentage of high priority hazardous areas remaining to be cleared (disaggregated by village poverty levels)			99.5				99.46	99.41	99.33	99.25	99.19	99.15	99.08	99.01	98.5	
18.2.2 Number of villages defined as 'poor' with Confirmed Hazardous Areas remaining to be cleared			3322	Number			2843	2399	1983	1526	1091		1850	1850	0	
18.3.1 Proportion of registered active age UXO survivors unable to earn sufficient income with access to basic income security			95.84	Percent			95.56	95.03	94.51	94.52	94.2	93.93	93.79	93.72	20	
18.3.2 Percentage of registered UXO survivors mainstreamed into health, education and employment services			0.1193					15.46	18.74	19.61	20.61	20.91	21.23	21.14	21.26	100

