

# EVALUATION OF LAO PDR - UN PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK (UNPF) 2017-2021

Evaluation Report

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**Prepared for**

UN Resident Coordinator's Office  
(RCO)

**April, 2021**



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## Acknowledgements

The evaluation of Lao PDR - UN Partnership Framework (UNPF) 2017-2021 was conducted by a team of international and national evaluators working under the direction of the UN Resident Coordinator, in cooperation with the UNCT and Government of Lao PDR who form the Joint Steering Committee.

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Michael Miner, Evaluation Team Leader.

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# ACRONYMS

Acronyms	Significance
AFML	ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour
AFP	Agencies, Funds and Programmes
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CFS	Child-Friendly Schools
CIIE	China International Import Expo
CPD	Country Programme Document
CPN	Child Protection Network
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DDF	District Development Fund
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ET	Evaluation Team
EST	Eastern Standard Time
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GE	Gender Equality

Acronyms	Significance
GEEW	Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
HR	Human Rights
HRH	Human Resources for Health
HSRS	Health Sector Reform Strategy
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IDR	Issuer Default Rating
IR	Inception Report
IRIS	International Recruitment Integrity System
ITC	International Trade Center
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JSC	Joint Steering Committee
KII	Key Informant Interview
LANITH	Lao National Institute of Tourism and Hospitality
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LDC	Least Development Countries
LFTU	Lao Federation of Trade Unions
LNCCI	Lao National Chamber of Commerce

Acronyms	Significance
LYU	Lao Youth Union
LWU	Lao's Women Union
LSB	Lao Statistics Bureau
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture
MECG	Mother and Early Childhood Grant
MDD	Minimum Dietary Diversity
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoIC	Ministry of Industry and Commerce
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of Lao PDR
MoNRE,	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MoPS	Ministry of Public Security
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
NA	National Assembly
NCAWMC	The National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children
NEET	Youth Not in Employment, Education or Training
NGO	Non- Government Organisation
NHI	National Health Insurance



Acronyms	Significance
NPA	Non-Profit Associations
NRES	National Rural Employment Strategy
NSEDP	National Socio-Economic Development Plan
NSPS	National Social Protection Strategy
NSSF	National Social Security Fund
ODOP	One-District-One-Product
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development -Development Assistance Committee
OLS	Online survey
OOP	Out of Pocket
OSPP	Office of Supreme People's Prosecutor
PBG	Performance based Grants
PFM	Public Financial Management
PMF	Project Management Framework
PPA	Provincial People's Assemblies
PPT	Power Point file
PSIF	Public Service Innovation Facility
RASaL	Resilient Agriculture Systems and Livelihoods
RBM	Results Based Management
RCO	Resident Coordinator Office
SDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Acronyms	Significance
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical, Vocational and Education Training
UFE	Utilization-Focused Evaluation
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCITRAL	United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Development Program
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlement Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNJP	UN Joint Programme

Acronyms	Significance
UNPF	Lao PDR - United Nations Partnership Framework
UNSDCF	Lao PDR - UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
	Socio-Economic Response Plan
QA	Quality Assurance
VSS	Voluntary Sustainability Standards
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

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# Executive Summary

## 1. Purpose

As described in the Terms of Reference (TOR), the overall purpose of the UNPF evaluation in Lao PDR was to assess the extent to which the UNPF outcomes (2017-2021) are aligned and contributed to the national development priorities set forth in the 8th NSEDP and to determine the extent to which UNPF outcomes have been achieved. In addition, the evaluation examined the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of UNPF results as well as the sustainability of the UNCT's support to national development priorities. The evaluation is intended to feed into design of the forthcoming Lao PDR - UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2026.

## 2. Objectives

As per the TOR, the overall objectives of the UNPF evaluation were to:

- Assess UNPF's overall effectiveness in advancing Lao PDR's national development agenda (8th NSEDP);
- Review results achieved during the UNPF 2017-2021 cycle;
- Review UNPF's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability against Lao PDR's national development agenda (8th NSEDP);
- Examine how the five UN programming principles have been mainstreamed in the results-based management cycle (design, implementation, and M&E) of the UNPF; and
- Provide clear, actionable strategic and programmatic recommendations for improving the UNCT's contribution to Lao PDR's development priorities, taking into consideration the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

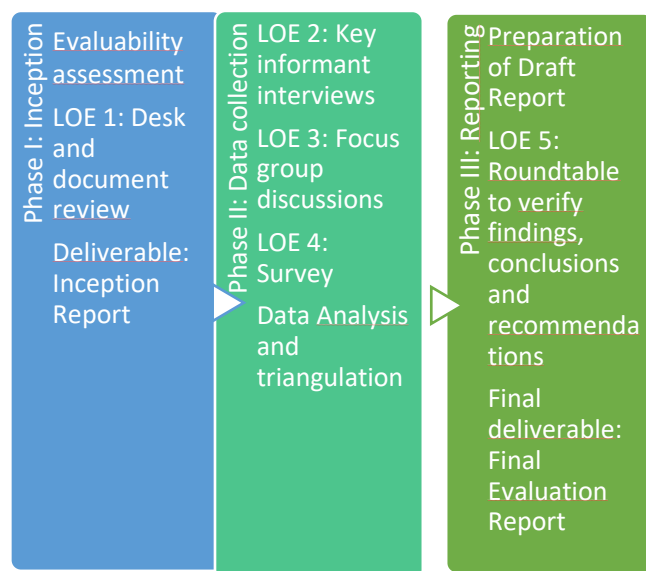
## 3. Principles and Pillars

The UNPF is underpinned by the five programming principles of: gender equality, human rights-based approach, environmental sustainability, results-based management and capacity development. It also considered the specific context of Lao PDR focusing on its cultural and national heritage, its very diverse number and variety of ethnic groups, its phased reform process and agricultural economy with a pronounced rural-urban divide. The UNPF is supported by three key pillars: 1. Inclusive Growth, Livelihoods and Resilience; 2. Human Development; and 3. Governance, Rule of Law and Participation in National Decision making under which the key outcomes are framed.

## 4. Evaluation Methodology

Beginning in September, 2020, the evaluation team (ET) met with members of the UNCT followed by a meeting with the UNCT and evaluation team members conducting evaluations of particular UN agencies including UNDP, WFP and UNFPA. The UNPF Evaluation Team then began with carrying out an Evaluability Assessment and the first line of evidence which was a desk and document review which was carried out and informed development of the Inception Report submitted in October, 2020. The agreed 5 lines of evidence are described below:

**Table 1 : WORK PLAN – 5 LINES OF EVIDENCE (LOE)**



### COVID-19 considerations:

Since COVID 19 prevented Baastel's international team members from coming to Lao PDR, Zoom calls were carried out in the morning in Lao PDR which was the previous evening in Eastern Canada.

Interviews in Lao were carried out by the two local team members during the days in Lao PDR. To ensure consistency, the same tools/templates were designed and used for all parts of data collection and analysis.

In November and December, 2020, the data collection phase including key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions and an on-line survey. Table 2 and Table 3 indicate the number of respondents which overall included interviews with 97 participants from 48 organizations plus 7 UN in 2 focus groups and 37 survey respondents for an overall total of 141 respondents from 61 organizations. Aside from the anonymous survey results, sex disaggregated numbers were: 34 male and 18 female for the Government's 52 stakeholders, 17 male and 18 female for 35 UN representatives and 11 male and 6 female for 17 other stakeholders for a total of 104.

**Table 2: Primary data collection from organizations**

Org.	# of KIIs requested	# of KIIs done	Remarks
UNCT	18	18	

Org.	# of KII requested	# of KIIs done	Remarks
Govt.	20	19	One government partner preferred to provide written comments instead of remote interview
DPs	13	11	One DP and one INGO declined the KII requests
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>48</b>	

Table3: - Primary Data Collection – Survey

	Government representatives survey	UN Agencies Survey	Development partners survey
Population	85	23	14
Emails sent	85	23	14
Questionnaire filled through email	8	8	2
Anonymous questionnaires completed	14	5	0
Total of responses	22	13	2
Response rate	26 %	57%	14%

The data gathered in the 4 lines of evidence were recorded by the 4 interviewers on templates based on the 20 specific evaluation questions under relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, cross cutting themes and forward-looking perspectives. In January, 2021, the team carried out a content analysis and triangulation of all the data and presented a set of findings on Feb 7 followed by sharing Draft 1 of the Report with findings, conclusions and recommendations on Feb 8. A few comments which were received on Feb. 15, 2021 were integrated into a revised power point which was presented and discussed with the UNCT on Feb. 16, 2021. Several additional ideas were suggested at the meeting and 3 regional comments were received afterwards which were considered and responded to in developing draft 2 of this final report.

Taped input from all the meetings were used to help the Evaluation Team to finalize Draft 2 of the Report. This Executive Summary and report include an updated version of the findings, conclusions and recommendations which were presented in a PPT to the JSC roundtable on Feb. 26, 2021. Following that presentation, feedback at the roundtable and follow-up comments in writing from the Government of Lao PDR were presented on March 16, 2021 and responded to and included in this Final Report. The ET also responded to comments in writing.

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<b>Relevance</b>		
<p>1. The large majority of stakeholders (over 75%) in the UN, Government of Lao PDR and other agencies consulted all agree that the UN Partnership Framework (UNPF) is well aligned with national plans and priorities identified in the Lao PDR 8th NSEDP. Specific results are primarily delivered through individual UN Agency efforts working with partners.</p> <p>2. The UNPF thematic areas are aligned with the national priorities of the 8th NSEDP of Lao PDR and have contributed to progress towards most targets but the implementation results are mixed.</p> <p>3. The UN is seen as a neutral partner with strong technical expertise supporting the Government to achieve the 8th NSEDP and SDG targets.</p> <p>4. Overall the UNRC and UNCT is leading movement towards improved interagency cooperation and collaboration among UN agencies and also with the Government of Lao PDR and other agencies but issues related to differing administrative modalities among UN agencies, other agencies and the Lao PDR Government make it difficult to optimize results and avoid duplication.</p> <p>5. Outreach to the private sector, the INGOs/NPAs and to new development partners is has not been significant and is essential to expanding the UNPF partnership</p>	<p>1. The UNPF is relevant and aligned to the political and economic context in which it is implemented. The actual process of developing the document is itself also relevant and brings stakeholders together to discuss their vision on how the UN, as a system and a neutral partner, can align its work with the priorities and needs of Lao PDR.</p>	<p>1. To further integrate the UNSDCF within the Lao PDR context, the UNCT needs to build on positive movement towards overcoming challenges linked to differing administrative modalities among UN agencies, development partners and the Lao PDR government. It also needs to identify ways to widen the partnership to include INGOs/NPAs, the private sector and new development partners. At the strategic level, the Joint Steering Committee should agree on directional issues while at the operational level a joint Theory of Change, monitoring framework and indicators should be developed together.</p> <p><b>Recommendation for:</b> the UNCT and headquarters of UN organizations and the Joint Steering Committee.</p> <p><b>When:</b> during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF.</p>



Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>between the UN and the Government of Lao PDR. But at present this situation is improving with several UN agencies increasing their linkages with INGOs/NPAs and expanding partnerships with multiple stakeholders such as e.g. UNFPA.</p> <p>6. The UN Agencies have responded well to the COVID crises which has enhanced the relevance of the UN working together as a whole.</p>		
<b>Effectiveness</b>		
<p>7. The UNCT is well respected as a UN coordinating body with improved positioning credibility, reliability and communication thanks to strong leadership from the UNRC which can potentially help bring about culture change within the Lao PDR UNCT.</p> <p>8. The UNPF clarifies Agency Financial Priorities effectively.</p> <p>9. Non-resident UN Agencies report they are well integrated into the UNCT.</p> <p>10. UNPF reporting has good coverage but reports are challenged in measuring progress on indicators due to weak baselines and wide-ranging indicators.</p> <p>11. Increased capacity is needed in M&amp;E as well as in statistical and data management in UN Agencies and the Government of Lao PDR.</p> <p>12. Many stakeholders view the work of the UN Results Groups as an internal UN mechanism while the 10 Sector Working</p>	<p>2. The UNCT and its member agencies, partly through the use of the UNPF, have achieved good results, all the more through its support to national institutions and ministries. These counterparts respect and have confidence in the UN system and its technical as well as thematic expertise.</p> <p>3. The Sector Working Groups set up by the Government and the Results Groups coordinated by the UN are not well aligned. While the Sector WGs are at the output sectoral level, the Results Groups are at the outcome level. This has contributed to the two groups not coordinating as well as they could in their work together.</p> <p>4. In the Government's view, the UNPF and UNCT need to empower Government stakeholders more in terms of decision-making, and involvement during programme</p>	<p>2. To ensure more effective implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF, the Lao PDR government needs to more actively participate in programmes designed and implemented by and with UN Agencies. The UNCT also needs to continue to fully consult the government throughout development of the UNSDCF and also in development of major coordinated programmes to ensure full commitment and ownership.</p> <p><b>Recommendation for:</b> the UNCT and the Government.</p> <p><b>When:</b> during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF.</p> <p>3. The Sector Working Groups and Results Working Groups should be aligned at the outcome level to the 9th NSEDP and the UNSDCF in order to promote and track changes at the transformational outcome level.</p>

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>Groups are a broader Government and Development Partner mechanism working under the Round Table process.</p> <p>13. The Results Groups are uneven in level of ownership by specific agencies and in their levels of involvement in planning and implementing programmes.</p> <p>14. UN programme teams need to empower Government stakeholders more in terms of decision-making during programme planning and implementation of UN programmes.</p>	<p>planning and implementation of UN programmes.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation for:</b> the UNCT and Joint Steering Committee.</p> <p><b>When:</b> during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF.</p> <p>4. Clarification of AFPs and reporting have been valuable, but further improvements are needed to strengthen M&amp;E and statistical management as well as overall joint reporting.</p> <p><b>Recommendation for:</b> the UNCT.</p> <p><b>When:</b> immediately.</p>
Efficiency		
<p>15. Each UN Agency has its own administrative modalities which makes it challenging for Ministries in Lao PDR to work with UN Agencies since they implement similar programmes using different methods which often increases transaction costs and creates duplication.</p> <p>16. UN Agencies tend to work in siloes focussed on achieving their own mandates which limits their efficiency linking with others to achieve UNPF's umbrella mandate.</p> <p>17. There are many examples of coordination on initiatives (e.g. Joint Programme on Social Protection).</p>	<p>5. Although UN agencies, in part thanks to the UNPF, have shown in many instances that they can coordinate their work through joint programming, many challenges remain to overcome silos within a number of agencies which are focused on their own specific mandates.</p> <p>6. In order to increase coordination among UN Agencies in the field, and avoid duplication, it is important to involve the headquarters of these UN Agencies since this is where policy decisions are made.</p>	<p>5. The UNRC, through the UNPF and the upcoming UNSDCF, needs to continue to support the culture change that encourages more joint programme design and implementation which better reflects the "One UN". Individual and team leadership is the key to fostering this cultural change. Some UN agencies could benefit from financial incentives or support for coordination which would encourage them to take part in more joint initiatives.</p> <p><b>Recommendation for:</b> the UNCT and UNRC.</p> <p><b>When:</b> during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF and beyond.</p> <p>6. Ways need to be found to overcome the effects of differing administrative modalities used by: UN agencies in the field and at UN</p>

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
		headquarters which can be identified through discussions among the agencies. <b>Recommendation for:</b> UNCT and Headquarters of UN agencies <b>When:</b> Streamlined overtime starting immediately.
<b>Sustainability</b>		
<p>18. Several stakeholders pointed to strong UN AFP partnerships in many provinces and districts in Lao PDR but several other stakeholders indicated that most UN support is at the national policy dialogue level with less at the provincial and district levels where actual implementation of policies and strategies takes place.</p> <p>19. There does not appear to be sufficient emphasis on sustaining results in some of the projects.</p> <p>20. There is a lack of knowledge transfer, coaching and mentoring to build capacity and contribute to sustainability.</p> <p>21. A longer transition period is needed for Lao PDR's graduation from LCD status given the effects of COVID-19 and need for UN and donor initiatives to build sustainability through improved use of national systems.</p> <p>22. Sustainability needs to be supported as an integrated whole including focusing on resiliency, building on institution strengthening of the governance institutions, building and sustaining human capital within the government and widening the</p>	<p>7. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has actually strengthened the UN's capacity to work together, overall, the crisis has also set the country back on many fronts. Some of the progress Lao PDR was making towards graduation from LDC status has slowed down making rapid graduation more difficult.</p> <p>8. The present UNPF framework still has some gaps in terms of setting a context in which information, knowledge and know-how can be shared beyond participants who are directly involved in UN agencies' capacity building and technical assistance.</p>	<p>7. The UNCT needs to bring the sustainability of initiatives, including for disasters of all types, to the center of the UNSDCF and guide coordinated efforts that can have longer lasting results. UN agencies should make every effort to support policy changes being implemented at all "levels" (i.e. national, regional, district and local). <b>Recommendation for:</b> the UNCT. <b>When:</b> during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF and beyond.</p> <p>8. In engaging and supporting the Government, the UN system's support at the national and local level should be balanced to help promote the government's Sam Sang decentralization policy which assigns broad roles to provinces as strategic units, districts as comprehensive planning units and villages as development units. <b>Recommendation for:</b> the UNCT. <b>When:</b> during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF.</p>

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
partnerships to include the private sector, INGOs/NPAs and new development partners.		
<b>Cross Cutting Issues</b>		
<p><b>Gender Equality (GE)</b></p> <p>23. Lao PDR had good gender mainstreaming but more effort needs to be placed on women's empowerment and women's rights to achieve SDG 5.</p> <p>24. The UN has provided good entry points to discuss sensitive topics but needs to better coordinate with other development partners as well as the government to continue to advance the GE agenda in Lao PDR. Working with other stakeholders will help identify gaps in policy and capacity.</p> <p>25. The Government would like the UN to take the lead on GE and the UNCT to identify a lead agency since UN Women is not in country at present.</p>	<p>9. Gender mainstreaming is well supported in Lao PDR and promoted by UN agencies and the UNPF. The UN is already seen as a leader in GE which has helped introduce sensitive topics such as GBV prevalence in Lao PDR which in turn provides a dialogue platform to strengthen discussions on women's rights and empowerment.</p> <p>10. Gender Equality in Lao PDR is well done overall with many promising areas which are positioned to be entry points and platforms for the expansion of the rights of women and girls such as reproductive rights, promotion of the rights of the girl child and work on GBV.</p>	<p>9. Gender Mainstreaming is essentially well integrated in how the UNCT operates in Lao PDR; however, the UNCT can and should extend this gender mainstreaming effort to some of the so-called technical programmes to ensure that women and girls are also sharing equally in the fruits of development. The UNCT should put particular emphasis on gender equality and making sure it is mainstreamed in everything it does, including the planning and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF.</p> <p><b>Recommendation for:</b> the UNCT.</p> <p><b>When:</b> during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF and beyond.</p> <p>10. Commencing with the solid platform of GE mainstreaming and good work done on GBV, the Joint Steering Committee, together should address more directly women's and girls' rights and women's empowerment bringing issues related to the public and private sphere together. All rights are indivisible and need to be seen as working together.</p> <p><b>Recommendation for:</b> the Joint Steering Committee.</p>

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
		<b>When:</b> during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF and beyond.
<p><b>Human Rights Based Approaches (HRBA)</b></p> <p>26. Promotion and strengthening of HRs has a transformative effect but is still weak in some policy areas in Lao PDR.</p> <p>27. HR provides a platform for more inclusive growth and the ability to advocate for its inclusion but it is still a sensitive subject in the country; human security issues are better accepted with a focus on poverty reduction, labour and social welfare and education.</p>	<p>11. In terms of the human rights-based approach, the 10 principles of the UN Global Compact including human rights and environment and the 3 pillars of the Ruggie Principles (protect, respect and remedy) are recognized to be well supported by the UN Agencies but there are still issues with HRs within the country. The government has signed several International Human Rights Conventions such as CEDAW and included gender equity and human rights in the national constitution, but there are areas in which the UNPF could make efforts to further bring forward human rights.</p> <p>12. The UN has advocated for HRBA as transformative and works to strengthen its inclusion in the development process, while the Lao PDR government argue for a step-wise approach in which primarily human security concerns, related to poverty alleviation and social welfare, are emphasized in the early stages over other rights. In short, Lao PDR is more comfortable promoting Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR) over those of Civil and Political Rights (CPR).</p>	<p>11. As with gender equality and gender mainstreaming efforts, it is important for all stakeholders to utilize entry points towards a wider discussion on human rights, beginning with children's rights, educational rights, and addressing poverty alleviation, health and social justice concerns to help move the needle towards a more just and equal society.</p> <p><b>Recommendation for:</b> all stakeholders involved in the UNSDCF.</p> <p><b>When:</b> during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF and beyond.</p> <p>12. ESCR and CPR are not mutually exclusive categories but interrelated. Therefore, when discussing the rights of women and girls, non Lao-Tai ethnic group rights, migrant workers rights, etc., it is vital to demonstrate a link between the need for agency and decision making as well as the right to education, land rights and decent work.</p> <p><b>Recommendation for:</b> all stakeholders involved in the UNSDCF.</p> <p><b>When:</b> during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF and beyond.</p>

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p><b>Environmental Sustainability</b></p> <p>28. As with GE, Environmental Sustainability is well supported. Cross-currents however, such as poverty alleviation, the abundance of mineral deposits in Lao PDR and the regional appetite to acquire them, lead to Lao PDR's extractive economy. In turn, this economy exacerbates the increase in climate disasters such as flooding and storms.</p> <p>29. Disaster management has worked as a critical entry-point for combatting challenges related to ES since it has a high degree of acceptance.</p> <p>30. The failure to deal with ES has a disproportionate effect on women and girls, particularly in rural areas where women and girls are over-represented in small subsistence farming.</p>	<p>13. The environment is of central concern to development partners in Lao PDR and a focus of many projects with the Government, both with the UN and Other Development Partners. However, there are other (economic) forces that put pressure on the environment. Environmental factors include human rights concerns since many small farmers for example, are among the hardest hit by the effects of environmental unsustainable actions. These negative environmental outcomes affect more importantly a sub-set of the rural poor, women and girls from non Lao-Tai ethnic groups who engage in subsistence farming. Lao PDR, like other countries in the region, e.g., Vietnam, is experiencing the effects of climate change through increased storms and flooding which often destroy the livelihoods of the country's most vulnerable women and children involved in subsistence farming.</p>	<p>13. One of the best entry points to move from the dialogue on Environmental Sustainability to concrete action plans is through disaster risk/ disaster management which naturally leads to the climate issue and ecosystem degradation. This issue has the added benefit of highlighting gender equality and non Lao-Tai ethnic group issues since these overlapping vulnerabilities make natural disasters even more destructive for certain populations. It is hence recommended that the UNCT, through the upcoming UNSDCF, concentrates significant environmental sustainability efforts on disaster risk/ disaster management.</p> <p><b>Recommendation for:</b> the UNCT.</p> <p><b>When:</b> during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF</p>
<p><b>Results Based Management (RBM)</b></p> <p>31. A clearly articulated Theory of Change (ToC) which spells out key assumptions and outcomes would help to provide an overarching strategy on the programme and RBM.</p> <p>32. The uniqueness of UN Agencies and the overwhelming number of indicators makes it challenging to collect data and for there to be ownership by the Lao PDR government. More support for government is needed by the UN</p>	<p>14. The UNPF does not include substantial RBM content or detailed guiding principles that promote a fully coordinated approach to reporting by the UN as a system but rather than as individual agencies with good content. The RBM system does not yet reduce pressure on signatory agencies by emphasizing the need to focus on higher level outcomes that demonstrate changes that are <i>contributing</i> to higher level results and changes by building the capacity of</p>	<p>14. The UNRC, the UNCT, the Government of Lao PDR and other stakeholders, as is possible, should be jointly involved in the development of the Theory of Change. It is imperative that the UNCT bases the new UNSDCF on increased and enhanced levels of baseline data and data coordination. The design of indicators and targets should be a joint exercise carried out in consultation with the Lao PDR government which will increase</p>

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>Agencies to help Lao PDR overcome data related and statistical capacity concerns.</p> <p>33. The UNPF can provide an overall umbrella mandate but there needs more emphasis on contribution rather on attribution of results to make this workable for all development partners.</p>	<p>national stakeholders to themselves generate long lasting changes within their society.</p>	<p>joint buy-in and lead to improved measurement of progress.</p> <p><b>Recommendation for:</b> all stakeholders involved in the UNSDCF.</p> <p><b>When:</b> during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF.</p>
<p><b>Capacity Building</b></p> <p>34. The Lao PDR government would like to see more technical assistance and capacity building rather than having international experts managing programmes since they see this as more sustainable in the long run. The UN agrees that capacity building in a number of key areas is critical for achieving and sustaining the development agenda in Lao PDR and includes CB in every programme.</p> <p>35. The government appreciates support to staff for capacity building but would also like more capacity building or institution building at the systemic levels of government, e.g., provision of improved systems and technology etc. since high staff turn-over and insufficient succession planning makes it difficult to sustain gains made by staff who have benefitted from capacity building alone. There needs to be a balance between investments in human capital and institutional systems building to maximize the effectiveness of capacity building.</p>	<p>15. Although UN programmes and the UNPF integrate technical assistance as an important approach to support Lao PDR nationals to increase their capacity to achieve results themselves, more focus is needed on learning by doing and generating local ownership rather than having international experts leading programmes. This is especially important as Lao PDR moves towards graduation from LDC status. There should be a balance between investments in human capacity and institutional systems building to ensure succession planning. There is a consensus around the fact that capacity building is a key area for sustainability and is an important area for the future UNSDCF and a core for future programming.</p>	<p>15. The UNCT, in close coordination with the Lao PDR government, needs to develop and jointly implement an integrated capacity development plan which responds to the needs of the Government of Lao PDR. This plan needs to include a specific section on building monitoring and evaluation capacity to help develop baselines and measure progress. Human capital investment is important (including investments in TVET however it is also important to invest in institutional strengthening within the Government Public Service to become sustainable).</p> <p><b>Recommendation for:</b> Joint Steering Committee.</p> <p><b>When:</b> during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF.</p>

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p><b>Forward Looking Perspectives</b></p> <p>36. It appeared to several representatives in all areas that some agencies and Ministries have not allocated sufficient resources for M&amp;E so they propose that additional resources be committed by agencies linked to the UNRC which could provide coordination purposes. A joint monitoring approach will benefit both large and small UN Agencies and the Government since cross over issues will become more apparent and help agencies, the Government and the UNSDCF to plan.</p> <p>37. Multiple stakeholders support the need for the UN and multilateral and bilateral development partners to work together on a range of activities including joint initial analysis of programme proposals, coordinating and having good exchanges across sectors and in specific sectors and also joint monitoring and evaluation missions and linkages that increase data sharing among all stakeholders.</p> <p>38. Clearly there is a need for finding ways to cut transaction costs in procurement and programme implementation and overcome the fallout from stakeholders needing to comply with multiple rules and regulations.</p> <p>39. Most of the groups of representatives suggest that the focus of the next UNSDCF needs to be on increasing the capacity of government staff to develop, manage, implement and monitor programmes with</p>	<p>16. The key messages for the next UNSDCF are:</p> <p>Align with the 9th NSEDP with jointly agreed indicators identified, monitored and reviewed by the JSC and coordinated by the UNRC;</p> <p>Allocate more resources for M&amp;E across the board and use a joint monitoring approach and joint analysis of programme proposals etc.; and,</p> <p>Focus on supporting capacity building and institutional strengthening nationally and increasingly at the provincial and district levels. To make this possible will require increased collaboration and commitment among development partners, the UN agencies in country and their headquarters and with the Government of Lao PDR at multiple levels.</p>	<p>16. Moving forward it is important to look back at relevance to ensure sustainability. The UNSCDF, as a universal mandate or blueprint, should be addressed at two levels: the strategic and operational. The Plan of Action process to concretize this could be:</p> <p>Step 1: Consultation Process – Bring together the Government of Lao PDR, UN Agencies, Development Partners, private sector and INGOs/NPAs in a series of consultations led by the UNRC and UNCT who are well trusted neutral parties.</p> <p>Step 2: Development of a Joint Theory of Change which could provide an overarching vision for change.</p> <p>Step 3: Development of joint-indicators</p> <p>Step 4: More regular, at least annual meetings, of the Joint Steering Committee are required.</p>



Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>decentralised decision-making and approval capability which is likely to increase government ownership.</p> <p>40. There is agreement among most stakeholders that there has not been sufficient focus in most programmes building local capacity at the provincial and district levels which needs to be improved in the next UNSDCF by integrating these levels in plans and programmes.</p>		

The recommendations are directed to the key stakeholders together (rather than to the UNCT) since to implement them, the UNCT needs to work with the Government of Lao PDR with input from other stakeholders (e.g., Mass Organizations, INGO/NPAs, Private Sector and UN Agencies headquarters). Therefore, implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) should include:

- A jointly agreed Theory of Change by the Joint Steering Committee meeting regularly,
- A coordinated strategy linking the Sector Working Groups with the UN Results Groups,
- An agreed approach to capacity building in support of the Government of Lao PDR, and
- A jointly agreed M, E & L approach with jointly agreed indicators and baselines.

This approach is consistent with the findings and conclusions of this UNPF evaluation and also to findings and conclusions of 3 country evaluations for UNFPA, WFP and UNDP in late 2020-early 2021.

As indicated, in a comparative table at the end of the report, all the evaluation reports suggest the way forward is to focus on partnership and to working together to develop an integrated, transformative and strategic approach to finalizing the UNSDCF to support the 9<sup>th</sup> NESDP and the SDGs in Lao PDR.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

This draft evaluation report has been carried out in stages which included an initial consultation with the UNCT, development of an inception report in October, 2020 which included a document review (in the Annex of this report), data gathering in November and December, 2020 which included input from 104 stakeholders in the Government of Lao PDR, the UN agencies and other partner agencies, and data analysis and triangulation in January and February 2021. The report includes findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations based on the data gathered by this evaluation team.

The primary data for the report was gathered from the interviews, focus groups and the survey responses as follows:

	Government of Lao PDR	UN Agencies	Other Agencies	Total
Key Informant Interviews (97)	52	28	17	104
Focus Group (7)		7		
Online Survey	22	13	2	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>141</b>

As noted in Annex 6, these participants represented 19 Lao PDR government departments, 18 UN agencies, 14 development partners and 3 INGOs for a total of 48 organizations.

The final draft of the report also compares the results of this evaluation with 3 other evaluations that have been carried out simultaneously with this evaluation in Lao PDR. What they illustrate is that there is a significant degree of coherence among key results. This should assist the UN in preparing its the new UNSDCF which will be linked to Lao PDR's 9<sup>th</sup> Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021-2025).

## 1.1. Purpose, Scope and Evaluation Objectives

### 1.1.1. Purpose

As described in the Terms of Reference (TOR), the overall purpose of the UNPF evaluation was to assess the extent to which the UNPF outcomes (2017-2021) are aligned and contributed to the

national development priorities set forth in the 8th NSEDP and to determine the extent to which UNPF outcomes have been achieved. In addition, the evaluation examined the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of UNPF results as well as the sustainability of the UNCT's support to national development priorities. The evaluation will feed into design of the forthcoming Lao PDR - UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2026.

### 1.1.2. Scope

The evaluation worked with UN agencies in country and those which have programmes in Lao PDR but do not have local offices. The evaluation reviewed the time frame up to the end of 2020 and covered UN supported programmes being delivered throughout the country.

The external evaluation of the UNPF 2017-2021 is intended to contribute to:

Supporting the UN system's Delivering as One principle to ensure the UNCT worked efficiently and effectively to implement the UNPF 2017-2021. By objectively verifying results achieved within the UNPF and assessing the sustainability of strategies and interventions used, the evaluation:

- Evaluated how the UNPF's strategic intent and principles have been taken forward by UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes (AFPs) and identified factors that have affected UN AFPs working together.
- Evaluated the UNCT's contribution to national development results through an assessment drawing on evaluation criteria grounded in evidence.
- Identified factors that may have affected the UNCT's support and contributions through the UNPF, highlighting good practices and bottlenecks.
- Assessed the performance, progress, and gaps of the UNPF's support to national goals and priorities; and,
- Generated a set of clear, forward-looking, and actionable recommendations logically linked to the findings and conclusions, to inform the strategies, implementation mechanism, and management of the forthcoming Lao PDR UNSDCF 2022-2026.

The evaluation also identified lessons learned from implementation of the UNPF 2017-2021 anchored around "what works, what doesn't and why?" This included highlighting lessons learned on what the added value of the UNCT has been and could be in the future, considering the changing development landscape, emerging actors and how the UN System is adapting to the changing aid environment. It also takes into consideration not only what is covered in the UNPF, but also examines and highlights aspects not currently covered but which are nevertheless relevant to Lao PDR's current and future context.

### 1.1.3. Objectives

As per the TOR, the overall objectives of the UNPF evaluation were to:

- Assess UNPF's overall effectiveness in advancing Lao PDR's national development agenda (8th NSEDP);
- Review results achieved during the UNPF 2017-2021 cycle.
- Review UNPF's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability against Lao PDR's national development agenda (8th NSEDP);
- Examine how the five UN programming principles have been mainstreamed in the results-based management cycle (design, implementation, and M&E) of the UNPF; and
- Provide clear, actionable strategic and programmatic recommendations for improving the UNCT's contribution to Lao PDR's development priorities, taking into consideration the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

#### 1.1.4. Principles and Pillars

As noted in the TORs, the UNPF is underpinned by the five programming principles of: gender equality, human rights-based approach, environmental sustainability, results-based management and capacity development. It also considered the specific context of Lao PDR focusing on its cultural and national heritage, its very diverse number and variety of ethnic groups, its phased reform process and agricultural economy with a pronounced rural-urban divide. The UNPF is supported by three key pillars: 1. Inclusive Growth, Livelihoods and Resilience; 2. Human Development; and 3. Governance, Rule of Law and Participation in National Decision making under which the key outcomes are framed.

## 1.2. Evaluability Assessment and Approach

### 1.2.1. Evaluability Assessment

As part of the initial development of any evaluation methodology, an evaluability assessment was carried out to ensure that the evaluation is doable and that the needed data was available. Most agencies working in international development agree that the definition of 'evaluability', presented by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC), is appropriate as: "The extent to which an activity or project can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion" (OECD-DAC 2010; p.21).

At the level of a UN country programme, this is usually not a problem but earlier evaluations in Lao PDR by this team had found this to be a problem. Also, given that only two members of the team were able to be in Lao PDR due to COVID 19, it was important to ensure that the required data was available for remote access. Therefore, a rapid scan of the documents provided by the UN Team, plus others in the public domain, were reviewed.

For this evaluation, lack of background data was not a major issue since there is substantive data to cover all the key areas within the UN system and in the dropbox. The Evaluability Assessment was done as part of the document review (see Annex). Overall, the Evaluation Team concluded

that a sufficiently critical mass of documents was available as well as some data on results, logic models and performance measurement data although more on baselines would have helped.

Another part of the evaluability assessment was planned to be a review of the Theory of Change (ToC), logic model, quantitative and qualitative indicators in the PMF and the programme frameworks of UN Agencies to see how best to identify an agreed ToC for the programme going forward. Since a ToC doesn't exist, the ET had suggested a line of evidence take the form of working with key UNCT stakeholders and the Government of Lao PDR to jointly create and agree on components of a Theory of Change. It was agreed with the UNRC and the UNCT that this exercise could not be done as part of this evaluation.

### **1.2.2. Approach**

The evaluation was guided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Evaluation Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System, and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System. In practical terms, the overall approach to the evaluation was results based using a participatory and mixed-method approach with the goal of providing learning and recommendations to the key stakeholders that will be of value to their ongoing strategic decision-making process.

#### **1.2.2.1. Results based and Utilization-Focused Approach**

Given that there is a formative function for this evaluation, and a forward-looking and decision-making aspect to the evaluation, the team adopted a Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE) framework, which is a widely known approach developed by Dr. Michael Quinn Patton (2008). This evaluation is intended to be used by its intended users to inform their decisions. Dr. Michael Quinn Patton was meta evaluator for the 22-country OECD study which members of this team carried out in Cambodia for UNDP and OECD in 2010 and was featured in the final presentation to OECD of this 22 country evaluation study in Bali). The title of the 22 country study was The Evaluation of the Paris Declaration: Phase 2 Final Report. OECD, 2011. This is a well-tested and widely used evaluation approach intended to increase the likely uptake of recommendations by key stakeholders since it clarifies expectations and objectives in terms of use of the evaluation. This approach does not decrease evaluation impartiality and independence since the evaluation team remains responsible for the content of the evaluation report.

#### **1.2.2.2. Participatory and Inclusive Approach**

The evaluation approach was participatory and inclusive. The evaluation team used this approach to ensure that, as external evaluators, we did not impose external perspectives on stakeholders who know the challenges of their UN country programme and country better. This approach

helped to foster buy-in of different types of stakeholders in the UNCT, Government and other Agencies to ensure that findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations are useful to review what took place and to guide future planning.

As part of the evaluation, which included input from 141 stakeholders (see Annex), the evaluation included consultation meetings with the UNRC and the UNCT on 3 occasions, a consultation with the other 3 evaluation teams and the Joint Steering Committee consultation with the UNCT and the Government of Lao PDR.

### **1.2.2.3. Mixed-Method Approach**

The purpose of a mixed-methods non-experimental approach was to triangulate sources of information and perspectives drawing on quantitative and qualitative techniques to ensure a comprehensive, robust and evidence-based understanding of the programme being evaluated. To this end, the ET carried out content analysis of data gathered using qualitative and quantitative data collection tools to assess each criterion and the 20 questions (including probes for interviews). Data from primary and secondary sources were triangulated during the analysis. This allowed for the development of insightful findings, reliable conclusions, and relevant lessons learned and recommendations.

### **1.2.2.4. Gender and Human Rights Based Lens**

This evaluation used a human rights-based lens in conjunction with the above-mentioned participatory approach. More specifically, it ensured that key gender equality (GE) and human rights (HR) principles (identified by the UNEG) were taken into account throughout the evaluation process:

- Non-discrimination and equality: All individuals are equal as human beings by virtue of the inherent dignity of each person. As such, all participants in the evaluation will be treated without discrimination as outlined in multiple human rights treaties;
- Participation and inclusion: Every person and all peoples are entitled to active, free and meaningful participation in, contribution to, and enjoyment of, civil, economic, social, cultural and political development in which human rights and fundamental freedoms can be realized;
- Accountability and the rule of law: Duty bearers (primary and secondary) are answerable for the observance of human rights while rights holders (including children supported by advocates) are entitled to claim and/or institute proceedings for appropriate redress before a competent court;

- Gender mainstreaming: Used more specifically, as “a ‘twin track strategy’, which involves: 1) Integrating women and men’s needs and interests into all development policies and programmes, and 2) Developing interventions oriented at empowering women.”

The Baastel team has a strong track record implementing evaluations using GE and HR based lens. For this evaluation, these principles were operationalized by:

- a) Ensuring there were opportunities for interested stakeholders to participate in the evaluation process while ensuring both duty bearers and rights holders are consulted;
- b) Recognizing and mitigating power dynamics by ensuring men and women and some beneficiaries of UN programming can participate; and,
- c) Proposing a gender-balanced and culturally sensitive team of evaluators who all have experience working with international UN culture and most who also have experience working with the local culture in Lao PDR, the culture of the Mekong sub-region, and of the ASEAN region.

Gender Equality and Human Rights questions and, where appropriate, probes to other questions, are included in the Evaluation Matrix. This allowed both the lens of the rights-based framework and the GEEW perspectives to be taken into account. The participant responses to the KIIs and FGDs were also sex disaggregated.

Specifically, the ET looked at Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment for a number of key elements as follows:

- 1) Gender division of labor/responsibility – Gender differentiated impact of gender inequality, e.g., inequality in the workplace, the public sphere or in the private sphere.
- 2) Access to resources – Gender differentiated access to services within Lao PDR that had differing impacts on women versus men with respect to economic policy and advancement
- 3) Overall position women versus men in society – Gender differentiated motivations and ability to make changes that affect women in the private and public spheres.
- 4) Finally, this is an intersectional analysis since not all women and men are equally empowered, e.g., some women are poor, from non Lao-Tai ethnic groups, and/or are more vulnerable or marginalized.

In summary, there are 4 separate areas of analysis: a) vulnerability analysis, b) access to service and opportunities, c) the ability to make change and finally, d) looking at these through an intersectional lens.

In terms of a human rights analysis, the ET proceeded as follows:

The ET used a human rights-based approach which empowers people to both know and claim their rights, thus such an approach seeks a balance between economic, social and cultural rights



with civil and political rights. People are at the center which increases their ability to influence organizations, public bodies and even businesses to fulfil their human rights obligations. Finally, we used an acronym called PANEL (which stands for participation, accountability, non-discrimination and empowerment and legality).

### 1.2.3. Key Evaluation Questions

The following are the specific evaluation questions to be addressed through the lens of evaluation criteria and cross-cutting issues:

#### Relevance

1. Has the UN System supported achievement of national development goals and targets in alignment to relevant national plans and frameworks for Lao PDR's 8th NSEDP?
2. To what extent did the UNPF foster synergies among agencies and involve concerted efforts to optimize results and avoid duplication?
3. Has the UN system remained responsive to emerging and unforeseen needs of Lao PDR and its people?
4. To what extent has interagency cooperation and collaboration with other entities facilitated or hampered the achievement of results?

#### Effectiveness

5. To what extent has the UN system promoted or supported policies consistent with each other and across sectors, given the multi-sectorial nature of economic development?
6. Has the cooperation framework strengthened the position, credibility and reliability of the UN system as a partner for government and other relevant actors?
7. To what extent has interagency cooperation and collaboration with other entities facilitated or hampered the achievement of results?

#### Efficiency

8. Has the Cooperation Framework reduced transaction costs for partners?
9. Was the Cooperation Framework supported by integrated funding framework and by adequate funding instruments?

#### Sustainability

10. Has the UN system support been extended in such a way to build national and local capacities to ensure long term, sustainable gains?
11. To what extent has the UN programming assisted Lao's government to scaled-up to achieve its goal of becoming a middle-income country?
12. To what extent has the UN system helped to support Lao PDR's journey towards becoming a sustainable middle-income country?

#### Cross cutting Principles



13. Has the UN system's support been extended in a way that promotes gender equity in Lao PDR?
14. Has the UN system supported followed the principles of a HRs based approach?
15. Has the UN system support been designed and delivered following the programming principles of environmental sustainability?
16. Have the programming principles of RBM been used to monitor and track results?
17. Has the overall UN program been designed with programming principle of capacity development at its core?

### **Forward looking**

18. What are the lessons learned that could be identified for informing the planning and decision-making of the UNSDCF 2022-2026?
19. Has the current UNPF 2017-2021 contributed to preparedness for emergency situations?
20. If you were involved in joint initiatives, what was their value-added and/or good practices?

## **1.2.4. Stakeholders mapping and analysis**

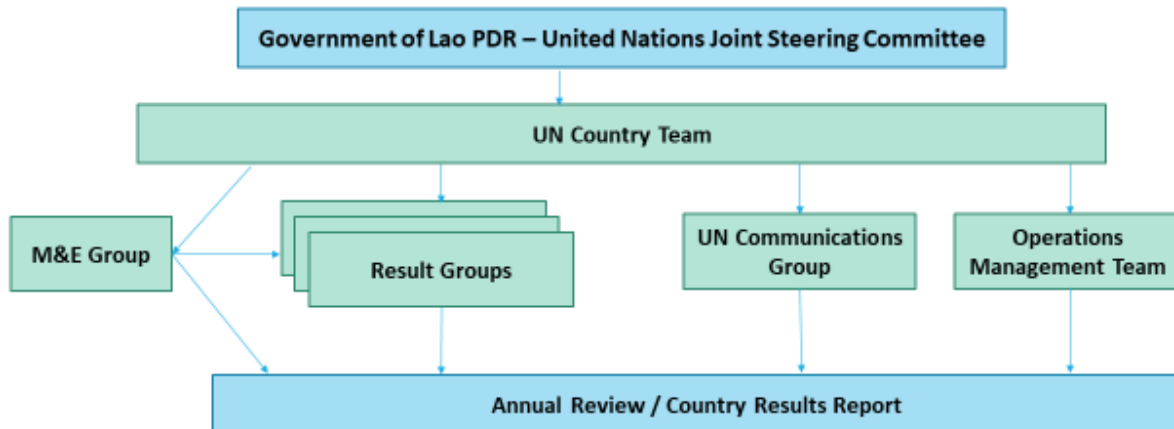
The UNPF stakeholder analysis was guided by Lao PDR - United Nations Partnership Framework 2017-2021, the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy of UNFP 2017 – 2020, materials from the Annual Review of the Lao PDR – UN Partnership Framework (UNPF) 2 February 2018, UN project mapping, draft UN stakeholder mapping (see Annex 4), and evaluation design reports of UNDP and UNFPA (and later received from the WFP).

### **UNPF institutional set up**

The Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy of UNPF 2017-2021 (May 2017) outlined the UNPF institutional set up, which consists of Joint National/UN Steering Committee (JSC), UNCT and Non-Resident UN agencies, M&E Group, Result Groups, UN Communication Group and Operations Management Team. Figure 1 summarizes the arrangement.

**Figure 1: UNPF 2017-2021 Institutional Set-up**

## UNPF 2017-2021 - Institutional Set-up



**The Joint National/UN Steering Committee (JSC)** was established to provide strategic oversight of the development and implementation of the Lao PDR – UN Partnership Framework 2017-2021 and future successive Frameworks. It was intended to ensure national ownership and alignment with national priorities throughout the duration of the Framework<sup>1</sup>. The Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy included the ToR of the JSC and its proposed membership. The JSC is co-chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the UN Resident Coordinator. The JSC TOR was revised (Draft as of July 2020), but does not yet include a membership list. Therefore Annex 3 of the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy was used as a reference for this stakeholder analysis.

**The UNPF Results Groups** is a mechanism for implementation of the UNPF Results Groups (RGs) which enhance coordination and synergies among UN Agencies working under each UNPF Outcome 2. Summary of RG facilitators and its government partners are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Summary of RG facilitators and its government partners**

Pillar	Results Group	Result Group Facilitators	Government Partners <sup>3</sup>
1. Inclusive Growth,	Results Group on Decent Livelihoods and Social Protection (Outcomes 1&2)	UNDP	Planning and International Cooperation, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

<sup>1</sup> Terms of Reference of the Government of Lao PDR – United Nations Joint Steering Committee (Draft as of July 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy – UNPF 2017-2021.

<sup>3</sup> Line ministries which made presentation of each UNPF outcome progress. The formation is from Tentative Agenda: Annual Review of the Lao PDR – UN Partnership Framework (UNPF) 2 February 2018.

Livelihoods and Resilience	Results Group on Climate Change, Disaster Management and Environment (Outcome 3)	FAO	Department of Climate Change, Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment.
	Results Group on Basic Education (Outcome 4)	UNICEF	Department of Planning, Ministry of Education and Sports.
2. Human Development	Results Group on Health, Water and Sanitation (Outcome 5)	UNFPA	Department of Planning and Cooperation, Ministry of Health.
	Results Group on Food Security and Nutrition (Outcome 6)	WFP	Department of Planning and Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
	Results Group on Institution Building and Access to Justice (Outcomes 7&8)	UNDP	Department of Planning and Cooperation, Ministry of Home Affairs.
3. Governance			

**UN Country Team Facilitators for the UNPF:** The UN Country Team assigned Facilitators to support all UNPF Results Groups in ensuring interlinkages and coordination among each other<sup>4</sup>.

**M&E Group:** The inter-agency M&E Group took responsibility for assuring the quality of monitoring and evaluation of the UNPF through development and implementation of UNPF Outcome Indicator Methodological Notes, cooperating with the UNPF Results Groups in planning, monitoring and reporting activities as well as through supporting the UNPF final evaluation<sup>5</sup>.

**UN Communications Group:** The UN Communications Group through its Communications Strategy (2017–2021) increases awareness and advocates for key issues under the UNPF Pillars and Outcomes. The Group includes UN Agency Communications Specialists and focal points.<sup>6</sup>

**Operations Management Team:** The Inter-Agency Operations Management Team supports UNPF implementation through a results-oriented Business Operations Strategy (2017–2021), which is the backbone of the ‘Operating as One’ pillar of the UN Development Group Standard Operating Procedures for Delivering as One<sup>7</sup>.

### UNPF stakeholders

Based on the ET analysis, UNPF stakeholders can be placed into three groups: 1. UN group; 2. Government group and 3. Other partners group. The mapping of their involvement in UNPF is included in the annex in Table 11: UN Mapping and number of supported projects, Table 2:

<sup>4</sup> Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy – UNPF 2017-2021.

<sup>5</sup> Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy – UNPF 2017-2021

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

Government Mapping and Table 3: Other Partners Mapping. In total, there are 24 UN (resident and non-resident) entities, 26 government ministries/entities, and 16 other partners who are associated with UNPF 2017-2021. The ET acknowledges the important contributions of all UNPF stakeholders and ensured that the evaluation process was inclusive and participatory. All the UNPF stakeholders were requested to take part in the evaluation.

With regard to Key Informant Interviews (KII) and focus groups, it would have been very challenging for the ET to conduct multiple focus groups so two were held with 7 respondents, but the majority of the data collection was through 97 key informant interviews and the 37 respondents to the online survey. The list of interviewees and those who took part in the focus groups is included as Table 4 (move into Annex 4). The 48 UN stakeholders represented most UN Agencies, and the 74 Government of Lao PDR representatives were primarily in different Departments of line ministries plus senior representatives of MOFA and MPI, and one provincial office, as well as one Mass Organisations (Lao Women's Union), while most Other Agencies included primarily development partners, INGOs/NPAs and no Private sector organizations.

## 2. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

During the virtual start-up meeting on Tuesday, September 15th, 2020, the evaluation team (ET) was presented to representatives from a variety of UN teams. Discussions on the motivations behind undertaking the UNPF evaluation, beyond the obligation to do so, and various conclusions of the UN Country Team (UNCT) as a whole were shared with the evaluation team. Reference was also made to the material to be reviewed in the document review shared on Google Drive.

A second meeting took place on Tuesday, September 22nd, 2020 during which the UNPF evaluation team met virtually with members of the other three evaluation teams who were conducting parallel assignments for UNDP, WFP, and UNFPA. The objective was for all the teams to get a better sense of how the different assignments were to take place. Each team made a short ppt presentation reviewing their plans and timelines. It was agreed that as the evaluations continue, there would be an opportunity for the evaluation teams or ETLs, to meet virtually and share their perspectives and learning on similar questions. This was the case for evaluators from the WFP, UNDP and UNPF evaluation teams between November, 2020 and January, 2021.

### 2.1. Data collection strategy

#### Line of Evidence 1 - Desk and Document Review

The Google Drive folders contained a variety of documents provided by different agencies on past and ongoing programmes and initiatives' results as well as on overall socio-economic, health,

education and disaster risk reduction contexts in the country. Specifically, these included UNPF progress reports, AFP reports and evaluations, government related information, as well as thematic documents on agriculture, civil society, human rights, and nutrition among many others. Information on SDG progress was also available in the folder. The document review allowed the team to familiarize themselves with the full UNPF context and understand key issues in sectors and thematic areas. Past evaluations, the most important having been the 2012 – 2016 UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) Lao PDR evaluation, and other relevant research and reference materials, were also accessed. A brief review was carried out of Country Programme documents (CPDs) of central agencies (e.g. UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, WHO, FAO, UNODC, ILO, UN Women, UNESCO and others).

As the review took place, specifics on different sectors and outcomes became clearer and informed the development of this inception report. Indeed, in addition to an improved understanding of the national and sub-national context, the review helped scope the evaluation process, finalize the key evaluation questions to be answered by the team through the lines of evidence. Data was systematically classified in a data collection matrix by relevant indicators (see evaluation matrix in Section 5) and, as noted under the data analysis sub-section below, coded using content analysis methods to ensure that bias is avoided, and trends are clearly identified. The inclusion of two national evaluators as part of the evaluation team (Ms. Latsany Phakdisoth and Ms. Dalaphone Sihanath) allowed the ET to review documents in both the English and Lao PDR languages.

Secondary data from a variety of sources gathered through literature searches was also used that was sex, urban-rural, and ethnicity-disaggregated data collected from all available sources. These literature searches provided background material on issues such as relevant national development contexts and key issues and challenges for each outcome. The Evaluation Team also reviewed regional and other publications and internet resources. The in-depth desk/document review allowed data to be collected prior to the 97 interviews which were conducted by Zoom and face to face in November and December, 2020 mostly prior to the launch of the online survey (OLS). Using these separate strategies allowed the results of the interviews and 2 focus groups to be compared with the results of the survey in developing the findings during the data triangulation process. Thus, the document review provided sufficient background to the context and themes to the evaluation team prior to beginning data collection in Nov. 2020.

### **Draft Inception Report**

Upon completion of the document review, the draft inception report (IR) was presented to the UNCT and RCO in October 2020. The IR included the intended methodology and evaluation tools which included: the evaluation matrix and data gathering tools developed (see Annexes): i) document review data collection matrix (internal document used by the ET); ii) customized interview protocols, iii) focus group discussion guides that were used with respondents, and iv) survey questionnaires. All tools focused on the main evaluation issues and allowed respondents to define, inform, and/or validate them.

The tools were also used to standardize the data collection processes. However, the content of the protocols and guides were only indicative, since depending on the respondents, ad-hoc questions and downstream discussions arose during interviews and focus group discussions. The interview protocol and focus group discussion guides were adapted on a case-by-case basis to each person or group.

Once agreed, the adjusted work plan guided the evaluation. As stated in the Interim Cooperation Framework Evaluation guideline (UN July, 2019), the IR: assesses the evaluability of the Cooperation Framework, presents evaluation questions and sub-questions, contains sources and methods of data collection and a concrete plan of evaluation activities. The UNCT's comments on the draft inception report were addressed in the second IR which allowed the ET to fine-tune and finalize the evaluation work plan.

## 2.2. Primary Data Sources, Analysis and Triangulation

### Line of Evidence 2 – Theory of Change (not included as agreed with UNRC)

As stated in the Interim Cooperation Framework evaluation guideline,

“The theory of change is the key reference framework for evaluators. For Cooperation Framework evaluations, the theory should cascade from the SDGs to Cooperation Framework outcomes and outputs to agency outcomes and outputs” (UNEG, July 2019).

The guideline goes on say that the Theory of Change (ToC) should have been developed when the Cooperation Framework was developed, but since this wasn't the case, a Theory of Change workshop was suggested to take place early in this evaluation process. The objective of the workshop would have been to ensure that the UNCT members and the Evaluation Team had a common understanding of the goals, activities and the changes being sought. In discussion with the UNCT and UNRC, it was agreed that there was insufficient data and time to do this as part of this UNPF evaluation.

### Line of Evidence 3 – Key Informant Interviews

The ET conducted interviews primarily virtually but face to face when possible especially for most interviews with Government of Lao PDR stakeholders. Virtual interviews were conducted with most key representatives of the UNCT including both agencies in Lao PDR as well as with non resident agencies, and other agencies particularly development partners and a few Mass Organisations, INGOs/NPAs. Interviews with Lao PDR government officials were mostly done by the Lao PDR speaking members of the Evaluation Team which avoided people having to speak in a second language and also avoided translation and interpretation challenges which otherwise would be a limitation as it was for other evaluations.

The sample was purposive with all UN agencies working in Lao PDR or remotely with Lao PDR and with all relevant Lao PDR government ministries. The ET used Zoom for virtual interviews which worked well technically for the most part. Semi-structured interviews used key evaluation

questions and sub-questions (probes) based on the four identified OECD-DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability) plus the cross-cutting issues on human rights and gender equality.

The draft interview protocols were prepared (see Annex 2) and adapted and refined during the interviews to tailor questions to different stakeholders, but the consistent key questions were included across all interviews to provide a basis for data triangulation. To ensure data collected in all sessions was comparable, and that there is no bias, tools used were the same for all members of the ET. The list of stakeholders proposed initially was adapted based on UN feedback and the resulting sample covered the key groups in terms of stakeholders from several levels, and themes. The ET was pleased to rely on support from the UNRC office and the local ET national consultants to identify and reach out to all selected potential respondents. The list of organizations consulted is in Annex 7 and the list of 104 people consulted, exclude 37 survey respondents, is included in Annex 6.

These interviews facilitated collection of qualitative data on a range of topics (e.g., different projects and initiatives' relevance at the national level and implementation processes, progress towards reaching SDGs, and sustainability of the results' achieved in different contexts), which were used to answer the evaluation questions and triangulate with data collected using other lines of evidence.

#### **Line of Evidence 4 – Focus Group Discussions**

Focus groups were requested to stakeholders but unlike the response to requests for interviews did not receive high response rates. Two were held with UN stakeholders which provided additional input to the interviews and included responses to the same questions. The focus groups did not have wide cross sections as had been anticipated but did provide useful information from the small number of participants (7 in all with 4 in one group and 3 in the other FGD). Two team members took part in each of these focus groups to ensure that one facilitated and the other took notes. In terms of sampling for the two focus groups, the UN participants were those who responded to the general call letter. During the proposal development process, the ET had planned to have an additional line of evidence which would be a provincial consultation site visit. In the light of the enduring Covid-19 pandemic, this was considered not to be possible so it was cancelled. A requested telephone interview with one provincial office (Attapeu province) was changed since they preferred to provide written comments which they did. To somewhat mitigate this, several of the interviews with Lao PDR government officials had experience working throughout the country. In addition, some local evidence that was gathered by other evaluation teams for the concurrent UN Agency evaluations, was reviewed.

#### **Line of Evidence 5 – Survey**

The idea of an Online Survey (OLS) was to reach stakeholders with whom the ET would not be able to talk to through other lines of evidence, with the goal of obtaining wider input. The ET considered the OLS as the most effective way to: 1) reach as many potential respondents as possible, 2) generate a large body of quantitative data that could be used to triangulate with



qualitative information collected through other lines of evidence (document review, interviews and focus group discussions), and 3) create a context in which potential respondents were ensured confidentiality (since the raw data was not going to be shared with the UNCT).

The ET developed survey questionnaires in English which were approved during the Inception Phase along with other instruments. The draft questionnaire in English was developed (see Annex 2) with mainly closed questions and a few open-ended questions to allow respondents to provide details. The Lao PDR version of the questionnaires was translated after the English version was accepted by the UNCT and UNRC.

An OLS was distributed to all UNPF stakeholders (census sample of all stakeholders for which the ET had email addresses). It included Ministries and central and provincial government agency representatives, UN Agency representatives and other partners representatives such as international and national organizations (see sub-section on stakeholder mapping). The ET anticipated that completion of an OLS would require a maximum of 15 minutes. Baastel uses Qualtrics for several reasons including because it has high standards in terms of data privacy protection.

The survey(s) was undertaken in phases:

1. Sampling Frame and Sample: The ET identified an appropriate stratified sampling frame and drew a sample.
2. Instrument: The survey instrument and materials (questions, covering letter, etc.) and contact lists were developed in consultation with the UNCT and then translated into the Lao PDR language.
3. Pre-test: Initial contact with potential survey participants involved sending the survey questions to a small sample of people from across targeted categories of stakeholders. In addition, pre tests were conducted with ET colleagues to ensure that the content was clear and simple and that the functionalities of the survey process were effective. Thereafter the survey instrument and procedures were revised.
4. Introduction: An introductory email was sent to the contact list to announce the upcoming survey. The ET has learned that a letter/email from the client (UNCT) is very important to ensure a high representative response rate. Therefore, the UNCT was asked to send official emails of invitation, written in partnership with the ET, to all potential respondents. These emails were drafted and sent and explained the evaluation process and e-survey context. They indicated completion would be quick and noted that they would be sent an invitation with the OLS link.
5. Distribution: Once the pre-test phase was completed, and the UNCT sent the introductory letters and emails were sent to the contact list with the link to the questionnaire (on-line platform).
6. Follow-up: After 3 weeks, the ET followed up by email, text or phone. A UNCT follow-up was also requested for groups with low return rates. Considering that potential respondents were quite busy during the end of the year phase of government management reporting cycles, as well as with other ongoing evaluative processes, the ET envisaged that some hands-on follow-up would likely be needed. This was done and the



ET was able to get a suitable response rate allowing for the survey data to be used for triangulation and analysis.

Three online surveys were carried out as part of the evaluation of UNPF in Lao PDR conducted by Le Groupe-conseil Baastel Itée. The online survey aimed to gather the views of a wide range of stakeholders that were involved in the UNPF, in order to obtain insights and lessons that can feed into the next UNPF. Each survey was adapted and sent to government representatives (an audience of 85 persons), UN agencies representatives (an audience of 23 persons) and development partners (an audience of 14 persons). The response rate was 26% for the government representatives survey, 57% for the UN agencies survey, and 14% for the development partners survey. Concerning the government response rate, after consultations with government staff, it was noted that from past experience, surveys circulated by electronic means and/or by email do not usually elicit a high response rate from Lao PDR government representatives so the number in this case was good. Current practices as per official policy of the Government do not recognize email as formal communication. In addition, in many cases, government officials still use their private email addresses for what is considered “less official” communications including surveys.

Results of the development partners have not been analysed since only one (1) questionnaire out of two was fully completed.

	Government representatives survey	UN Agencies Survey	Development partners survey
Population	85	23	14
Emails sent	85	23	14
Questionnaire filled through email	8	8	2
Questionnaire filled through the anonymous link	14	5	0
Total of responses	22	13	2
Response rate	26 %	57%	14%

### 2.2.1. Data Analysis

To assist with the lines of evidence, the ET drafted and utilized several tools including those which overviewed both the outcome and output-level results in the reports and identified the challenges faced. The ET also reviewed the indicators that were tracked and summarized them. The team's gender expert also applied the most updated GEEW (Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) tools to ascertain how proactive (rather than reactive) the conceptual model operating in UN agencies in Lao PDR was and the level of GEEW mainstreaming and what gaps remain.

Once all necessary data was collected through document review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and e-surveys, content analysis of data from multiple sources to the same evaluation questions was done permitting triangulation and informing the drafting of evidence-based findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations. Triangulation was used to validate and enrich findings with details or additional perspectives from other sources, countering any potential bias, and gaining greater understanding of identified facts. Evidence supplied by the different lines of enquiry were placed in an evidence matrix in which facts and opinions from various sources were identified and triangulated for evaluation questions.

This analytic grid (the evidence matrix), based on the evaluation design matrix, was used to capture information, data, and the source for each evaluation question and performance indicator or measure. The table below is an illustration of how the data was processed during the triangulation process:

**Table 1 – Triangulation Matrix**

Criteria, Questions/Sub- questions and Indicators	Data and Findings from Different Lines of Evidence					Findings
	Document Review	Interviews	FGDs	Direct observation	OLS	
<i>1. Relevance</i>						
Question 1-"n"						
Indicator 1-"n"						
<i>Relevance Conclusions</i>						
<i>2. Sustainability</i>						
Question 1-"n"						
...						

Qualitative data analysis was supported using standardized data collection recording templates. Capturing data in a standardized way helped ensure that anomalies, non-representative, or inaccurate data were spotted quickly and managed so as to allow the ET to validate evidence against relevant data. The ET used content analysis methods to help triangulate data and standardize results across evaluators and lines of evidence. The content analysis surfaced multiple similar responses from a variety of data sources which facilitated generating evidence-based findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations.

### Validation (Line of Evidence 6)

Upon completion of the first draft of the evaluation report, the ET had a consultation with the UNCT followed by a consultation with the Joint Steering Committee composed of UNCT and Government of Lao PDR representatives. These two virtual consultations by zoom provided additional data for the evaluators on key issues to be addressed and items that needed more detail. After these consultations, comments in writing were received which have been addressed in this second draft of the report.

## 2.3. Data Protection Protocol and Evaluation Ethics

The evaluation approach that was used conforms to the ethical principles described in the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (2008). The inception report and its data collection tools were reviewed and approved by the dual tiered evaluation management structure which verified the use of the Ethical Protocol and Informed Consent Forms.

The evaluation approach was grounded in ethical principles defined in the UNEG Guidelines that fall under three broad categories: obligations of evaluators, safeguards for participants, and the evaluation process and product. The evaluation team complied with all the stated obligations.

First, the obligations of the evaluation team included independence, impartiality, credibility, honesty and integrity, conflicts of interest and accountability. These were all be met by the team throughout the evaluation without bias or conflict of interest.

Secondly, the principles of safeguards for participants of confidentiality, do no harm, respect for dignity and diversity and rights, were also met through using approved instruments, ethics protocols and consent forms as required. Participants were informed that the final report will be a public document to which they will have access.

Finally, the evaluation team also complied with the third area of Evaluation Process and Products, which cover transparency, accuracy, reporting, omissions and wrongdoing.

In terms of data security, the team is security cleared for multiple clients and complied with all ethical standards in terms of questions and anonymity of specific respondents in the reporting.

The main method of protecting confidentiality was to use the following method: No individual respondents will be named to protect anonymity but some agencies where appropriate. The format will essentially be: All respondents said...; (100%) The majority of respondents said... (~ more than 75%); Many respondents said... (~ more than 50%), Some respondents said... (~between 25 and 50%), A few said... (~ less than 25%); and One respondent said... (This was not used because if only one person mentioned the information, it is identifiable and is too minimal).

## 2.4. Quality Assurance

The Quality Assurance (QA) approach includes the ET having a Quality Control expert as part of the team to ensure that the evaluation and methodologies used comply with the OECD DAC Quality Standards, the OECD DAC criteria and United Nations Evaluation Group standards and details as presented in the UNEG Handbook. In addition, the products of the evaluation were reviewed by the Evaluation Team Leader using evaluation grids which he has used as a reviewer for UN agencies including UNICEF for which he evaluates research and evaluation reports in Asia. Finally, the UNCT has shared comments on the methodology to which the team has responded in this report.

## 2.5. Limitations

First limitation was timing and the challenge for the UN dealing with 4 evaluations taking place during the same time frame when there were also challenges for the Lao PDR Government dealing with multiple high level internal political activities happening at the same time. This was mitigated by extending the time line for the consultation with the Joint Steering Committee in late February, 2021 followed by the ET integrating their feedback into this second draft of the report. It may be useful for the UNCT to consider whether the UN carrying out several evaluations at the same time is the best approach.

A second related limitation was low response rates to interviews and the survey which the national Lao PDR ET members worked to mitigate by reaching out in-person as needed to ensure as much data as possible could be collected.

A third limitation was lack of access to local communities, the private sector and multiple mass organisations beyond the Lao Women's Union which was interviewed. More was not possible in the evaluation time frame.

A fourth limitation was the team not being able to use an agreed upon Theory of Change at the start of the evaluation since no ToC existed and the UNCT was planning to develop a ToC as part of preparing the new UNSDCF. The UNRC also shared ToCs from agencies that have them including the UNDP ToC which had parallel outcome areas as those of the UNPF.

A final limitation was that due to the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic, none of the international team members were able to be in Lao PDR to conduct interviews and focus groups. This was mitigated to as large an extent as possible by having two local team members based in Vientiane.

Any possible bias was mitigated by having two evaluators taking part in most interviews and having the whole team review all notes prior to the content analysis to identify any bias.

## 3. FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION

### 3.1. Relevance

#### 3.1.1 Question - Has the UN System supported achievement of National Development Goals and Targets in alignment to relevant national plans and frameworks for Lao PDR's 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP?

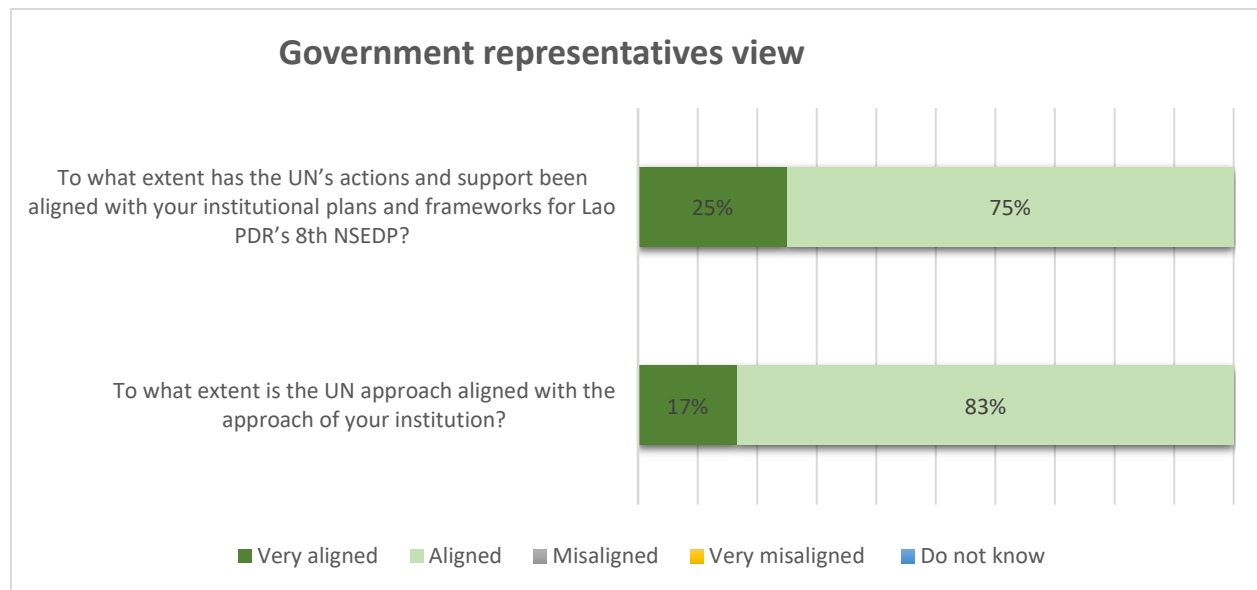
*Findings:*

1. The large majority of stakeholders (over 75%) in the UN, Government of Lao PDR and other agencies consulted all agree that the UN Partnership Framework (UNPF) is well aligned with national plans and priorities identified in the Lao PDR 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP. Specific results are primarily delivered through individual UN Agency efforts working with partners.
2. The UNPF thematic areas are aligned with the national priorities of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP of Lao PDR and have contributed to progress towards most targets but the implementation results are mixed.
3. The UN is seen as a neutral partner with strong technical expertise supporting the Government to achieve the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and SDG targets.

Overall, the key informant interviews, focus groups and the survey results all indicated that the UN, the Government of Lao PDR and other agencies view the present UNPF as well aligned to the Lao PDR 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP. (Please see Figure 2 below).

#### Government Representatives

Overall, the survey indicated that Government representatives were very positive regarding the alignment of UN's actions and support with government entities and their plans and frameworks for the Lao PDR's 8th NSEDP. Government representatives think that UN's actions and support are very aligned (25%) or aligned (75%) with their institutional plans and frameworks for Lao PDR's 8th NSEDP. Specifically, in terms of their specific agency, 17% of government representatives state that the UN is very aligned with the approach of their institution while a total of 83% state that it is aligned.

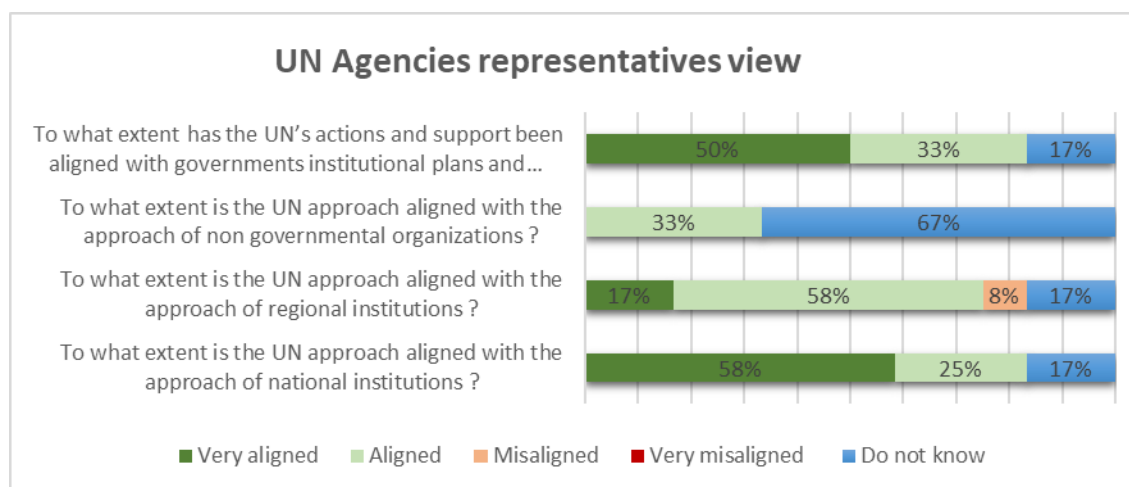


This finding was verified by the interviews in which 75% of Government stakeholders interviewed indicated that UN support to government stakeholders to achieve their development priorities and goals has assisted them to achieve their organizational priorities and goals and contributed to the 8th NSEDP. For example, the Lao PDR Social Indicator Survey 2017 on which the Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB) worked closely with UNICEF and UNFPA and other DPs, has generated evidence-based data to monitor NSEDP progress and design evidence-based interventions. A few stakeholders also shared their concerns on UN support that did not meet their needs and suit the local situation such as for example the rural solar power project with Institute of Renewable Energy Promotion, and Pelletization Technology project with the Department of Industry and Handicraft.

### UN Agencies

When it comes to alignment of UN actions and support with the Government's institutional plans and frameworks for Lao PDR's 8th NSEDP, 50% of UN Agencies representatives responding to the survey state that they see themselves as very aligned, 33% think they are aligned for a total of 83% whereas none see themselves as misaligned or very misaligned and 17% do not know. With respect to alignment of the UN approach with national institutions, 58% of UN agency representatives think they are very aligned, 25% perceive they are aligned for a total of 83% while none see themselves as misaligned or very misaligned and 17% do not know.

Concerning the alignment of the UN Approach with that of regional institutions, 17% UN agencies representatives state that they are very aligned and 58% see themselves as aligned whereas 8% think that they are misaligned and 17% do not know. On other issues related to alignment of the UN approach with the approach of INGOs/NPAs, it is instructive to note that 67% of UN agencies representatives do not know about relationships with the INGOs/NPAs while only 33% think that they are aligned.



This was similar to the interview and focus groups findings which indicated that over 75% of UN agencies see themselves as well aligned with the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP of Lao PDR and 50% aligned with regional agencies such as ASEAN but few (only 25% of UN agencies see themselves as aligned with INGOs/NPAs and almost none mention alignment or relationships with private sector organizations. This was the case both for UN Agencies represented in Lao PDR and for non-resident agencies who report being more included in the UNCT over the past few years and learning more about activities of other UN Agencies.

Although UN Agencies see the relevance of the UNPF and increased work on coordination supported by the UNRC, they also indicate that more coordination could be done to overcome siloes. One of the areas is to link the Sector Working Groups and the appropriate Results Groups more. The emphasis of the UN Agencies, as part of the UNPF, is to work as closely as possible with the key Lao PDR Ministries which most agree is happening and the increased interaction enhances the relevance of working together to achieve shared goals. There was an emphasis on the importance of the UN and its bilateral partners working together with each other and country officials since most key issues are interconnected and Lao PDR does not have excess resources and is not a major target country receiving very significant international assistance.

### Other Agencies

Development partner respondents, who were aware of both the UNPF and the 8th NSEDP, mentioned that there is alignment but it is difficult to see since both documents are quite broad. In addition, the UN system supports the development of the NSEDP which makes it easier for the UNPF to be aligned with those goals and targets. For some development partners, the UNPF is not a central element in their decision-making process. They have their own agendas and priority sectors/pillars in which they invest. Some respondents (25%) did not know much about the framework at all. Still, many respondents believed that the process of developing the UNPF was important and they wanted to be part of it including in the development of the upcoming UNSDCF.

Some development partner representatives mentioned that they considered the UN system to be complementary to what they do through other means which makes its work relevant e.g., UN



agencies' work is more at the strategic policy dialogue level that allows development partners to work at a "practical" level. A few respondents mentioned that the Lao PDR government wants to make "intense support" investments whereas the UN offers "soft support". This can be seen as a mismatch to some extent. Much of the data collected through interviews with the donor representatives point to the fact that they more easily find affinities with specific agencies (thematic alignments) than with the whole UN system. It is easier to align work of individual agencies with their narrower priorities than working through the full UN system. Many development partners have two or three programmes with two or three agencies but the rest of their portfolio is with other implementing agencies.

### **3.1.2 Questions - To what extent has interagency cooperation and collaboration with other entities facilitated or hampered the achievement of results? (This also addresses synergies among agencies, responsiveness to emerging needs and inclusiveness)**

#### *Findings:*

4. Overall the UNRC and UNCT is leading movement towards improved interagency cooperation and collaboration among UN agencies and also with the Government of Lao PDR and other agencies but issues related to differing administrative modalities among UN agencies, other agencies and the Lao PDR Government make it difficult to optimize results and avoid duplication.

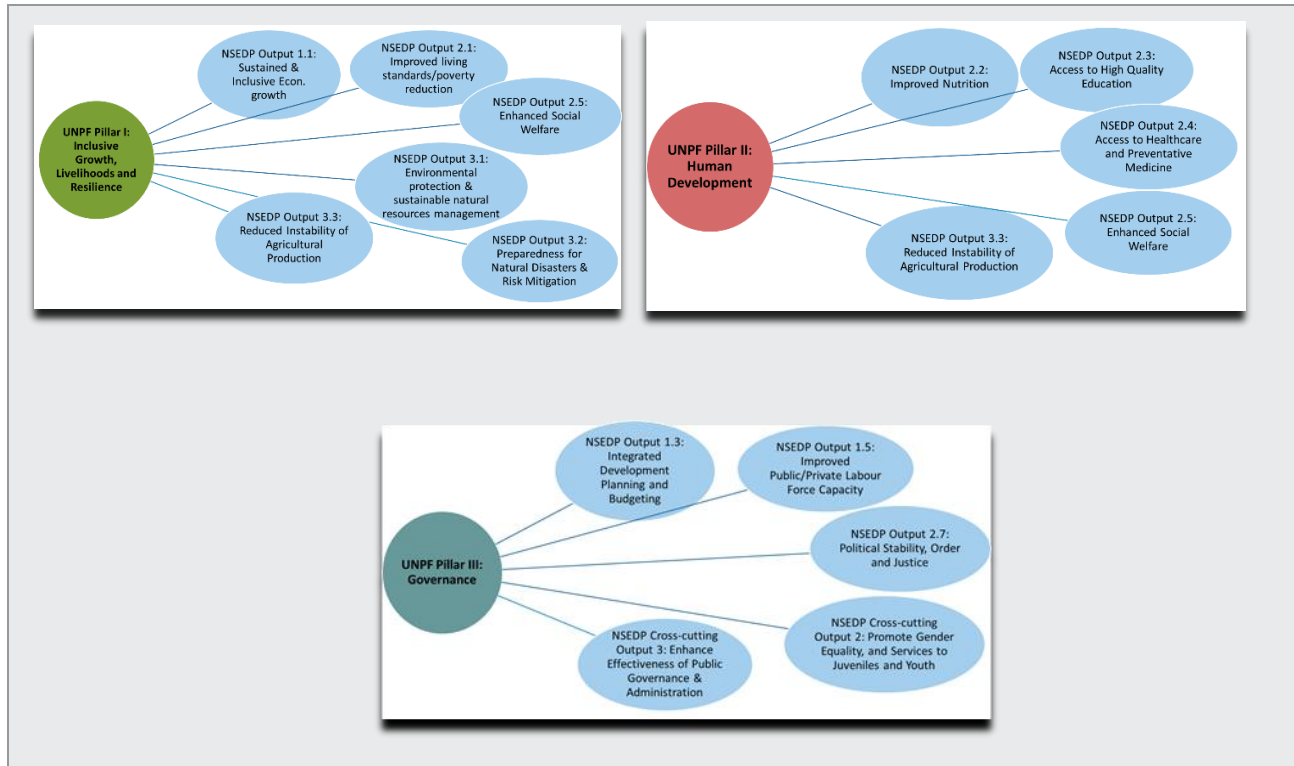
5. Outreach to the private sector, INGOs/NPAs and to new development partners is has not been significant and is essential to expanding the UNPF partnership between the UN and the Government of Lao PDR. But at present this situation is improving with several UN agencies increasing their linkages with INGOs/NPAs and expanding partnerships with multiple stakeholders such as e.g. UNFPA.

6. The UN Agencies have responded well to the COVID crises which has enhanced the relevance of the UN working together as a whole.

The UNPF 2017-2021 reflects the plan of the UNCT to support national development priorities and the government's aspirations for Lao PDR to develop into a modern upper middle-income country. The UNPF is aligned closely to the 8th NSEDP 2016-2020, and each of the three pillars of UNPF are connected to 8th NSEDP outputs, as indicated in the 17 indicators being among the 8th NSEDP indicators as described in Figure 2 below.

The 8th NSEDP in turn has a strong link to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Lao PDR was among the earliest countries to localize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and integrate them into its national planning. Nearly 60 % of the SDG indicators for Lao PDR were fully aligned with the 8th NSEDP with the target for the 9th NEDP being to increase this to 80%.



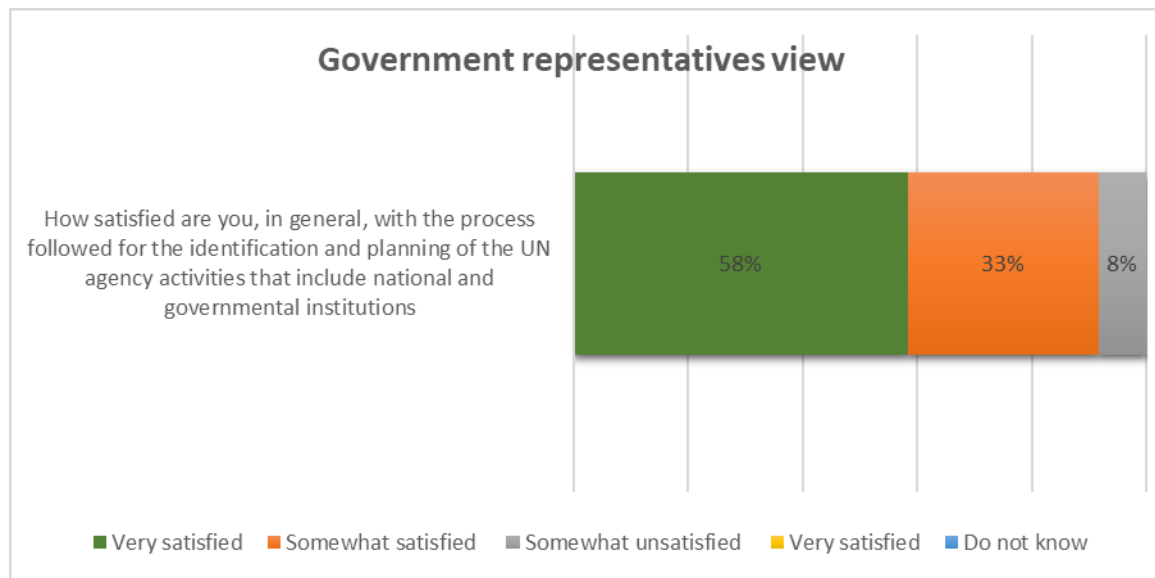
**Figure 2: Linkage of the Partnership Framework to the 8th NSEDP**

source: 2018 Annual Review of the Lao PDR – UN Partnership Framework (2017 – 2021) Power Point Presentation

## Government Representatives

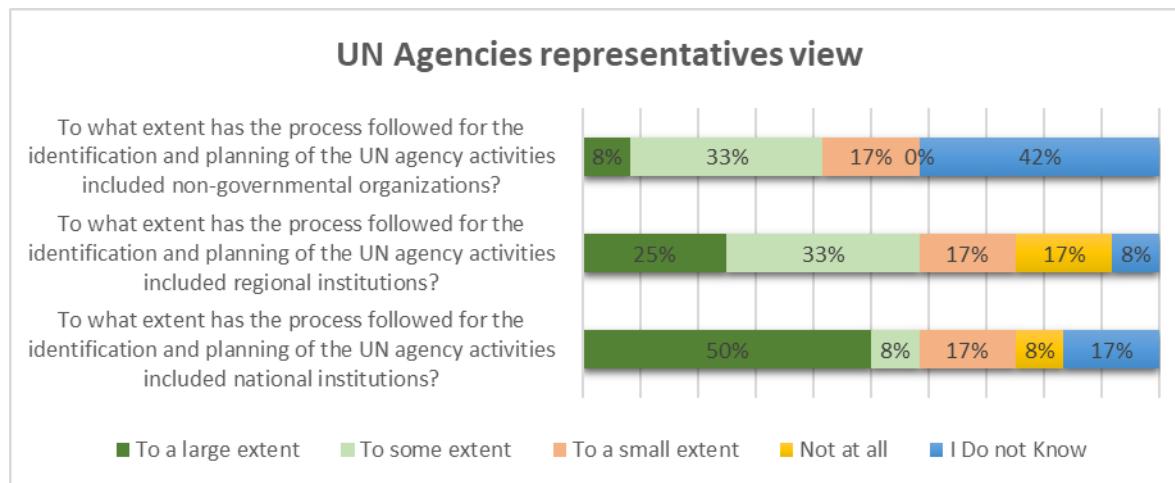
Interviews with government stakeholders who were aware of UNPF indicated that UNPF has taken 8th NSEDP targets and objectives into account but even those 58% were very satisfied, another 33% were only somewhat satisfied. On a positive note, most government representatives indicated that they perceive UN agencies as representing them and voicing concerns on their behalf in many international events. Most Government respondents in interviews indicated that there is good collaboration and cooperation with the UN agencies and other development partners and these do follow the 8th NSEDP. UN programmes are viewed as contributing to the achievement of the 8th NSEDP.

But at the same time, there were areas of the Government which was not aware of the UNPF such as Technical Departments. Some Government staff find it difficult to follow UN policies on COVID 19, such as a collaboration, coordination, working and training through online video conferences even though UN agencies have been flexible on work and budget planning during COVID 19 and changed some activities to match current local needs. Also, some national stakeholders perceived that the UN focussed more on regional, cross border or national issues rather than local issues whereas others perceived that that there was sufficient local involvement. A recurring theme from the Government was that differing administrative requirements made very relevant programmes difficult to carry out easily in practice.



## UN Agencies

As noted in the previous chapter and illustrated in Table 1, the UNPF Results Groups is a mechanism intended to enhance coordination and synergies among UN Agencies. In terms of UN Agencies working with others, most UN Agencies, both resident and non-resident, include consultations with government as part of their planning processes. As the survey results below indicate, 58% of UN Agencies (50% to a large extent) indicate that they believe that they are including national institutions in their process of identifying and planning UN agency activities. Although many UN Agencies mentioned in interviews that they took working with regional institutions such as ASEAN into consideration, the interviews also surfaced that others did not. This was similar to the survey results which indicated a range of response with 34% noting to a small extent or not at all. But very noticeable in both the interviews and the survey was the small linkage between UN Agencies and INGOs/NPAs. For example, 42% of UN survey respondents indicated not knowing and 17% indicated knowing to a small extent about the process followed for the identification and planning of the UN agency activities included INGOs/NPAs or regional institutions. There was limited reference to NPAs or INGOs from UN Agencies in their interview responses about partners with whom they coordinated.



### Other Agencies

Overall, most development partners indicated that the UNPF is consistent with the 8<sup>th</sup> NSED with which their efforts are also aligned. Some respondents from other agencies mentioned in interviews that as part of working with the UNPF, building on responding to the SDGs for their own planning has been useful. However, many also mention that multi-agency programmes are not really examples of clear co-implementation, but rather parallel programmes implemented at the same time. Some donor representatives focused on the importance of regional linkages (i.e. the ASEAN Regional Integration Support-Lao PDR Trade Related Assistance - Arise Plus), while others focused less on regional or sub-regional considerations. But many do consider the Chinese presence (existent or non-existent) as being an important consideration for the UN, the Government and themselves in future planning. Many donor representatives (as well as other types of respondents) mentioned the COVID crisis enhanced the relevance of having the UN working as a whole to respond to emerging needs. The UNCT prepared the UN Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP) using its extensive experience of diverse development challenges globally and of the country context, as well as its strong partnership with government, development partners, civil society, and the private sector. It establishes an essential package of support offered by the UN Development System (UNDS) in Lao PDR over the 18 months from September 2020 to support Lao PDR's recovery effort and to protect the needs and rights of people living under the duress of the pandemic, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable people and groups, who are at risk of being left behind.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Draft UN Lao PDR Socio-Economic Response Plan to COVID-19  
[https://laopdr.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/UN%20Lao%20PDR\\_Socio-Economic%20Response%20to%20COVID-19\\_Draft%20as%20of%2029%20September.pdf](https://laopdr.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/UN%20Lao%20PDR_Socio-Economic%20Response%20to%20COVID-19_Draft%20as%20of%2029%20September.pdf)

## 3.2. Effectiveness

Questions: To what extent has the UN system promoted or supported policies consistent with each other and across sectors, given the multi-sectoral nature of economic development? Has the cooperation framework strengthened the position, credibility and reliability of the UN system as a partner for government and other relevant actors? To what extent has interagency cooperation and collaboration with other entities facilitated or hampered the achievement of results.

### *Findings:*

**7. The UNCT is well respected as a UN coordinating body with improved positioning credibility, reliability and communication thanks to strong leadership from the UNRC which can potentially help bring about culture change within the Lao PDR UNCT.**

**8. The UNPF clarifies Agency Financial Priorities effectively.**

**9. Non-resident UN Agencies report they are well integrated into the UNCT.**

**10. UNPF reporting has good coverage but reports are challenged in measuring progress on indicators due to weak baselines and wide-ranging indicators.**

**11. Increased capacity is needed in M&E as well as in statistical and data management in UN Agencies and the Government of Lao PDR.**

**12. Many stakeholders view the work of the UN Results Groups as an internal UN mechanism while the 10 Sector Working Groups are a broader Government and Development Partner mechanism working under the annual Round Table process.**

**13. The Results Groups are uneven in level of ownership by specific agencies and in their levels of involvement in planning and implementing programmes.**

**14. UN programme teams need to empower Government stakeholders more in terms of decision-making during programme planning and implementation of UN programmes.**

### Government Representatives

Many government stakeholders see the UN as a neutral and trusted partner, with strong technical expertise. Many of them state that working with the UN has strengthened their organizations internal capacity and helped them to achieve their organizations' goal. The UN system has also promoted or supported policies consistent with each other and across sectors. Most Government representatives state that the UN agencies support and promote interagency cooperation and collaboration which has helped the government achieve its mandates with support from multiple agencies. The technical department indicated it can achieve its mandates partly because of the support it receives from UN agencies which are trusted. While acknowledging the strong technical expertise of UN APF, several government stakeholders suggested that there could be more of a

balance between international practices and local needs particularly related to working in a Less Developed Country. They also think that UN agencies need more resources to implement the UNPF.

Government partners who have received support from a variety of UN agencies suggested that there is no overlapping support among UN agencies as each agency has its own focus. This situation demonstrates that there is significant work being done in siloes and a lack of synergy in UN support overall. This feedback is consistent with that of interviewed INGOs/NPAs' feedback, discussed below.

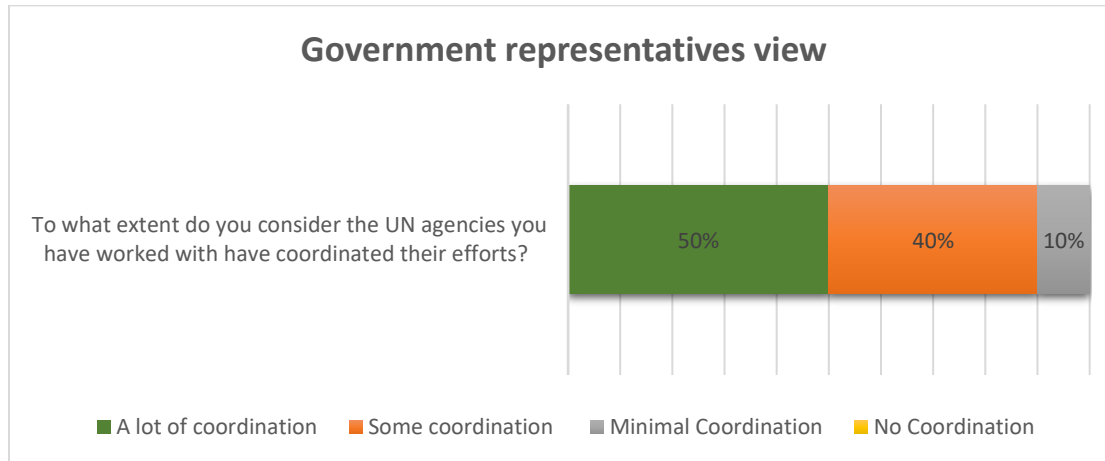
Many government representatives do not feel that they have been consulted sufficiently in the decision-making process during design and implementation of UN programmes in which they are involved and in which they are fully involved and participating. At the project implementation level, several government partners feel that they do not have real decision-making power on projects including preparation, planning, project implementation and recruitment of project staff. They would like UN partners to decentralise decision making to them to draft workplans and budget plans and manage implementation. There is also minimal evaluation on the effectiveness of the UN projects/programmes and many small projects (i.e. on regulations, training, policy papers etc.) which were implemented in short timelines without the use of M&E indicators and reporting. Some programmes duplicate other efforts, are not linked to larger initiatives and often have no outreach activities. Respondents indicated that they had insufficient tools and capacity in M&E and reporting which needs to be strengthened.

At the provincial level, local authorities indicated that the UN AFP have also provided significant contributions to their socio-economic development. However, provincial planning and investment departments face some challenges in tracking and consolidating data on UN support to their province. UN support is often channeled to relevant sectors directly without informing provincial planning and investment departments which are responsible for development coordination. UN agencies mobilise funds and assistance for development of the country which are agreed at the central and local levels but the level of coordination and consultation with line Ministries and the provincial and local levels of government needs to be improved. Given the UN works with the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) through the Round Table mechanism, the Government representatives think that the UN should consider addressing this with the government which would improve coordination at the provincial level and widen the impact of UN assistance across the country.

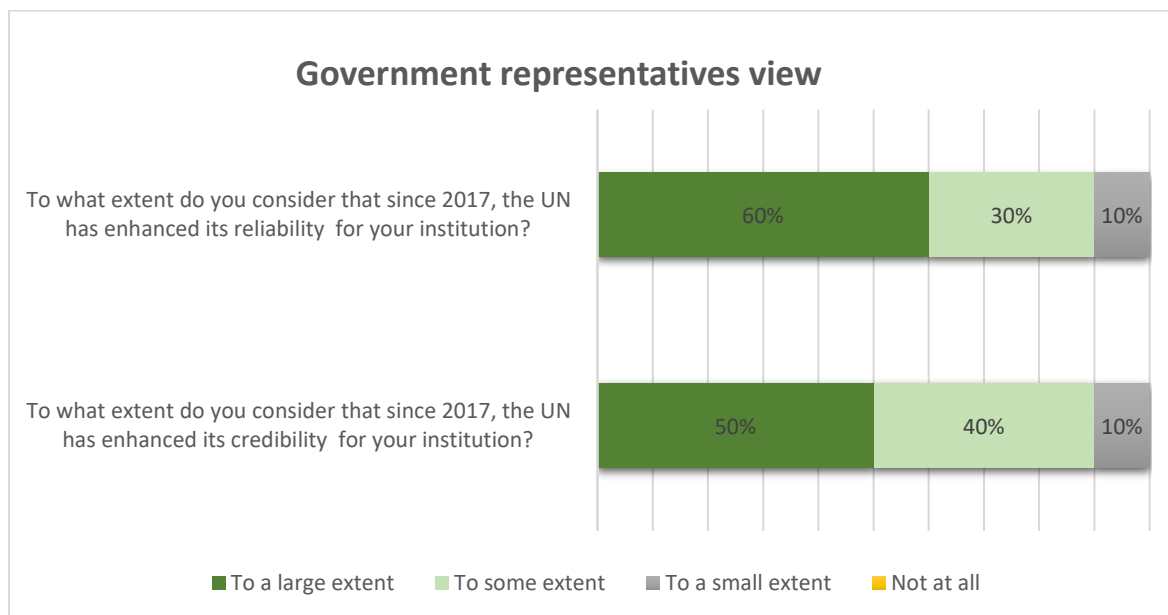
The UNPF annual progress report is prepared regularly to document results and progress achieved. It demonstrates that joint UN efforts are part of the UN's annual achievements and challenges. The evaluation team observed that the report would be more substantive if it reported against the annual UNPF joint workplan and targets.

An idea that was suggested by multiple Government stakeholders was that big programmes with 5-year plans are more likely to see tangible results and impacts that can be demonstrated in M&E reports. The programme timeline could be aligned with the next national five-year plan (NSED) cycle and would demonstrate results that clearly contribute to the development of the country.

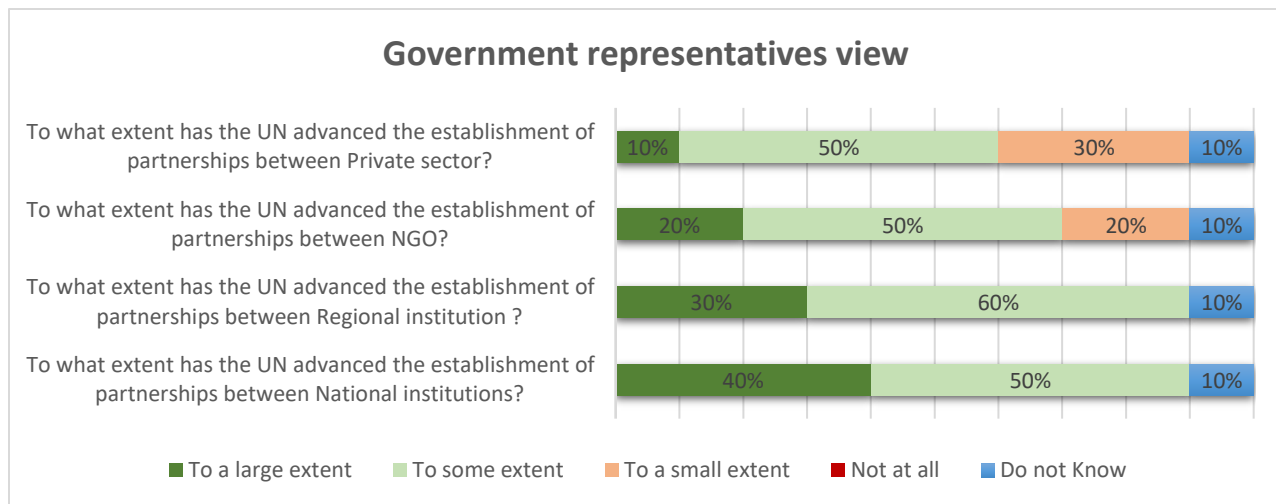
As noted in the interview results, the responses of the Government to questions on UN agencies coordination efforts indicates that most think there is a lot of coordination (50%) and others indicate that there is some coordination (40%).



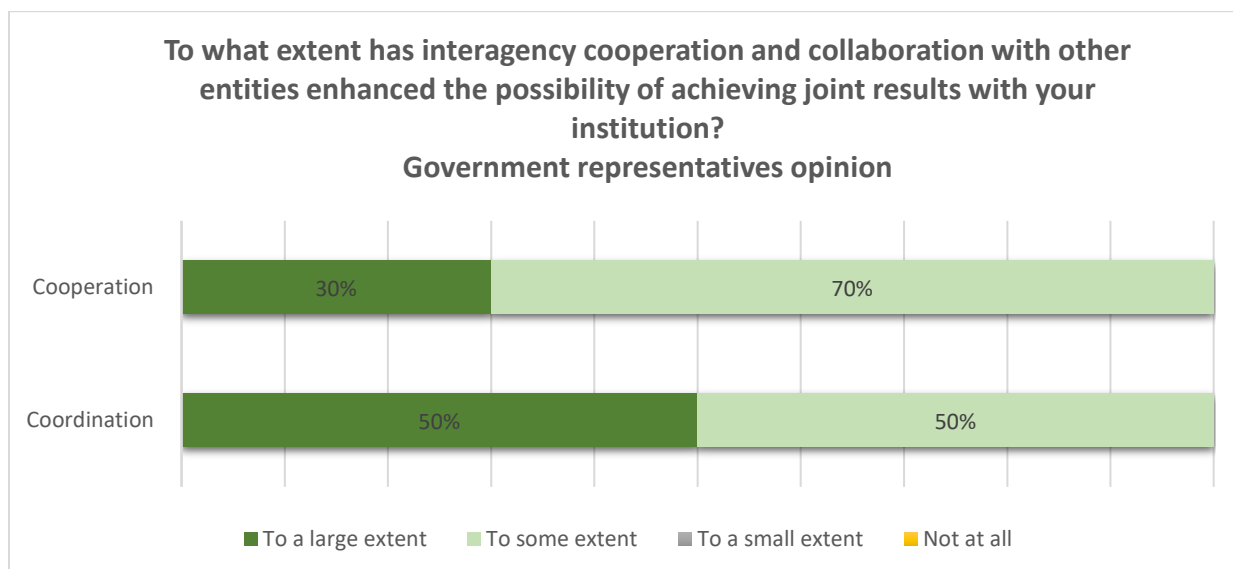
In terms of the UN's enhanced reliability and credibility the ratings noted by the Government representative respondents noted that it had increased to a large extent - 60% reliability and 50% credibility.



With respect to partnership, in the Government representatives view, it is very low for the private sector with 30% noting to a small extent and low for INGOs/NPAs with 20% noting to a small extent. The Government representatives think that partnerships at the regional level exist more and see partnerships between the UN and themselves in the government as better with 40% rating it as a large extent and 50% as to some extent.



Finally, the Government representative's opinion about the extent that interagency cooperation and collaboration with other entities enhanced the possibility of achieving joint results with their institution was encouraging with 30% noting to a large extent for cooperation and 50% noting to a large extent for coordination.



## UN Agencies

Most UN Agencies indicated in interviews that being part of the UNCT and the UNPF provided them with a clearer picture of what are the key priorities of other UN agencies and what their specific areas of focus in Lao PDR are. This allowed the agencies to see where there are possibilities for working in partnership with other agencies. They also report that this helps them to see where there can be scale up and where they can provide more assistance in terms of capacity building that they had not yet identified. Many agencies see the need to work together with a variety of other agencies and the importance of culture change from working in siloes which is less effective to developing and working in partnerships with other UN agencies, development



partners and a variety of Ministries in the Government of Lao PDR. However, as discussed in the "relevance" section above, although coordination between the UN agencies and government institutions does take place, many respondents agree that efforts are still needed to ensure existing implementing bodies on both sides are better aligned. The most discussed example during the data collection process is linked to insufficient coordination between the 10 governmental Sector Working Groups and the eight UN Results Groups.

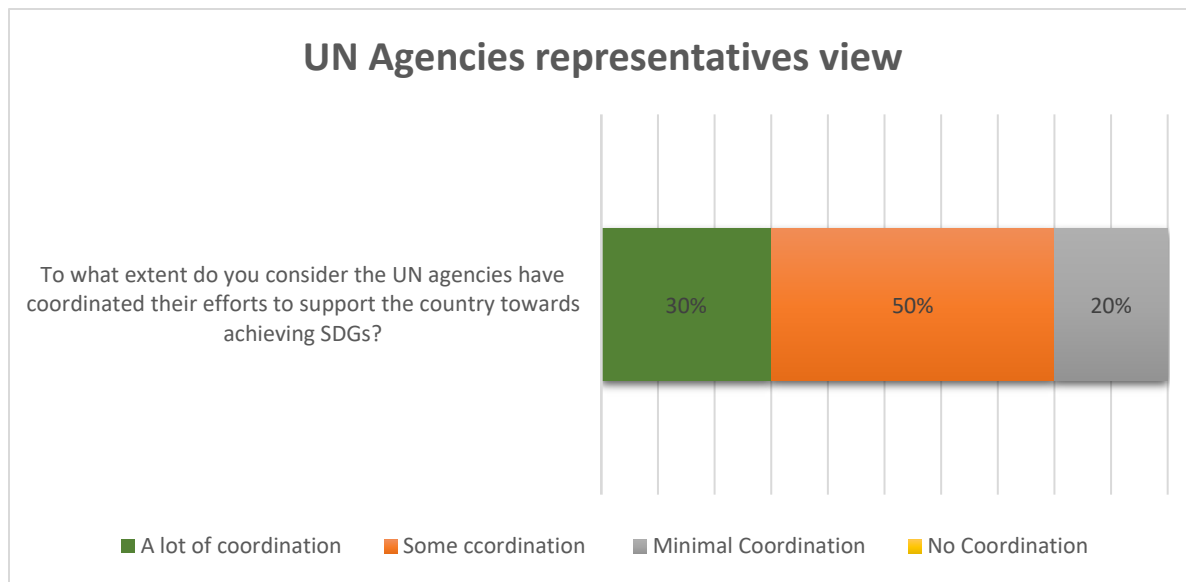
In terms of effectiveness, work on COVID has been very collaborative and coordinated among UN agencies and with the Government. The response has demonstrated preparedness in DRM with good investments in the public health information system. The principle of build back better evolved from building responses to disasters which is building that capacity. Several interviewees mentioned that the simple act of working together is building trust. Several agencies indicated that to continue to be effective, the UNPF needs to increase its focus on all types of DRM including preparation for future pandemics. Many interviewees also mentioned that there are results in terms of building capacities in multiple sectors i.e. in health for example several agencies mention there have been significant gains but there still are inequities and significant gaps at the rural level. Most agency representatives made similar comments. Some agencies mentioned working with 4 agencies successfully on issues related to UN reform. The key point is to find shared interest in a programme or issue and to take the initiative to build on the opportunity provided by the UNRC and the UNCT and links with the relevant Government Ministries.

The UNPF is relevant but given its high level it is overarching and can support multiple activities and results. The positioning of the UN is important and has allowed UN Agencies to work more closely with Government partners to assist them to leverage up their plans that will help Lao PDR to graduate. The UNPF was developed at a different time and context and must be flexible as the situation changes. What the UNPF does well is open doors. This can pave the way for increased future partnerships. The coordinating mechanism has created better credibility and reliability which has led more agencies in the same sectors to work with each other with their specific partner Ministry i.e. Agriculture, Health etc. What is needed to be more effective is a UNPF framework linked to significant money. The new UNSDCF needs to emphasize more coordination in the face of funding shortfalls.

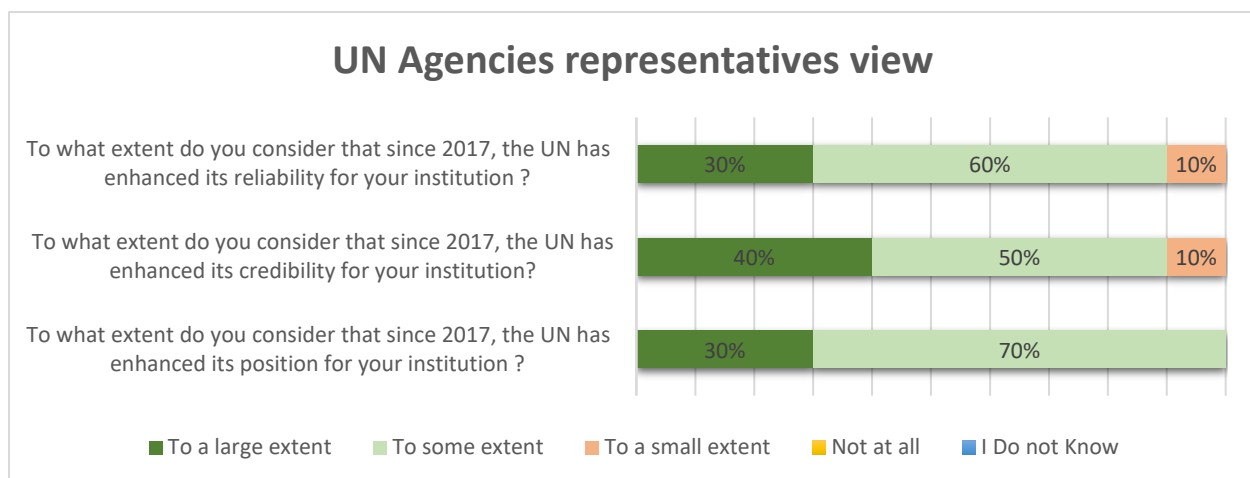
For non-resident agencies, the support of the UNRC's office has been of particular value since it helps them to be kept updated on what is happening on the ground in Lao PDR and then to be part of the UNCT and have both input and information sharing through being on distribution lists. Some non-resident agencies focussed on the importance of the UNPF building regional linkages in a variety of sectors. UN Agencies working on business areas think that to be as effective as possible the UNPF needs to support these agencies linking more with each other, the appropriate ministries and also the private sector. Most interviewees point out that to gain influence at the policy level, it is valuable to draw in a wide variety of stakeholders.

The survey results for UN Agencies shows that the respondents are mixed in their views of how much coordination there is with 20% saying a lot, 50% saying some and 20% indicating minimal coordination. This corresponds with the various responses of the interviewees.



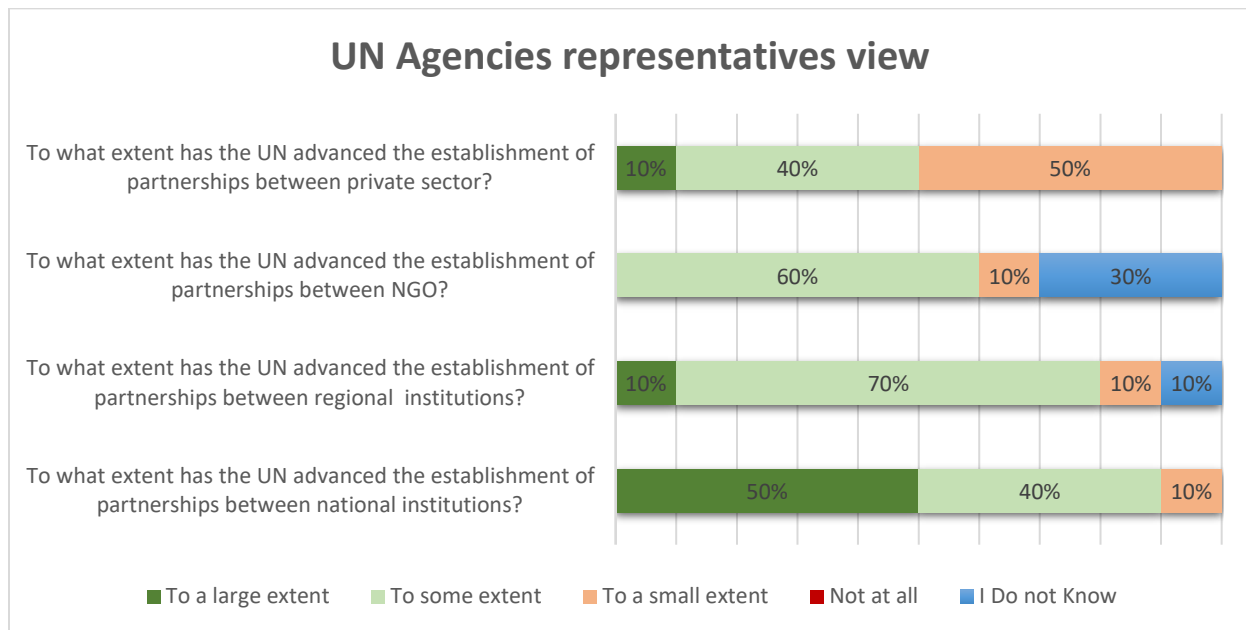


Most UN Agencies representatives see the UN overall as having enhanced the reliability, credibility and position of their institution to some extent since 2017 and another 30% to a large extent.

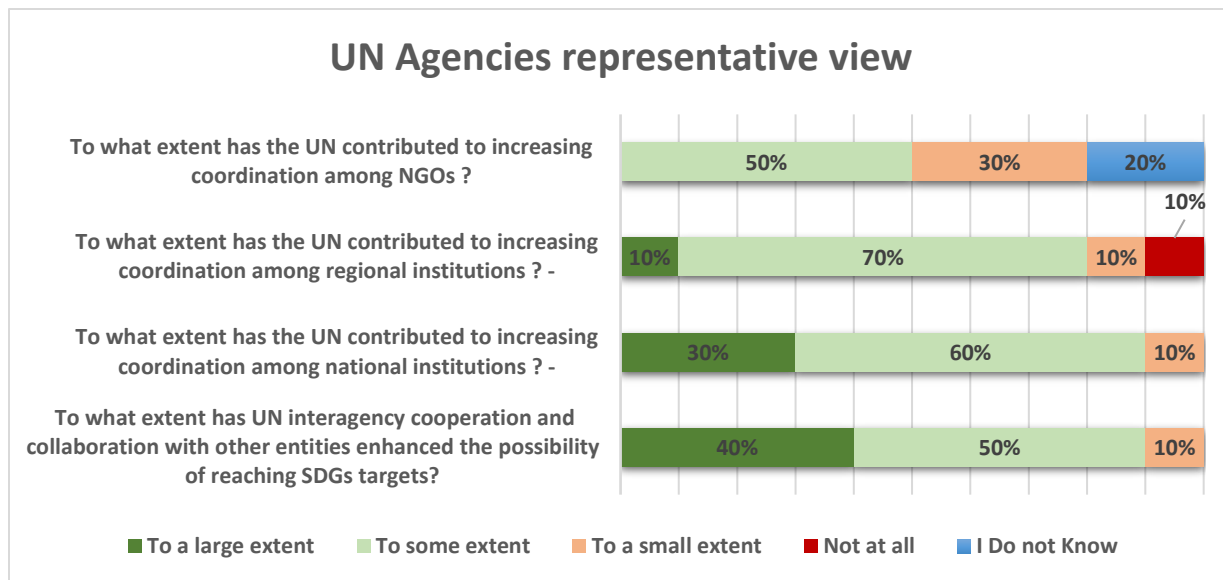


With respect to UN Agencies representatives view of establishing partnerships, the result is very clear in that 50% do not think that the UN has advanced the establishment of partnerships with the private sector and 30% are not sure if the UN has advanced the establishment of partnerships with the NGO sector. The establishments of partnerships with regional organizations are more of an emphasis (70% to some extent) and advancing the establishment of partnerships with national

institutions in particular are much stronger at 50% noting to a large extent and 40% to some extent.



Finally, with respect to UN Agencies representatives' views on the extent which the UNPF has contributed to increasing coordination with these stakeholders, the findings are similar. NGO linkages are again very low with 30% to a small extent and 20% not knowing. Regional institutions again indicate to some extent (70%) whereas coordination at the national level is 90% either to a large extent or to some extent which is similar to the extent of UN interagency cooperation and collaboration with other entities to enhance the possibility of reaching SDG targets. Clearly there is a need for more reaching out to the private sector and the NGO sector.



### Other Agencies Representatives

Many development partners participate in UN system and joint events and chair or take part in meetings and groups and are pleased to be asked for their input. The interviewees indicate that UN agencies have been in the country for a long time and are a valuable source of knowledge about Lao PDR. Working with the SDGs in a wholistic manner brings a well coordinated targeted approach to structure the support provided by the UN as a system. For many representatives, the UNPF is quite broad but they find it appropriate for Lao PDR. The UNRC is good at strategically cultivating partnerships with the government and its departments and needs to leverage up this good positioning. Interviewees indicated that this coordination is essential since some agencies and programmes have shifting mandates which need to be coordinated to leverage up inputs and avoid duplication.

All respondents were of the opinion that the UN, as a system, is well positioned with the government. Almost all donor representatives mentioned that the leadership within the UNRC/UNCT is the most important success factor in positioning the UN system with all actors. The UN working with many departments makes it easier for development partners to work with them as well. Notwithstanding this positive view, some respondents mentioned that it is important that the UNCT does not become complacent and repeat supporting the same programmes and types of programmes through continuous phases. The direction for future programmes should be on longer (5 year programmes) working on comprehensive issues, such as skills building and connectivity for example, which can best be done with multiple partners supporting relevant UN agencies, the government and others.

From their viewpoint, these representatives did not see the UN as working much with NPAs, or INGOs and not having developed relationships with the private sector which all should be expanded by drawing in these additional partners when it is possible at the policy dialogue level.

If the private sector is invited, they may well get involved and take part in partnership initiatives in their areas of expertise. In some cases, particularly with some INGOs/NPAs, this will be challenging but it would be worth the effort if wider more inclusive partnerships could be developed in the future including a variety of partners. Similarly, a few respondents mentioned that the UN has had difficulty in developing working relations with “emerging donors” (China and South Korea for example). There appeared to be a lack of communication and few attempts to involve them in UN work. Building these linkages may also enhance access to additional resources.

Interviewed INGOs/NPAs suggest that although the UN has done a great deal of good work in Lao PDR, they tend to work in siloes and need to work more in partnerships with other stakeholders. The prevailing view is that working together with INGOs/NPAs with expertise in specific areas in both planning and implementing activities will increase the effectiveness of projects and programmes, as they are on the ground and would be able to support UN AFP, who very much focus their work on the policy level, in translating policies into implementation at the local level. Interviewed INGOs highlighted that the UNFPA Nang Noi Framework has been a platform for collaborative efforts to advocate for greater investments on adolescent girls with an aim to support the girls to make healthy choices in their lives and learn about the consequences of early marriage and pregnancy.

### 3.3 Efficiency

Questions Has the Cooperation Framework reduced transaction costs for partners? And Was the Cooperation Framework supported by integrated funding frameworks and by adequate funding instruments?

**Findings:**

**15. Each UN Agency has its own administrative modalities which makes it challenging for Ministries in Lao PDR to work with UN Agencies since they implement similar programmes using different methods which often increases transaction costs and creates duplication.**

**16. UN Agencies tend to work in siloes focussed on achieving their own mandates which limits their efficiency linking with others to achieve UNPF’s umbrella mandate.**

**17. There are many examples of coordination on initiatives (e.g. Joint Programme on Social Protection).**

#### Government Representatives

In key stakeholder interviews, most government stakeholders indicated that each UN Agency has its own operational approach and appears to be working somewhat in silos which made it difficult for government departments to work most efficiently with several UN Agencies at the same time.

Many Government stakeholders report that given that each UN Agency has different financial reporting requirements, often it takes a lot of time to fulfil each of their requirements which is not an efficient use of time. The UNPF is one framework, but each of the UN agencies has different policies and principles. It is difficult for government departments to join activities and funds involving several agencies in the UN, especially after a programme is already approved or in a stage of implementation. Some indicated that joining activities and funds might be possible during an initial stage such as proposal development.

Some government partners report having been empowered and taking the lead in implementing UN supported activities, but other government partners expressed their frustration in working with their UN partners due to an environment lacking trust in which they did not feel a sense of ownership and transparency especially on financial reporting. While government partners were very much appreciative of technical and financial support from UN partners, they observe that there are many shortfalls in the UNFP budget as well as for some individual programmes. At the programme level, this creates challenges for the government to plan its activities since the government is asked to develop plans before they know the actual allocations and then have to adjust their plans after the budget allocation is confirmed. In connection to the funding shortage, government partners suggested that the UN may help the government to identify potential external funding sources and build government capacity on how to access those funds, and the best ways in which to engage more with the private sector.

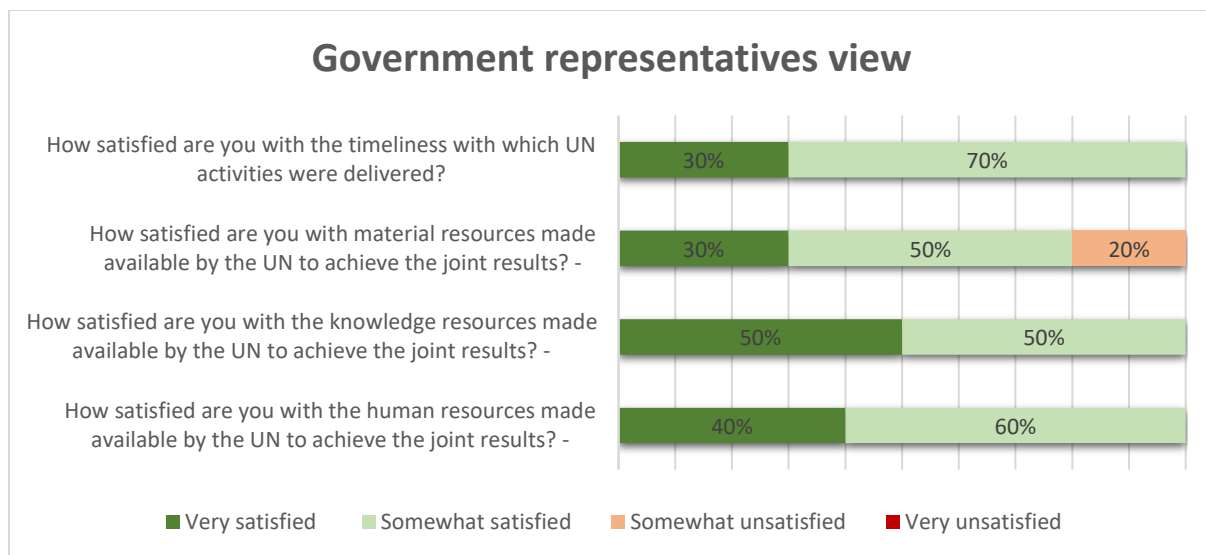
Cost sharing for implementing activities is impossible if the costs are not aligned with programme objectives for programmes that are managed by one UN agency working with one Department. Many interviewees think that UN agencies should be more flexible in working together with the government to achieve maximum results. The cost of international experts is high and often over budgets allocated for implementing programme activities. Many partners noted that the most important function for international experts is training, coaching, M&E and providing specific technical expertise that is needed rather than programme management. Many also note that UN agencies often have to take time to compete with each other to get funds from development partners and to build their credibility.

Staff from Government implementing agencies are occasionally not well trained on UN procurement rules and procedures of UN agencies with which they work but some training on finance that was received in programmes was well delivered and useful. The problem is that many rules of UN Agencies are not aligned with government rules set by the Ministry of Finance.

This does not facilitate an ease of working collaboratively especially at local levels. Many interviewees suggested that all UN programmes should follow national procurement and finance regulations and the rules of the Ministry of Finance. For example, no full DSA on travelling days and no fee for opening remarks at workshops and meetings. Similarly, procurement of vehicles and IT managed by the UN is often not cost effective. Several examples related to vehicles and specifications for IT equipment prevented less expensive services to be used etc. Many partner agencies thought that procurement should be in the country and flexible in selecting available goods/services to their specifications. Government representatives indicate that some UN Agencies do use country financial and procurement systems and rules and regulations which

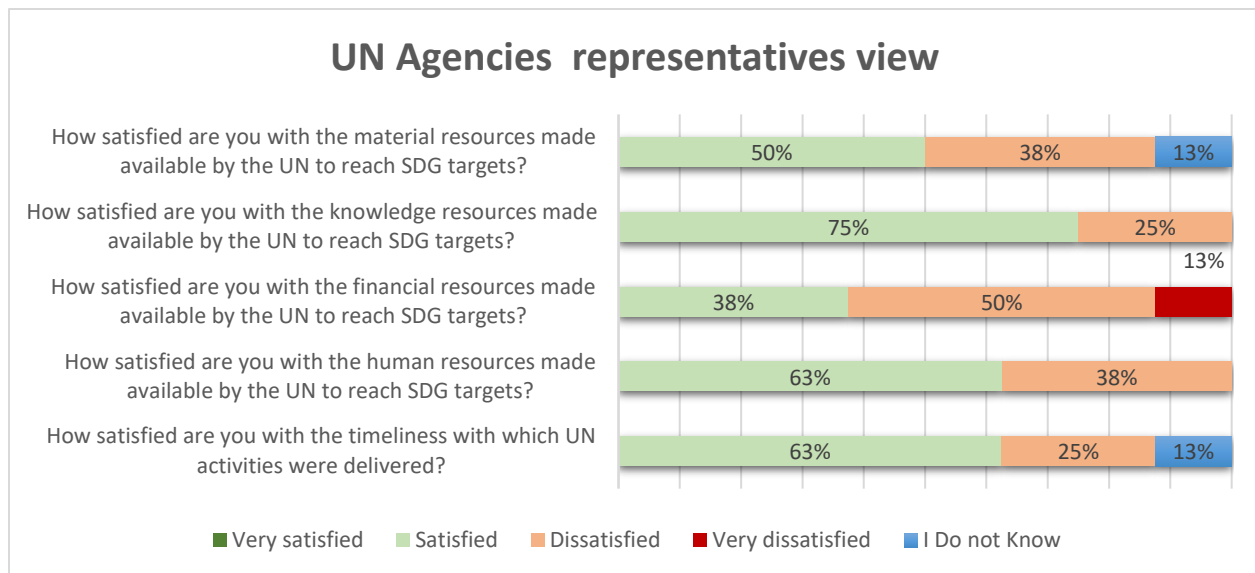
increases ownership. A letter of agreement by FAO is an example of a good practice to clarify exactly what is intended to take place and by whom.

Survey responses from Government representatives to specific questions demonstrated that the Government Representatives were satisfied most with knowledge resources being made available to the Government and access to human resources and timely support. They were somewhat less satisfied with the level of material and financial resources made available from the UN to achieve joint results. In fact, that particular point was made by most Government Agencies which is significant in the near future as Lao PDR needs increased financial resources to move towards graduation.



### UN Agencies

As noted below, representatives of UN Agencies responding to the survey also noted the least positive responses are to being satisfied with the financial resources made available by the UN with 38% being somewhat unsatisfied with the level of material resources and 63% being somewhat unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with the level of financial resources made available to the UN to reach SDG resources.



In terms of efficiency, in addition to agreeing with the inadequacy of resources, another recurring theme pointed out by many UN Agencies was that many UN Agencies work in silos which is not efficient and contributes to duplication of efforts since agencies are unaware of what other similar activities are being supported by other UN Agencies. Also, the issue of some agencies seeking to lead programmes outside their main area of expertise also does not contribute to efficiency. To improve efficiency, several UN Agencies said that more focus needs to be placed on capacity building to develop skills needed both in programme content areas and in monitoring and evaluation including report writing. Similarly, more support for developing research and policy expertise was also noted.

Several smaller UN Agencies noted that, working together with other UN Agencies, and the Government in joint programmes can cut transaction costs for them and lead to increased synergies but this also makes attribution and even contribution more difficult to track. Notwithstanding this perspective and the fact that joint monitoring especially working in districts where costs are high was viewed as very useful, few UN agencies could identify ways in which transaction costs were decreasing overall as a result of working together.

### Other Partners

Some development partners mentioned that there is sometimes a lack of communication among UN agencies which leads them to duplicate work being done by other UN Agencies which points, in the views of these respondents, to a lack of coordination among agencies. Some respondents mentioned that the UN did not have the necessary human resources to reach the “lower” levels of implementation on the ground that is needed to achieve meaningful results. UN agencies are also financially resource constrained. A few development partner respondents mentioned that the differing amounts for travel and per diems among UN agencies is confusing and unclear for some

partners. Some communication issues in terms of roles and responsibilities were also mentioned. For example, sometimes UN agencies are seen as sources of money in the same way as development partners but that is not what the UN is. Development partners are keen on visibility and want to ensure that they receive credit and can demonstrate contribution if not attribution resulting from their support.

### 3.4 Sustainability

**Questions:** Has the UN system support been extended in such away to build national and local capacities to ensure long term, sustainable gains? To what extent has the UN programming assisted Lao's government to scale up to achieve its goal of becoming a middle-income country? And, To what extent has the UN system helped to support Lao PDR's journey towards becoming a sustainable middle-income country?

**Findings:**

**18. Several stakeholders pointed to strong UN AFP partnerships in many provinces and districts in Lao PDR but several other stakeholders indicated that most UN support is at the national policy dialogue level with less at the provincial and district levels where actual implementation of policies and strategies takes place.**

**19. There does not appear to be sufficient emphasis on sustaining results in some of the projects.**

**20. There is a lack of knowledge transfer, coaching and mentoring to build capacity and contribute to sustainability.**

**21. A longer transition period is needed for Lao PDR's graduation from LDC status given the effects of COVID-19 and need for UN and development partner initiatives to build sustainability through improved use of national systems.**

**22. Sustainability needs to be supported as an integrated whole including focusing on resiliency, building on institution strengthening of the governance institutions, building and sustaining human capital within the government and widening the partnerships to include the private sector, INGOs/NPAs and new development partners.**

#### Government Representatives

In term of sustainability, most government stakeholders pointed out that they benefited from participating in the implementation of UN supported programmes through learning by doing and being engaged in the implementation process. They indicated that this was a good way for capacity transfer of skills. Government partners also suggested that to ensure sustainability of UN intervention results, the projects should involve more people, offices and authorities at the sub-



national level and work towards strengthening their capacity as well. Cooperation and participation at the local level is important to national sustainability.

Regarding UN support to Lao PDR becoming an upper middle-income country by 2030, government stakeholders noted that UN agencies have provided support through contributions to issues in the 8th NSEDP. To become an upper middle-income country, Lao PDR GNI per capital has to reach more than 6,000 USD, which is a challenge. In this regard, Lao PDR would need more support on income generation activities at local and community levels, more support on production of local products, more building of local capacity, and more opportunities to work closely with the private sector as well as NGOs.

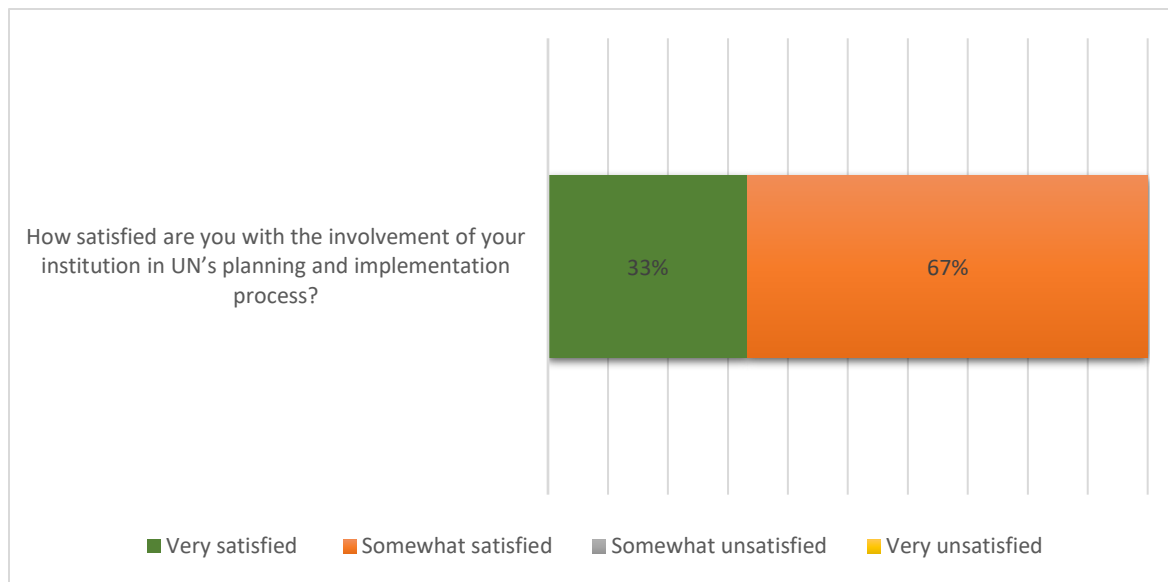
UN agencies have strengthened the national capacity. Many capacity development initiatives include intensive training and awareness building workshops. Due to staff turnover and internal movement, Technical Departments still need capacity development on specific expertise required for sectoral management, monitoring, and planning. This could be in the form of on-job training, long-term coaching, short-term training including recognized institutes and certificates, or mid and long-term capacity development through Masters/PhD scholarship study in country or overseas. A baseline should be agreed and a level of capacity development targeted and agreed by the UNCT and the Government.

When programmes end, most of their activities also end. The Government has limited budget and often these activities are not categorized in sectoral budget priorities so do not receive ongoing support. Also, often, external experts and consultants have not transferred sufficient knowledge to the appropriate local staff so they are unable to use the knowledge and know how and ensure long term benefit. The UNFPA evaluation points to this situation in “Finding 2: The UNFPA country office has put a comparatively strong emphasis on adolescents and particularly adolescent girls in data gathering and research, but key knowledge products are not widely known [...] the CPE team noted that these useful knowledge products were not widely known among consulted government and development partners<sup>9</sup>.”

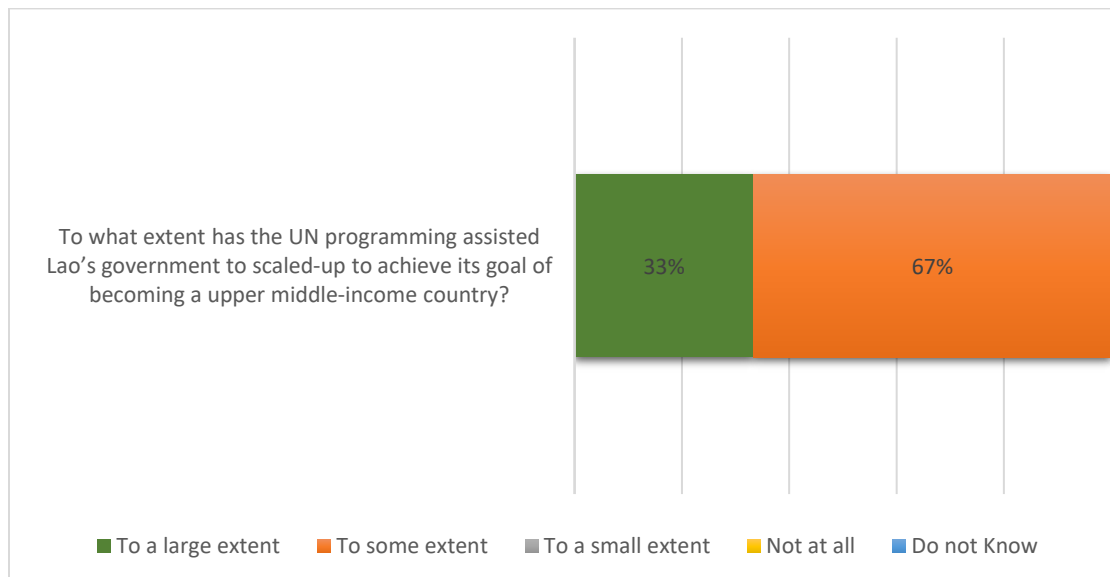
In summary, the responses to the survey reflect the perspective that the majority of the Government respondents were somewhat satisfied (67%) with the involvement of their institution in UN’s planning and implementation process, but others (33%) were very satisfied.

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<sup>9</sup> UNFPA, January 2021. UNFPA Country Programme Evaluation Lao PDR. P. 39



Similarly, 67% of government representatives also perceived that UN programming assisted to some extent the Lao's government scale-up to achieve its goal of becoming an upper middle-income country and 33% scored it to a large extent.



## UN Agencies

Most UN Agency respondents indicated that the plans of the Government in the 8th NSED Plan were perhaps overly ambitious but definitely going in the right direction to support sustainability. But In future they need to work more intersectorally, prioritizing working together and building interlinkages across sectors. Some Agencies are not reaching out sufficiently but can be brought along by the UNRC.

The issue of supporting human capital development was mentioned by most UN Agencies as critical with a particular emphasis on Train the Trainer capacity development approaches augmented by coaching and mentoring and building local human capacity over time.

Many UN Agencies indicated that achieving sustainability in Lao PDR still has a strong need to use the technical expertise housed in their UN agency and in many others. They also indicated that they have solutions for problems that have not been identified by most stakeholders. For example, a rural country such as Lao PDR has one of the highest urbanization rates in the world and needs to confront the issue of planning urbanization in towns and villages in a sustainable manner to address issues related to the growing urban poor. Or in terms of dealing with agriculture, it is important to address root causes and introduce mechanized approaches which are sustainable and linked to the realities on the ground.

Many agencies point out that the key to overall sustainability is an integrated approach with progress on multiple goals at the same time. Several UN Agencies indicated that Sustainability is enhanced by programmes like the UN Joint Programme which is a cooperation platform among UN Agencies working on social protection and poverty<sup>10</sup> and also can include UXO. But other UN Agencies indicate that it is difficult to get many UN Agencies all on the same page and move forward together.

Overall, many UN Agencies note that for potential graduation from LDC status<sup>11</sup>, work needs to be done on preparing for the new modalities that will be needed. Several UN Agencies indicated that UXO needs to have its support increased to build capacity on UXO-Lao and the NRA which will strengthen the two national institutions and reduce the high costs of external support. Support for education and youth job training also needs to be strengthened. Also mentioned by several respondents was the need to increase linkages regionally to address challenges that are beyond one country. For example, migration needs to be dealt with by linking with other countries and with regional organizations such as ASEAN with which initiatives can be coordinated.

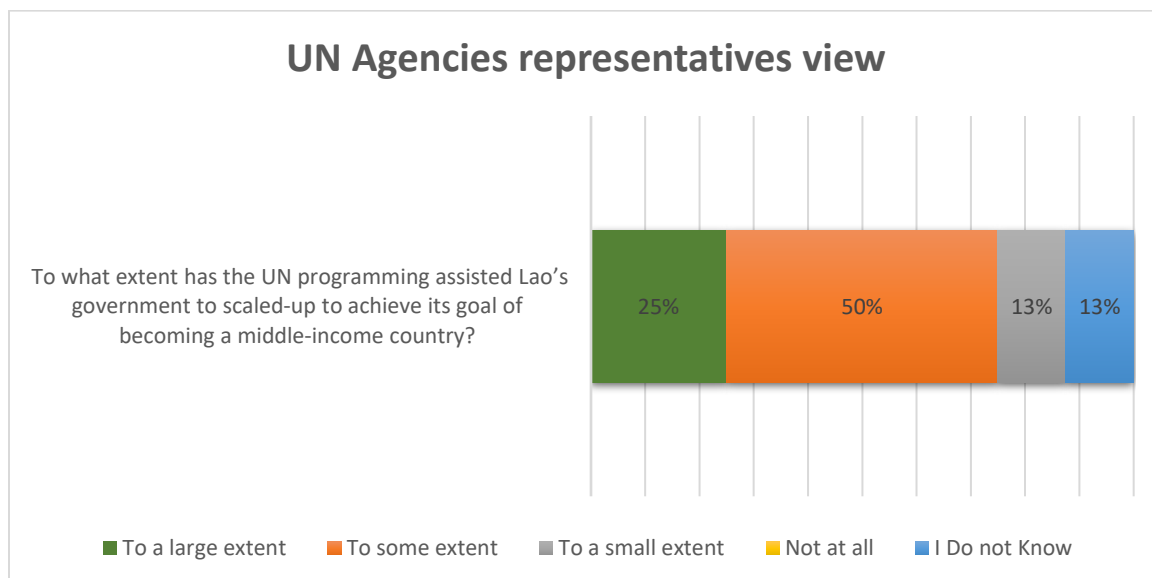
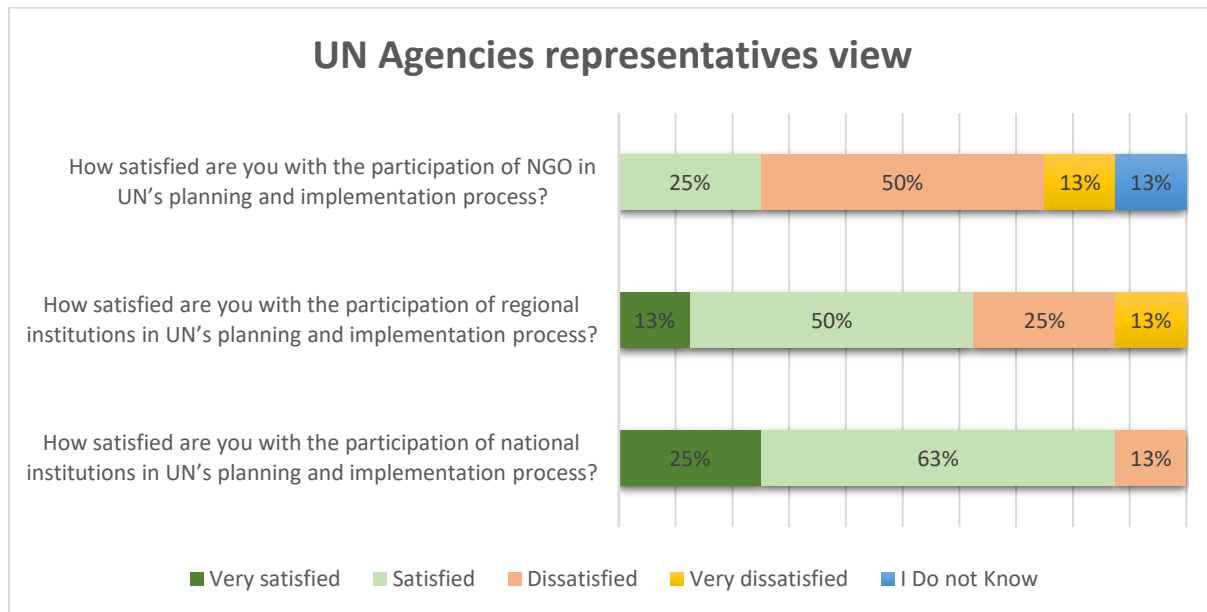
The UN Agency representatives' responses to the survey questions on participation showed that most are satisfied with their participation with national institutions at 87% either very satisfied at 25% or satisfied at 63%. These scores are lower at the regional level 65% very satisfied or satisfied and very low at only 25% satisfied with their involvement with NGOs in their planning and implementation processes. Although not asked, there was mention in the interviews of the lack of involvement with the private sector. On the question of to what extent UN programming is assisting the Lao PDR Government to scale up to achieve its goal of becoming a middle-income

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<sup>10</sup> During the current UNPF cycle the number of UN joint programme has increased from one to five.

<sup>11</sup> In Feb 2021, Lao PDR has been recommended, by UN CDP, for graduation with an extended 5-year preparatory period effectively setting the graduation to 2026 assuming a positive and continued trajectory throughout the time period leading up to graduation. <http://www.mofa.gov.la/index.php/activities/state-leaders/3999-lao-pdr-is-recommended-to-graduate-in-2026-from-the-least-developed-country-category-with-an-extended-preparatory-period>

country, the findings were mixed with 50% saying to some extent and 25% saying to a large extent but with 13% saying to a small extent and 13% saying they did not know.



## Other Partners

Some development partner representatives mentioned that COVID affected the sustainability of results achieved by the UN and refocusing on urgent COVID matters diminished the attention brought to other issues. To ensure the sustainability of all the policy work conducted by the UN, the UNCT needs to review programmes and initiatives to ensure that there are clear sustainability goals in mind since it is the experience of several development partners that this is not clear in some UN supported programmes. Several other partners also noted the importance of exploring new funding sources and encouraging private sector investment.

### 3.5 Cross-cutting issues

This section reports on a number of cross-cutting issues in the Lao PDR context as follows: gender equality, environment, human rights and results-based management, and capacity building issues. All these areas are critical to international development assistance and to the SDGs 2030 Agenda. The evaluation team sought to gauge what progress had been made in these areas using a variety of measures, including a review of documents, key Informant interviews, focus groups and an online survey. An evaluation matrix provided the conceptual framework for all of the lines of evidence. Respondents included Government representatives, UN agencies, and other development partners including development partners and INGOs/NPAs.

**Questions on Gender– Has the UN system’s support been extended in a way that promotes gender equality in Lao PDR? And, to what extent did UNPF make use and promote gender equality standards and principles (e.g., participation, non-discrimination, accountability, etc.) to achieve its goals?**

#### Finding on Gender Equality (GE)

**23. Lao PDR had good gender mainstreaming but more effort needs to be placed on women’s empowerment and women’s rights to achieve SDG 5.**

**24. The UN has provided good entry points to discuss sensitive topics but needs to better coordinate with other development partners as well as the government to continue to advance the GE agenda in Lao PDR. Working with other stakeholders will help identify gaps in policy and capacity.**

**25. The Government would like the UN to take the lead on GE and the UNCT to identify a lead agency since UN Women is not in country at present.**

#### Government Representatives – Gender Equality (GE), SDG 5

Government stakeholders noted that UN agencies and the UNPF have helped to promote goal 5 on gender equity in Lao PDR. GE accomplishments in Lao PDR were proudly reported by some representatives who pointed out that the country has the highest female representation in parliament among all ASEAN countries; it has adopted gender related laws and legislation; the government has worked closely with the UN to enhance gender equality as well as with the national machinery such as, the Lao PDR Women’s Union and National Commission for Advancement of Women - Mother and Children (NCAW\_MC); and worked to integrate gender into the 8th National Plan. Several government representatives also expressed their appreciation for the UN’s support regarding the promotion of gender equity in the country, especially UNFPA and UNICEF which they see as currently leading the effort from the UN side.

Some government representatives however, felt that at times it was important to adapt the principles of GE, as conceived by the UN system, into existing social norms to ensure internal support and long-term sustainability within the country context. In other words, to soften the tone to ensure GE, particularly with reference to women rights and empowerment, was well implemented.

With respect to the on-line survey, government representatives responded as follows in terms of the advancement of gender equality in Lao PDR: 67% answered that GE has been extended to a large extent; 22% think it has been extended to some extent; 11% state it has been extended to a small extent.

### **UN Agencies – Gender Equality**

Overall, the sense is that gender equality is on track in Lao PDR and is well linked to the UNPF but there are many important caveats, including issues related to Gender Based Violence (GBV). The UN was able to bring the needed national government attention to important and sensitive topics on GE, such as GBV, but it still has high prevalence within the society. This evidence is aligned to that collected through the UNFPA CPE evaluation: “CP6 is a good reflection of UNFPA’s family planning and maternal health transformative result areas. Gender-based violence is becoming more prominent. There is scope for more and more concerted support for ending early marriages<sup>12</sup>.”

Many UN agencies said that gender equality is mainstreamed well and that UN agencies cooperate well with the Lao PDR Women’s Union as well as with several government departments. Due its overall acceptance, some agencies have used gender to address overall issues related to human rights, particularly as it relates to issues concerned with UXOs in Lao PDR. However, more efforts need to be made beyond gender mainstreaming on women’s rights and women’s empowerment to overcome structural and institutional barriers.

In general, UN representatives felt that UN agencies, in partnership with the government, were largely contributing to gender equality in Lao PDR. Examples of best practices mentioned are: UNICEF’s support for the CEDAW implementation, a gender plan of action (first implemented in Vientiane and then at the local levels) and an annual report to the HQ in New York regarding progress towards gender equality in Lao PDR. UNFPA has supported the government in the formulation of a Gender Equality Law and has mobilized funds to support its implementation and advocacy. UNFPA in Lao PDR initiated targeted GE/GBV activities under PD activities and UNFPA’s 2019 and 2020 annual work plans included interventions to assist the Government of Lao PDR through LWU to establish multi-sectoral referral system based on the 2014 Law on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Girls.

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<sup>12</sup> UNFPA, December 2020. *UNFPA Country Programme Evaluation*. P. 60

With respect to the on-line survey, UN representatives responded on GE as follows: 50% of UN agency representatives answered that it has been extended to a large extent; 25% think it has been extended to some extent; 13% say to a small extent; and surprisingly, 13% responded, that they do not know which is concerning since GE should be mainstreamed through UN programmes.

### **Other Development Partners – Gender Equality**

Overall, the UN is seen by the development partners as a champion of the cross-cutting principles discussed in this section and particularly on GE. With respect to the government, GE mainstreaming into government was considered good and some indicated that GE was well linked in the UNPF, although few could provide details.

The majority of development partners who responded pointed to the fact that the UN continues to bring attention on important and sensitive topics related to GE e.g., Gender Based Violence (GBV) which can then lead to other considerations. Specifically, the UN engagement of government (and other partners) on such a sensitive issue (by commissioning a GBV study in 2014) helped to raise awareness and sparked an ongoing dialogue. This dialogue not only yielded the first time the government acknowledged the prevalence of GBV in Lao PDR but has helped to provide a platform to discuss the need to strengthen women's empowerment and women's rights to fight against GBV.

Also, development partners said there should be more openings with respect to coordination with Lao PDR INGOs/NPAs and that they should be brought into the process from the beginning. Selected CSO for example, were invited to participate in a number of important consultations with government and the UN with respect to e.g., the preparation of the CEDAW progress report and the UPR as well the SDG reporting. Some INGOs/NPAs were also invited by MOFA to provide comments and inputs to CEDAW and UPR preparation process. The problem however was that even though invited to these events, they were sometimes brought in mid-stream and thus were less able to influence the course of action and provide the needed grass-roots voice.

Although most development partner respondents agreed that GE should be led by the UN, they were concerned that, since the departure of UN Women from Lao PDR, it was difficult to discern which of the UN Agencies should take the lead. This is a concern that was also expressed by some government representatives.

**Questions on Human Rights Based Approach- Has the UN system supported/ followed the principles on HRs based approach? To what extent did UNPF make use of and promote human rights standards and principles to achieve its goals?**

#### **Finding on HR Based Approach (HRBA)**

**26. Promotion and strengthening of HRs has a transformative effect but is still weak in some policy areas in Lao PDR.**



**27. HR provides a platform for more inclusive growth and the ability to advocate for its inclusion but it is still a sensitive subject in the country; human security issues are better accepted with a focus on poverty reduction, labour and social welfare and education.**

### **Government Representatives – Human Right Based Approach (HRBA)**

This topic was met with mixed reviews from government representatives. Virtually all respondents said that they felt that human rights are important and that, as LDC, the government of Lao PDR needs to make the discussion of basic human rights a priority. At the center of the mixed reactions however, is the interpretation of what a human rights-based approach entails within the Lao PDR context.

Overall, the representatives emphasized two main factors when discussing the HRBA: 1) the importance of prioritizing poverty alleviation, health and well-being as well as children's education; and, 2) the government's ratification of several HRs conventions e.g., the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as well the preparation of relevant reports associated with HRs conventions as proof that they were working hard on the rights agenda. However, implementation was more difficult. The promotion of human rights in partnership with UN agencies was said to be under domestic law and regulation and needed to be interpreted accordingly.

Several representatives also felt that some international experts/CTA have not been credible or reliable since they were inflexible with respect to how HRs be implemented. According to some respondents, it is necessary to fit HRs into the broader Lao PDR context and culture, including the collectivist approach of their governance system. Thus, they argued, HRs remains a very sensitive subject, particularly in areas related to information dissemination and disclosure.

Finally, the online survey of government representatives yielded the following responses on human rights progress: 67% of government representatives answered that it has been extended to a large extent; 22% think it has been extended to some extent; and 11% answered that they do not know.

### **UN Representatives – Human Right Based Approach (HRBA)**

With respect to Lao PDR' achievements in human rights, UN Agency representatives acknowledged that progress has been made, particularly in the areas of social welfare, disaster management, climate change, child rights, education rights and to some extent women's rights. However, they also felt that HRBA was not well mainstreamed into technical programmes such as taxation and agriculture. The UN technical programmes focus on training and workshops. Principles of human rights are generally not applied in the technical content of the training/workshop/seminar/study tours. The UNPF addresses the principles of using HRBA but implementation is still a work in progress. Particularly, as it concerns civil and political rights in



Lao PDR and the rights of ethnic minorities and migrant worker, this is still a difficult discussion. Thus, progress on the HRBA has mixed reviews.

Finally, responses to the online survey by UN representatives yielded the following in terms of human rights progress in Lao PDR: 50% of UN agencies representatives answered that it has been extended to a large extent; 38% think it has been extended to some extent; and, 13% answered that they do not know.

### **Other Partners – Human Right Based Approach (HRBA)**

Privately various development partners continue to raise issues related to HRBA in Lao PDR. Examples are related to undocumented migrant workers, particularly from Vietnam and Burma, since they are vulnerable to exploitation given their status. There are also issues related to discrimination and exploitation with respect to migrant labourers working on plantations and in the informal sector related to low wages as well as occupational health and safety concerns. Again, civil and political rights continue to be of concern, e.g., forced disappearances, fair trials, as well as continued discrimination against non Lao-Tai ethnic groups persist, despite laws and policies providing for equal rights for members of all national, racial and ethnic groups. Thus, changes in HRBA acceptance needs to go beyond changes in law and regulation, including the signing of HR conventions. These concepts need to be enforced and accepted within the Lao PDR country context.

**Questions on Environmental Sustainability - Has the UN system support been designed and delivered following the programming principles of environmental sustainability? And, To what extent did UNPF effectively use the principles of environmental sustainability to strengthen its contribution to national development results?**

#### **Finding on Environmental Sustainability (ES)**

**28. As with GE, Environmental Sustainability is well supported. Cross-currents however, such as poverty alleviation, the abundance of mineral deposits in Lao PDR and the regional appetite to acquire them, lead to Lao PDR's extractive economy. In turn, this economy exacerbates the increase in climate disasters such as flooding and storms.**

**29. Disaster management has worked as a critical entry-point for combatting challenges related to ES since it has a high degree of acceptance.**

**30. The failure to deal with ES has a disproportionate effect on women and girls, particularly in rural areas where women and girls are over-represented in small subsistence farming.**

### **Government Representatives – Environmental Sustainability (ES)**

When asked about addressing environmental sustainability, most government representatives interviewed responded that ES is a core principle related to the country's on-going well-being and sustainable growth, particularly given rise to issues related to flooding, storms and disaster/risk. Government representatives suggested that the Technical Departments on environment and natural resources were strictly implementing the principles of environmental sustainability as part

of their mandate, as well as promoting gender equity and women in decision making, since many women and girls are often disproportionately affected by these issues. Also, UN Agencies working in this area should coordinate better and move forward in the same direction. They saw this coordination as resulting in more influence at a policy level and implementation of programming, as well as providing more clarity for Lao PDR's government on a way forward.

Echoing the sentiments above, in on-line survey with respect to ES, government representatives responded as follows: 56% of government representatives answered that it has been extended to a large extent; 33% think it has been extended to some extent; and 11% say they do not know.

### **UN Agencies Representatives – Environmental Sustainability (ES)**

UN Agency respondents said that environmental sustainability is central because there has been a real degradation of the Laotian forests and many challenges with programming in this area. Due to the extent of the challenges, UN Agencies and their Government counterparts, have worked hard to address environmental sustainability in policies and practices, including in the UNPF and the National Plan. Also, although UN DESA is a non-resident agency in New York, it supports the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and works to help countries like Lao PDR translate global commitments into national action in the economic, social and environmental spheres – including environmental sustainability.

Yet, there are many inter-related reasons why tackling ES is challenging in the country. For example, Lao PDR is a very resource-rich country with well over 500 mineral deposited identified, including gold and zinc. In short, Lao PDR benefits economically from an extractive economy which continues to contribute to mounting ES issues.

The underlying challenge is that poverty levels are high in Lao PDR and natural resources are plentiful and in demand in the region, which is a mixed blessing. Thus, although some progress has been made in terms of disaster management and ES in general, it continues to be a balancing act.

With respect to ES, the importance of building capacity in disaster risk reduction cannot be overstated and needs to become an overarching area of importance for the UNCT and next UNPF. In fact, there are many UN programmes related to environment and particularly to the green climate/economy, but often these could be better coordinated among the UN's four Biodiversity Agencies e.g., UNESCO, FAO, UNEP, and UNDP. Environmental sustainability is also supported in the Arise programme of ITC with its overall focus on building capacity. Other agencies such as UN-Habitat, working with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, also support the management of resources including for disaster risk reduction and natural protection from climate change.

In terms of the survey, UN Agencies responded in the following manner with respect to ES: 25% of UN agencies representatives answered that it has been extended to a large extent; 25% think

it has been extended to some extent; 25% state it has been extended to a small extent; 13% state it has not been extended at all; and 13% said they do not know at all.

### **Other Partners – Environmental Sustainability (ES)**

There is a lot of work on ES in Lao PDR and it would benefit from more work at the local levels by the UN. Most UN agencies support the national level through policy dialogue and include limited support to provincial and district levels where actual implementation of policies and strategies takes place. This risks a disconnect between policy and implementation and, for example, results in many rural women and girls being victims of challenges related to ES due to increased climate disasters. They would benefit from more support at the local levels.

**Questions on Results Based Management (RBM) – Have the programming principles of RBM been used to monitor and track results? And, to what extent did UNPF make use of the programming principles of RBM to monitor and track its results?**

#### **Finding on Results Based Management (RBM)**

**31. A clearly articulated Theory of Change (ToC) which spells out key assumptions and outcomes would help to provide an overarching strategy on the programme and RBM.**

**32. The uniqueness of UN Agencies and the overwhelming number of indicators makes it challenging to collect data and for there to be ownership by the Lao PDR government. More support for government is needed by the UN Agencies to help Lao PDR overcome data related and statistical capacity concerns.**

**33. The UNPF can provide an overall umbrella mandate but there needs more emphasis on contribution rather on attribution of results to make this workable for all development partners.**

### **Government Representatives – Results Based Management (RBM)**

According to many government representatives it appears that RBM is used more for larger programmes but less for smaller projects valued from 50K – 200K. Also, with respect to Monitoring and Evaluation and Results Based Management and the development and ownership of indicators, representatives stressed the importance of not having overly ambitious indicators. Moreover, the importance of developing a culture that supports placing significant effort and resources on M&E & RBM needs to begin by fostering a sense of ownership and mutual accountability. With respect to the UNPF and UN supported programmes, Government agencies would like to be consulted and be part of the overall process more than they are currently when it comes to RBM which deals with which indicators are tracked and why. This would increase the likelihood that indicators are utilized and data tracked and of use to the government.

DOP/MPI took the lead in preparing the 9th NSEDP and its M&E framework, and currently have 300+ indicators in the 9th Plan. There was optimism expressed by some Government representatives who mentioned that UNRC and UNDP has pushed for high quality indicators in the 9th NSEDP. As a result, the 9th Plan is an improvement on the present 8th Plan. The 9th Plan is said to have a clearer structure and focused areas of interest. Previously, the 8th Plan

was very focused on the economy and to some extent on social and environmental issues. The 9th Plan however, contains six inter-related areas namely, economic, HRD, livelihood, environment, partnership development, and governance. The government partners interviewed said they were more confident that the 9th Plan will be a “real” Results-Based Plan with which the UN will be well aligned.

Some government departments expressed challenges in reporting on some SDG indicators. The challenges that they are facing include unclear indicator definitions and knowledge about how to use those indicators effectively. These issues were reported with the goal of receiving further support and working to ensure that Government of Lao PDR and the UN indicators are complementary.

Largely in keeping with findings from other lines of evidence, the government representatives surveyed online felt that RBM was as follows: 44% of government representatives answered that it has been extended to a large extent; 44% think it has been extended to some extent; and 11% said they do not know.

### **UN Agencies Representatives – Results Based Management (RBM)**

RBM is not yet being well done and needs increased capacity and training to develop better measures, including how to use the indicators and other techniques to augment RBM such as Most Significant Change (MSC) to help track progress towards results. Moreover, there is a need for developing better indicators that can be measured and setting of targets is also something that needs to be improved as does work on baselines. This is particularly crucial as Lao PDR moves towards graduation from LDC status to help track progress and follow results from interventions. In general, there is a need to increase the capacity for RBM at both the national and local levels of government working with UN Agencies at multiple levels.

Within the UNPF there were some indicators that did not have baselines, targets and also some indicators that were too ambitious to track properly. There was an overall sense that the UNPF should be supportive of the NSEDP. It was pointed out that NSEDP indicators were contributed to by government and other Development Partners, not just UN Agencies and that this should be borne in mind when thinking about the UNPF and NSEDP indicators.

There are 10 Sector WGs and 8 UN Results Groups which need to be better coordinated, not just in terms of their agendas but also in terms of their results framework as many have overlapping influences. Moreover, the UN Results Groups tend to be uneven in the level of ownership by specific agencies and their involvement in planning and implementing programmes. Working with government from the beginning of the process will go a long way to helping alleviate these issues, particularly those related to ownership of indicators, targets and the inclusion of baselines.

With respect to what extent the UN system’s support has been extended to promote gender equity, human rights, environmental sustainability, and RBM use in Lao PDR, 50% indicated that it had been extended to some extent but 25% thought it was only extended to a small or no extent while another 25% thought it had been extended to a large extent. This was inconclusive.

### Other Partners – Results Based Management (RBM)

Many development partners agree that there is work to be done with respect to RBM and the alignment of indicators, targets and baselines in all development areas. With respect to cross cutting issues such as gender equality, the human rights-based approach, environmental sustainability and capacity building within government, this continues to be a challenge even in areas where the government is improving RBM reporting. When it comes to M&E support, development partners and the government tend to look to the leadership of the UNCT and the UN in general so they are well positioned to provide coordination opportunities to improve RBM. This also requires cooperation from other parties and will also require some changes on the part on individual development partners themselves, who are sometimes too concerned with capturing their own contributions to results rather than working collaboratively to show overall progress.

### Question on Capacity Building (CB)

Has the overall UN program been designed with programming principles of capacity development at its core? And, to what extent has UNPF been designed with programming principles of capacity building at its core?

#### Finding on Capacity Building (CB)

**34. The Lao PDR government would like to see more technical assistance and capacity building rather than having international experts managing programmes since they see this as more sustainable in the long run. The UN agrees that capacity building in a number of key areas is critical for achieving and sustaining the development agenda in Lao PDR and includes CB in every programme.**

**35. The government appreciates support to staff for capacity building but would also like more capacity building or institution building at the systemic levels of government, e.g., provision of improved systems and technology etc. since high staff turn-over and insufficient succession planning makes it difficult to sustain gains made by staff who have benefitted from capacity building alone. There needs to be a balance between investments in human capital and institutional systems building to maximize the effectiveness of capacity building.**

### Government Representatives – Capacity Building

Capacity development is a core principle of the government of Lao PDR as well as UN Agencies and other Development Partners. The government representatives indicated that there is a need to work on capacity development on two levels: with respect to government staff and with respect to government institutions to increase sustainable development.

Within the government structure, the ‘Sam Sang’ policy has mainly focused on human development from the central to the grass-roots level. Indeed, government implementing agencies are trying to ensure that all programmes are aligned with capacity development activities. A

primary goal is that, once programmes are completed, government staff will have obtained the necessary knowledge and know how, in order to function at the level of specialists in their respective fields.

The UN is seen as having strong technical expertise, which many government representatives felt fortunate to be able to benefit. In addition, the UN has strengthened the capacity of many line ministry staff, including soft skills and has also opened up more positions for Lao PDR nationals. There should be a stronger emphasis on learning by doing and longer programme timeliness since real capacity building does not just involve funding but time to learn and integrate what you've learned. The Lao PDR government would like to see more involvement of technical assistance and capacity building in the form of coaching and mentoring and exchange of skills in the future. In addition, they hope to have more systemic capacity building embedded into government and succession planning to retain knowledge locally which is especially important due to high staff turnover. The government hopes to plan and implement joint programmes which are aligned with national systems. The overall view of most government stakeholders was that this type of capacity building will be successful for the government.

Some government institutions indicated that the exchange visits through South-South cooperation were found to be useful. This is consistent with the UNDP CP evaluation. However, the evaluation also suggests that they are limited by being one-off exchanges which did not result in ongoing cooperation following the exchanges.

### **UN Agencies - Capacity Building**

UN Agency respondents recognize that capacity building is very important for national counterparts and the UN and needs to be integrated into programmes. UN capacity building however, is often too centred at the national level. Indeed, the UNPF and UN agencies do contribute to capacity building at the national level, but there is agreement that there should be increased local and also regional support as well, e.g., ASEAN. An example was provided in terms of dealing with trade disputes, in which case Lao PDR has had to seek external TA. However, after graduation from LDC status, Lao PDR will need to rely more on its own resources and thus will need well developed national capacity in this and other important areas.

The UN should support the Lao PDR government staff's capacity building in areas such as: resource mobilization, RBM, data and monitoring and evaluation. There needs to be more coordination among UN Agencies and with the Government on capacity building strategies which should link with the UN Joint Program in Social protection and value chains and capacity in TVET and apprenticeships.

There is also a need for increased capacity in areas such as disaster prevention and building resilience. The UNCT should help UN Agencies develop joint approaches with government and



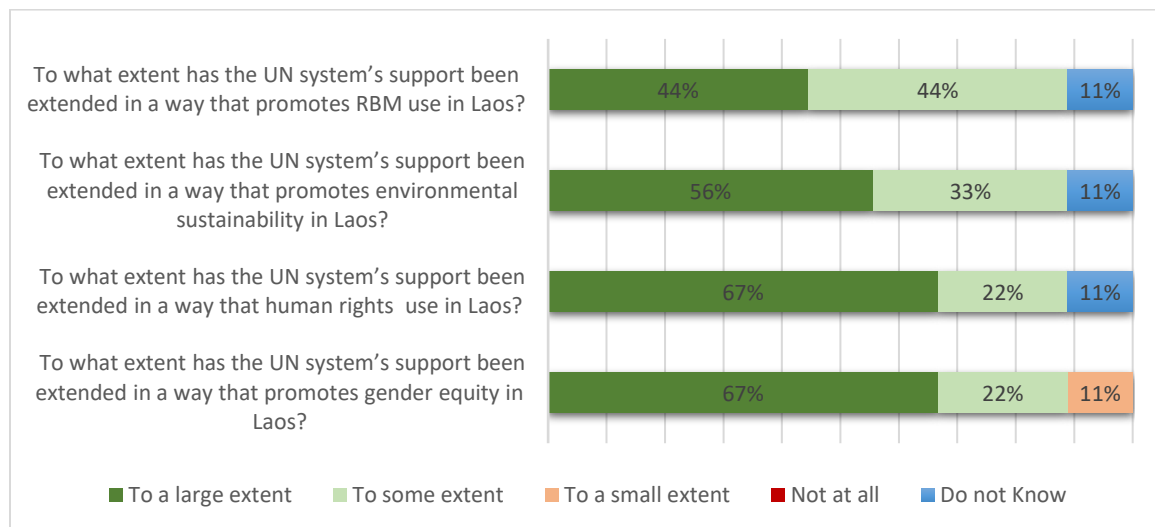
UN Agencies on these issues. Additionally, the UNCT and UNRC should be able to do oversight and coordinate capacity development initiatives to strengthen national capacity.

### Other Partners – Capacity Building

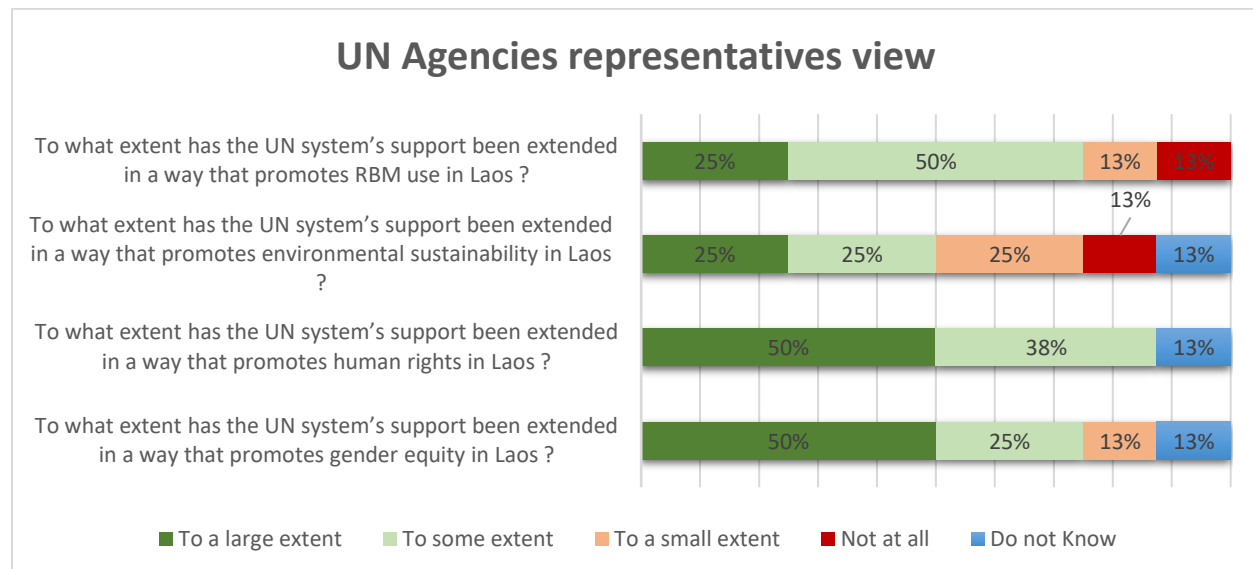
Capacity development can take many avenues, including not just technical skills development but critical soft skills that can help move difficult agendas forward. A great example of this are responses for the EU on their joint efforts with the UNCT working together on cross cutting issues.

The EU team in Lao PDR were exposed to a useful way of working together and thinking about cross-cutting issues. It was through participating in a pilot course organised by DEVCO's Unit B1 (Human Rights, Gender, Democratic Governance) and Unit 06 (Quality & Results). It used a learning workshop on the intercultural methodological approach which responded to the need to better understand people in the social and cultural context in which they operate. Not having this intercultural understanding can prevent programmes from achieving their goals. It can help people reframe their approaches with others and understand factors they had not considered. The EU in Lao PDR was the first location in which this intercultural approach was piloted and was successful leading people to see that the cultural lens is key to looking at cross-cutting issues and how different partners/stakeholders can work together and communicate with each other using culturally sensitive interventions.

### Government Representatives



## UN Agencies Representatives



## 3.6 Forward Looking Perspectives

**Questions:** In response to questions about what the future focus of the next UNPF 2017-2021 should be, what lessons have been learned, and how joint ventures have added value or identified good practices, the interviewees and focus groups from the UN, Government and others presented several ideas which are presented below.

### Findings:

36. It appeared to several representatives in all areas that some agencies and Ministries have not allocated sufficient resources for M&E so they propose that additional resources be committed by agencies linked to the UNRC for coordination purposes. It was noted that a joint monitoring approach would benefit both large and small UN Agencies and the Government since cross over issues will become more apparent and this would help agencies, the Government and the UNCT to plan.

37. Multiple stakeholders support the need for the UN and multilateral and bilateral development partners to work together on a range of activities including joint initial analysis of programme proposals, coordinating and having good exchanges across sectors and in specific sectors and also joint monitoring and evaluation missions and linkages that increase data sharing among all stakeholders.

38. Clearly there is a need for finding ways to cut transaction costs in procurement and programme implementation and overcome the fallout from stakeholders needing to comply with multiple rules and regulations.

39. Most of the groups of representatives suggest that the focus of the next UNSDCF needs to be on increasing the capacity of government staff to develop, manage, implement and monitor



**programmes with decentralised decision-making and approval capability which is likely to increase government ownership.**

**40. There is agreement among most stakeholders that there has not been sufficient focus in most programmes building local capacity at the provincial and district levels which needs to be improved in the next UNSDCF by integrating these levels in plans and programmes.**

## Government Representatives

Several government representatives indicated that the next UNSDCF (UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework) should be aligned with the 9th NSEDP and several mentioned that skill development is an important component of the 9th NSEDP. Representatives of technical departments also indicated that they had not been sufficiently involved in the development of UNPF indicators and would like to be in the future UNSDCF.

Many Government representatives recommend that there be one standardized set of UN regulations/rules for programme management, finance, procurement and reporting. Procurement should be in the country but if local goods and services are not available, procurement could be from overseas. Some financial and procurement rules are not appropriate in Lao PDR especially at the local level since they conflict with NIM policies and MoF financial regulations and rules. Procurement policies and approval needs to be faster, more flexible and applicable to the Lao PDR context especially at the local level and in remote areas. The conditions for receiving funds should be less onerous and flexible.

Several representatives noted that many small projects do not achieve their planned results and are not well monitored. The UN should support larger programmes with spending of USD 5 million to ensure tangible results that achieve SDGs. Programmes need to be 3-5 years to be able to demonstrate impact.

Disaster management is already included in the 9th NSEDP particularly focusing on prevention, response and recovery. Recovery should be prioritized and focused upon since most current funds are allocated for emergency responses during disasters and less is allocated to livelihood recovery to build resilience after disasters. Funds for disaster risk response, management and prevention are channeled to the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and are needed to prevent and control disease outbreaks caused by flood and drought and climate change. The UNSDCF should include priorities of the MAF which are defined in the 9th NSEDP and continue to achieving the Sendai framework.

Overall Government representatives noted that there is too much of a top-down view on environment when a bottom-up view would work better to bring in the provincial and district levels. This should be linked to building local capacity including for example capacity in remote sensing, water accounting, pollution control and use of data and statistics etc. Enhanced capacity is needed as well as links with international research institutes and universities. Many representatives suggest that the focus of the next UNSDCF needs to be on increasing the

capacity of government staff to develop, manage, implement and monitor programmes with decentralised decision-making and approval capability. This will increase government ownership.

### UN Agencies

Many interviewees noted that in the future the M&E framework must be upgraded so that the UNSDCF clearly supports the 9th NSEDP and has a well-developed results framework. It appeared to several representatives that some agencies and Ministries have not allocated sufficient resources for M&E. Additional resources could be committed by agencies linked to the UNRC for coordination purposes. A joint monitoring approach will benefit both large and small UN Agencies since cross over issues will become more apparent and help agencies and be useful to include in the UNSDCF. Many also added that indicators should not be too ambitious. It is important to develop a culture which supports and funds M&E and RBM.

Many stakeholders agree that policy dialogue is important but think that there should be more focus on providing resources for action at the local level which also needs to be part of the policy dialogue. The local levels also need to benefit from lessons learned by others such as tools developed in Cambodia by the UN to generate income which could be replicated and deployed in Lao PDR where such approaches are needed.

Additional cross cutting issues could be considered including UXO especially given the importance of Lao PDR's Special SDG 18 on UXO. Others could include people with disabilities, and migration which is also a regional concern that needs to be included in the UNSDCF.

Most interviewees agree that the major investment in the future needs to be on human capital including digital knowledge and capacity in all the key sectors. The UNSDCF could help integrate the many UN initiatives and pull them together and help link them to MPI plans.

A practice that is not helpful is having trust funds or programmes set up proposals which attract hundreds of good proposals of which only very few can be funded. This is discouraging for possible partners and discourages rather than encourages action.

A key lessons-learned mentioned was that the UNRC setting the tone for coordination and partnership among agencies and partners adds substantial overall value to the programme, and as coordination becomes a reality, increases the possibility of decreasing transaction costs from joint activities.

### Other Partners

These stakeholders note that the UNRC and UNCT are doing a good job and need to continue it since there is much to be done. As part of this, several development partners mentioned that the UN needs to open up to new development partners, the private sector and INGOs/NPAs.

Development partners mentioned that the recommendations from the mid-term review of the 8th NSEDP focussed on institutional strengthening which is still the key in the near future and to Lao

PDR being ready for graduation. Many also focus on the fact that Lao PDR has financial challenges and needs to focus on building human capital as its central focus.

Development partners also focussed on the need for the UN and multilateral and bilateral development partners to work together on a range of activities including joint initial analysis of project proposals, coordinating and having useful exchanges across sectors and in specific sectors and also carry out joint monitoring and evaluation missions and linkages that increase data sharing.

## 4 LIST OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

### FINDINGS

#### Relevance

1. The large majority of stakeholders (over 75%) in the UN, Government of Lao PDR and other agencies consulted all agree that the UN Partnership Framework (UNPF) is well aligned with national plans and priorities identified in the Lao PDR 8th NSEDP. Specific results are primarily delivered through individual UN Agency efforts working with partners.
2. The UNPF thematic areas are aligned with the national priorities of the 8th NSEDP of Lao PDR and have contributed to progress towards most targets but the implementation results are mixed.
3. The UN is seen as a neutral partner with strong technical expertise supporting the Government to achieve the 8th NSEDP and SDG targets.
4. Overall the UNRC and UNCT is leading movement towards improved interagency cooperation and collaboration among UN agencies and also with the Government of Lao PDR and other agencies but issues related to differing administrative modalities among UN agencies, other agencies and the Lao PDR Government make it difficult to optimize results and avoid duplication.
5. Outreach to the private sector, INGOs/NPAs and to new development partners is has not been significant and is essential to expanding the UNPF partnership between the UN and the Government of Lao PDR. But at present this situation is improving with several UN agencies increasing their linkages with INGOs/NPAs and expanding partnerships with multiple stakeholders such as e.g. UNFPA.
6. The UN Agencies have responded well to the COVID crises which has enhanced the relevance of the UN working together as a whole.

**Effectiveness**

7. The UNCT is well respected as a UN coordinating body with improved positioning credibility, reliability and communication thanks to strong leadership from the UNRC which can potentially help bring about culture change within the Lao PDR UNCT.
8. The UNPF clarifies Agency Financial Priorities effectively.
9. Non-resident UN Agencies report they are well integrated into the UNCT.
10. UNPF reporting has good coverage but reports are challenged in measuring progress on indicators due to weak baselines and wide-ranging indicators.
11. Increased capacity is needed in M&E as well as in statistical and data management in UN Agencies and the Government of Lao PDR.
12. Many stakeholders view the work of the UN Results Groups as an internal UN mechanism with the 10 Sector Working Groups as a broader Government and Development Partner mechanism working under the annual Round Table process.
13. The Results Groups are uneven in level of ownership by specific agencies and in their levels of involvement in planning and implementing programmes.
14. UN programme teams need to empower Government stakeholders more in terms of decision-making during programme planning and implementation of UN programmes.

**Efficiency**

15. Each UN Agency has its own administrative modalities which makes it challenging for Ministries in Lao PDR to work with UN Agencies since they implement similar programmes using different methods which often increases transaction costs and creates duplication.
16. UN Agencies tend to work in siloes focused on achieving their own mandates which limits their efficiency linking with others to achieve UNPF's umbrella mandate.
17. There are many examples of coordination on initiatives (e.g. Joint Programme on Social Protection).

**Sustainability**

18. Several stakeholders pointed to strong UN AFP partnerships in many provinces and districts in Lao PDR but several other stakeholders indicated that most UN support is at the national policy dialogue level with less at the provincial and district levels where actual implementation of policies and strategies takes place.
19. There does not appear to be sufficient emphasis on sustaining results in some of the projects.
20. There is a lack of knowledge transfer, coaching and mentoring to build capacity and contribute to sustainability.

21. A longer transition period is needed for Lao PDR's graduation from LCD status given the effects of COVID-19 and need for UN and donor initiatives to build sustainability through improved use of national systems.

22. Sustainability needs to be supported as an integrated whole including focusing on resiliency, building on institution strengthening of the governance institutions, building and sustaining human capital within the government and widening the partnerships to include the private sector, INGOs/NPAs and new development partners.

### **Cross Cutting Issues Gender Equality (GE)**

23. Lao PDR had good gender mainstreaming but more effort needs to be placed on women's empowerment and women's rights to achieve SDG 5.

24. The UN has provided good entry points to discuss sensitive topics but needs to better coordinate with other development partners as well as the government to continue to advance the GE agenda in Lao PDR. Working with other stakeholders will help identify gaps in policy and capacity.

25. The Government would like the UN to take the lead on GE and the UNCT to identify a lead agency since UN Women is not in country at present.

### **Human Rights Based Approaches (HRBA)**

26. Promotion and strengthening of HRs has a transformative effect but is still weak in some policy areas in Lao PDR.

27. HR provides a platform for more inclusive growth and the ability to advocate for its inclusion but it is still a sensitive subject in the country; human security issues are better accepted with a focus on poverty reduction, labour and social welfare and education.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

28. As with GE, Environmental Sustainability is well supported. Cross-currents however, such as poverty alleviation, the abundance of mineral deposits in Lao PDR and the regional appetite to acquire them, lead to Lao PDR's extractive economy. In turn, this economy exacerbates the increase in climate disasters such as flooding and storms.

29. Disaster management has worked as a critical entry-point for combatting challenges related to ES since it has a high degree of acceptance.

30. The failure to deal with ES has a disproportionate effect on women and girls, particularly in rural areas where women and girls are over-represented in small subsistence farming.

### **Results Based Management (RBM)**

31. A clearly articulated Theory of Change (ToC) which spells out key assumptions and outcomes would help to provide an overarching strategy on the programme and RBM.

32. The uniqueness of UN Agencies and the overwhelming number of indicators makes it challenging to collect data and for there to be ownership by the Lao PDR government. More support for government is needed by the UN Agencies to help Lao PDR overcome data related and statistical capacity concerns.

33. The UNPF can provide an overall umbrella mandate but there needs more emphasis on contribution rather on attribution of results to make this workable for all development partners.

### **Capacity Building**

34. The Lao PDR government would like to see more technical assistance and capacity building rather than having international experts managing programmes since they see this as more sustainable in the long run. The UN agrees that capacity building in a number of key areas is critical for achieving and sustaining the development agenda in Lao PDR and includes CB in every programme.

35. The government appreciates support to staff for capacity building but would also like more capacity building or institution building at the systemic levels of government, e.g., provision of improved systems and technology etc. since high staff turn-over and insufficient succession planning makes it difficult to sustain gains made by staff who have benefitted from capacity building alone. There needs to be a balance between investments in human capital and institutional systems building to maximize the effectiveness of capacity building.

### **Forward Looking Perspectives**

36. It appeared to several representatives in all areas that some agencies and Ministries have not allocated sufficient resources for M&E so they propose that additional resources be committed by agencies linked to the UNRC which could provide coordination purposes. A joint monitoring approach will benefit both large and small UN Agencies and the Government since cross over issues will become more apparent and help agencies, the Government and the UNSDCF to plan.

37. Multiple stakeholders support the need for the UN and multilateral and bilateral development partners to work together on a range of activities including joint initial analysis of programme proposals, coordinating and having good exchanges across sectors and in specific sectors and also joint monitoring and evaluation missions and linkages that increase data sharing among all stakeholders.

38. Clearly there is a need for finding ways to cut transaction costs in procurement and programme implementation and overcome the fallout from stakeholders needing to comply with multiple rules and regulations.

39. Most of the groups of representatives suggest that the focus of the next UNSDCF needs to be on increasing the capacity of government staff to develop, manage, implement and monitor programmes with decentralised decision-making and approval capability which is likely to increase government ownership.

40. There is agreement among most stakeholders that there has not been sufficient focus in most programmes building local capacity at the provincial and district levels which needs to be improved in the next UNSDCF by integrating these levels in plans and programmes.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The evaluation identified lessons learned from implementation of the UNPF 2017-2021 anchored around “what works, what doesn’t and why?” which build on the conclusions and could be applicable for wider use.

1. A key lesson learned identified by multiple stakeholders in this evaluation was that the UNRC in Lao PDR is setting the tone for creating a cultural change which highlights the importance and value of partnership and coordination among agencies and partners which has added substantial overall value to the UNPF and encouraged partnerships becoming a reality and increasing the likelihood of more joint activities taking place. The lesson is that leadership is essential for cultural change related to building partnerships.
2. As noted above, other levels of stakeholders in a country need to be integrated but also other actors need to be drawn in including inactive or new development partners, the private sector locally and internationally and INGOs/NPAs and international NGOs.
3. Entry points need to be identified and used such as on gender through Gender Based Violence and Environmental Sustainability through Disaster Management to move the needle and create a platform for open discussion in each area.
4. Actions at multiple levels need to be consistent and moving in the same direction to avoid issues such as trust funds or calls for proposals being let and attracting hundreds of responses but only having very few be funded which discourages many interested possible partners and discourages rather than encourages actions and a widening of the partnership.
5. Levels of governance such as Joint Steering Committees or Technical Working Groups or Results Groups all need to be inclusive and operating with significant ownership by all stakeholders.
6. Finally, the central lesson is that to move forward with a national level undertaking, all the levels need to be working together and be on the same page to address all the SDGs successfully.

## CONCLUSIONS



Building on the findings, this section draws together and integrates conclusions based on those findings.

### **Relevance**

1. The UNPF is relevant and aligned to the political and economic context in which it is implemented. The actual process of developing the document is itself also relevant and brings stakeholders together to discuss their vision on how the UN, as a system and a neutral partner, can align its work with the priorities and needs of Lao PDR.

### **Effectiveness**

2. The UNCT and its member agencies, partly through the use of the UNPF, have achieved good results, all the more through its support to national institutions and ministries. These counterparts respect and have confidence in the UN system and its technical as well as thematic expertise.

3. The Sector Working Groups set up by the Government and the Results Groups coordinated by the UN are not well aligned. While the Sector WGs are at the output sectoral level, the Results Groups are at the outcome level. This has contributed to the two groups not coordinating as well as they could in their work together.

4. In the Government's view, the UNPF and UNCT need to empower Government stakeholders more in terms of decision-making, and involvement during programme planning and implementation of UN programmes.

### **Efficiency**

5. Although UN agencies, in part thanks to the UNPF, have shown in many instances that they can coordinate their work through joint programming, many challenges remain to overcome silos within a number of agencies which are focused on their own specific mandates.

6. In order to increase coordination among UN Agencies in the field, and avoid duplication, it is important to involve the headquarters of these UN Agencies since this is where policy decisions are made.

### **Sustainability**

7. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has actually strengthened the UN's capacity to work together, overall, the crisis has also set the country back on many fronts. Some of the progress



Lao PDR was making towards graduation from LDC status has slowed down making rapid graduation more difficult.

8. The present UNPF framework still has some gaps in terms of setting a context in which information, knowledge and know-how can be shared beyond participants who are directly involved in UN agencies' capacity building and technical assistance.

### **Cross Cutting – Gender Equality**

9. Gender mainstreaming is well supported in Lao PDR and promoted by UN agencies and the UNPF. The UN is already seen as a leader in GE which has helped introduce sensitive topics such as GBV prevalence in Lao PDR which in turn provides a dialogue platform to strengthen discussions on women's rights and empowerment.

10. Gender Equality in Lao PDR is well done overall with many promising areas which are positioned to be entry points and platforms for the expansion of the rights of women and girls such as reproductive rights, promotion of the rights of the girl child and work on GBV.

### **Human Rights Based Approach**

11. In terms of the human rights-based approach, the 10 principles of the UN Global Compact including human rights and environment and the 3 pillars of the Ruggie Principles (protect, respect and remedy) are recognized to be well supported by the UN Agencies but there are still issues with HRs within the country. The government has signed several International Human Rights Conventions such as CEDAW and included gender equity and human rights in the national constitution, but there are areas in which the UNPF could make efforts to further bring forward human rights.

12. The UN has advocated for HRBA as transformative and works to strengthen its inclusion in the development process, while the Lao PDR government argue for a step-wise approach in which primarily human security concerns, related to poverty alleviation and social welfare, are emphasized in the early stages over other rights. In short, Lao PDR is more comfortable promoting Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR) over those of Civil and Political Rights (CPR).

### **Environmental Sustainability**

13. The environment is of central concern to development partners in Lao PDR and a focus of many projects with the Government, both with the UN and Other Development Partners. However, there are other (economic) forces that put pressure on the environment. Environmental factors include human rights concerns since many small farmers for example, are among the hardest hit

by the effects of environmental unsustainable actions. These negative environmental outcomes affect more importantly a sub-set of the rural poor, women and girls from non Lao-Tai ethnic groups who engage in subsistence farming. Lao PDR, like other countries in the region, e.g., Vietnam, is experiencing the effects of climate change through increased storms and flooding which often destroy the livelihoods of the country's most vulnerable women and children involved in subsistence farming.

### Results Based Management

14. The UNPF does not include substantial RBM content or detailed guiding principles that promote a fully coordinated approach to reporting by the UN as a system but rather than as individual agencies with good content. The RBM system does not yet reduce pressure on signatory agencies by emphasizing the need to focus on higher level outcomes that demonstrate changes that are *contributing* to higher level results and changes by building the capacity of national stakeholders to themselves generate long lasting changes within their society.

### Capacity Building

15. Although UN programmes and the UNPF integrate technical assistance as an important approach to support Lao PDR nationals to increase their capacity to achieve results themselves, more focus is needed on learning by doing and generating local ownership rather than having international experts leading programmes. This is especially important as Lao PDR moves towards graduation from LDC status. There should be a balance between investments in human capacity and institutional systems building to ensure succession planning. There is a consensus around the fact that capacity building is a key area for sustainability and is an important area for the future UNSDCF and a core for future programming.

### Forward looking Perspectives

16. The key messages for the next UNSDCF are:

Align with the 9th NSEDP with jointly agreed indicators identified, monitored and reviewed by the JSC and coordinated by the UNRC;

Allocate more resources for M&E across the board and use a joint monitoring approach and joint analysis of programme proposals etc.; and,

Focus on supporting capacity building and institutional strengthening nationally and increasingly at the provincial and district levels.

To make this possible, will require increased collaboration and commitment among development partners, the UN agencies in country and their headquarters and with the Government of Lao PDR at multiple levels.

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

### Relevance

1. To further integrate the UNSDCF within the Lao PDR context, the UNCT needs to build on positive movement towards overcoming challenges linked to differing administrative modalities among UN agencies, development partners and the Lao PDR government. It also needs to identify ways to widen the partnership to include INGOs/NPAs, the private sector and new development partners. At the strategic level, the Joint Steering Committee should agree on directional issues while at the operational level a joint Theory of Change, monitoring framework and indicators should be developed together.

**Recommendation for:** the UNCT and headquarters of UN organizations and the Joint Steering Committee.

**When:** during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF.

### Effectiveness

2. To ensure more effective implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF, the Lao PDR government needs to more actively participate in programmes designed and implemented by and with UN Agencies. The UNCT also needs to continue to fully consult the government throughout development of the UNSDCF and also in development of major coordinated programmes to ensure full commitment and ownership.

**Recommendation for:** the UNCT and the Government.

**When:** during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF.

3. The Sector Working Groups and Results Working Groups should be aligned at the outcome level to the 9th NSEDP and the UNSDCF in order to promote and track changes at the transformational outcome level.

**Recommendation for:** the UNCT and Joint Steering Committee.

**When:** during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF.

4. Clarification of AFPs and reporting have been valuable, but further improvements are needed to strengthen M&E and statistical management as well as overall joint reporting.

**Recommendation for:** the UNCT.

**When:** immediately.

### Efficiency

5. The UNRC, through the UNPF and the up coming UNSDCF, needs to continue to support the culture change that encourages more joint programme design and implementation which better reflects the “One UN”. Individual and team leadership is the key to fostering this cultural change. Some UN agencies could benefit from financial incentives or support for coordination which would encourage them to take part in more joint initiatives.

**Recommendation for:** the UNCT and UNRC.

**When:** during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF and beyond.

6. Ways need to be found to overcome the effects of differing administrative modalities used by: UN agencies in the field and at UN headquarters which can be identified through discussions among the agencies.

**Recommendation for:** UNCT and Headquarters of UN agencies

**When:** Streamlined overtime starting immediately.

### Sustainability

7. The UNCT needs to bring the sustainability of initiatives, including for disasters of all types, to the center of the UNSDCF and guide coordinated efforts that can have longer lasting results. UN agencies should make every effort to support policy changes being implemented at all “levels” (i.e. national, regional, district and local).

**Recommendation for:** the UNCT.

**When:** during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF and beyond.

8. In engaging and supporting the Government, the UN system’s support at the national and local level should be balanced to help promote the government’s Sam Sang decentralization policy which assigns broad roles to provinces as strategic units, districts as comprehensive planning units and villages as development units.

**Recommendation for:** the UNCT.

**When:** during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF.

### Cross cutting themes - Gender Equality

9. Gender Mainstreaming is essentially well integrated in how the UNCT operates in Lao PDR; however, the UNCT can and should extend this gender mainstreaming effort to some of the so-called technical programmes to ensure that women and girls are also sharing equally in the fruits of development. The UNCT should put particular emphasis on gender equality and making sure it is mainstreamed in everything it does, including the planning and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF.

**Recommendation for:** the UNCT.

**When:** during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF and beyond.

10. Commencing with the solid platform of GE mainstreaming and good work done on GBV, the Joint Steering Committee, together should address more directly women's and girls' rights and women's empowerment bringing issues related to the public and private sphere together. All rights are indivisible and need to be seen as working together.

**Recommendation for:** the Joint Steering Committee.

**When:** during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF and beyond.

### Human Rights Based Approach

11. As with gender equality and gender mainstreaming efforts, it is important for all stakeholders to utilize entry points towards a wider discussion on human rights, beginning with children's rights, educational rights, and addressing poverty alleviation, health and social justice concerns to help move the needle towards a more just and equal society.

**Recommendation for:** all stakeholders involved in the UNSDCF.

**When:** during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF and beyond.

12. ESCR and CPR are not mutually exclusive categories but interrelated. Therefore, when discussing the rights of women and girls, non Lao-Tai ethnic group rights, migrant workers rights, etc., it is vital to demonstrate a link between the need for agency and decision making as well as the right to education, land rights and decent work.

**Recommendation for:** all stakeholders involved in the UNSDCF.

**When:** during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF and beyond.

### Environmental Sustainability

13. One of the best entry points to move from the dialogue on Environmental Sustainability to concrete action plans is through disaster risk/ disaster management which naturally leads to the climate issue and ecosystem degradation. This issue has the added benefit of highlighting gender equality and non Lao-Tai ethnic group issues since these overlapping vulnerabilities make natural disasters even more destructive for certain populations. It is hence recommended that the UNCT, through the upcoming UNSDCF, concentrates significant environmental sustainability efforts on disaster risk/ disaster management.

**Recommendation for:** the UNCT.

**When:** during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF

### **Results Based Management**

14. The UNRC, the UNCT, the Government of Lao PDR and other stakeholders, as is possible, should be jointly involved in the development of the Theory of Change. It is imperative that the UNCT bases the new UNSDCF on increased and enhanced levels of baseline data and data coordination. The design of indicators and targets should be a joint exercise carried out in consultation with the Lao PDR government which will increase joint buy-in and lead to improved measurement of progress.

**Recommendation for:** all stakeholders involved in the UNSDCF.

**When:** during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF.

### **Capacity Building**

15. The UNCT, in close coordination with the Lao PDR government, needs to develop and jointly implement an integrated capacity development plan which responds to the needs of the Government of Lao PDR. This plan needs to include a specific section on building monitoring and evaluation capacity to help develop baselines and measure progress. Human capital investment is important (including investments in TVET however it is also important to invest in institutional strengthening within the Government Public Service to become sustainable).

**Recommendation for:** Joint Steering Committee.

**When:** during the preparation and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF.

### **Forward Looking Perspectives**

16. Moving forward it is important to look back at relevance to ensure sustainability. The UNSCDF, as a universal mandate or blueprint, should be addressed at two levels: the strategic and operational. The Plan of Action process to concretize this could be:

Step 1: Consultation Process – Bring together the Government of Lao PDR, UN Agencies, Development Partners, private sector and INGOs/NPAs in a series of consultations led by the UNRC and UNCT who are well trusted neutral parties.

Step 2: Development of a Joint Theory of Change which could provide an overarching vision for change.

Step 3: Development of joint-indicators

Step 4: More regular, at least annual meetings, of the Joint Steering Committee are required

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: EVALUATION MATRIX

EVALUATION CRITERIA	KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	METHODS AND SOURCES
Relevance	<div>1. Has the UN System supported achievement of national development goals and targets in alignment to relevant national plans and frameworks for Lao PDR’s 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP?</div> <div>2. To what extent did the UNPF foster synergies among agencies and involve concerted efforts to optimize results and avoid duplication?</div> <div>3. Has the UN system remained responsive to emerging and unforeseen needs of Lao PDR and its people?</div> <div>4. To what extent has interagency cooperation and collaboration with</div>	<div>1.1 Has the UN system paid proper attention to regional and cross-border issues of importance, e.g., ASEAN, Mekong and other cross border issues of importance?</div> <div>2.1. COVID 19? (Related issues with respect to e.g., health, economic well-being, human security, etc.)</div> <div>4.1. Using an assessment of the evaluation criteria, how has the</div>	<div>Degree of alignment between different agencies’ project results and relevant national plans and frameworks for Lao PDR’s 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP</div> <div>Evidence and level of participation of UN system in national events related to the Partnership Framework interfacing with Government. (# of times participated compared to overall # of events)</div> <div>Role of the UN during relevant national and regionally related events.</div> <div>Evidence of active participant in and contributor to national and regional partnership framework related networks.</div> <div>External and internal stakeholders' perception that UN is leader and convenor for the partnership framework related activities and programmes.</div> <div>Partnerships and networks have been created at all levels (national, and sub-national) and across sectors.</div>	<div>Desk review</div> <div>Progress Reports</div> <div>Interviews</div> <div>Government</div> <div>UN staff</div> <div>Provincial Government</div> <div>INGOs/NPAs etc.</div> <div>Focus Group Discussion</div> <div>Online survey</div> <div>Coordination with other concurrent evaluations</div> <div>Roundtable discussion</div>



EVALUATION CRITERIA	KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	METHODS AND SOURCES
Effectiveness	other entities facilitated or hampered the achievement of results?	UNCT contributed to national development results in Lao?		
	<div>5. To what extent has the UN system promoted or supported policies consistent with each other and across sectors, given the multi-sectorial nature of economic development?</div> <div>6. Has the cooperation framework strengthened the position, credibility and reliability of the UN system as a partner for government and other relevant actors?</div> <div>7. To what extent has interagency cooperation and collaboration with other entities facilitated or hampered the achievement of results?</div>	<div>5.1 Have UN policies been used effectively as partnership tools?</div> <div>7.2 Using an assessment of the evaluation criteria, how has the UNCT contributed to national development results?</div>	<div>Extent of progress toward outcome targets (% of planned outcomes achieved)</div> <div>Extent of progress toward SDG targets</div> <div>Evidence of a UN, Lao PDR government and other relevant counterparts and implementing partners shared understanding of the systemic approach to partnership framework</div> <div>Evidence that the partners/stakeholders have a shared vision on longer-term goals, boundaries, complexities, possible pathways to success, responsibilities and financial commitment involved to maintain a well-functioning partnership framework</div> <div>Number and quality of partnerships and networks that have been created at all levels (national, and sub-national) and across sectors</div> <div>External and internal stakeholders' perception on the alignment and</div>	<div>Desk review</div> <div>Progress Reports</div> <div>Interviews</div> <div>Focus Group Discussion</div> <div>Online survey</div> <div>Government</div> <div>UN staff</div> <div>Provincial Government</div> <div>INGOs/NPAs etc.</div> <div>Coordination with other concurrent evaluations</div> <div>Roundtable discussion</div>

EVALUATION CRITERIA	KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	METHODS AND SOURCES
			<p>coordination between UN programmes and government systems.</p> <p>External and internal stakeholders' perception of the relevance of the partnership to the context, coherent and effective long term.</p> <p>External and internal stakeholders' perception on achieving jointly reported results</p> <p>% of spent funds vs commitments</p> <p>Evidence that national institutions adopt measures derived from UN cooperative leadership.</p> <p>Level of progress towards impacts along change paths of the Theory of Change.</p>	
Efficiency	8. Has the Cooperation Framework reduced transaction costs for partners?	<p>8.1 What factors have affected UNAFPs working together to achieve the UNPF strategic intent and principles?</p> <p>8.2 What factors have affected the UNCT support and contributions through the UNPF highlighting good practices and bottlenecks?</p>	<p>% of total budget for project management services (vs % operational) per agency</p> <p>External and internal stakeholders' perception on UN's effective leadership role at the national level.</p> <p>Actual vs planned schedule and budget for a sample of agencies (both UN and</p>	<p>Desk review</p> <p>Progress Reports</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus Group Discussion</p> <p>Online survey</p> <p>Government</p> <p>UN staff</p>

EVALUATION CRITERIA	KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	METHODS AND SOURCES
		8.3 To what extent has the UNPF outcomes related to Human Development been achieved?	Government) and external partnerships with local INGOs/NPAs, business and other relevant actors.	Provincial Government INGOs/NPAs etc.
		8.4 FTo what extent has the UNPF outcomes related to Inclusive Growth, Livelihoods and Resilience been achieved?	Contributions towards outcomes specified in planning and programming documents or in reports or evaluations that are traceable and measurable.	Coordination with other concurrent evaluations Roundtable discussion
		8.5 To what extent has the UNPF achieved outcomes related to Governance, Rule of Law and Participation in National Decision-Making been achieved?	Actions taken to mitigate time or budget problems	
	9. Was the Cooperation Framework supported by integrated funding framework and by adequate funding instruments?	9.1 What were the performance, progress or gaps in the UNPF support to national goals and priorities?	UN and governmental stakeholders' perception concerning on-going cooperation (e.g., in terms of human resources, finances and knowledge capacity) Toward the goal of being adequately equipped	Desk review Progress Reports Interviews Government UN staff Provincial Government Focus Group Discussion Online survey Coordination with other concurrent evaluations Roundtable discussion

EVALUATION CRITERIA	KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	METHODS AND SOURCES
Sustainability	<div>10. Has the UN system support been extended in such a way to build national and local capacities to ensure long term, sustainable gains?</div> <div>11. To what extent has the UN programming assisted Lao’s government to scaled-up to achieve its goal of becoming a middle-income country?</div> <div>12. To what extent has the UN system helped to support Lao PDR’s journey towards becoming a sustainable middle-income country?</div>	<div>10.1 What other types of partners have been approached to ensure the sustainability, e.g., private sector?</div> <div>11.1 Can the UN continue to be a catalyst?</div>	<div>Evidence that local and national stakeholders and partners are able to deliver against global, regional and country level goals and objectives agreed to.</div> <div>Conformity with global and UN institutional objectives spelled in the partnership framework is evidenced.</div> <div>Relationship to relevant SDGs and national plans are evident.</div> <div>Evidence of increasing national resources devoted to partnership framework, e.g., in national budgets.</div> <div>Strength of stated and documented government commitment to resource partnership framework.</div> <div>Explicit national budgeting related to the objectives of the partnership agreement from a range of government agencies and other external partnerships with civil society.</div> <div>National reports and statistics show improved services related to the PA.</div> <div>Evidence that UNCT agencies have developed and implemented strategies and actions to promote sustainability of benefits and results</div>	<div>Desk review</div> <div>Progress Reports</div> <div>Interviews</div> <div>Government</div> <div>UN staff</div> <div>Provincial Government</div> <div>INGOs/NPAs etc.</div> <div>Focus Group Discussion</div> <div>Online survey</div> <div>Coordination with other concurrent evaluations</div> <div>Roundtable discussion</div>

EVALUATION CRITERIA	KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	METHODS AND SOURCES
Cross-Cutting Principles	13. Has the UN system’s support been extended in a way that promotes gender equity in Lao PDR?	13.1 To what extent did UNPF make use and promote gender equality standards and principles (e.g., participation, non-discrimination, accountability, etc.) to achieve its goals?	<p>Documented evidence of procedures to engage and of actual engagement in the promotion of gender equality.</p> <p>Evidence of improved protection performance achieved through stronger engagement procedures and practice.</p> <p>Broad range of approaches based on improved understanding of women’s perspectives and experiences in Lao PDR are present in the UNPF and related national agreements/frameworks.</p> <p>Type and amount of stakeholders’ financial and human resources allocated to GEWE date</p>	<p>Reporting with disaggregated gender and intersectionality</p> <p>Desk review</p> <p>Progress Reports</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Government</p> <p>UN staff</p> <p>Provincial Government</p> <p>INGOs/NPAs etc.</p> <p>Focus Group Discussion</p> <p>Online survey</p> <p>Coordination with other concurrent evaluations</p> <p>Roundtable discussion</p>
	14. Has the UN system supported followed the principles of a HRs based approach?	14.1 To what extent did UNPF make use of and promote human rights standards and principles to achieve its goals?	<p>Evidence that UN, duty-bearers, counterparts and other national implementing partners share a common understanding of the systems approach to HRs protection.</p> <p>Evidence that stakeholders have shared vision on longer-term goals, boundaries, complexities related to HRs and are moving towards alignment on these issues within the country.</p>	<p>Analysis of gender</p> <p>Intersectionality</p> <p>Desk review</p> <p>Progress Reports</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Government</p> <p>UN staff</p> <p>Provincial Government</p> <p>INGOs/NPAs etc.</p> <p>Focus Group Discussion</p> <p>Online survey</p>

EVALUATION CRITERIA	KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	METHODS AND SOURCES
				Coordination with other concurrent evaluations Roundtable discussion
	15. Has the UN system support been designed and delivered following the programming principles of environmental sustainability?	15.1 To what extent did UNPF effectively use the principles of environmental sustainability to strengthen its contribution to national development results?	Evidence of improved protection performance achieved through stronger engagement procedures and practice with respect to environmental sustainability.  Extent to which measures address relevant environmental issues and risks in the communities	Desk review Progress Reports Interviews Government coUN staff Provincial Government INGOs/NPAs etc. Focus Group Discussion Online survey Coordination with other concurrent evaluations Roundtable discussion
	16. Have the programming principles of RBM been used to monitor and track results?	16.1 To what extent did UNPF make use of programming principles of RBM to monitor and track its results?	Level of progress towards impacts along change paths of the implicit Theory of Change found in the UNPF.	Desk review Progress Reports Interviews Government UN staff Provincial Government INGOs/NPAs etc. Focus Group Discussion Online survey

EVALUATION CRITERIA	KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	METHODS AND SOURCES
Forward looking				Coordination with other concurrent evaluations Roundtable discussion
	17. Has the overall UN program been designed with programming principle of capacity development at its core?	17.1 To what extent has UNPF been designed with the programming principles of capacity building at its core?	Evidence that UN program has been designed with programming principle of capacity development at its core	Desk review Progress Reports Interviews Focus Group Discussion Online survey Government UN staff Provincial Government INGOs/NPAs etc. Coordination with other concurrent evaluations Roundtable discussion
	18. What are the lessons learned that could be identified for informing the planning and decision-making of the UNSDCF 2022-2026?	18.1 What specific recommendations should be included in the 2022-2026 UNSDCF?	Evidence of increased national capacity to manage elements of the Partnership Framework with reducing support from UN and others.	Desk review Progress Reports Interviews Focus Group Discussion Online survey Government UN staff Provincial Government INGOs/NPAs etc.
	19. Has the current UNPF 2017-2021 contributed to preparedness for emergency situations? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li></li></ul>		Specific plan(s) of the Government to work with other national stakeholders to mainstream the goals and objectives of the UNPF into on-going development of the country in the future.	

EVALUATION CRITERIA	KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	METHODS AND SOURCES
	20. If you were involved in joint initiatives, what was their value-added and/or good practices?		Examples where joint initiatives led to results that are traceable and measurable.	Coordination with other concurrent evaluations Roundtable discussion UN staff Provincial Government INGOs/NPAs etc. Coordination with other concurrent evaluations Roundtable discussion



## ANNEX 2: LAO PDR UNPF- DOCUMENT REVIEW

This UNPF evaluation takes into consideration the overall United Nations Partnership Framework (UNPF) 2017-2021, the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) 2016-2020 in alignment with the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as articulated in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2019). It also takes into account other background including the Interim Cooperation Framework evaluation guideline developed by the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) in 2019, and the Programming Principles (UNDAF Companion guidance document (2017) which all provide background to the development of the upcoming UNSDCF (UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework) 2022-2026.

The UNPF 2017-2021 was drafted as a roadmap by the UNCT and the government to ensure alignment with national development plans and included major milestones. A National UN-Steering Committee established that the following elements of strategic focus were key to the development of the UNPF. As noted in the UNPF 2017-2021 (p. 4), these were:

- National ownership and alignment with national development priorities, strategies and systems;
- Inclusiveness of UN system with full involvement of specialized and non-resident agencies;
- Integration of the five programming principles of: human rights based, gender equality, environmental sustainability and other international commitments, and theory of change / results based management and capacity development, tailored to the Lao PDR context;
- and, Mutual accountability for development results.

As part of the initial information from the UNCT, we were provided with the approach being used by the UNCT to work with the three key pillars and related outcomes:

Pillar 1 of Inclusive Growth, Livelihoods and Resilience includes Results Groups (RG) 1 and 2 on Livelihood and Social Protection and RG 3 on Climate Change, Disaster Management and Environment.

Pillar 2 on Human Development includes Results Groups 4 on Basic Education, RG 5 on Health, Water and Sanitation and RG 6 on Food Security and Nutrition.

Pillar 3 on Governance, Rule of law and Participation in National Decision Making includes RG 7 and 8 on Institution building and Access to Justice.

Team members reviewed materials in the documents provided and drafted the initial comments in this section. Sections 1 and 2 are integrated into 1 results group as are sections 7 and 8.

The evaluation team's objective is to have focus group meetings with the 6 results groups described below. To begin this process, we want to work with the responsible UN agency person who is the lead for a specific group or groups. These may change during the evaluation.

Results group facilitators					
<b>RG 1&amp;2:</b> Livelihood & Social protection <b>(UNDP – Ricarda)</b>  ILO, IFAD, UN Women, UNDP, UNCDF, IOM, UNIDO, UNV, UNCTAD, WFP, UNESCO, ITC, UNFPA, WHO	<b>RG 3: Climate Change, DM &amp; environment (FAO – Nasar)</b>  FAO, IFAD, IOM, UN-Habitat, UNDP, UNESCO, UNEP, UNICEF, UNV, WFP, WHO, UNIDO	<b>RG 4: Basic Education (UNICEF – Pia)</b>  UNICEF, UNFPA, ILO, WFP, UNV, UNESCO, WHO, IOM	<b>RG 5: Health, water &amp; sanitation (UNFPA – Mariam)</b>  UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, IAEA, IOM, UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNODC, WHO, WFP, UNV	<b>RG 6: Food security &amp; nutrition (WFP – Jan)</b>  UNICEF, FAO, WFP, IAEA, IFAD, UN Habitat, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, WHO, IOM	<b>RG 7&amp;8: Institution building &amp; access to Justice (UNDP – Ricarda)</b>  UNDP, FAO, IFAD, ILO, IOM, UN Habitat, UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNCDF, UNCITRAL, UNV, UNIDO, <u>UNODC</u> , <u>WFP</u> , WHO

## ○ Inclusive Growth, Livelihoods and Resilience

### Results Groups 1 & 2: Livelihood and Social Protection

After more than a decade of high growth with low inflation, Lao PDR is solidifying its progress toward graduating from the Least Developed Country (LDC) status. In 2011, The World Bank has raised Lao PDR's income categorization from a low-income economy to a lower-middle income economy<sup>13</sup>. However, more than one fifth of the population remains poor, regional disparities are persistent, and recurring natural disasters pose risks for poverty reduction<sup>14</sup>. The Lao PDR economy is characterized by a large current account deficit, low level of reserves, a high level of debt, managed exchange rate, and a dollarized banking system which amplify macro-vulnerabilities. In Lao PDR, it was estimated that economic growth slightly increased to 6.4 per cent in 2019 from 6.3 per cent in 2018 after a decrease from 6.8 per cent in 2017<sup>15</sup> as both agricultural and industrial production declined mainly due to natural disasters. Despite disruptions, inflation remained below 3 percent. Foreign currency reserves are low, estimated to cover under one month of imports by the end of 2020. Fiscal deficit went down to 4.4 percent of GDP in 2018 from 5.5 percent in 2017 and were expected to decline to 4.3 percent of GDP in 2019<sup>16</sup>. Lao PDR

<sup>13</sup><https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2011/08/17/lao-pdr-now-lower-middle-income-economy#:~:text=The%20World%20Bank%20has%20raised,estimates%20using%20the%20Atlas%20method.>

<sup>14</sup> 2019. IMF. Lao People's Democratic Republic Staff Report for the 2019 Article IV Consultation

<sup>15</sup> Idem

<sup>16</sup> Idem

faces a challenging external debt profile with around USD1.1 billion a year due over the next four years, compared to current foreign-exchange reserves of USD1.3 billion.<sup>17</sup>

The Government committed to a policy of fiscal consolidation, reflecting in part, mounting fiscal pressure following the 2018 floods. The high level of debt and low level of international reserves increased the economy's vulnerability to shocks. Since 2017, the IMF has classified Lao PDR's risk of external debt distress as moderate to high. According to a recent report from the World Bank, the share of debt to GDP increased from 57 per cent in 2018 to nearly 60 per cent in 2019 was forecasted to rise by two to three percentage points per year for the period between 2020 - 2022. Debt sustainability is a major impediment for Lao's economic development that needs to be addressed. Since public debt is high and the risk of debt distress remains elevated, one of the priorities is to put debt on a sustainable path while meeting development needs. Much of the existing public and publicly guaranteed (PPG) debt stock is external, and close to 65 percent of the public external debt is on concessional and semi-concessional terms<sup>18</sup>. Due to the high level of public debt and weak external position, Lao PDR has no fiscal space. Committed Public Financial management (PFM) and tax policy reforms are directed towards building necessary fiscal space and should be implemented at an accelerated pace. Lao PDR authorities reiterated that a fiscal deficit of about 2 percent of GDP could be achieved by 2025 by tightening public expenditure and improving revenue administration. However, as a result of the coronavirus shock and the sovereign's large debt maturities, Fitch rating Ratings has downgraded Lao PDR Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) from 'B-' to 'CCC'.

Tourism was rapidly growing and continued to be an important sector in Lao PDR, with strong growth in tourist arrivals and spending over the past decade. In 2019, international tourist arrivals increased by 14.4%, reaching an all-time peak of 4.79 million. International tourism receipts totaled \$934 million, trailing mineral exports (\$1.43 billion) and electricity exports (\$1.32 billion).<sup>19</sup> According to Government of the Lao PDR, during 2010-2019, international tourist receipts increased faster than international arrivals, suggesting an increasing value addition from the sector<sup>20</sup>. Recent reports<sup>21</sup> estimate that tourism directly contributes to 4.6% to GDP and employs 54,000 workers, about 63% of whom are women<sup>22</sup>. The number of visitors to the country was expected to reach 2.5 million by 2025, benefiting from the completion of the Lao PDR-China railway from Vientiane to Kunming, planned for December 2021. With this rapid expansion in tourism and transportation links, the Government has prioritized efforts to ensure that Lao PDR citizens, particularly those in rural areas, benefit from the growth in tourism. Since March 2020,

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<sup>17</sup><https://www.fitchratings.com/research/sovereigns/fitch-downgrades-laos-to-ccc-23-092020#:~:text=Fitch%20Ratings%20%2D%20Hong%20Kong%20%2D%2023,of%20'CCC'%20or%20be low.>

<sup>18</sup> 2019. IMF. Lao People's Democratic Republic Staff Report for the 2019 Article IV Consultation. P 6

<sup>19</sup> June 2020. ADB Briefs. The impact of Covid-19 on Tourism Enterprises in the Lao People's democratic Republic. P.2

<sup>20</sup> Idem

<sup>21</sup> Reports from World Travel and Tourism 2018 and Ministry of Education and Sports 2018.

<sup>22</sup> June 2020. ADB Briefs. The impact of Covid-19 on Tourism Enterprises in the Lao People's democratic Republic. P.2

COVID-19 has paralyzed tourism as countries closed their borders, suspended commercial aviation, restricted domestic travel, and implemented physical distancing measures. These measures implemented to contain the pandemic are expected to severely affect the tourism sector. In fact, tourism-related sectors in Lao PDR, including transport, food, and accommodation services and the retail trade have been hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis, due to fewer tourists from China and other neighboring countries in the first quarter of 2020. International arrivals to the country have dropped by 17% in the first quarter of 2020 compared with the same period in 2019.<sup>23</sup>

Against the backdrop of economic advancement, the development of labour market institutions is ongoing, but remains fragile. Significant decent work challenges remain, particularly those related to high levels of vulnerability and informality, as well as the frequently limited transferable skills linked to an economy that is still dominated by a low-productivity agricultural sector, despite the recent expansion of the industrial and service sectors. It is worth mentioning that a core issue of capital-intensive investments underpins the labour issues plus the actual size of the labor force that cannot drive nor maintain industrialization policy. In addition, the economy suffers from complex regulatory procedures as reflected in its Doing Business Ranking. Lao PDR's 2019 ranking on the Ease of Doing Business Index in 2019, has remained unchanged since 2018, at 154 out of 190 after falling from 139 in 2017, despite key measures undertaken to improve the business environment and support Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) development, and notably, the endorsement of the amended Law on Investment Promotion, establishment of the One-Stop-Service Office, and initiatives to promote access to finance and streamlining of business start-up procedures. In fact, the Lao PDR Prime Minister Order No 02 effective since February 2018 aims to mobilize and attract quality investments, bolster the competitive capacity of domestic businesses, and minimize constraints to make it easy to do business in Lao PDR, among others. In addition, the focus is on transparency, simplifying procedures, and reducing the application time for investment license and business registration, to inspire confidence among both domestic and foreign investors<sup>24</sup>.

Although Lao PDR has so far avoided a major health crisis related to COVID-19, it has not been spared by the global economic downturn. The COVID-19-induced economic downturn has affected Lao PDR through multiple channels including tourism, trade, investment, commodity prices, exchange rates, and lower remittances. In the more favorable scenario, the Lao PDR's economy is expected to grow at 1 percent, while in the downside scenario, the economy could contract by 1.8 percent in 2020<sup>25</sup>.

As in many countries worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic has had negative effects such as employment and welfare impacts affecting mostly labor-intensive sectors and those linked to global and regional value chains. Supply chain disruptions followed by contracting external

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<sup>23</sup> Idem

<sup>24</sup> <https://ifcextapps.ifc.org/ifcext/pressroom/IFCPressRoom.nsf/0/6223AF059FBCA40E852582660026E85B#:~:text=Prime%20Minister%20issued%20the%20Order,190%20nations%20across%2010%20indicato>.

<sup>25</sup> June 2020. The World Bank Group. Lao PDR Economic Monitor. P 2.

demand have led to a severe decline in production in the export-oriented manufacturing sector. The COVID-19 mitigation measures in Lao PDR are causing unprecedented disruption to the labor market. A sharp drop in demand is leading to job losses in tourism-related sectors, which account for 11 percent of total employment. The unemployment rate rose to 25 percent in May 2020, from 16 percent at the end of 2019<sup>26</sup>. Although the government of Lao PDR is providing social insurance system to around 96,000 affected workers, this coverage amounts to only 3.1 percent of total employment and 26 percent of total urban wage workers<sup>27</sup>.

Moreover, the flow of remittances is being impacted by COVID-19 related economic shock since more than 100 000 migrant workers have returned to Lao PDR. This has resulted in an estimated reduction of up to US\$125 million in remittances in 2020, or 0.7 percent of GDP and could push as many as 214 000 people into poverty<sup>28</sup>.

Furthermore, the pandemic has severely affected economic growth, which will decline to an estimated range of between -0.6 to -2.4 percent in 2020. Structural vulnerabilities have been exacerbated by COVID-19, leading to a significant deterioration in the macroeconomic situation. State revenues are declining, and the fiscal deficit is projected to increase to between 7.6 and 8.9 percent, constraining the government's ability to mitigate the economic impacts of the pandemic. Public debt is expected to increase to between 69 and 74 percent in 2020, from around 60 percent in 2019. These factors make it increasingly difficult for Lao PDR to meet its debt service obligations, which stand at around US\$1.1 billion per year for 2020-23<sup>29</sup>.

**Table 2: Status of UNPF Outcome and Output 1 & 2 Indicators**

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status 2019
<b>1. Decent Livelihoods and jobs</b>			
1.1 Percentage of total population living below the national poverty line  (National SDG Indicator 1.2.1)	Baseline: 23.2% (2012-2013)	Target: 16.2% (2020)	Data to be updated by the Lao PDR Expenditure and Consumption Survey 2017/18 (not yet published)

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lao/overview#1>

<sup>27</sup> June 2020. The World Bank Group. Lao PDR Economic Monitor. P 3

<sup>28</sup> June 2020. The World Bank Group. Lao PDR Economic Monitor. P 4

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lao/overview#1>

1.2. Gini coefficient	Baseline: 36.2 (2012/13)	Target: Gini coefficients improved for Lao PDR, urban and rural as compared to coefficients estimated in 2013  (MoV: 8 <sup>th</sup> NSEDP) (2020)	Data to be updated by the Lao PDR Expenditure and Consumption Survey 2017/18 (not yet published)
1.3. Percentage of labour force in formal sector as a share of total employment rate, female/male	Baseline: 15.6% (female: 15%/male: 75%) (2010)	Target: 30% (female: 30%/ male: 70%) (2021)	27.1% (2017 Labour Force Survey)  No data available for 2019
2.1. Number of formally employed workers enrolled in Social Security Fund (excluding army officials)	Baseline: 230,000 (2015)	Target: 300,000 (2021)	299,998 formally employed workers enrolled in National Social Security Fund (female – 140,036) in 2019  8,080 Self-employed people enrolled in NSSF (3,714 females)
2.2. Percentage of poor covered by social protection schemes  (national SDG indicator 1.3.1)	80% (2015)	Target: 95% (2021)	94% of total population are covered under the national social health protection in 2019

During the past two decades, poverty in Lao PDR was cut in half from 46 to 23 percent. Since 2012/13, the incidence of poverty declined by 6.3 percentage points to 18.3 percent in 2018/19<sup>30</sup>. Inequality has risen due to widening consumption gaps within regions. The Gini index, a measure of inequality, increased from 36 in 2012/13 to 38.8 in 2018/19<sup>31</sup>. As per Table 2 above, the percentage of labour force in formal sector as a share of total employment rate has increased from 15.6 % in 2010 to 27.1% in 2017. In 2019, nearly 300,000 people, of whom, approximately

<sup>30</sup> 2020. Lao PDR Poverty Assessment 2020: catching up and falling behind. P 2

<sup>31</sup> 2020. Lao PDR Poverty Assessment 2020: catching up and falling behind. P 3



140,000 were female, found employment in the formal sector<sup>32</sup>. Nearly 8,000 people from the informal, self-employed sector, of whom, approximately 3,700 were female, were enrolled in the NSSF (Please see Table 2). In 2019, 94 % of total population are covered under the national social health protection which is an increase from the 80 % coverage in 2015.

### **Decent Livelihoods and Jobs**

ILO provided capacity development to the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of Lao PDR (MoLSW) and the Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB) on labour market statistics and analysis. MoLSW and ILO also finalized the National Rural Employment Strategy (NRES) that aims to increase decent employment opportunities for women and men in rural areas through public and private sector interventions.

Following a request from MoIC, a capacity building initiative for SMEs, “Laos in Business”, was developed, tested, and launched in 2019, with the support of ILO (600 SMEs participated). In collaboration with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MoIC), UNIDO provided technical support to the review and launch of an Industry Manufacturing Establishment Survey, setting up a database, and training MoIC staff to carry out their own surveys in the future.

ITC also provided support to SMEs to facilitate their access to global markets through the participation of Lao PDR companies at the China International Import Expo (CIIE) in 2019.

To further enhance Lao PDR’s ability to reap the benefits of regional integration and international trade, in 2019, ITC worked with Government to develop a Foreign Trade Negotiation Roadmap which is focused on the promotion of Lao PDR’s economic interests in the ASEAN economic integration process.

To provide alternative livelihoods, through its Alternative Development Programme linked to the MoPS, in 2019, UNODC helped farmers shift from the cultivation of opium to cash crops such as coffee. Through the UNODC project, 383 families from opium growing areas have established a jointly owned coffee cooperative and processing facilities. The cooperative has also been linked with international markets, as well as with continuous capacity building on coffee processing in order to produce quality coffee.

To boost local business and commerce, UNCDF conducted customer journey mapping research in Lao PDR in partnership with Columbia University to gain customer insights for digital finance product development and delivery.

The research yielded insights that have helped identify business cases for mobile wallet and banking delivery on digital and agent banking services for garment workers and persons with disabilities.

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<sup>32</sup> 2020. The United Nations in Lao PDR. 2019 Progress report. P 23

## Capacity Building and Training

To ensure that Lao PDR benefits from regional integration, trade opportunities in particular to the EU market, and improved participation in global value chains, the International Trade Centre (ITC) supported the MoIC and other line Ministries and key counterparts such as MAF and the Lao National Chamber of Commerce (LNCCI) with a series of workshops and training in 2019 and 2020. These engagements include among others:

- Reviewing Lao PDR's export potential and existing trade with the EU and the regional market.
- Jointly developing sectoral export roadmaps: identifying supply-side constraints and remedial actions for the coffee and wood processing sectors.
- Developing through a consultative approach a Foreign Trade Negotiation Roadmap for Lao PDR
- Analysing the measures and level of implementation of Lao PDR commitments in the ASEAN Trade in Goods agreement
- Providing technical assistance and capacity building in the area of quality, e.g. conformity assessment and quality management
- Reviewing quality and availability of statistical trade data: capacity building to strengthen data collection and statistical production capacities

ITC, in collaboration with LNCCI, also provided a series of training on Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS):

- to strengthen SMEs' competitiveness through the implementation of green business practices, to capacitate Lao PDR's SMEs on issues related to standards required by international buyers (e.g. Organic, Fairtrade etc.), and
- to address gaps and obtain relevant certificates of compliance.

When it comes to strengthening data collection, statistical and assessment capacities:

- ITC's technical team reviewed the availability and quality of statistical trade data in country, and
- Training was organised in November 2019 with participation from key government representatives.

Following training from ILO, agricultural extension officials who provide technical advisory services on coffee promotion at provincial level, were able to introduce coffee farmers to zero-waste methodologies for producing animal feed and fertilizer. As a result, approximately 100 coffee-producing households in target villages from the poorest areas of Dak Cheung district in Xekong province, were able to increase their income five-fold. In Savannakhet province, a skills needs assessment tool was developed in 2019 and piloted in target districts, villages and selected companies to inform skills development interventions.



Through ILO support, the provincial Department of Labour and Social Welfare together with the local skills development centres are now able to conduct assessments related to the recruitment of rural workers and offer improved employment services and skills training.

After participating in a LWU training through the Government's One-District-One-Product (ODOP) initiative that benefited from UNDP support, a group of 250 women in seven districts of Salavan, Houaphanh and Saysomboun provinces were able to strengthen their business management skills while receiving support to product development and access to markets. New products from women's business groups were subsequently developed and are in the process of being certified under the ODOP initiative.

Livestock and funds for farming were also provided to vulnerable communities in the form of an initial investment. The communities also benefited from improved knowledge on food preparation, food hygiene and nutrition.

### **Labour and Migration**

At the national level, a consultation in preparation for the ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML) was organized by the MoLSW with support from ILO, which brought together representatives from Government, workers and employers, UN agencies, and INGOs/NPAs to discuss and agree on proposed recommendations that the Lao PDR delegation brought to the 12th annual regional AFML in Thailand.

A technical workshop was organized in June 2019 and shaped the agreed ILO-ASEAN study on "Decent Work Promotion in Rural Economy through Productivity Growth, Local Employment Promotion, and Transition from Informal to Formal Employment".

To strengthen legislation aimed at protecting migrant workers, through IOM and ILO joint support, the MoLSW, revised and finalized Decree No. 68 on the placement of Lao PDR Labour to Work Abroad, last reviewed in 2002.

IOM initiated the promotion of ethical recruitment practices in Lao PDR through a standardized capacity building program, using IOM's International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS), targeting 24 of the 26 licensed recruitment agencies in Lao PDR. As a result of the workshop, two recruitment agencies formally requested IOM's support to work towards the IRIS certification.

IOM partnered with UN Women to ensure gender-responsive messaging and training was provided to the Technical, Vocational and Education Training (TVET) institutions and women migrant workers. A total of 33 teachers from TVET institutions and Skills Development Centres from Vientiane, Khammouan, Savannakhet, Salavan, Attapue and Oudomxay provinces were trained on safe migration in preparation for the rollout of trainings in their institutions.

ILO continued to provide support and capacity building to all Lao PDR Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs), to raise awareness and provide services to potential migrant workers, through telephone and through outreach activities in communities.

In Vientiane, the Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU) conducted awareness training on safe migration and human trafficking risks exercises that benefited more than 2,000 workers (1,784 were females) in 21 garment factories.

IOM working with the Department of Skills Development and Employment Department, MoLSW, in partnership with the Lao National Institute of Tourism and Hospitality (LANITH), implemented the first cross-border training and employment placement models between skills providers and employers in Thailand of which, 23 migrants completed a one-month training on Food and Beverage Service and/or Housekeeping. Out of the 23 selected, 18 participants successfully conducted interviews with employers in Thailand and were accepted to undertake internships in various hotels in Thailand, resulting in five participants being offered fulltime employment at the end of their internship.

IOM developed a Psychosocial Awareness Training Curriculum to increase the knowledge among first responder participants on the mental and physical impacts of trafficking, and how to provide appropriate support to both staff and victims of human trafficking (VOT) for psychosocial reintegration. A total of 356 provincial and district level line ministries and civil society organizations (INGOs/NPAs), working in service provision to VOTs received the training in Vientiane Capital, Luang Namtha, Savannakhet, Champasak, Luang Prabang and Xieng Khouang provinces. The post-test evaluation results indicated that overall, there was an increase in knowledge of approximately 90 per cent across all six rollout trainings.

## **Social Protection**

The MoLSW, with technical assistance from ILO and development partners in 2019, finalised the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS), which included an implementation plan. The UN Joint Programme (UNJP) “Leaving No One Behind: Establishing the basis for social protection floors in Lao PDR” was approved by the Joint SDG Fund. The primary objective of the UNJP is to support Government with implementation of the new National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS), through an approach focused on systems development with implementation through the Mother and Early Childhood Grant (MECG). Implementation of the UNJP will be led by the MoLSW in partnerships with relevant ministries, the provincial authority of Savannakhet as the targeted pilot province, and the UN system (led by ILO, UNCDF, and UNICEF) from January 2020 until December 2021<sup>33</sup>.

In 2019, through support from the ILO regional social protection facility involving Lao PDR, Vietnam and Myanmar, technical assistance was provided to MoH and MoLSW on merging statutory health insurance schemes under the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) and National Health Insurance (NHI). The continued expansion of the NHI Fund now covers all 17 provinces of Lao PCR and has brought the overall health coverage total for all schemes, including NSSF, NHI, the military and a variety of police schemes to a total of 94 per cent nationwide.

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<sup>33</sup> 2020. The United Nations in Lao PDR. 2019 Progress report. P 23

WHO has provided technical support for NHI implementation to improve financial protection associated with use of healthcare services and assessment of it with focus on protection of vulnerable population (poor group, pregnant women and children under 5).

### Results Group 3: Climate Change, Disaster Management & Environment

Outcome 3: Forests and other ecosystems are protected and enhanced, and people are less vulnerable to climate-related events and disasters. This is aligned with Outcome 3 on Improved Environmental Protection of the Eighth NSEDP, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on reduction of risks posed by climate change induced disasters.

#### Situation

Lao PDR will not achieve its target of 70 per cent forest cover by 2020. The forest cover was maintained at 58% between 2015<sup>34</sup> to 2019<sup>35</sup>. Approximately 100,000 ha out of 2,954,443ha have been restored from regenerating vegetable (RV) to forest over in the period of 2005 to 2015. Also, 50 out of 51 Production Forest Areas have developed detailed management plans. The average annual historical emission from deforestation and forest degradation was +34,106,431 tCO<sub>2</sub>/year and the total removals from reforestation and restoration was -7,530,536 tCO<sub>2</sub>/year. Through deducting the GHG mitigation measures implemented across all sectors since 2000, the National GHG emissions in 2020 have been estimated around 53,000 ktCO<sub>2</sub>e<sup>36</sup>.

Two thirds of the country population face an average of 1.5 serious floods or droughts every year, which is accounting for annual economic losses equivalent to 0.7 % of GDP and 4.6% of GDP as consequences of natural hazards once every 20 years<sup>37</sup>. Floods have been occurring more frequently. In 2018, there were over 600,000 people affected from the floods caused by the two tropical storms, Sontinh and Bebinca, and the collapse of Xe Pian-Xe Namnoy hydropower dam in Attapeu Province. The total effects of the floods to the economy were estimated at 3,166 billion Lao kip, or approximately US\$371 million or 2 % of GDP of the year. Damage and losses of floods to agriculture sector were at 1,227 billion Lao<sup>38</sup>. WHO has provided technical support for NHI implementation to improve financial protection associated with use of healthcare services and assessment of it with focus on protection of vulnerable population (poor group, pregnant women and children under 5).

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<sup>34</sup> MAF-DOF (2018). The Lao PDR's Forest Reference Emission Level and Forest Reference Level for REDD+ Results Payment under the UNFCCC

<sup>35</sup> UN (2020). Draft 2019 Progress Report: Lao PDR-United Nations Partnership Framework 2017-2021

<sup>36</sup> MONRE (2020). Draft Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)

<sup>37</sup> World Bank (2012). ASEAN Advancing Disaster Risk Financing and Insurance in ASEAN Member States: Framework and Options for Implementation

<sup>38</sup> Government of Lao PDR (2018). The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment 2018 Floods, Lao PDR

In 2019, 764,937 people (of which 51, 970 women) in Khammouan, Savannakhet, Champasak, Salavan, Xekong and Attapeu provinces were affected by floods caused by a Low Pressure Area (LPA) and tropical cyclones PODUL and KAJIKI. The total damage was estimated at US\$ 164 million. Farmlands of over 123,000 hectares<sup>39</sup> were destroyed. The estimated average annual fiscal cost of floods is 2.7 percent of government expenditures. Overall, the most affected sectors were infrastructure and agriculture followed by health, education, mining, and labour. Resilience at the community level is low due to the prevalence of monoculture, lack of diversity in livelihoods, and limited infrastructure. The poor and vulnerable will be most affected since they have the fewest options to mitigate risks. In 2020, as impacts of COVID-19, revenue loss will be about 3-4 % of GDP and the fiscal deficit is estimated to increase about 7.5-8.8 % of GDP from 5.2 % in 2019<sup>40</sup>. UNDP has worked with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on through a six-year project called “Sustainable Forest and Land Management in the Dry Dipterocarp Forest Ecosystem of Southern Lao PDR” from 2016 to demonstrate sustainable land and forest management in the forested landscape of Savannakhet province to secure the critical wildlife habitats, conserve biodiversity and maintain a continuous flow of multiple services including quality water provision and flood prevention.

Prolonged drought conditions in the north from May to December and severe floods in the south and parts of the centre from August to September, severely affected the 2019 main cropping season. Nearly nine in ten households, which reported planting later than normal in 2019, said that their harvest was lower when compared with 2018<sup>41</sup>. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and FAO has developed a new Resilient Agriculture Systems and Livelihoods (RASaL) Programme 2020-2030 to enhance climate and disaster resilience of the agriculture system and development livelihoods. The RASaL is centred on empowering and strengthening the capacity of smallholder farmers to adopt climate resilient agro-ecological technologies and participate in innovative value chains<sup>42</sup>.

MoNRE, a focal point to the Montreal Protocol of Lao PDR, successfully controlled consumption of hydrochlorofluorocarbon through the country licensing system. The consumption of hydrochlorofluorocarbon in 2019 was 1.29 Ozone Depleting Potential Tonnes, well below the country's 2019 obligation of 2.07 Ozone Depleting Potential Tonnes. MoNRE has set up the maximum import quota of hydrochlorofluorocarbon not to be more than 1.5 Ozone Depleting Potential Tonnes in 2020 in line with the target.

**Table 3: UNPF results framework 2017-2021**

<sup>39</sup> AHA Centre (2019). Situation update tropical storm PODUL and tropical depression KAJIKI Lao PDR.

<sup>40</sup> World Bank (2020). Lao PDR Economic monitor: Lao PDR in the time of COVID-19

<sup>41</sup> FAO (2020). Special Report - 2019 FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission to the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Rome

<sup>42</sup> MAF&FAO (2020). Resilient Agriculture Systems and Livelihoods (RASaL) Programme in Lao PDR (2020-2030)

Indicators	UNPF 2017-2021			Draft 2019 UNPF Progress Report, 2020
	Baselines	Targets 2021	Means of verification	Status 2019
3.1. Proportion of land area covered by forest	46% (2015)	70% (2020)	3.1. Forest Cover Assessment Report (2016,2021)	58%
3.2. Number of persons per 100,000 directly affected by natural disasters	Not available (Being established by MONRE)	Not available (Being established by MONRE)	3.2. Annual Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Reports	UNDRR provided training to the GoL and partners in 2019 to report number of persons per 100,000 directly affected by disasters into the online Sendai Framework Monitor.
3.3. Agricultural value affected by natural disasters and climate change	Not available (Being established by MAF)	Not available (Being established by MAF)		Agricultural value lost estimated to be Lao kip 1,227.3 billion (USD 136 millions) by flood. (2018).
3.4. (a) level of hydrochlorofluorocarbon consumption and (b) signature and ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury	(a) hydrochlorofluorocarbon consumption of 2.3 Ozone Depleting Potential Tonnes (2010); (b) Minamata Convention on Mercury not signed (2010)	(a) hydrochlorofluorocarbon consumption of 1.5 Ozone Depleting Potential Tonnes (2020); (b) Minamata Convention on Mercury signed and ratified (2021)	3.4. (a) National Ozone Officer (annual); (b) Montreal Protocol Secretariat (annual)	The consumption of hydrochlorofluorocarbon in 2019 was 1.29 Ozone Depleting Potential Tonnes

### Intervention

The UN has worked on reducing persistent organic pollution, healthy living work environments free from hazardous chemicals, climate change and health adaptation, disaster adaptation and resilience, disaster management, disaster risk reduction, capacities in disaster preparedness, response and recovery strengthened, data collection and information management for farmers resiliencies, protection and development of forest and ecosystems strengthened. These will significantly contribute to the International Convention and Agreement, as detailed below:

- Climate change: The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer -UNEP, REDD+,
- Environmental Protection: The International Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES),
- Forest Resources and biodiversity: The UN Convention for Biological Diversity,
- Persistent Organic Pollution: the Stockholm Convention for reducing POPs UNIDO-

Persistent Organic Pollution (POPs),

- Health Living and Work Environments free from Hazardous chemicals: Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) management, the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and
- Disaster management: the Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework for DRR.

### Lessons learned for 2019

- Progress during the Eighth NSEDP period has been affected by natural disasters and human-driven shocks, and the impact of these have been worsened by poorly functioning early-warning systems and response mechanisms<sup>43</sup>.
- The lack of understanding among officials, lack of risk information relevant to sector, and the need to clarify roles and responsibilities (as defined by the new DRM Law) are key challenges in implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- In the context of recovery efforts underway in the southern provinces, lack of coordination and delays in response have increased the vulnerability of affected communities. Coordination efforts should be improved to enhance efficiency and improved preparation and response to future disaster, especially for planning, risk identification and sequencing of interrelated support activities such as ensuring water, sanitation, electricity and road access for housing projects, securing livelihoods and other public services including schooling and health facilities.
- Coordination beyond the forestry sector, including agriculture, investment, environment and population in affected areas is also necessary for sustainable progress in forest cover.
- WASH facilities are currently vulnerable to climate change. The climate resilient WASH facilities that can address the impacts of floods and storms are not available in health facilities and in vulnerable communities. This is a serious gap holding back progress.

## ○ Human Development

### **Results Group 4: Basic Education**

Outcome 4: Children and youth enjoy better access to inclusive and equitable quality basic education and vocational skills.

This is aligned with Outcome 2, Output 3: Universal access to quality education achieved of the NSEDP and SDG 4: Quality Education which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

### Situation

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<sup>43</sup> Ministry of Planning and Investment. 2020. Pre final draft Mid-Term Review of the Eighth National Socio-Economic Development Plan, 2016-2020. Vientiane



The percentage of Grade 1 enrolment of primary education with pre-school experience has increased from 51% in 2015 to 64,6% in 2018<sup>44</sup>. Early Childhood Education (ECE) has gradually improved with an increased number of kindergartens and pre-primary facilities. The enrolment rate of children aged 3-5 increased from 56, 3% to 59% and the enrolment rate of 5-year-old children increased from 77,1% to 79,4%<sup>45</sup>. Also, 82.9% of villages have primary schools in village<sup>46</sup>. The primary net enrollment rate achieved 99,1% in 2018-2019. However, the drop-out rate of grade 1 students has increased from 5,8% to 6,3% and in primary education from 4% to 4,3%. Together 57.3% of children aged 6 year+ completed primary school<sup>47</sup>. Nationally, the survival rate in primary education increased to 82% in 2019 from 78% in 2015. Grade 1 repetition has decreased from 13.5% in 2015 to 8.4 % in 2019 (girls 7.4 %)

By the last-year of severe natural disasters, the people have faced hardship and living conditions, some school infrastructure have been destroyed and some affected schools were not able to start their academic year in a timely manner. Some affected families have had to move their farming areas to other places followed by their children being school drop-outs. Having more children and youth go to school and ensuring they stay in school is a key challenge. The impact of the 2018 natural disasters and the Government's fiscal challenges continued through to 2019 which affected the allocation to the education budget allocation which decreased. Budget for the education and sports sector is equivalent to 12.15% of government expenditure and 2.45% of GDP. This figure is positively closed to the OECD bench marks of 4-7% of GDP. Together 80% of the education budget is comprised of salary allocations which leaves little for investments into improving the quality of education.

Many teacher graduates in each year could not be recruited. In 2019, a total of 3,124 students graduated, of which 466 were ECE, 204 primary educations, 1.960 secondary education, 372 physical and arts education and 122 monk teachers. In contrast, in rural areas, many schools need to provide multi-grade teaching classes, especially at Grade 1 due to lack of teachers. The outcomes of the 2017-2018 ECE and general education teachers' survey showed that among 4,995 ECE teachers, 422 (8,45%) of total teaching staff do not teach subjects in their field of study. Some teachers of primary education teach pre-primary classes without any training on the use of the pre-primary curriculum and experience of an orientation plan. Over and under-supplied teachers are a striking issue in ECE. Nationwide, there are around 168 over-supplied teachers and 4,153 under-supplied teachers. There are also 1.65 volunteer teachers teaching at ECE schools. Of this number, only 1.560 teachers teach subjects in their fields of study.

Survival rates of grade 5 students have decreased from 82,2% to 82,8%, lower education dropout

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<sup>44</sup> UN (2020). Draft 2019 Progress Report: Lao PDR-United Nations Partnership Framework 2017-2021

<sup>45</sup> Ministry of Education and Sports (2019). Education and Sports Sector Performance Annual Report 2018-2019

<sup>46</sup> Ministry of Planning and Investment/LSB (2020). Highlight result of 6th Lao Consumption and Expenditure Survey (LECS VI), 2018/2019. Ministry of Planning and Investment/Lao Statistic Bureau, Vientiane.

<sup>47</sup> Idem

rates have increased from 9.2% to 9.5% and upper secondary dropout rates from 7.1% to 8.1%. High drop-out rates at secondary schools were contributed to by the distance of students' homes from their schools or work. In total, 93.8% of villages have road access in dry season which is an increase from the last survey (76.4%)<sup>48</sup>. Children in primary schools also leave school to help parents in the farms during growing seasons which results in their not completing their study programs and leaving schools. Low salaries and teacher absences have become a critical issue in Lao PDR (partly the result of Lao Social Index Survey II-2017). In all, 80% of students skip classes due to the absence of teachers from their teaching assignments which leads to student dropout and the need for the repetition of classes.

The proportion of youth (female/male) employed as a result of participation in vocational training programmes has decreased from 30% in 2015 to 17% in 2019. The current skills development system is inadequate in Lao PDR. Access to TVET, career guidance, reliable labour market information and employment service is limited especially for people in rural and remote areas. Youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) stood at 42.1 % in 2017. Specific challenges for youth trying to access the labour market include a variety of challenges including: lack of labour market information and job search experience, skills gap, lack of diversified working experience, socio-cultural and family pressures and lack of capital.

**Table 4: UNPF Results Framework 2017-2021**

Indicators	UNPF 2017-2021			Draft 2019 UNPF Progress Report, 2020
	Baselines	Targets 2021	Means of verification	Status 2019
4.1. Percentage of Grade 1 enrolment of primary education with pre-school experience (national SDG indicator 4.2.3)	51% (girls: 52%/boys: 50%) (2015)	75% (girls: 75%/boys: 75%)	Annual data by Ministry of Education and Sports: Education Management Information System	64,6% (2018) (girls: 65.5% /boys: 63.7%)
4.2 Survival rate in primary education	78% (girls:80%/boys: 77%) (2015)	93% (girls:93%/boys: 93%)	Annual data by Ministry of Education and Sports: Education Management Information System	82% (girls: 83.8% /boys: 80.39%)
4.3. Proportion of youth (female/male) employed as a result of participation in vocational training programmes	30% (2015)	70% (2021)	Annual Reports by the Ministry of Education and Sport, and Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare; Employers' survey (2020/2021)	Proxy indicator: Youth employment: 17% (2017) (18.6% women/ 15.5% men)  34% of male youth; and 43% female youth who report that their highest education completed is TVET are in

<sup>48</sup> Idem



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### Intervention

- Enhanced health, water, sanitation, hygiene, and nutrition in formal and non-formal education,
- Strengthened teacher education and other capacity building,
- Improved school and teacher education curricula,
- Increased access, participation and learning outcomes,
- Strengthening capacity for evidence-based analysis, policy dialogue and advocacy,
- Promoting and supporting teaching and learning, improving some curriculum, providing textbooks and teaching materials to all primary schools,
- School feeding programmes in eight provinces,
- Early Childhood Education (ECE) and monitoring of teaching classes pedagogical advisory,
- Focusing supports especially on community children development target group and multi-grade teaching for 3-5 year-old children and children's caregivers.

### Lessons learned for 2019

- The recurring floods highlight the need to strengthen emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction, including climate change resilience in all programmes. This required a joint and integrated response from government stakeholders, the UN and key development partners,
- Constrained budget remains the key bottleneck to the system.
- Coordination and collaboration within MoES and across other line ministries and involvement of provinces and districts in planning stages are likely to positively impact on the quality, alignment and effective use of limited human and financial resources in the sector.
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## **Results Group 5: Health, Water and Sanitation**

### **Outcome 5: People enjoy improved access to quality health services, and water, sanitation and hygiene**

#### **Overview Health System**

2014 Health Care Law outlines the healthcare system in Lao PDR which consists of: Public healthcare system, Private healthcare system, and Joint public-private healthcare system. Three administrative levels of the Ministry of Health include: central, provincial, and district. A fourth level under the districts is responsibility for providing community health services through Health Centers, village health volunteers, community health committees, and traditional. Health care which is predominantly delivered by the public system through government-owned and operated health centers, and district and provincial hospitals. There are an increasing number of private sector services.

Health sector has suffered from low levels of public investment and correspondingly high reliance on out-of-pocket (OOP) financing, with gaps filled by external assistance for health. The government health expenditure, as a percentage of government expenditure, has increased from 3.7 percent (2010-11) to 5.9 percent in 2015/16, but still has not reached the committed amount. The country spent US\$71 per capita, or about 2.8 percent of GDP, in 2018. While the government budgetary spending on health has increased, Lao PDR is greatly dependent on the Global Fund and the GAVI - the Vaccine Alliance - for supporting its immunization, malaria, tuberculosis (TB), and HIV/AIDS program. External support is expected to phase out in the coming years, Lao PDR will have to transition to domestic financing. The COVID-19 response measures are largely financed by external sources at present. Overall government revenues and revenues from employment-based health insurance schemes will drop. It is likely that the country will run much larger fiscal deficits than usual during the crisis, building up debt and restricting fiscal space for health in the future<sup>49</sup>.

Significant improvements were achieved in improved health outcomes, including life expectancy and, key indicators such as under five and maternal mortality which remain high. These challenging outcomes can, in large part, be attributed to health systems challenges on both supply and demand sides. Some key challenges include: limited government funding; weak financial management, with fragmented and inaccurate expenditure monitoring; lack of ethnic language skills among healthcare providers serving culturally and ethnically diverse areas; shortage of health professionals, doctors and nurses - with close to 1.88 physicians, nurses and midwives per 1000 population, which is well below the WHO recommended aggregate density of 4.45 physicians, nurses and midwives per 1000 population<sup>50</sup>. Poor data quality has resulted in, limited use of data for evidence-based planning and decision making and use by donors.

In response to the sectoral challenges, the government developed a Health Sector Reform Strategy (HSRS) 2013 – 2025. The HSRS focuses on five priority areas:

- Human resources development
- Health financing
- Governance, organization, and management
- Equitable access to quality health services
- Health information systems and monitoring and evaluation

From 2013 to 2020, the implementation of the HSRS focuses on delivering essential and quality health services to the population. From 2021–2025, implementation will focus on achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

## Maternal and Child Health

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<sup>49</sup> World Bank Lao PDR Economic Monitor, Lao PDR in the time of COVID-19, June 2020

<sup>50</sup> Draft Background Paper for the Multi-Stakeholder Taskforce to Study the Impact of COVID-19 to support a Determination of the 9th NSEDP and SDG Localization in Lao PDR – Theme 3: Investing in the Human Capital of Lao PDR. September 2020.

Maternal and child mortality have been reduced. Maternal mortality decreased from 197 (2015) to 185 (2017), and under-five mortality fell from 79 (2012) to 46 (2017). Significant progress has been achieved on these indicators however, Lao PDR still has the highest rates of mortality among ASEAN countries. COVID-19 may also slow the progress achieved over the past decade. The low education of pregnant mothers, poor access in some geographic areas, and limited cultural understanding can further intensify disparities and inequities in access to essential health services among mothers and children. To mitigate the impact of COVID-19, ensuring access to essential health services for those most vulnerable groups needs to be highlighted.

The mid-term evaluation of 8th NSEDP suggests that a significant proportion of interventions required to reduce maternal and child mortality lie outside the health services sector, such as sparse populations in geographical regions, women's education, the conditions that would make it conducive to like skills education on family planning and sexual and reproductive health, livelihood and socio-economic status, culture and behavior. The health services indicators show significant improvement from that in 2011/12 but nonetheless remain low. The rates for immunization, antenatal care, skilled attendant at delivery, and institutional delivery need to be further improved. Indicators for reproductive health also show improvement, with increased use of modern contraceptives, and a reduction in adolescent birth rate.

### **Water-Sanitation**

The use of clean water has increased from 69.9 percent in 2011/12 to 83.9 percent in 2017. There remain many mountainous and remote provinces with lower coverage, and water sources may be prone to contamination from the increasingly frequent floods. The use of improved sanitation facilities has increased significantly from 56.9 in 2011/12 to 71 percent in 2017. The rate of open defecation has decreased from 37.9 percent in 2011/12 to 23.9 in 2017, but the practice is still a significant health risk. Flooding also poses risks to sanitation facilities and sanitation in general.

### **UN supports:**

According to provided information<sup>51</sup> to the ET, during the current UNPF cycle, there are 29 UN supported projects to the Outcome 5. Among the 29 projects, 23 projects have been supported directly to Ministry of Health through different UN agencies which are IAEA, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS, WFP and WHO. Other projects to a variety of government partners were through UNODC, UNESCO, UNIDO, UN-Habitat, FAO and IOM. Total UN delivery to the Outcome 5 from 2017 to 2019 through the 29 projects was US\$46,393,032 which accounts for 26% of total three-year UNPF delivery and highest among all Outcomes; and accounts for 71% of planned budget, US\$64,755,00, of Outcome 5.

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<sup>51</sup> File name: UN project mapping V1

In response to Covid-19, UNCT has prepared the UN Lao PDR Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP) to COVID-19 which is considered as an essential package of support offered by the UN Development System (UNDS) in Lao PDR over the next 18 months to contribute to Lao PDR's recovery effort and to protect the needs and rights of people living under the duress of the pandemic, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable people and groups, who are at risk of being left behind. In addition to the SERP, different UN entities also conducted Rapid Assessment of Covid-19 impact in their focused areas. Among other UN AFP responses to Covid -19, two UN projects under the United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund were approved to support the Lao PDR Government's preparedness and response to Covid-19.

**Table 5: Status of UNPF Outcome and Output 5 Indicators**

UNFP Outcome 5	Indicators, Baselines, Targets	Means of Verification	Progress
<b>Outcome 5: People enjoy improved access to quality health services, and water, sanitation and hygiene</b>  IAEA, IOM, UN-Habitat, UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, UNV, WFP, WHO	<b>5.1. Maternal mortality ratio</b> <b>Baseline:</b> 197 per 100,000 (2015) <b>Target:</b> 160 per 100,000 (2020)	5.1. Annual global UN estimate	<b>5.1 Maternal mortality ratio:</b> 185 (2017) - UNFPA State of World Population 2020;
	<b>5.2. Under-five mortality rate, girls/boys</b> <b>Baseline:</b> 79 per 1,000 (girls: 83per 1,000 / boys: 95 per 1,000) (2012)  <b>Target:</b> 40 per 1,000 (girls and boys) (2020)	5.2. Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS) (2016/17)	<b>5.2. Under-five mortality rate:</b> 46 (2017) - LSIS II 2017;
	<b>5.3. Percentage of population using an improved drinking water source and sanitation facility</b> <b>Baseline:</b> 76% water supply coverage (2015); 71% sanitation coverage (2015) <b>Target:</b> 90% water supply coverage (2020); 80% sanitation coverage (2020)	5.3. Annual UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme estimates; Annual Ministry of Public Works and Transport data;  Annual Ministry of Health data	<b>5.3. Percentage of population using an improved drinking water source and sanitation facility</b>  - Proportion of population using an improved source of drinking water: 83.9% - LSIS II 2017;  - Proportion of population having an improved but not shared sanitation facility is 73.8% - LSIS II 2017

Due to the large availability of illicit drugs, Lao PDR also faces significant challenges with drug use, particularly Amphetamine-Type-Stimulants and opiates. There is a need to introduce and enhance availability of voluntary and evidence-based treatment for drug users, including Community Based Treatment.

### **Results Group 6: Food Security & Nutrition**

Outcome 6: the most vulnerable people benefit from improved food security and nutrition.

Outcome 6 is linked to SDG2 on zero hunger and improved nutrition and the eighth national socio-economic development plan (2016-2020) Outcome 2, Output 2 on food security and malnutrition being reduced.

#### **Situation**

Lao PDR achieved the MDG1 target to reduce hunger by half but did not achieve its MDG target in reduction of malnutrition. Malnutrition continues to be one of the main challenges. The Lao Social Indicators Survey-II 2017 showed that stunting and underweight among children are still a major concern. Between 2012 and 2017, stunting among children under age five decreased from 44 % to 33%, moderate or severe wasting increased from 9% to 6 %, and underweight was reduced from 27% to 21% 1. Overall, 11 out of 18 provinces have critical levels of stunting above the WHO recommended threshold of 30 per cent, and there exists wide disparity in prevalence of stunting among people living in different geographical areas, by wealth quintile, and ethnicity2. Children living in rural areas suffer twice the rate of overlapping deprivation in all three dimensions, nutrition, health and sanitation (32.3-39.0 per cent) compared to those living in urban areas (17.7 per cent) 2. Stunting in rural areas without road access (43.3%) is twice than in urban areas (21.5%) 3.

Data from the most recent Lao PDR Expenditure and Economic Survey 6 revealed that slightly over a fifth of the population experienced 'severe' or 'moderate' food insecurity2. Food insecurity is not a major determinant of stunting. Stunting prevalence was found in 20% of the richest quintile1. An inadequate nutrient intake in children is from the lack of dietary diversity, including poor child feeding practices. Food expenditure and consumption are underpinned by mothers' education levels, poor households, social norms and practices. The households still eat more rice (31%) than other foods.

1. Minimum Dietary Diversity (MDD) is met by only 16 percent of children 6-23 months. 2. Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W) is met by 36 percent of non-pregnant women and 44 percent of pregnant women. 3. 40 percent of children less than 6 months are exclusively breastfed, and the average duration is 20 months. 4. 67% of health center staff have not received appropriate training on nutrition and tend not to recognize stunted children or offer appropriate recommendations about nutrition and growth promotion. 5. 44% of health care workers never undergo in-service training. Most health care workers are female (57%, but 42% of health staff conducting deliveries are male 6. That surfaces a cultural barrier that can create resistance in

access to maternity services. Social, gender, and cultural norms and practices are rarely addressed in health promotion activities or at health facilities.

Factors contributing to stunting and malnutrition include poverty, poor quality diets during pregnancy, inadequate feeding practices for infants and young children, limited access to clean water and good sanitation facilities, poor hygiene behaviors, and limited access to and utilization of quality health services. Nationally, 19.6 % of population do not have toilets and 9.3% of villages cannot access clean water. Nearly three in four stunted children are deprived in the sanitation dimension (77.3%), as compared to 67.0% among none stunted children and 14.3 per cent out of the 32.9 per cent of children deprived in water are stunted. The likelihood of being stunted is 10% higher among children conceived by women below the age of 17.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, 67,800 people are estimated to have been food insecure beginning from March 2020 as the impacts of drought and flooding in 2019<sup>7</sup>. The Covid19 could push more people into poverty<sup>8</sup> and an additional 383,000 people could fall into poverty as a result of the pandemic<sup>9</sup>. The rapid assessment of food security and agriculture in Lao PDR conducted by WFP on May 2020 revealed that perceptions around changes in the health and malnutrition status of communities were not significant. The restrictions in movement have visible impacts on food supply chain and prices, food availability, accessibility and food consumption. A higher share of the population (47.5%) will be at risk of food insecurity and severe food insecurity due to the Covid-19 crisis and a small share of households will also be at risk of experiencing extreme food insecurity after COVID-19<sup>10</sup>. Low income households, those engaged in daily labour, and informal workers are likely to fall back to less diverse diets leading to increased rates of malnutrition.

**Table 6: UNPF results framework 2017-2021**

Indicators	UNPF 2017-2021		
	Baselines	Targets 2021	Means of verification
6.1 percentage of children under 5 years of age affected by stunting	44% girls 43% boys 46% (2012)	34% girls & boys	1.National nutrition survey (2016) 2.Lao social indicator survey (2016-2017)
6.2 prevalence of undernourishment in the population	22% (2014)	10%	Annual FAOSTAT data
6.3 percentage of rural households with poor and borderline food consumption	11.2% (2013)	8%	1.Annual risk and vulnerability survey 2.Biennial government 3.WFP Food Security Assessment



**Table 7: Draft 2019 UNPF Progress Report, 2020**

Draft UNPF Progress 2019			
Indicators	Baselines	Targets 2021	Status 2019
6.1 Prevalence of moderate and severe food insecurity (FIES 2018) (National SDG Indicator 2.1.2)	FIES with the LECS 2017/2018	TBC	9.4% of households have 'severe' and 10.9% 'moderate' experience of food security (LECS6)
6.2. Percentage of children 6-23 month with improved dietary diversity	TBC (LSISII)	TBC	45.3% of children 6-23 months received minimum dietary diversity (LSISII)
6.3. Wasting prevalence among children under 5 years (National SDG indicator 2.2.3)	9.6% (LCASS 2015)	5%	9% of children under age 5 with weight for height below -2 Standard Deviations (wasted)
1.4. Annual data on nutrition generated by nation 1.5. Nutrition surveillance system	Nil	Annual report	First two rounds of surveillance were undertaken in 2019 and round 2 still under analysis
6.5. Percentage of children under 5 years of age affected by stunting (National SDG Indicator 2.2.1)	44%, girls 43% boys 46% (2012)	34% girls & boys	33%, girls 32%/boys 34%
6.6. Prevalence of undernourishment in the population	22% (2014)	10%	16.5% (2016-2018), FAOSTAT 17.1% Mid-term review NSED (2018)
6.7. Percentage of rural households with poor and borderline food consumption	11.2% (2013)	8%	1.8 % households have poor and 4.5% have borderline food consumption

### **Intervention**

The UN has engaged in a number of different areas to ensure malnutrition is addressed in a coordinated, sequenced and targeted manner across the health, water, sanitation, agriculture and education sectors. These are related to food security and nutrition, agricultural production, expansion of markets, behavioral change campaign, strengthening coordination structures within the Government and partners, data and monitoring and evaluation.

### **Lessons Learned for 2019**

- Nutrition must not be seen as a separate, independent programme area but rather as

being mainstreamed across existing programmes and delivery vehicles. This rests with the relevant programmes/programme managers

- Prioritization of nutrition interventions
- Capacity of Government across sectors and levels for planning, preparedness and response to emergencies includes the availability of key commodities and supplies.

## ○ Governance, Rule of Law and Participation in National Decision Making

### Results Groups 7 & 8: Institution Building and Access to Justice

#### Outcome 7: Institution Building

Linked in particular to SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, the UNPF's Outcome 7, aims to ensure that Lao PDR's institutions and policies both at national and local levels, contribute to the delivery of quality services that respond to Lao PDR citizens' needs, and facilitate the achievement of strategic development goals.<sup>52</sup>

The National SDG Steering Committee officially endorsed a comprehensive set of 238 SDG indicators in June 2019, and allocated them across line ministries for ownership, monitoring, and reporting. Sixty per cent of the SDG indicators include baselines and are mainstreamed into the current 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP.

Lao PDR has one of the highest proportions of women in parliament in the region. There were 25% of women in the National Assembly from 2011 to 2016. Since 2016, these figures rose to 27,5% women in the National Assembly. Despite an increase in terms of percentages from 6% in 2012 to 19 % in 2019, women are still under-represented in senior Government positions<sup>53</sup>. In 2019, mine risk education took place in 572 villages, benefitting 265,556 people from which 70,000 were reached in Xieng Khouang<sup>54</sup>.

Recognizing the improvements in service delivery that can come from configuring institutional structures to empower local decision makers, the Government also took measures to further operationalize the decentralization process (known as 'Sam Sang', or 'Three Builds') which was officially extended to all 148 districts nationwide.

Projects that tested locally identified, innovative solutions to address chronic bottlenecks in the provision of local public services, contributed to efforts to improve the quality, relevance, and alignment of basic services. The successful implementation and completion of these projects led

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<sup>52</sup> 2019. Draft- UNPF Progress Report. P 77

<sup>53</sup> 2019. Draft-UNPF Progress Report. P 87

<sup>54</sup> 2019. Draft-UNPF Progress Report. P 83



to improved service delivery for at least 70,000 people, of whom, 50 per cent were women, over 75 per cent ethnic minorities, and 50 per cent were children and youth.

Driven by strong economic growth and rapidly improving health and education, Lao PDR is on track to graduate from LDC status. Given the importance of LDC graduation as a policy priority, a smooth transition strategy to help the country phase out certain international support measures, will be important to maintain development momentum and support of the 2030 Agenda and the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP (2021- 2025).

**Table 8: Status of UNPF Outcome and Output 7 Indicators**

Outcome 7: Institutions and policies at national and local level support the delivery of quality services that better respond to people's needs			
Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status 2019
7.1. Number of new households receiving 2 or more basic services from their districts	373,948 households (2015)	600,000 households (2021)	386,115 Households (2019) <i>*It is anticipated that the number of households will increase when One Door Service Centres (including, those established in 2019 and those planned for 2020), become fully operational.</i>
7.2 Percentile rank on aggregate Government effectiveness	39.4% (2014)	45% (2021)	24.5% (2018)
7.3 Extent to which National Socio-Economic Development Plan monitoring informs evidence-based policy making	Limited extent (2015)	Target: Large extent (2021)	LaolInfo, managed by the Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB) continues to be used on a limited basis; Ministries provided limited data against indicators of the 8th NSEDP; The provincial statistics database (LaolInfo) system was established in five provinces for statistics dissemination, serving policy and decision making; the provincial database is linked to the national system used to track progress on SDGs.

### Strengthening National Institutions to Implement the NSEDP and Achieve the SDGs

During 2019, UNDP continued to deliver support to the National Assembly (NA) and Provincial People's Assemblies (PPAs):

- to further develop their effectiveness in oversight the 8th NSEDP objectives and SDGs. Support was extended to the legislative agenda of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Sessions of the NA during which it completed its legislative plan for 2019 including adoption of several laws.

- for the organization of two intersessional programmes in June and November to provide a platform for the provision of independent opinions ahead of the Ordinary Session, with participation from the NA, line ministries, representatives of PPAs as well as Members of the Parliamentarian Performance Review Group.
- through outreach missions and public consultations in nine districts within two provinces (Houaphanh and Salavan), allowing for feedback and inputs from constituents and key stakeholders<sup>55</sup> on draft laws and amendments prior to their adoption.

As part of UN analytical support to the achievement of the SDGs, DESA, in cooperation with the National Institute for Economic Research, supported research and dialogue on the potential implications of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) on the 2030 Agenda.

As part of efforts to ensure continued development momentum towards the SDGs through the graduation process, the UN has been working with the Government to start developing a smooth transition strategy.

As part of building the system to track progress against the SDGs, the National SDG Steering Committee Meeting adopted a set of 238 national SDG indicators in June 2019, that are intended to serve as a “living document”. In support of national statistics efforts, DESA’s Statistics Division organized several activities:

- two national activities in 2019, in support of capacity development towards improved SDG monitoring and dissemination,
- a user engagement workshop brought together the LSB and line ministries to develop SDG indicators working closely with policy-makers, academia, civil society and other user groups that make use of the data, to share experiences, discuss challenges and draft a strategy for continued user engagement for SDG monitoring,
- a workshop on metadata for SDG indicators was conducted with participants from LSB and 20 line ministries and agencies, building their capacity to compile metadata according to international standards and resulting in compilation of draft metadata for several national indicators.

### **Sam Sang Decentralization**

In 2019, UNCDF and UNDP jointly supported the Sam Sang decentralization process through the integration of the DDF into national planning and finance systems at sub-national level. They also provided support to improved transparency and accountability in the transfer of finance to districts via the national treasury system.

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<sup>55</sup> Comprised of approximately 839 participants, of whom 243 were women

As part of the DDF's third cycle, in 2019, UNCDF in partnership with UNDP, explored an innovative approach to the Performance-based Grants (PBGs)<sup>56</sup>. To ensure citizens' participation in local planning, only projects that were identified and listed within the provincial government approved three-year district investment plans were considered for short-listing. Through this, an additional 7 DDF projects were selected using the explicit 'Leave No One Behind' methodology, reaching a total of 2,400 households, including 50 per cent poor households and 2,000 non Lao-Tai ethnic households.

UNCDF and UNDP also jointly supported greater local engagement in the delivery of public services through the Public Service Innovation Facility (PSIF). In 2019, the PSIF provided financial and technical assistance to 16 local partners, including local authorities and Non-Profit Associations (NPAs), to promote the participation of local communities and civil society in the improvement of local service delivery with a special focus on vulnerable groups including women, youth and ethnic groups.

In 2019, UN-Habitat supported Sam Sang decentralization across eight districts<sup>57</sup> in three provinces (Xekong, Salavan and Attapeu) and the Vientiane Prefecture. This support included the collection of large quantities of data at the village level, which were subsequently developed into a series of infographics that were translated into the Lao PDR language to support more effective and inclusive knowledge management and decision-making at local level.

In a practical example of how decentralized decision making can address priority development needs, UN-Habitat also finalized climate change action plans that identified resilience-building measures that fed into local development plans.

WHO has not provided active support to implement Sam Sang decentralization as yet. In the updated Health Sector Reform Strategy, which was developed at end of 2019, it suggests strengthening primary health care through implementation of Sam Sang as a key strategic direction to achieve universal health coverage by 2025.

## Improving Access to Services

At the sub-national level, in 2019, MoHA conducted a user survey in four districts (Hinboun, Xaysettha, Khoau and Xiengkhor) with support from UNDP. This feedback collected from 1,700 households on local public services, administrative performance, and governance practices, provided district authorities and the Provincial People's Assembly (PPA), with important information to guide improvement of public service delivery. As a practical step to improve structures for service delivery, UNDP also supported a significant upgrade to the One Door Service Centres (ODSC) in Bachiangchaleunsook district, Champasack province, allowing for

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<sup>56</sup> through transitioning from an equal distribution model, to one which promotes SDG acceleration and the focused targeting of measures, applying the principals of Leaving No One Behind to ensure equitable access to basic services for the most vulnerable communities.

<sup>57</sup> (Kaleum, Dakcheung, Xaysetha, Sammakhixay, Sanxay, Phouvong, Samuoi and Ta Oi).

more convenient and timely delivery of district services to citizens including for example, access to legal certificates including birth, marriage, death and land entitlements.

To support the fair and efficient administration of land, in 2019, UN-Habitat worked with MoNRE, Village Focus International, and a range of district- and provincial-level decision makers<sup>58</sup> to develop innovative, fit-for-purpose, gender-appropriate tools to improve citizens' access to land. As a result, over 70 government staff from district and provincial levels have benefitted from training developed through consultations with key partners and the identification and prioritization of GLTN tools. Also, in 2019, through support from MoNRE, UN-Habitat's Social Tenure Domain Model, was translated into the Lao PDR language to simplify land certification.

in 2019, WHO provided technical support to MoH departments during a review and update of health policies and strategies, including the National Health Insurance Strategy, the National Financing Strategy, and the Health Workforce Strategy. WHO's technical support for this includes support for implementation of the Health Sector Reform Strategy and a review and update of it, and technical support for the RMNCAH strategy including an immunization program and key disease programs (communicable diseases). WHO also provided support to Government development of an implementation plan including a baseline survey on the capacity of health care facilities, a costing exercise of health workforce planning and management to meet minimum requirements to deliver services. The costing exercise is for essential health service package and national health insurance benefit package, not for human resources for health. It aims to provide data/information to improve sustainable health financing. For human resources for health (HRH), it is more about strategic planning for HRH, including distribution, retention, incentives and quality improvement in medical education.

### **Outcome 8: Access to justice**

According to the latest Freedom House report (2020), Lao PDR is not free and scores 14 out of 100 in the global freedom ranking<sup>59</sup>. In fact, due process rights are outlined in the law, but these rights are routinely denied. Defendants are often presumed guilty, and long procedural delays in the judicial system are common. In addition, equal rights are constitutionally guaranteed but are not upheld in practice. Discrimination against members of non Lao-Tai ethnic tribes is common. Gender-based discrimination and abuse are widespread. Discriminatory traditions and religious practices have contributed to women's limited access to education, employment opportunities, and worker benefits. Therefore, social freedoms can be restricted, especially for women and children. In 2016, a survey supported by the UN and the World Health Organization (WHO) revealed that nearly a third of women in Lao PDR had experienced domestic violence. Children as young as 12 years old also may be legally employed in Lao PDR.

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<sup>58</sup> The Provincial Natural Resources and Environment Department, the District Office of Natural Resources and Environment, the District Agriculture and Forestry Office, and the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office.

<sup>59</sup> 2020. Freedom House. Freedom in the world-Laos.

Furthermore, given its strategic geographic location bordering multiple countries, Lao PDR is vulnerable to increased flows of drugs and pre-cursor chemicals necessary for drug production. In recent years, countries in the Mekong sub-region have witnessed a significant increase in the production, trafficking, and consumption of Amphetamine-Type-Stimulants. They also are vulnerable to human trafficking which is common in the Mekong sub-region, as well as for laundering of money gained from illicit activities. In Lao PDR, the UN works in partnership with national authorities to improve access to justice and realization of human rights under UNPF Outcome 8. Access to justice is a basic necessity for the rule of law<sup>60</sup>. Aspirations for SDG 16 are most clearly articulated in the Government's ongoing efforts to ensure its citizens enjoy expanded and equitable access to justice, as part of the transition to a 'Rule of Law State' by 2020<sup>61</sup>.

**Table 9: Status of UNPF Outcome and Output 8 Indicators**

Outcome 8: People enjoy improved access to justice and fulfilment of their human rights			
Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status 2019
8.1. Number of people's grievances redressed through courts and village mediation units using legal aid services	Formal Courts 4,000; Village Mediation Units 4,746 (2015)	Formal Courts: 7,000 Village Mediation Units: 8,000 (2021)	Formal Courts: 4,644 Village Mediation Units: 6,109
8.2. Number of Laws certified by the Ministry of Justice that are compliant with the requirements of drafting / amending and public consultations	0 (2014)	8 (2021)	Eight laws on track: Penal code, Law on Lawyers, Law on Judgement Enforcement, Law on Treaties and International Agreement, Law on Supreme People's Prosecutor, and Law on Disaster on Climate Change, Civil Code, Land Law
8.3. Percentage of accepted recommendations of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> UPR cycle Implemented	0 (2015)	60% / 70 of 116 (2021)	On track – the Government adopted 116 recommendations from a total of 196 recommendations (59%).

60 The UNSG Report stated, "the rule of law is ensured by national institutions that can generate and implement clear, public and just laws, and that provide fair, equitable and accountable public services to all people equally." Report of the UNSG, "Delivering justice: programme of action to strengthen the rule of law at the national and international levels", 16 March 2012, A/66/749.

61 Master Plan on Development of the Rule of Law in the Lao PDR toward the Year 2020 (2009) [https://www.la.undp.org/content/dam/laopdr/docs/Reports%20and%20publications/2018/LSMP\\_\\_Sep\\_2009\\_.pdf](https://www.la.undp.org/content/dam/laopdr/docs/Reports%20and%20publications/2018/LSMP__Sep_2009_.pdf)

8.4. Percentage of women in National Assembly, and in leadership positions in state and party (National SDG Indicator 16.7.1)	27.5% in National Assembly (2016); 6.06% in leadership positions in state and party (2013)	35% in National Assembly and 20% in leadership positions in state and party (2021)	27.5% (41 out of 149 parliamentarians). 31% (20,772 out of 66,828 leadership position and equivalent positions 1 <sup>st</sup> Minister and equivalent to 8 <sup>th</sup> Deputy head of Unit and equivalent 10% (1 out of 11 Politburo members, 7 women out of 69 central committee members).
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### Fulfilment of Human Rights

Following the completion of the second UPR<sup>62</sup> of Lao PDR, the Government adopted 116 of 196 recommendations. To support the need for a well-elaborated action plan for follow-up, the UN works with national counterparts to strengthen capacity to facilitate harmonization with international obligations and standards.

The Government's steady progress was noted under the implementation of the Legal Sector Master Plan, with improvements in capacity, procedures, and standards for legislative development and implementation, effectiveness and responsiveness of judicial institutions, systematic development of legal and judicial professionals, public understanding of legal rights and information, participation in the legal system, adoption, implementation, enforcement, monitoring and reporting of international legal instruments.

As part of outreach to better engage disadvantaged groups in the development of legislation, the Legal and Institutional Oversight Sub Sector Working Group, provided opportunities for multi-stakeholder engagement on the Penal Code and access to justice for groups including women and persons with disabilities in October 2019, jointly co-chaired by the MoJ, UNDP and the EU.

In 2019, UNFPA, in collaboration with the LWU, the NCAWMC, international organizations, Lao PDR civil society organizations, media agencies, and the UN system worked together to raise awareness under a 16-day public campaign focused on gender equality and ending violence against women and girls around International Women's Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls, reaching an estimated 500,000 people in Lao PDR.

As part of the emergency response in Attapeu province, in 2019 the LWU, with support from UNFPA, managed two Women's Friendly Spaces (WFSs) in two temporary camps in Sanamxay district:

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<sup>62</sup> The UPR mechanism facilitates a review of the human rights record of all UN Member States on a rotating basis. It also provides states with the opportunity to share actions undertaken to address their human rights record as part of their obligations under international law.



- This included a total of 30 participants from LWU, Public Security, Health sector, Labour and Social Welfare Sector and Lao PDR Youth Union staff who were trained with skills on counselling and how to respond to GBV in an emergency setting.
- Psycho-social support and counselling were provided to 175 cases, of which 96 were health related, and 79 were related to psychological issues.
- Recreational activities to relieve stress for the affected people living in temporary camps reached more than 2,000 people.

To support protection of children's rights, by the end of 2019, the Child Protection Network (CPN) was established in a total of 1,248 villages nationwide. The capacity of 93 government officials and village coordinators from five (5) villages in Savannakhet province and 13 villages in Xieng Khouang province was strengthened in 2019, through four (4) training sessions and the collection of critical data on CWD. More than 100 parents of CWD, received training on care and support for CWD in 2019. Subsequently, 109 SWDs (of which 44 female) from target villages benefited from support, including referrals.

UNICEF also provided psychosocial support through Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) to 3,039 children and documented the experience to form the country's first-ever lessons learnt in Child Protection in Emergency. MoHA, through UNICEF's support, also provided mobile birth registration services to 783 children (353 girls and 430 boys) who were not registered at birth or those who had lost legal documents during the disaster.

### **Access to Justice**

The first Lao PDR Penal Code was enacted on 10 September 2019, with support from UNDP, serving as the key legal reference for the Judiciary. The Penal Code subsumes legal provisions and laws related to critical issues for the protection of human rights, including violence against women, children's rights, and environmental protection and is expected to improve access and referencing of laws by legal authorities.

Efforts to increase access to justice continued throughout 2019, with support provided by UNFPA, UNDP, IOM, and UNICEF, focusing on disadvantaged groups including women, particularly those who were survivors of GBV and natural disasters. Support mechanisms for GBV victims were strengthened through the launch and upgrade of the Women-Children Consultation Service Centre in Xieng Khouang province in partnership with the MoJ and the LWU.

To support improved access to justice for vulnerable migrant populations, IOM, in partnership with INGO Village Focus International, provided direct assistance services to 907 deported migrants from the Vangtao - Chongmek Lao-Thai border, among which 485 were deemed to be vulnerable

In 2019, the Office of Supreme People's Prosecutor (OSPP) developed three key manuals on Interview Skills Training, Case Management, and OSPP's In-House Manual on Trafficking-in-Persons Prosecution, for Lao PDR prosecutors with support provided by IOM.

With regard to access to justice for children, approximately 930 children (431 boys and 499 girls) from targeted provinces, benefited from legal and social assistance, community-based diversion

including strengthening community awareness on child protection issues including Violence Against Children, child marriage, and trafficking.

Legal and judicial institutional capacities of evidence-based policy and legislative-development and justice service delivery were further enhanced through training supported by UNDP, with the participation of more than 1,000 people including lawyers, officials from the MoJ, People's Supreme Court, Office of the Supreme People's Prosecutors, police officers, as well as law professors and students.

## ○ **Issues Emerging from Preliminary Desk Review of Documents: Initial Thoughts on Thematic Challenges**

The UNPF 2017-2021 identified the following key challenges:

- A main development challenge is ensuring that benefits from high economic growth are evenly distributed and translated into inclusive and sustainable human development because there are widening gaps between the rich and the poor, women and men, ethnic groups and residents from different regions of the country which need to be addressed;
- A key driver of poverty in Lao PDR is largely attributed to the heavy reliance on the agricultural sector and the need for expansion in education and targeted government investment in poverty related interventions;
- Lao PDR's economic boom (driven by foreign direct investment in national resource extraction and hydropower) needs to be conducted in an economically sustainable way that respects the rights of communities and individuals and generates revenue for all;
- In order for Lao PDR to benefit from its formal accession to the WTO in 2013 and closer integration with ASEAN and the world, it will be necessary for Lao PDR to deal with its skills deficit, reliance in the agricultural sector and its need to invest in machinery;
- The need to deal with unexploded ordinances (UXO) from the Indochina War (1964-73) is important since there may well be a link between UXO contamination and the prevalence of poverty (with 42 of the 46 poorest districts affected by UXO); and,
- The three Pillars and eight Outcomes of the UN Partnership Framework prioritize the needs in the context of Lao PDR to both achieve the SDGs and graduate from LDC status. (Lao PDR – UN Partnership Framework 2017-2021 pp 7-8).

Overall, most recently in October 2020, the World Bank Review states that: "Lao PDR has made good development progress over the past twenty years, halving poverty, reducing malnutrition and improving education and health outcomes. However, there is room for further improvement. A child born in Lao PDR today will only be half as productive as she could be if she enjoyed full



health and education. Malnutrition continues to be a critical issue, with stunting (impaired growth and development from poor nutrition) affecting over 30 percent of children under five. The maternal mortality rate is also high, at 185 per 100,000 births (2017). While a Lao PDR child goes to school for 10.8 years on average, she only receives the equivalent of 6.4 years of learning.”

The 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2016–20 outlined the Lao PDR government’s plan to address these challenges through greener, more inclusive growth that improves local livelihoods by diversifying income sources and private sector support for sustainable forest management and nature-based tourism. Given that Lao PDR is the most ethnically diverse country in the region, implementing inclusive development is challenging in terms of access to resources coupled with issues related to the urban and rural divides.

Given that many people in Lao PDR are close to the poverty line, major issues have significant impact. For example, the World Bank concludes that “The COVID-19 pandemic has brought renewed challenges to this agenda. The pandemic has severely affected economic growth, which will decline to an estimated range of between -0.6 to -2.4 percent in 2020. The service sector, including travel and tourism has been hit hard by lockdown measures while remittances, a vital source of income for many families, have dried up. The unemployment rate rose to 25 percent in May 2020, from 16 percent at the end of 2019. Structural vulnerabilities have been exacerbated by COVID-19, leading to a significant deterioration in the macroeconomic situation. State revenues are declining and the fiscal deficit is projected to increase to between 7.6 and 8.9 percent, constraining the government’s ability to mitigate the economic impacts of the pandemic.” <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lao/overview>.

In short, COVID-19 has exacerbated the structural weaknesses and made it more of a challenge for Lao PDR to develop quickly.

In reviewing overall challenges, flooding again must be noted since it affects so many other areas in an integrated fashion. For example, at a meeting in October, 2019 in Vientiane, members of the Lao PDR Ministry of Planning and Investment (chaired by Lao PDR Deputy Minister Kikeo Chanthaboury) plans were developed to deal with widespread flooding in 2019 in six central and southern provinces where widespread flooding occurred along with, crop and livestock diseases and dengue fever outbreaks. These all impacted on Lao PDR development plans. ([http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-10/15/c\\_138473104.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-10/15/c_138473104.htm))

### **Inclusive Growth, Livelihoods, Climate Change and Environment**

Human security, built in terms of livelihoods over time and resilience, in Lao PDR is threatened by environmental disasters such as storms and flooding. The question is whether it is possible to achieve real sustainability in terms of livelihoods without working more diligently on preventing climate disasters.

Indeed, there has been progress on many other thematic areas but a series of natural disasters have hit Lao PDR coupled with poorly function early-warning systems.

In turn they have led to a number of interrelated issues which include:

- lack of understanding among officials,
- lack of risk information relevant to sector, and
- the need to clarify roles and responsibilities as defined by the new DRM Law.

Together, these present key challenges in the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction while lack of coordination and delays in response serve to increase vulnerability in sectors such as: forestry, agriculture, WASH, to name a few.

### **Human Development: Education, Health, WASH, Food Security and Nutrition**

Given that the interrelated variables of education, health and nutrition are affected by climate change and environment, should environment and climate change be a key cross cutting theme for this evaluation?

For example, although the percentage of Grade 1 enrolment of primary education with pre-school experience has increased from 51% in 2015 to 64,6% in 2018 and The Early Childhood Education (ECE) has gradually improved with increased number of kindergartens and pre-primary facilities, the drop-out rate of grade 1 students has increased from 5, 8% to 6,3%.

There are many reasons for this including, the increasing number of severe natural disasters - which have their own difficult effects on children's education, health and nutrition as follows:

- School infrastructure was destroyed, resulting in some schools being unable to begin or carry on with their academic year, and
- Families having to relocate had adverse implications for their children who had to drop-out of school to follow them.

Thus, getting more children in school and keeping them there is a key and multifaceted challenge. Apart from the schools themselves, the impact of flooding and other natural disasters on the Government's impacted fiscal allocations which also effected education budgets which left little reserves for improving education quality.

Additionally, children are still expected to help their parents during the harvest which compromises their ability to complete their studies. Another critical factor is the low salaries of teachers which leads to absences of educators and a large percentage of students' truancy.

There are also issues in relation to skills development, e.g., access to TVET and employment services are limited – this is especially true in remote areas of the countries. Issues related to nutrition are multi-faceted and include such factors as poverty, poor diet during pregnancy and inadequate diet for infants and young children. Access to clean water is also an issue etc.

Discussion of other emerging themes have been added to discussions in the document review for the particular results groups.

## **Governance: Institution Building and Access to Justice**

To promote the participation of local communities and civil society in the improvement of local service delivery with a special focus on vulnerable groups including women, youth and ethnic groups, in 2019, both UNCDF and UNDP supported the Sam Sang decentralization process. UNCDF and UNDP also jointly supported greater local engagement in the delivery of public services through the Public Service Innovation Facility (PSIF).

Yet questions remain in terms of decentralization however as follows: Is the decentralization process enhancing gender equality which it doesn't usually do? Are there sufficient women and ethnic minorities on local councils that deal with flooded storm control and other climate issues? The recurring floods highlight the need to strengthen emergency preparedness and DRR/DRM programming. This needs to be done as an integrated response from government stakeholders, the UN and key development partners and is not always easy to accomplish at the local levels. Capacity at the local level is often lower than at the national level which presents challenges.

In Lao PDR, the UN also works in partnership with national authorities to improve access to justice and realization of human rights under UNPF Outcome 8. As discussed, in the latest Freedom House report (2020), Lao PDR scores 14 out of 100 in the global freedom ranking<sup>63</sup>. Although, due process rights are outlined in the law, these rights are routinely denied, defendants are often presumed guilty, and there are still long procedural delays in the judicial system. Similarly, although equal rights are constitutionally guaranteed they are not upheld in practice. For example, discrimination against members of ethnic minorities are common, gender-based discrimination and abuse are widespread and discriminatory traditions and religious practices contribute to women's limited access to education, employment opportunities, and worker benefits.

Overall, it is clear that there are a myriad of issues which are linked, and which all need to be considered during the evaluation. As background to building our understanding, we are beginning with an understanding of what the UNCT shared with us in our first zoom call as follows:

### **Some Systemic Issues Identified by UN Country Team in initial discussion with ET**

1. The UNCT identified the strength of the current UNPF as being the documentation in the annual reports from 2017, 2018 and 2019.
2. They also indicated that the thematic areas are well aligned with selected Lao PDR national priorities (8th NSEDP).

The team indicated many challenges of which many surfaced in the document review.

1. There will be challenges reporting against targeted indicators and a lack of baseline indicators, some of which are not aligned with UN activities, or scale of interventions or

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<sup>63</sup> 2020. Freedom House. Freedom in the world-Laos.

with end targets or the indicators in the 8th NSEDP. As requested, the ET will acknowledge challenges and seek to suggest ways to improve work on indicators.

2. There will be uneven progress of Result Groups. Some are less active needing more joint planning and coordination of RG themes with SDG themes. We will verify these issues and as requested we will suggest ways to improve RGs in the next CF.

3. There is a lack of oversight by the Joint Steering Committee which met only twice in 4 years. We will seek to identify ways to leverage more regular meetings take place.

4. There is a lack of a clearly articulated theory of change, with identified key assumptions that can be reviewed as the situation changes to identify when changes are needed. This is not the case at present.

5. There is limited content or objectives focused on means of implementation and monitoring, in particular Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in statistical/data capacity and indicators for SDG 17. We will address this and report on it.

6. Needs to incorporate stronger elements of disaster risk reduction to prevent and mitigate damage and loss from future disasters in Lao PDR UN Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). As noted above, we will look at the impact of environmental, climate change and disaster and the need for integrated approaches in Lao PDR by the UN.

7. Insufficient ownership of responsibility for Results Groups (RG) reporting and delivery. To address this, improving ownership will be discussed in RG focus groups.

8. UNESCO seeks to ensure that the UNPF ensures learning opportunities for marginalized and disadvantaged, especially non Lao-Tai ethnic communities and those with disabilities. The evaluation will review this, and other issues related to marginalized groups.

9. Higher education, research, pre-service and in-service teacher education, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) broadly (not just vocational) are critical for Lao PDR to graduate from LDC status quickly. This will be a focus of our questions with relevant RGs and interviewees. Graduation is a key area for the ET.

## ANNEX 3: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS/ PROTOCOLS-DISTRIBUTION LIST

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The table outlines questions that will facilitate the collection of relevant information from key informants participating in the interviews. For each interview, the evaluation team may develop an individualized, personalized guide derived from the contents of this table.

The protocols and guides are designed to enable the collection of relevant information from four categories of key informants participating in interviews carried out by the evaluators. Questions will be different based on the category of informants interviewed. The evaluation team will put special care into adapting the language to recipients and situations.

Criteria, questions, and sub-questions	Categories of key informants			
	UNRC	UN AFP	Government	Other Partners
<p>Hello, my name is [name of evaluator], and I am here today to discuss about the Evaluation of Lao PDR's UN Partnership Framework (UNPF) 2017-2021. Before going any further, we would like to thank you for the time you are giving us, so we can better understand how you perceive UN support to Lao PDR. We have been asked to evaluate work carried out so far by this Partnership Framework, and as such it is important for us to interview key persons who can provide us with valuable insights. Please note that what you say will remain strictly confidential.</p> <p>[Ask if the person has questions before beginning]</p> <p>If you agree to be interviewed, you will be asked to share openly your opinion regarding your experience with the UNPF. Do we have your consent?</p> <p>We have a lot of ground to cover and may not have enough time to do so today. However, please don't feel rushed to share your thoughts at the point. If, at the end of our discussion, there are still a number of outstanding questions, we can send you a list afterwards. This way, you will have a chance to review the questions at leisure, and supply us with written answers if you wish.</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Introduction				

Criteria, questions, and sub-questions	Categories of key informants			
	UNRC	UN AFP	Government	Other Partners
Can you tell us about the nature of your involvement in the UNPF (or UN supported activities, project or programme)?	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Relevance</b>				
1. Has the UN System supported achievement of national development goals and targets in alignment to relevant national plans and frameworks for Lao PDR's 8th NSEDP?				
1.1 Has the UN system paid proper attention to regional and cross-border issues of importance, e.g., ASEAN, Mekong and other cross border issues of importance?				
2. To what extent did the UNPF foster synergies among agencies and involve concerted efforts to optimize results and avoid duplication?				
2.1. COVID 19? (Related issues with respect to e.g., health, economic well-being, human security, etc.)				
3. Has the UN system remained responsive to emerging and unforeseen needs of Lao PDR and its people?				
4. To what extent has interagency cooperation and collaboration with other entities facilitated or hampered the achievement of results?				
4.1. Using an assessment of the evaluation criteria, how has the UNCT contributed to national development results in Lao?				
<b>Effectiveness</b>				
5. To what extent has the UN system promoted or supported policies consistent with each other and across sectors, given the multi-sectorial nature of economic development?				
5.1 Have UN policies been used effectively as partnership tools?				
6. Has the cooperation framework strengthened the position, credibility, and reliability of the UN system as a partner for government and other relevant actors?				

Criteria, questions, and sub-questions	Categories of key informants			
	UNRC	UN AFP	Government	Other Partners
7. To what extent has interagency cooperation and collaboration with other entities facilitated or hampered the achievement of results?				
7.2. Using an assessment of the evaluation criteria, how has the UNCT contributed to national development results?				
<b>Efficiency</b>				
8.Has the Cooperation Framework reduced transaction costs for partners?				
8.1What factors have affected UNAFPs working together to achieve the UNPF strategic intent and principles?				
8.2What factors have affected the UNCT support and contributions through the UNPF highlighting good practices and bottlenecks?				
8.3To what extent has the UNPF outcomes related to Human Development been achieved?				
8.4 To what extent has the UNPF outcomes related to Inclusive Growth, Livelihoods and Resilience been achieved?				
8.5To what extent has the UNPF achieved outcomes related to Governance, Rule of Law and Participation in National Decision-Making been achieved?				
9. Was the Cooperation Framework supported by integrated funding framework and by adequate funding instruments?				
9.1What were the performance, progress or gaps in the UNPF support to national goals and priorities?				
<b>Sustainability</b>				
10.Has the UN system support been extended in such a way to build national and local capacities to ensure long term, sustainable gains?				
10.1 What other types of partners have been approached to ensure the sustainability, e.g., private sector?				

Criteria, questions, and sub-questions	Categories of key informants			
	UNRC	UN AFP	Government	Other Partners
11.To what extent has the UN programming assisted Lao's government to scaled-up to achieve its goal of becoming a middle-income country?				
11.1 Can the UN continue to be a catalyst?				
12. To what extent has the UN system helped to support Lao PDR's journey towards becoming a sustainable middle-income country?				
<b>Cross-Cutting Principles</b>				
13. Has the UN system's support been extended in a way that promotes gender equity in Lao PDR?				
13.1 To what extent did UNPF make use and promote gender equality standards and principles (e.g., participation, non-discrimination, accountability, etc.) to achieve its goals?				
14. Has the UN system supported followed the principles of a HRs based approach?				
14.1 To what extent did UNPF make use of and promote human rights standards and principles to achieve its goals?				
15. Has the UN system support been designed and delivered following the programming principles of environmental sustainability?				
15.1 To what extent did UNPF effectively use the principles of environmental sustainability to strengthen its contribution to national development results?				
16. Have the programming principles of RBM been used to monitor and track results?				
16.1 To what extent did UNPF make use of programming principles of RBM to monitor and track its results?				
17. Has the overall UN program been designed with programming principle of capacity development at its core?				
17.1 To what extent has UNPF been designed with the programming principles of capacity building at its core?				



Criteria, questions, and sub-questions	Categories of key informants			
	UNRC	UN AFP	Government	Other Partners
<b>Forward Looking</b>				
18.What are the lessons learned that could be identified for informing the planning and decision-making of the UNSDCF 2022-2026?				
18.1 What specific recommendations should be included in the 2022-2026 UNSDCF?				
19.Has the current UNPF 2017-2021 contributed to preparedness for emergency situations?				
20.If you were involved in joint initiatives, what was their value-added and/or good practices?				

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL- FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

A brief overview of the project and goals for the FGD/Roundtable are provided below. This full description is not likely to be needed but it is useful to have in case it is needed to respond to questions. Participants will be provided with information about process, time, breaks, location of bathrooms and other details.

Baastel, an evaluation consulting firm headquartered in Gatineau, Canada, was mandated to carry out independently, an evaluation (with some formative and summative elements) of the Lao PDR UNPF. More specifically, the evaluation is taking place on two levels: 1. At the formative level to assess the function of the current UNPF and gain insights and recommendations for improvements and, 2. At the summative level to assess results achieved by the UNPF 2017-2021 to determine the success of the UN's/Lao PDR government's implementation and development of a sustainability plan and method.

In scope - The scope of this evaluation is limited to the current UNPF. The evaluation studied information provided on the current UNPF. Since UNPF is designed to be implemented across the country to all peoples, the evaluation is national. The evaluation will also make recommendations for the UNSDCF 2022-2026.

We are currently in the data collection phase and are therefore consulting the UN and the Government of Lao PDR, as well as other local implementing partners of the UNPF and seeking their views of these stakeholders in the country.

### Presentations

- Presentation of evaluation process, explanation of purpose of focus group and obtaining consent
  - Consent forms – Templates used will be approved by UN prior to this FGDs/Stakeholder Roundtable. (Participants will be asked to review the templates, ask questions, and sign the consent forms. A copy of a consent form, unsigned, will be offered to each participant. Some will want a copy, others will not, but the evaluation team will always offer to provide one).
- Please ensure that all members of the focus group respond to the following:
  - Specify your position and your level of seniority
  - Present your organization / department / section (since the focus group roundtable will include cross stakeholder groups)
  - Present your links to the UNPF and/or to partnership arrangements (if applicable).
- Name tags will be distributed for the FGD/roundtable (first names only) for face to face sessions.
- Basic guidelines will be provided for the focus group/roundtable. These will be reviewed with participants and posted for everyone to see. These guidelines will include the following:

- If you feel uncomfortable during the meeting, you have the right to leave or to pass on any question. There is no consequence for leaving. Being here is voluntary.
  - Keep personal stories “in the room”; do not share other participants’ information or what anybody else said outside of the focus group/roundtable.
  - Everyone’s ideas should be respected.
  - One person talks at a time please...Everyone has the right to talk. (The facilitator(s) may ask someone who is talking a lot to step back and give others a chance to talk and may ask a person who isn’t talking if he or she has anything to share).
  - Everybody has the right to pass on a question.
- Participants should know that evaluators will be taking notes about what is discussed, but that individual names or identifying information will not be attached to comments.
  - At the end of the process all those participating will be thanked and told how important their participation has been to the evaluation being conducted.

**If you have questions about the evaluation, or to obtain more information, ask questions about the research procedures, express concerns about your participation, or report illness, injury or other problems, please contact UN Lao PDR: [banthida.komphasouk@un.org](mailto:banthida.komphasouk@un.org)**

**Agreement:** Unless you say otherwise prior to beginning the interviews, our understanding will be that you agree to participate in the evaluation of the Lao PDR UNPF as described above.

Signature of key informant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of key informant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of witness \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of witness \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship between witness and key informant \_\_\_\_\_

### Evaluation Questions and Responses:

Especially in mixed groups, the facilitator(s) should take pains to ensure that views of all stakeholders participating in the focus group are considered:

This includes gender equity sensitivities and other intersectional matters (e.g., ethnic minorities).

All have a right to have their unique perspective heard.

The questions below are partly from the Terms of Reference and partly probes or questions added to explore with the participants several issues discovered during data gathering.

<b>Relevance:</b>	
20. Has the UN System supported achievement of national development goals and targets in alignment to relevant national plans and frameworks for Lao PDR's 8 <sup>th</sup> NSEDP?	
20.1. Has the UN system paid proper attention to regional and cross-border issues of importance, e.g., ASEAN, Mekong and other cross border issues of importance?	
– Responses	
21. To what extent did the UNPF foster synergies among agencies and involve concerted efforts to optimize results and avoid duplication?	
2.1. COVID 19? (Related issues with respect to e.g., health, economic well-being, human security, etc.)	
– Responses	
22. Has the UN system remained responsive to emerging and unforeseen needs of Lao PDR and its people?	
– Responses	
23. To what extent has interagency cooperation and collaboration with other entities facilitated or hampered the achievement of results?	
– 4.1 Using an assessment of the evaluation criteria, how has the UNCT contributed to national development results in Lao?	
– Responses	

Perception of relevance according to the focus group interviewed:	
Negative	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>
Positive	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Effectiveness:**

24. To what extent has the UN system promoted or supported policies consistent with each other and across sectors, given the multi-sectorial nature of economic development?

5.1 Have UN policies been used effectively as partnership tools?

Responses

25. Has the cooperation framework strengthened the position, credibility and reliability of the UN system as a partner for government and other relevant actors?

Responses

26. To what extent has interagency cooperation and collaboration with other entities facilitated or hampered the achievement of results?

– Perception of effectiveness according to the focus group interviewed:

– Negative

– ☐

– Neutral

– ☐

– Positive ☐

– ☐

– Perception of Quality of Services and Referral according to the focus group interviewed:

– Negative

– ☐

– Neutral

– ☐

– Positive

– ☐

**Efficiency:**

<p>7. Has the Cooperation Framework reduced transaction costs for partners? 7.1 What factors have affected UNAFPs working together to achieve the UNPF strategic intent and principles?</p> <p>7.2 What factors have affected the UNCT support and contributions through the UNPF highlighting good practices and bottlenecks?</p> <p>7.3 To what extent has the UNPF outcomes related to Human Development been achieved?</p> <p>7.4 To what extent has the UNPF outcomes related to Inclusive Growth, Livelihoods and Resilience been achieved?</p> <p>7.5 To what extent has the UNPF achieved outcomes related to Governance, Rule of Law and Participation in National Decision-Making been achieved?</p>
– Responses
<p>8. Was the Cooperation Framework supported by integrated funding framework and by adequate funding instruments?</p> <p>8.1 What were the performance, progress or gaps in the UNPF support to national goals and priorities?</p>
– Responses

– Perception of efficiency according to the focus group interviewed:	
– Negative	– <input type="checkbox"/>
– Neutral	– <input type="checkbox"/>
– Positive	– <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Sustainability:</b>
<p>9. Has the UN system support been extended in such a way to build national and local capacities to ensure long term, sustainable gains?</p> <p>9.1 What other types of partners have been approached to ensure the sustainability, e.g., private sector?</p>

– Responses	
10. To what extent has the UN programming assisted Lao's government to <b>scaled-up to achieve its goal of becoming a middle-income country?</b> 10.1 Can the UN continue to be a catalyst?	
– Responses	
11. To what extent has the UN system helped to support Lao PDR's journey towards becoming a sustainable middle-income country?	
– Responses	

–	
Perception of sustainability according to the focus group interviewed:	
– Negative	– <input type="checkbox"/>
– Neutral	– <input type="checkbox"/>
– Positive	– <input type="checkbox"/>
–	–

<b>Cross-Cutting:</b>
12. Has the UN system's support been extended in a way that promotes gender equity in Lao PDR? – 12.1 To what extent did UNPF make use and promote gender equality standards and principles (e.g., participation, non-discrimination, accountability, etc.) to achieve its goals?
– Responses
13. Has the UN system supported followed the principles of a HRs based approach? – 13.1 To what extent did UNPF make use of and promote human rights standards and principles to achieve its goals?
– Responses

<p>14. Has the UN system support been designed and delivered following the programming principles of environmental sustainability?</p> <p>– 14.1 To what extent did UNPF effectively use the principles of environmental sustainability to strengthen its contribution to national development results?</p>	
<p>– Responses</p>	
<p>15. Have the programming principles of RBM been used to monitor and track results?</p> <p>15.1 To what extent did UNPF make use of programming principles of RBM to monitor and track its results?</p>	
<p>– Responses</p>	
<p>16. Has the overall UN program been designed with programming principle of capacity development at its core?</p> <p>16.1 To what extent has UNPF been designed with the programming principles of capacity building at its core?</p> <p>–</p>	
<p>– Responses</p>	
<p>–</p>	
<p>– Perception of equity and gender according to the focus group interviewed:</p>	
– Negative	– <input type="checkbox"/>
– Neutral	– <input type="checkbox"/>
– Positive	– <input type="checkbox"/>
	–
<p><b>Looking Forward:</b></p>	
<p>17. What are the lessons learned that could be identified for informing the planning and decision-making of the UNSDCF 2022-2026?</p> <p>– 17.1 What specific recommendations should be included in the 2022-2026 UNSDCF?</p>	
<p>– Responses</p>	



18. Has the current UNPF 2017-2021 contributed to preparedness for emergency situations?

– Responses

– Perception of equity and gender according to the focus group interviewed:

– Negative – ☐

– Neutral – ☐

– Positive – ☐

– Conclusion: Lessons Learned and Recommendations

– 19. What are the main lessons (success and failure factors) that you would draw from the work of implementing the current UNPF in Lao PDR?

– Responses

– R1 26. What are the main recommendations you would make to inform the development of the next phase and scale up which would avoid making mistakes going forward?

– Responses

## SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

### FOR Government REPRESENTATIVES

#### EMAIL INVITATION

**Subject:** Survey for the Evaluation of the “United Nations Partnership Framework - UNPF”

The Lao PDR UN Country Team (UNCT) is currently evaluating its UNPF. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the extent to which the UNPF outcomes are aligned and contribute to the national development priorities set forth in the 8th NSEDP and to determine the extent to which UNPF outcomes have been attained. As you have been informed in a previous email, the UNPF is presently being evaluated by an independent evaluation team of consultants employed by Le Groupe-conseil Baastel. As an important component of this evaluation, our team has prepared this online survey (OLS) for government representatives working with UNCT agencies.

**Our records indicate that your institution was involved with a UN Agency**, which is why we are requesting your participation to an OLS (see below for survey link) administered within the context of the evaluation. This survey has been prepared and is managed directly by us, at Le Groupe Conseil Baastel. It will take approximately 10–15 minutes of your time to fill out the OLS questionnaire. We invite you to provide additional qualitative information to explain and/or detail your responses when you believe it to be relevant in the available answer boxes.

All your contributions will be **strictly confidential** and will be highly valuable to help understand the relevance and the effectiveness of the UNPF as well as to improve them in the future. Your responses will be transferred to a database accessible solely by the independent evaluator.

**We thank you in advance for your help and your responses.**

#### SURVEY INTRODUCTION

Dear Sir or Madam:

Welcome to the online survey (OLS) for the evaluation of the Lao PDR UNPF.

The OLS is designed to provide useful information that will help improve the UNPF as a whole and help generate constructive recommendations in order to strengthen all UN agencies work in Lao PDR. Your participation in this OLS is especially important. A summary of the recommendations will be made available to relevant stakeholders.

We kindly request you to respond to this survey by **TBD<sup>64</sup>**. Your insights and responses are greatly appreciated and are valuable to the success of the UNPF. Your individual feedback will be kept confidential to Baastel.

This survey has been designed and is managed by Mr. Alexandre Daoust. You may contact Mr. Daoust via alexandre.daoust@baastel.com if you have any questions on the survey.

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<sup>64</sup> Date to be determined

We thank you in advance for your valuable contribution to this important evaluation exercise.

<b>Section A: Identification</b>
1. For which institution do you work for? (open-ended questions)
2. With which UN agency have you been working? (please select from list, more than one response possible)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> UNICEF</li> <li><input type="radio"/> WFP</li> <li><input type="radio"/> UNFPA</li> <li><input type="radio"/> UNDP</li> <li><input type="radio"/> ILO</li> <li><input type="radio"/> IOM</li> <li><input type="radio"/> UNHCR</li> <li><input type="radio"/> ...</li> </ul>
* Please note all questions will be related to the agency(ies) selected here.
3. What is your current position? (open-ended question)
4. Please specify your gender
Male, Female, Rather not Gender diverse (specify)
5. Are you able to clearly identify activities delivered by the UN agency you work with among those delivered by other programs?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Yes</li> <li><input type="radio"/> No</li> <li><input type="radio"/> I don't know</li> </ul>
6. How long have you personally been involved with the UN agency you work with? (open-ended question)
7. When did your institution start receiving support from the UN agency mentioned above? (open-ended question)
<b>Section B: Relevance</b>
8. How satisfied are you, in general, with the process followed for the identification and planning of the UN agency activities?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Very satisfied</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Somewhat satisfied</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Somewhat unsatisfied</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Very unsatisfied</li> </ul>
9. To what extent is the UN approach aligned with the approach of your institution?

- Very aligned
- Aligned
- Misaligned
- Very misaligned
- N/A Do not know

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

10. To what extent has the UN's actions and support been aligned with your institutional plans and frameworks for Lao PDR's 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP?

- Very aligned
- Aligned
- Misaligned
- Very misaligned
- N/A Do not know

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

### Section C: Effectiveness

11. (If worked with multiple agencies) To what extent do you consider the UN agencies you have worked with have coordinated their efforts?

- A lot of coordination
- Some coordination
- Minimal coordination
- No coordination

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

12. To what extent do you consider that during the last five years, the UN has enhanced its credibility and reliability for your institution (cross table for the two variables)?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

13. In your opinion, to what extent has the UN advanced the establishment of partnerships between national and regional counterparts, civil society, and/or the private sector?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent

- Not at all
- I do not know

Please describe these partnerships:

14. To what extent has interagency cooperation and collaboration with other entities enhanced the possibility of achieving joint results with your institution (cross table for the two variables)?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

15. To what extent has the UN contributed to increasing coordination among national/ regional institutions and organizations (cross table for the two variables)?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

#### Section D: Efficiency

18. How satisfied are you with the human, knowledge and material resources made available by the UN to achieve the joint results (cross table for the two variables)?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

19. How satisfied are you with the timeliness with which UN activities were delivered?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer (e.g. challenges or constraints that affected the timeliness implementation):

**Section E: Sustainability**

22. How satisfied are you with the involvement of your institution in UN's planning and implementation process?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

23. To what extent has the UN programming assisted Lao's government to scaled-up to achieve its goal of becoming a middle-income country?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

**Cross-cutting Principles**

24. To what extent has the UN system's support been extended in a way that promotes gender equity, human rights, environmental sustainability, RBM use in Lao PDR (cross table for the two variables)?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all
- I do not know

Please describe these partnerships:

**FOR UN Agencies****Section A: Identification**

1. For which UN agency have you been working? (please select from list)

- ☐ UNICEF
- ☐ WFP
- ☐ UNFPA
- ☐ UNDP
- ☐ ILO
- ☐ IOM
- ☐ UNHCR

* Please note all questions will be related to the agency(ies) selected here.
2. What is your current position? (open-ended question)
3. With which national and regional institutions and organizations do you work with? (Open ended question)
4. Please specify your gender  Male, Female, Rather not say Gender diverse (specify)
5. How long have you been working for the UN agency? (open-ended question)
<b>Section B: Relevance</b>
6. To what extent is the process followed for the identification and planning of the UN agency activities participative (with national and regional institutions and organizations – cross table)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To a large extent</li> <li>• To some extent</li> <li>• To a small extent</li> <li>• Not at all</li> </ul> Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:
7. To what extent is the UN approach aligned with the approach of national and regional institutions and organizations (Cross table)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very aligned</li> <li>• Aligned</li> <li>• Misaligned</li> <li>• Very misaligned</li> <li>• N/A Do not know</li> </ul> Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:
8. To what extent has the UN's actions and support been aligned with your institutional plans and frameworks for Lao PDR's 8 <sup>th</sup> NSEDP? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very aligned</li> <li>• Aligned</li> <li>• Misaligned</li> <li>• Very misaligned</li> <li>• N/A Do not know</li> </ul> Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:
<b>Section C: Effectiveness</b>
11. To what extent do you consider the UN agencies have coordinated their efforts to support the country towards achieving SDGs? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lot of coordination</li> <li>• Some coordination</li> </ul>

- Minimal coordination
- No coordination

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

12. To what extent do you consider that during the last five years, the UN has enhanced its position, credibility, and reliability for your institution (cross table for the three variables)?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

13. In your opinion, to what extent has the UN advanced the establishment of partnerships between national and regional counterparts, civil society, and/or the private sector?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all
- I do not know

Please describe these partnerships:

14. To what extent has UN interagency cooperation and collaboration with other entities enhanced the possibility of reaching SDGs targets (cross table for the two variables)?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

15. To what extent has the UN contributed to increasing coordination among national/ regional institutions and organizations (cross table for the two variables)?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

#### Section D: Efficiency



18. How satisfied are you with the human, knowledge and material resources made available by the UN to reach SDG targets (cross table for the two variables)?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

19. How satisfied are you with the timeliness with which UN activities were delivered?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer (e.g. challenges or constraints that affected the timeliness implementation):

#### Section E: Sustainability

22. How satisfied are you with the participation of national and regional institutions and organizations in UN's planning and implementation process (cross table for all variables type of organizations)?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

23. To what extent has the UN programming assisted Lao's government to scaled-up to achieve its goal of becoming a middle-income country?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

#### Cross-cutting Principles

24. To what extent has the UN system's support been extended in a way that promotes gender equity, human rights, environmental sustainability, RBM use in Lao PDR (cross table for the two variables)?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

- I do not know

Please describe these partnerships:

### For Development partners

#### Section A: Identification

1. For which institution do you work for? (open-ended questions)

2. With which UN agency have you been working? (please select from list, more than one response possible)

- ☐ UNICEF
- ☐ WFP
- ☐ UNFPA
- ☐ UNDP
- ☐ ILO
- ☐ IOM
- ☐ UNHCR
- ☐ ...

\* Please note all questions will be related to the agency(ies) selected here. If more than one agency, question on coherence to be prompted

3. What is your current position? (open-ended question)

4. Please specify your gender

Male, Female, Rather not say Gender diverse (specify)

5. Are you able to clearly identify activities delivered by the UN agency you work with among those delivered by other programs?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

6. How long have you personally been involved with the UN agency you work with? (open-ended question)

7. When did your institution start partnership with the UN agency mentioned above? (open-ended question)

#### Section B: Relevance

8. How satisfied are you, in general, with the process followed for the identification and planning of the UN agency activities?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

9. To what extent is the UN approach aligned with the approach of your institution?

- Very aligned
- Aligned
- Misaligned
- Very misaligned
- N/A Do not know

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

10. To what extent has the UN's actions and support been aligned with your institutional plans and frameworks for Lao PDR's 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP?

- Very aligned
- Aligned
- Misaligned
- Very misaligned
- N/A Do not know

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

### Section C: Effectiveness

11. (If worked with multiple agencies) To what extent do you consider the UN agencies you have worked with have coordinated their efforts?

- A lot of coordination
- Some coordination
- Minimal coordination
- No coordination

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

12. To what extent do you consider that UN complements well in the sectors that your organization is involved in?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all
- N/A Do not know

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

13. To what extent do you consider that UN in Lao PDR has the mandate, capacity and positioning in the following thematic area: Inclusive Growth, Livelihoods and Social Protection; Climate Change;

Disaster Management and Environment; Basic Education, Health, Water and Sanitation; Food Security and Nutrition; Institution building and Access to Justice (cross table for the variables)

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

14. To what extent do you consider that during the last five years, the UN has enhanced its credibility and reliability for your institution (cross table for the two variables)?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

15. For which of the following does your organization view UN in Lao PDR as an important partner: (please select from list, more than one response possible)

- Normative framework
- Convening power
- Monitoring of SDGs
- Policy Advice
- Capacity building
- Organizing development discourse
- Networks

16. To what extent does your organization view UN in Lao PDR as an important partner for: 1. its normative framework 2. convening power 3. monitoring of SDGs 4. policy advice 5. capacity building 6. organizing development discourse 7. Networks (cross table for the variables)

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

17. In your opinion, to what extent has the UN advanced the establishment of partnerships between national and regional counterparts, civil society, and/or the private sector?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent

- Not at all
- I do not know

Please describe these partnerships:

18. To what extent has interagency cooperation and collaboration with other entities enhanced the possibility of achieving joint results with your institution (cross table for the two variables)?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

19. To what extent has the UN contributed to increasing coordination among national/ regional institutions and organizations (cross table for the two variables)?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

#### Section D: Efficiency

20. How satisfied are you with the human, knowledge and material resources made available by the UN to achieve the joint results (cross table for the two variables)?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

21. How satisfied are you with the timeliness with which UN activities were delivered?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer (e.g. challenges or constraints that affected the timeliness implementation):

#### Section E: Sustainability

22. How satisfied are you with the involvement of your institution in UN's planning and implementation process?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

23. To what extent has the UN programming assisted Lao's government to scaled-up to achieve its goal of becoming a middle-income country?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

24. In your opinion, what should UN in Lao PDR do **more** in next 5 years?

25. In your opinion, what should UN in Lao PDR do **less** in next 5 years?

26. In your opinion what can UN in Lao PDR do to best support the Government in accelerating SDG progress?

27. In your opinion what can UN in Lao PDR do to support your organization towards SDGs / national development goals?

### Cross-cutting Principles

28. To what extent has the UN system's support been extended in a way that promotes gender equity, human rights, environmental sustainability, RBM use in Lao PDR (cross table for the two variables)?

- To a large extent
- To some extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all
- I do not know

Please describe these partnerships:

## ANNEX 4: UNPF STAKEHOLDERS

Table 1: UN Mapping and number of supported projects

No	Agency	# projects	OC 1	OC 2	OC 3	OC 4	OC 5	OC 6	OC 7	OC 8	JSC	RGs
1	FAO	36	1		13	1	4	17			x	
2	IAEA	15			1		4	7	3			
3	IFAD	4						4				
4	ILO	7	4	1		1			1			
5	IOM	12	4	3	2				1	2		
6	ITC	4	4									
7	UN-Habitat	9			6		2	1			x	
8	UN Women	3	2							1		
9	UNAIDS	1					1					
10	UNCDF	4	2	1					1			
11	UNCITRAL	3								3		
12	UNDP	38	9		20				5	4	x	x
13	UNEP	5			5							
14	UNESCO	8		1	2	3			2			
15	UNFPA	5		1		1	3				x	x
16	UNICEF	15		1	1	2	4	1	4	2	x	x
17	UNIDO	4			3				1			
18	UNODC	10	1				1			8		
19	UNOPS	7				1	5			1		
20	WFP	4			1	1		1	1		x	x
21	WHO	5					5				x	
22	UNV	1							1			
23	UNDRR	4			4							
24	UNESCAP	6						6				
	Total	210	27	8	58	10	29	37	20	21		

Source: UN project V1 and compiled by ETTable 2-A: Government Mapping

List of Partners - UNPF 2017-2021		UNPF										UNFPA CP	WFP CP	UNDP CP	FAO CP
		OC 1	OC 2	OC 3	OC 4	OC 5	OC 6	OC 7	OC 8	JSC	RG	on going	on going	on going	Planned
<b>Government</b>															
1	Ministry of Planning and Investment	x		x			x	x		x		x	x	x	x
2	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare	x	x		x					x	x		x	x	x
3	Ministry of Health		x		x	x	x			x	x	x	x		x
4	Ministry of Education and Sports		x		x		x			x	x	x	x		
5	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment			x						x	x		x	x	x
6	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry			x			x			x	x		x	x	x
7	Ministry of Public Works and Transport					x				x					
8	Ministry of Home Affairs							x		x	x		x	x	
9	Ministry of Finance							x		x					
10	Ministry of Justice								x	x				x	
11	Ministry of Foreign Affairs								x	x				x	x
12	Ministry of Public Security								x						
13	Bank of Lao PDR	x													
14	The National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children					x			x						
15	Lao Federation of Trade Unions	x	x		x										
16	Lao Women's Union				x		x					x	x	x	x
17	Office of Supreme People's Prosecutor								x						
18	People's Supreme Court								x						
19	Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI)	x	x		x									x	
20	State Audit							x							
21	Ministry of Industry and Commerce									x					
22	Ministry of Energy and Mines														
23	Ministry of Information and Culture														
24	Ministry of Science and Technology														
25	National Assembly														
26	Lao Youth Union											x			

Table 2 - B: Government Mapping (at department level)



Ministries/Govt. agencies	Department	UN partners
MOLSW	Dept of Skills Development and Employment	IOM
	National Regulatory Authority for Mine/UXO in Lao PDR (NRA)	UNDP
	Lao Social Security Organization	ILO
	Disaster Management Dept.	UNDRR
	Dept. of Labour Management	ILO/IOM
	Dept. of Social Welfare	IOM/UNDP/UNDRR
MPI	Dept. of International Cooperation	UN
	Dept. of Planning	UNFPA
	Dept. of Investment Promotion	UNDP
	Center for Development Policy (CDR)	UNFPA/UNICEF
	Lao Statistics Bureau	UNFPA/UNICEF
MOFA	Dept. of International Organization	UN/DESA/IOM
MAF	Dept. of Planning and Cooperation	IFAD/FAO
	Dept. of Agriculture	ITC
	Dept. of Forestry	UNDP/FAO
	National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI),	IAEA
	Dept. of Livestock and Fisheries	IAEA
	Dept. of Agricultural Land and Management (DALaM)	UN-Habitat
MOJ	Dept. of International Cooperation	UNDP/UNICEF/UNWOMEN
MOH	Dept. of Planning and Cooperation	UNFPA/UNICEF/WFP
	Centre for HIV/AIDS and STI,	UNAIDS
	Midwifery schools	UNFPA
	Dept. of Food and Drug (FDD)	UNFPA
	Lao Tropical and Public Health Institute	UNFPA
	Dept. of Hygiene and Health Promotion	IAEA
	Dept. of Communicable Disease Control (DCDC)	IOM
	Dept. of Health Professional Education (DHPE)	UNFPA

MOES	Dept. of Planning and Cooperation	UNFPA/UNICEF/WFP
	Dept. of Teacher Training	UNESCO/UNFPA
	Dept. of Non-Formal Education (DNFE)	UNESCO/UNFPA
	Dept. of Technical and Vocational Education	UNFPA
	Vocational Education Development Institute (VEDI)	UNFPA
	Dept. of General Education	UNFPA
MONRE	Dept. of Climate Change	UNDP/FAO/UN-Habitat
	Dept. of Water Resources	UNDP
	Dept. of Planning and Finance	
	Dept. of Meteorology and Hydrology	
	Dept. of Disaster Management and Climate Change (DDMCC)	UNEP
	Natural Resources and Environment Statistic and Research Institute	UNIDO
	Pollution Control and Monitoring Dept.	UNIDO
MOHA	Dept. of Planning and Cooperation	UNDP/UNCDF
MPWT	Dept. of Housing and Urban Planning (DHUP)	UN-Habitat
	Dept. of Water Supply (DWS)	UN-Habitat
MOICom	Dept. of Planning and Cooperation	ITC/UNCITRAL
	Dept. Industry and Handicraft	UNIDO
MOF	Customs Dept.	UNODC/UNOPS
MEM	Institute of Renewable Energy Promotion (IREP)	UNDP
	Renewable Energy Research Institute	IAEA
	Renewable Energy and New Materials Institute	IAEA
MOIC (info.)	Heritage Dept.	UNESCO
	Mass Media Dept.	UNDP
MOPS	The Dept. of Immigration	IOM
	Office of the Supreme People's Prosecutor (OSPP)	IOM
	Laos Police Force	UNIDO
BOL	Financial Institution Dept.	UNCDF
LWU	Dept. of Planning and Cooperation	UNDP/UNFPA/UNWOMEN/WPF
	Counselling and Protection Centre for Women and Children'	IOM

LYU	Dept. of Planning and Cooperation	UNFPA/UNESCO
Lao Federation of Trade Unions		ILO
NCAWMC		UNFPA
LNCCI		UNDP/ILO/ITC
National Assembly		UNDP
Lao National Commission for Drug Control and Supervision (LCDC)		UNODC
State Inspection and Anti-Corruption Authority		UNODC
The People's Supreme Court		UNICEF
The People's Supreme Prosecutor		UNICEF/IOM
Secretariat to the National Committee on Anti-Trafficking in Persons		IOM
Provincial Government - (Attapeu province)		

**Source: UN stakeholder and project mapping\_NOV2020; UNFPA CP 6 Data Collection Itinerary\_30Oct20; UNDP CP Evaluation\_IR\_Sep 2020; WFP draft field data collection 13/09/20. Note: Survey was sent to all partners in the list**

Table 3: Other Partners Mapping

List of Partners - UNPF 2017-2021		UNPF									UNFPA CP	WFP CP	UNDP CP	FAO CP
		OC 1	OC 2	OC 3	OC 4	OC 5	OC 6	OC 7	OC 8	JSC	on going	on going	on going	Planned
Other Partners														
1	ADB	x		x		x					x			
2	World Bank	x		x	x	x	x				x	x	x	
3	Australia DFAT/Australian Embassy		x			x					x	x	x	
4	European Union				x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x
5	Japan International Cooperation Agency				x	x				x	x	x		x
6	Luxembourg Government					x					x	x	x	
7	Korea Internal Cooperation					x					x		x	x
8	Swiss Development Cooperation						x				x		x	
9	USAID						x					x	x	x
10	Global Fund					x								
11	Gavi					x								
12	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education organization				x									
13	Korea Foundation for International Health care					x								
14	Commission on Information and Accountability for Women’s and Children’s Health					x								
15	CARE International		x				x				x			
16	Oxfam		x				x							
17	Save the Children				x	x	x							
18	Plan International				x		x				x	x		
19	World Vision				x		x							
20	Child Fund				x									
21	Catholic Relief Services				x							x		
22	Helvetas						x							x
23	Village Focus Group							x						
24	Lao Bar Association							x						

Note: Survey was sent to all partners in the list

## ANNEX 5: LIST OF DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

- ADB Briefs (2020). The impact of Covid-19 on Tourism Enterprises in the Lao People's democratic Republic.
- Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (2018). Lao People's Democratic Republic: Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Vientiane, Lao PDR.
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## ANNEX 6: LIST OF PEOPLE CONSULTED

No	Name	Title	Organization
<b>Government</b>			
1.	Mr. Kanya Khammoungkhoun	Deputy Director General	Department of International Organization, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
2.	Mr. Vanthadaxay Akkharath-Sisane	Deputy Director - UN Social and Economic Affairs Division	Department of International Organization, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
3.	Ms. Viengdalat Somphet	Technical Officer, UN Social and Economic Affairs Division	Department of International Organization, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
4.	Ms. Sisomboun Ounavong	Director General	Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Planning and Investment
5.	Mr. Sysomphorn Phetdaoheuang	Deputy Director General	Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Planning and Investment
6.	Mr. Alounsith	Technical Officer	Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Planning and Investment
7.	Ms. Sipaphaphone Choulamany	Deputy Director of Division	Department of Planning, Ministry of Planning and Investment
8.	Mr. Khamphasone Bounthanavong	Technical Officer	Department of Planning, Ministry of Planning and Investment
9.	Ms. Chanthapany Mahathilath	Deputy Director of Division	Department of Administration, Lao Statistics Bureau
10.	Ms. Phuangmala Lasasy	Deputy Director of Division	Department of Social Statistics, Lao Statistics Bureau
11.	Ms. Khamkhounhuan	Technical Officer	Department of Social Statistics, Lao Statistics Bureau
12.	Mr. Canda Sinpaseuth,	Deputy Director - International Cooperation Division	Customs Department, Ministry of Finance
13.	Mr. Bouasavanh Vongbounleua	Technical Officer	Department of Disaster Management and Climate Change, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
14.	Mr. Amphayvanh Ondomdeth	Director of General Affairs Division	Department of Disaster Management and Climate Change, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
15.	Mr. Vanxay Bouttanavong	Director of Planning Division	Department of Disaster Management and Climate Change, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

No	Name	Title	Organization
16.	Mr. Bountee	Deputy Director	Department of Disaster Management and Climate Change, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
17.	Mr. Virasack Chundar	Director General	Natural Resources and Environment Statistic and Research Institute, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
18.	Mr. Oulaphone Ongkeo	Director of the Modeling Division	Natural Resources and Environment Statistic and Research Institute, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
19.	Mr. Vilayphong Sisomvang	Director General	Department of Social Welfare Department/ Secretariat of NDMC, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
20.	Mr. Bounsouan Xaiyasinh,	Director of Employment Promotion Division	Department of Skill Development and Employment, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
21.	Ms. Bouasy Thammasack	Director, Polices and Planning Division	Department of Skill Development and Employment, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
22.	Mr. Vanthieng Phommasalin	Director	Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
23.	Mr. Bouapha Bounkhamphone	Deputy Director	Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
24.	Mr. Phomma Souliyasith	Technical officer	Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
25.	Ms. Thatsamaly Saphongthong	Acting Director	Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
26.	Ms. Phonethip Sommany	Director	Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
27.	Ms. Yatkeo Phoumidalyvanh	Deputy Director	Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
28.	Mr. Phanisone Samountry	Deputy Director - International Cooperation Division	Department of Planning and Finance, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
29.	Mr. Kynong Keopaseuth	Deputy Director - Planning Division	Department of Planning and Finance, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
30.	Dr. Mr. Phouthone Southalack	Director	National Center for HIV/AIDS and STI
31.	Dr. Ms. Vanvilay Saphabmixay	Deputy Director of Administration Division	National Center for HIV/AIDS and STI
32.	Dr. Ms. Souphanthong Manichanh	Deputy Director of Administration Division	National Center for HIV/AIDS and STI
33.	Dr. Mr. Bounlerd Vilayhong	Director of Administration Division	National Center for HIV/AIDS and STI



No	Name	Title	Organization
34.	Dr. Ms. Ketmala Banchongpanith	Director of MAS Division	National Center for HIV/AIDS and STI
35.	Mr. Phetphonechay Sinlaphakit (PhD)	Deputy Director General	Department of Housing and Urban Planning, Ministry of Public Works and Transport
36.	Mr. Sengdara Duangmixay	Director of Division	Department of Housing and Urban Planning, Ministry of Public Works and Transport
37.	Mr. Lonchanh Yangjubulom	Deputy Director of Division	Department of Housing and Urban Planning, Ministry of Public Works and Transport
38.	Mr. Vongxay Phanthavong,	Deputy Secretary General	Commission for Drug Control and Supervision, Ministry of Public Security
39.	Mr. Khamnoi Xaybounheung,	Director of Division	Commission for Drug Control and Supervision, Ministry of Public Security
40.	Mr. Khamsudchay Phengsamphanh	Director of Division	Commission for Drug Control and Supervision, Ministry of Public Security
41.	Ms. Phetsakhone Duangthongsouk	Domestic Coordination and International Cooperation Division	The Department of Immigration, Ministry of Public Security
42.	Ms. Soudalak Phounsavanh,	Deputy Director	Counselling and Protection Centre for Women and Children, Lao Women's Union
43.	Ms. Manivone Somleudy	Technical Officer	Counselling and Protection Centre for Women and Children, Lao Women's Union
44.	Ms. Vilayvanh Keopasert	Deputy Director General	Department of Planning and International Cooperation, Lao Women's Union
45.	Ms. Chanhom Vongthongkham	Director of Division	Department of Planning and International Cooperation, Lao Women's Union
46.	Mr. Chantho Milattanapheng	Director General	Institute of Renewable Energy Promotion, Ministry of Energy and Mines
47.	Mr. Sermkham Thummavongsa (PhD)	Deputy Director General	Institute of Renewable Energy Promotion, Ministry of Energy and Mines
48.	Mr. Vithayaphone Phiouon	Technical Officer and International Cooperation Coordinator, Executive Information Division.	Institute of Renewable Energy Promotion, Ministry of Energy and Mines
49.	Mr. Somfong Soulivanh	Deputy Director General	Department of Industry and Handicraft, Ministry of Industry and Commerce
50.	Mr. Kinon Kunvisith	Director of Division	Department of Industry and Handicraft, Ministry of Industry and Commerce

No	Name	Title	Organization
51.	Mr. Khamsonvanh Phutdavong	Deputy Director General	Department of Planning and Cooperation, Ministry of Industry and Commerce
52.	Mr. Sounakhone Keoviengkham	Director General	Attapeu Provincial Planning and Investment Department
<b>UN</b>			
53.	Ms. Sara Sekkenes	UN Resident Coordinator	UN RCO
54.	Mr. Matthew Johnson-Idan	Senior Economist	UN RCO
55.	Ms. Lin Yang	Head of RC Office	UN RCO
56.	Ms. Banthida Komphasouk	Data Management and Result Monitoring/ Reporting Officer	UN RCO
57.	Mr. Nasar Hayat	Representative	FAO
58.	Mr. Aleksandar Nikolovski	Chief Technical Officer	FAO
59.	Ms. Yee Un	Program Support Officer	FAO
60.	Mr. Soulivanh Pattivong	Country Programme Officer	IFAD
61.	Ms. Anne-Katrin Pfister	Senior Programme Coordinator	ITC, Vienna
62.	Mr. Thongdeng Silakoune	Country Manager	UNAIDS
63.	Ms. Ricarda Rieger	Resident Representative	UNDP
64.	Ms. Mariam Khan	Representative	UNFPA
65.	Ms. Siriphone Sally Sakulku	Sexual and Reproductive Health Programme Coordinator	UNFPA
66.	Mr. Oloth Sene-Asa	National Programme Analyst, Sexual and Reproductive Health	UNFPA
67.	Ms. Sisouvanh Vorabouth	, Gender Programme Analyst	UNFPA
68.	Mr. Avi Sarkar	Regional Advisor, South East Asia	UN-Habitat
69.	Ms. Pia Rebello Britto	Representative	UNICEF
70.	Dr. Ms. Annemarie Schuller Tot Peursum	UN Joint Programme Coordinator	UNICEF
71.	Ms. Leotes Helin	Chief of Education Section	UNICEF
72.	Mr. Sommai Faming	Country Representative	UNIDO
73.	Mr. Erlend Audunson Falch	Programme Manager and Officer-in-Charge UNODC Country Office	UNODC
74.	Mr. Jan Delbaere	Country Director and Representative	WFP

No	Name	Title	Organization
75.	Dr. Mark Jacobs	Representative	WHO
76.	Dr Yu Lee Park	HSD Technical Officer	WHO
77.	Mr. Paul Martin	Regional Technical Advisor, ASEAN & Pacific Local Development Practice	UNCDF
78.	Mr. Graeme Buckley	Regional Director	ILO, Bangkok
79.	Mr. Charles Davies	Programme Management Expert	UN DESA, New York
80.	Dr. Benno Böer	Chief, Natural Science Unit	UNESCO Bangkok
81.	Ms. Ushio Miura	Programme Specialist, Future of Learning, Section for Educational Innovation and Skills Development	UNESCO Bangkok
82.	Mr. Ichiro Miyazawa	Programme Specialist, Life long Learning	UNESCO Bangkok
83.	Ms. Nantawan Hinds	Programme Specialist, Education	UNESCO Bangkok
84.	Ms. Kamonrat Chayamarit	Programme Specialist	UNESCO Bangkok
85.	Mr. Nyi Nyi Thaung	Programme Specialist, Education	UNESCO Bangkok
86.	Ms. Shareen Tuladhar	Chief of Mission	IOM
87.	Ms. Zena Van Bommel-Faulkner	Head of Office (to June 2020)	IOM
<b>Development Partners</b>			
88.	Mr. Rattanatay Luanglatbandith	Public Management Specialist	ADB
89.	Mr. Ignacio Colina – Cruz	Programme Manager	EU
90.	Dr. Chansy Phimpacanh	Deputy Chair	Lao CSO Coordination Committee (LCCC)
91.	Mr. Viengkhone Souiyou	Head of Lao PDR CSO Coordination Office	Lao PDR CSO Coordination Office
92.	Mr. Michael Ronning	Country Representative	USAID
93.	Ms. Silavanh Vongphosy	Project Management Specialist – Governance and Vulnerable Populations	USAID
94.	Mr. Nicolas Tasch	Attaché	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg Embassy
95.	Mr. Khamphy Khamavong	Active Citizenship and Gender Justice Programme Manager	OXFAM

No	Name	Title	Organization
96.	Ms. Chaipasird Phunphouvanna	Gender Justice Programme Coordinator	OXFAM
97.	Ms. Yen Mai	INGOs Coordinator	INGO Network
98.	Mr. Viengsamay Vongkhamsao	Country Director	PSI Laos
99.	Mr. Soumya Brata Guha	Country Director	Plan International Laos
100.	Ms. Viengsamay Srithirath	Senior Country Officer	World Bank
101.	Mr. Phouthaphone Vorabouth	Program Officer	Japan International Cooperation Agency
102.	Ms. Anna Dyason	First Secretary, Education and Governance	Australia DFAT/Australian Embassy
103.	Ms. Bounmy Souvannalath	Senior Program Officer	Australia DFAT/Australian Embassy
104.	Mr. Christian Engler – (SDC)	Deputy Director of Cooperation for the Mekong Region	Swiss Development Cooperation

ANNEX 7: LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS CONSULTED

UN	# of KIs requested	Status
RC	1	Done
FAO	1	Done
IFAD	1	Done
ILO	1	Done
IOM	1	Done
ITC	1	Done
UN Habitat	1	Done
UNAIDS	1	Done
UNCDF	1	Done
UNDP	1	Done
UNESCO	1	Done
UNFPA	1	Done
UNICEF	1	Done
UNIDO	1	Done
UNODC	1	Done
WFP	1	Done
WHO	1	Done
UNDESA	1	Done
Total	18	18

GOV.	Dept.s	# of KIs requested	Status
MOLSW	Dept of Skills Development and Employment	1	Done
	Disaster Management Dept.	1	Done
MPI	Dept. of International Cooperation	1	Done
	Dept. of Planning	1	Done
	Lao Statistics Bureau	1	Done
MOFA	Dept. of International Organization	1	Done
MAF	Dept. of Planning and Cooperation	1	Done
	Dept. of Agriculture	1	Done
MOH	Centre for HIV/AIDS and STI,	1	Done
MONRE	Dept. of Disaster Management and Climate Change (DDMCC)	1	Done
	Natural Resources and Environment Statistic and Research Institute	1	Done
MPWT	Dept. of Housing and Urban Planning (DHUP)	1	Done
MOIC	Dept. of Planning and Cooperation	1	Done
	Dept. Industry and Handicraft	1	Done
MOF	Customs Dept.	1	Done
MEM	Renewable Energy Research Institute	1	Done
MOPS	The Dept. of Immigration	1	Done
LWU	Dept. Planning and Cooperation and Counselling and Protection Centre for Women and Children'	1	Done
Lao National Commission for Drug Control and Supervision		1	Done
Provincial Government/DPI - (Attapeu province)		1	inputs provided in writing
Total		20	19

Other Partners	# of KIs requested	Status
ADB	1	Done
Australia DFAT/Australian Embassy	1	Done
European Union	1	Done
Japan International Cooperation Agency	1	Done
Korea Internal Cooperation Agency	1	Declined
Luxembourg Government	1	Done
Swiss Development Cooperation	1	Done
USAID	1	Done
World Bank	1	Done
CSO Network Coordinator and their members	1	Done
INGO Network Coordinator and their members	1	Done
Oxfam	1	Done
Village Focus Group	1	Declined
Total	13	11

## ANNEX 8: SURVEY RESULTS

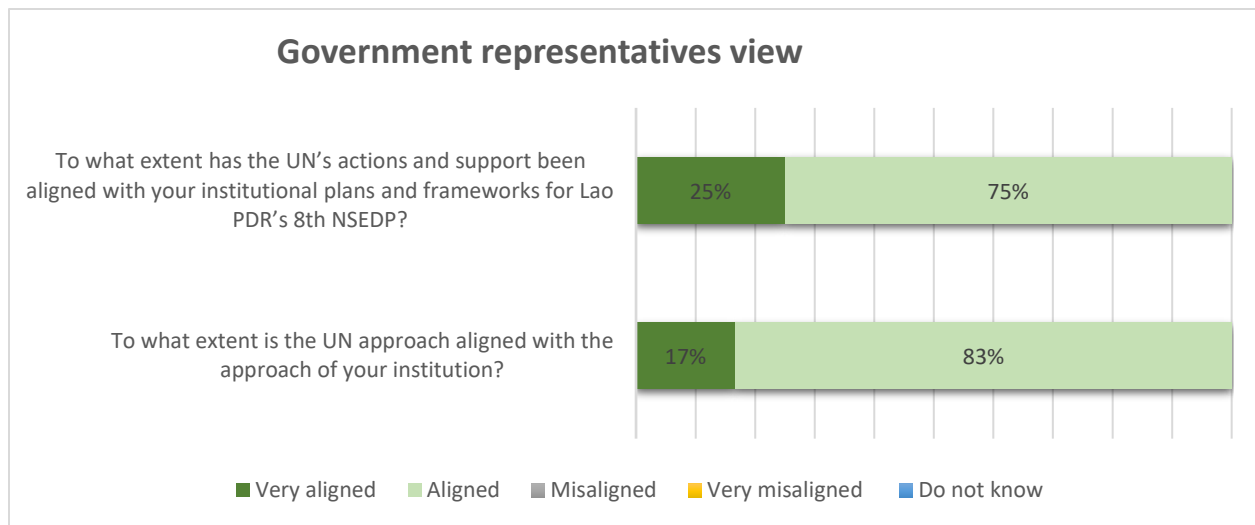
Three online surveys were carried out as part of the evaluation of UNPF in Lao PDR conducted by Le Groupe-conseil Baastel Itée. Online survey aims to gather the views of a wide range of stakeholders that have been involved in the UNPF, in order to obtain insights and inform lessons that can feed into the next UNPF. Each survey was adapted and sent respectively to government representatives (an audience of 85 persons), UN agencies representatives (an audience of 23 persons) and development partners (an audience of 14 persons). The response rate was 26% for the government representatives survey, 57% for the UN agencies survey, and 14% for the development partners survey. Results of the development partners have not been analysed since only one (1) questionnaire out of two was fully completed.

	Government representatives survey	UN Agencies Survey	Development partners survey
Population	85	23	14
Emails sent	85	23	14
Questionnaire filled through email	8	8	2
Questionnaire filled through the anonymous link	14	5	0
Total of responses	22	13	2
Response rate	26 %	57%	14%

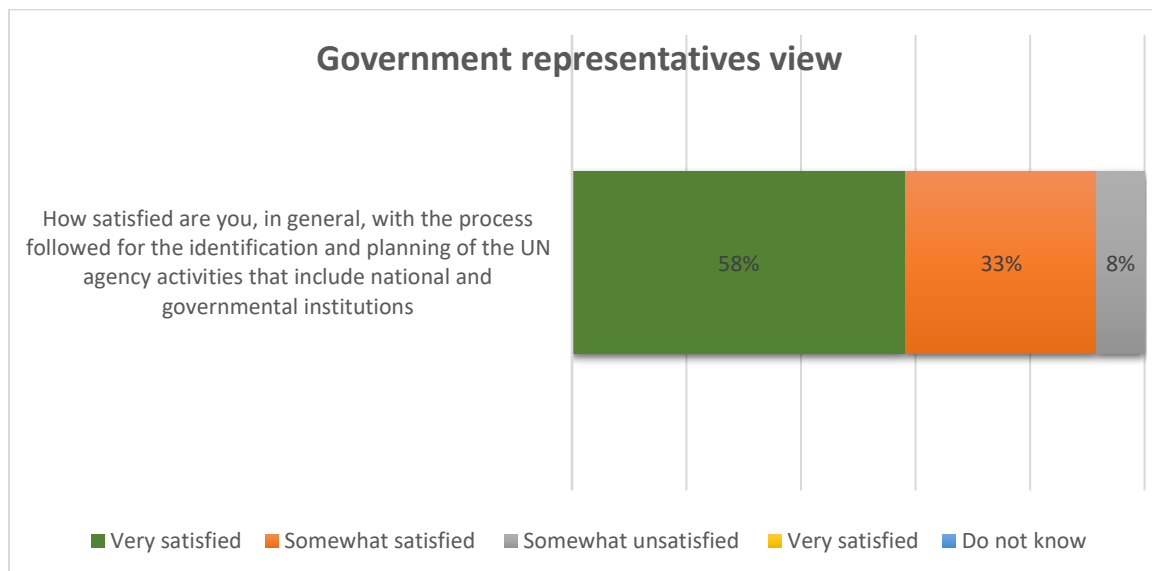
### Relevance

#### Government representatives

Government representatives' point of views are very positive regarding the alignment of UN's actions and support with government entities approach and their plans and frameworks for Lao PDR's 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP. In fact, government representatives think that UN's actions and support are very aligned ( **25%**) and aligned (**75%**) with their institutional plans and frameworks for Lao PDR's 8<sup>th</sup> NSED. **17%** of government representatives state that the UN is very aligned with the approach of their institution while **83%** state that it is aligned.



58% of government representatives are very satisfied with the process followed for the identification and planning of UN Agency activities that include national and governmental institutions. 33 % of government representatives are somewhat satisfied. 8% are somewhat unsatisfied.



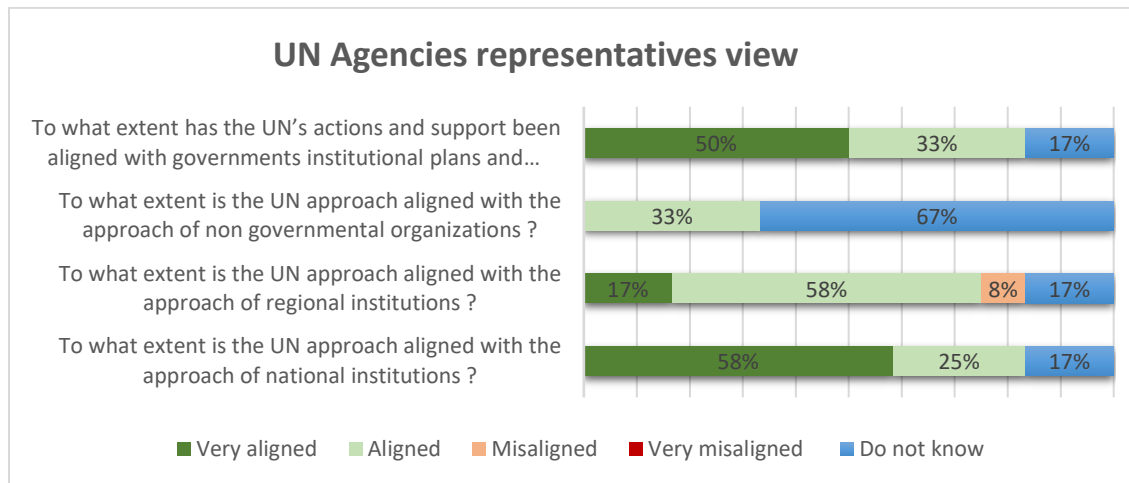
## UN Agencies

When it comes to the alignment of UN's actions and support with governments institutional plans and framework for Lao PDR's 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP, **50 %** of UN Agencies representatives state that they are very aligned, **33%** think they are aligned and **17%** do not know.

For the alignment of UN approach with the approach of NGO, **67 %** of UN agencies representatives do not know while **33%** think they are aligned.

Concerning the alignment of UN Approach with the approach of regional institutions, **17 %** UN agencies representatives state that they are very aligned. For **58%**, they are aligned while **8%** think that they are misaligned and **17%** do not know.

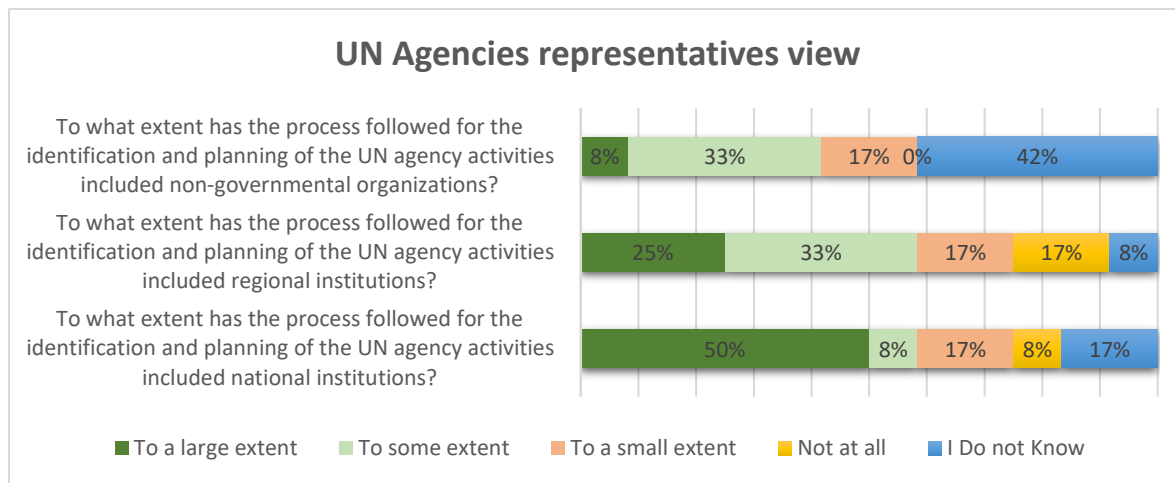
When it comes to the alignment of UN approach with the approach of national institutions, **58%** of UN agencies representatives think they are very aligned. For **25%** they are aligned while **17%** do not know.



To the question related to the inclusion of:

- NGO in the process followed for the identification and planning of the UN Agency activities
  - 8% of UN Agencies representatives answer that they were included to a large extent
  - 33 % state they were included to some extent
  - 17% think they were included to a small extent
  - 42% do not know.
- Regional institutions in the process followed for the identification and planning of the UN Agency activities
  - 25% of UN Agencies representatives answer that they were included to a large extent
  - 33 % state they were included to some extent
  - 17% think they were included to a small extent
  - 17% state that they were not included at all.
  - 8% do not know
- National institutions in the process followed for the identification and planning of the UN Agency activities
  - 50% of UN Agencies representatives answer that they were included to a large extent
  - 8% state they were included to some extent
  - 17% think they were included to a small extent
  - 8% state that they were not included at all.
  - 17% do not know

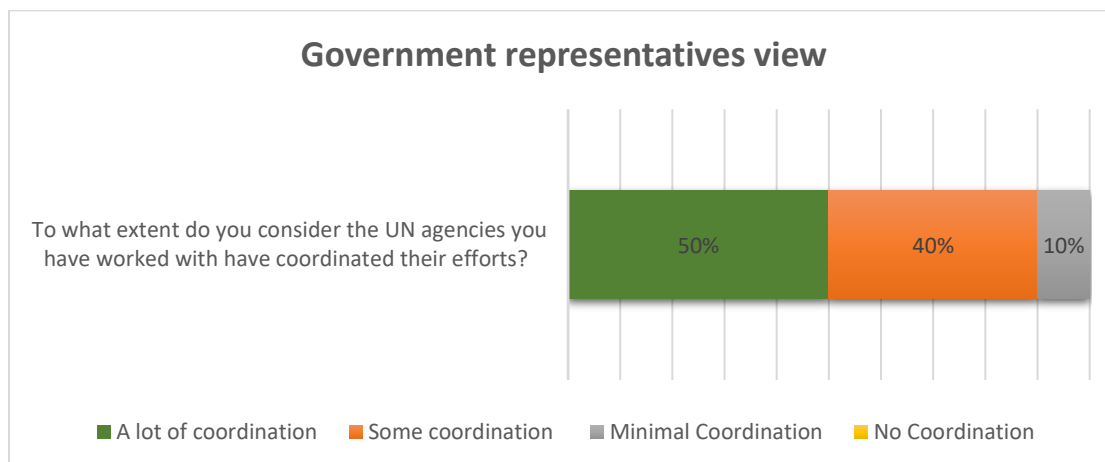




## Effectiveness

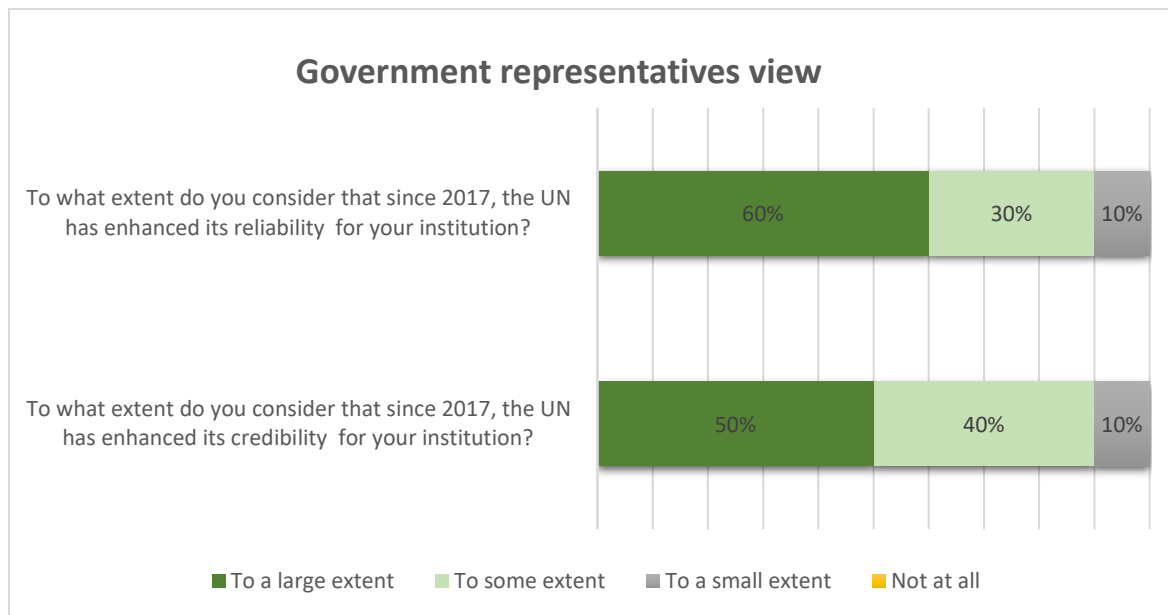
### Government representatives

For 50% of government representatives, there is a lot of coordination between the UN agencies they have worked with. 40% state that some coordination has been done. For 10%, there was minimal coordination.



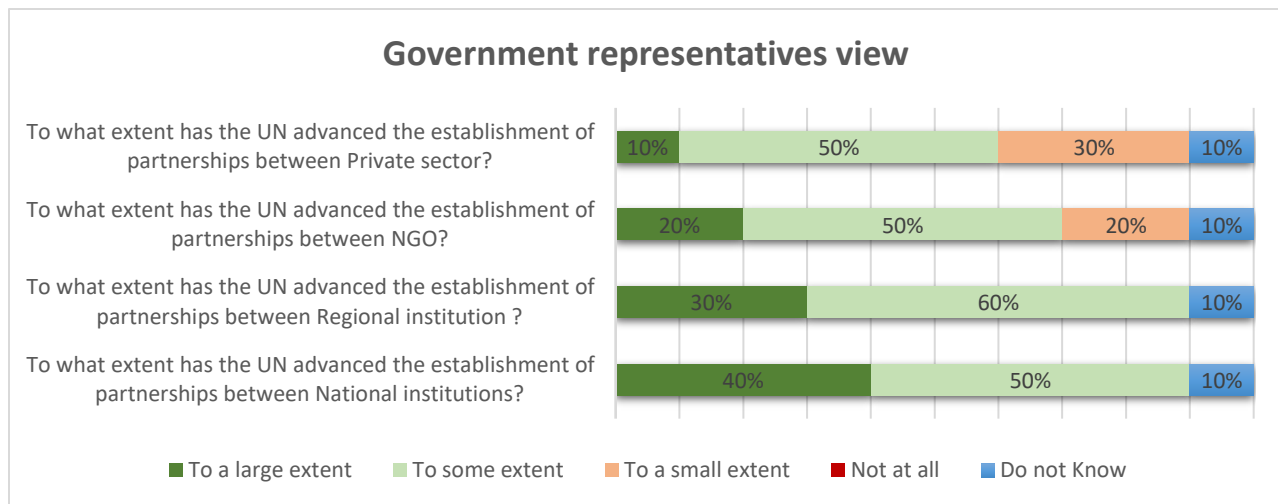
According to **60%** of government representatives, UN has enhanced its reliability to a large extent for government institution since 2017. For **30%**, UN has enhanced its reliability to some extent while for **10%** UN reliability has been enhanced to a small extent.

According to **50%** of government representatives, UN has enhanced its credibility to a large extent for government institution since 2017. For **40%**, UN has enhanced its credibility to some extent while for **10%** UN credibility has been enhanced to a small extent.



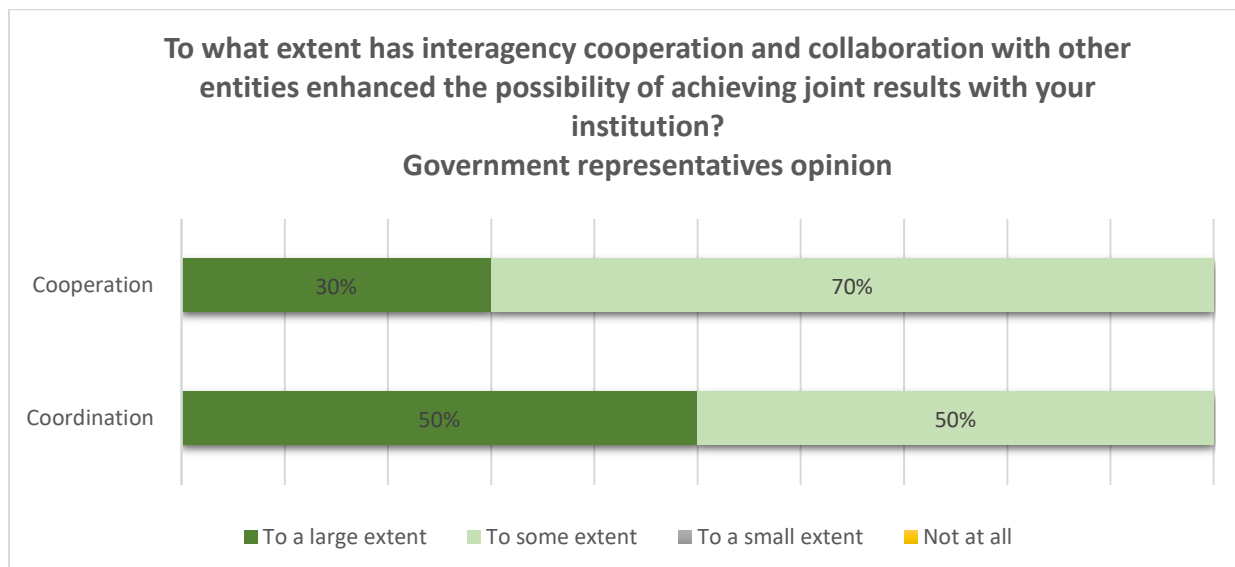
When it comes to the extent of which UN advanced the establishment of partnership between:

- Private sector:
  - 10% of government representatives answer that it has advanced to a large extent
  - 50% state it has advanced to some extent
  - 30% think it has advanced to a small extent
  - 10% do not know.
- NGO:
  - 20% of government representatives answer that it has advanced to a large extent
  - 50 % state it has advanced to some extent
  - 20% think it has advanced to a small extent
  - 10% do not know
- Regional institution:
  - 30% of government representatives answer that it has advanced to a large extent
  - 60 % state it has advanced to some extent
  - 10% do not know
- National institutions
  - 40% of government representatives answer that it has advanced to a large extent
  - 50 % state it has advanced to some extent
  - 10% do not know



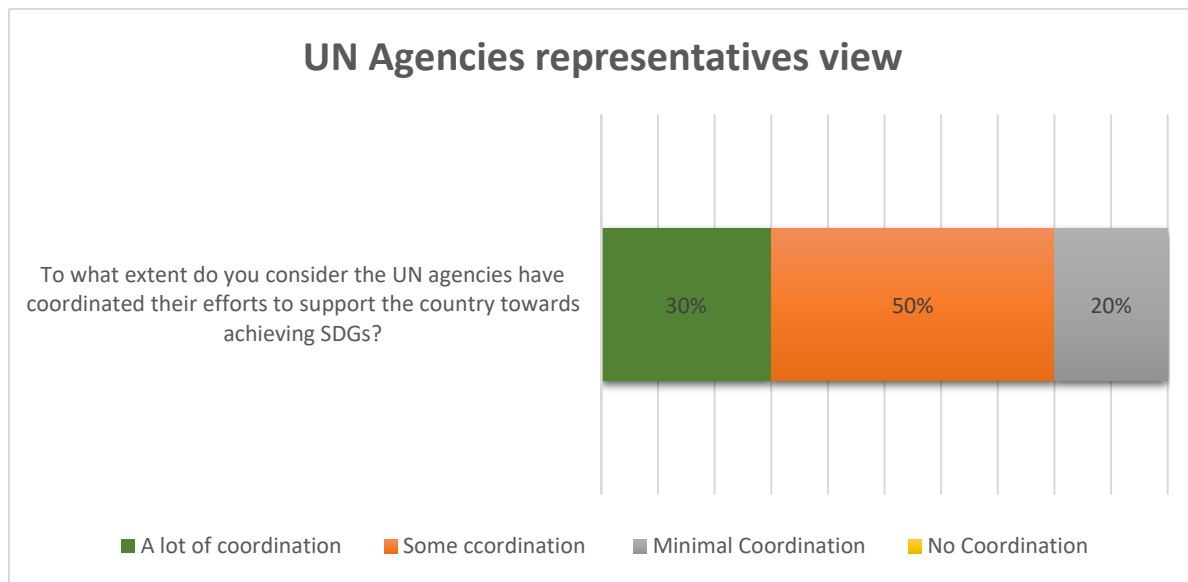
Government representative's opinion about interagency cooperation and collaboration with other entities are incredibly positive. For **30%** of government representatives, interagency cooperation with other entities has enhanced to a large extent the possibility of achieving joint results with government institutions. For **70%** it has enhanced it to some extent.

When it comes to interagency coordination, **50 %** of government representatives think that it has enhanced to a large extent the possibility of achieving joint results with government institutions. **50%** state it has enhanced it to some extent.



## UN Agencies

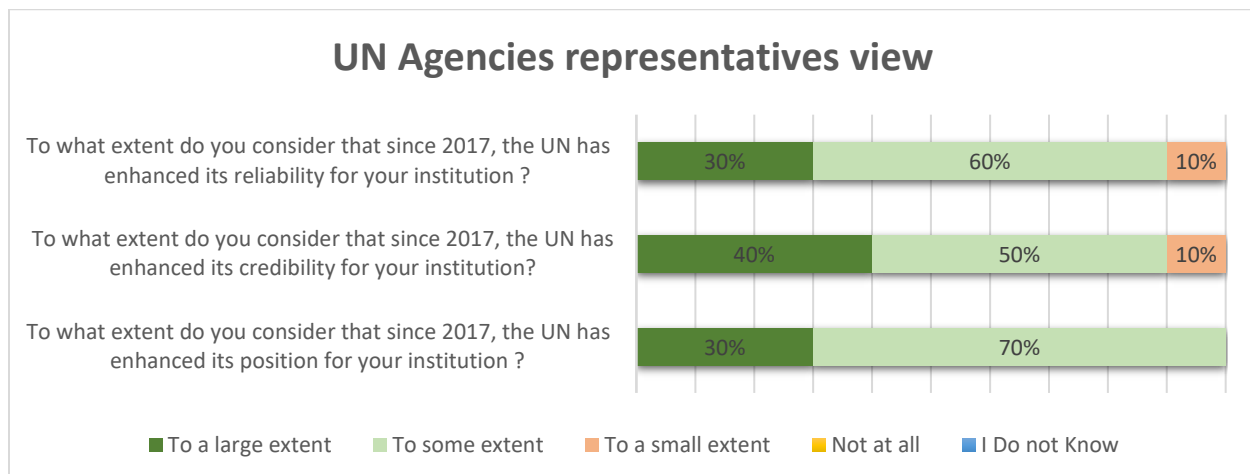
For **30%** of UN Agencies representatives, there is a lot of coordination between the UN agencies to support the country towards achieving SDGs. **50%** state that some coordination has been done. For **20%**, there was minimal coordination.



According to 30% of UN agencies representatives, UN has enhanced its reliability to a large extent within their agency since 2017. For 60%, UN has enhanced its reliability to some extent while for 10 % UN reliability has been enhanced to a small extent.

According to 40% of UN agencies representatives, UN has enhanced its credibility to a large extent within their agency since 2017. For 50%, UN has enhanced its credibility to some extent while for 10 % UN credibility has been enhanced to a small extent.

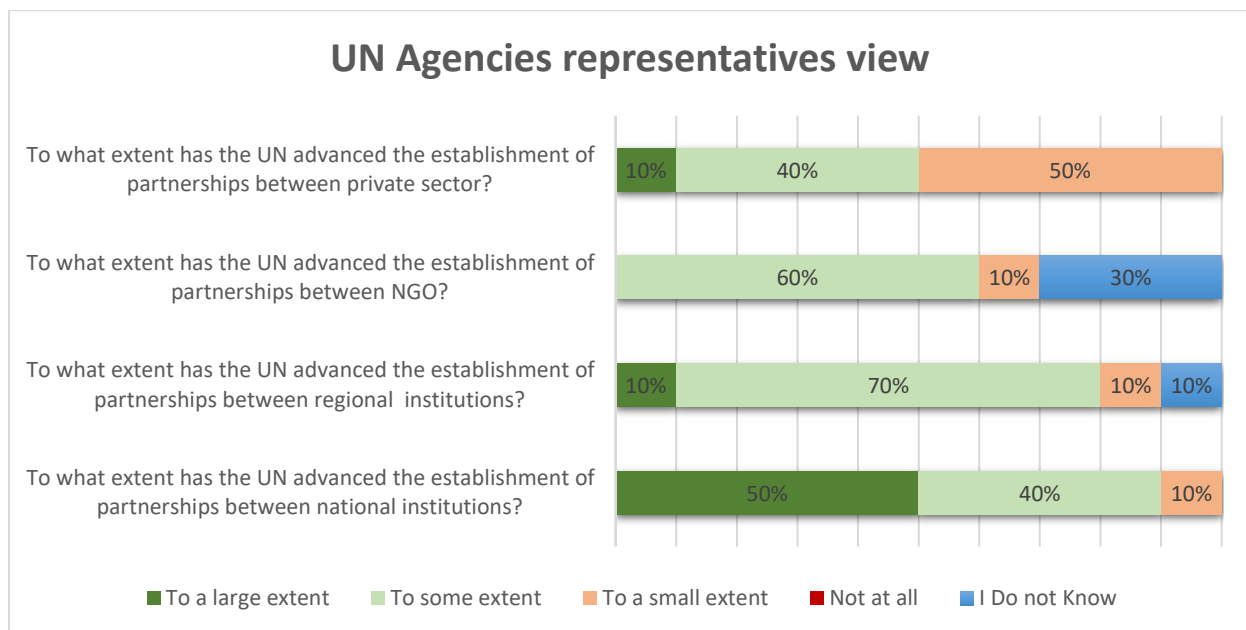
According to 30% of UN agencies representatives, UN has enhanced its position to a large extent within their agency since 2017. For 70%, UN has enhanced its position to some extent.



When it comes to the extent of which UN advanced the establishment of partnership between:

- Private sector:
  - 10% of UN agencies representatives answer that it has advanced to a large extent

- 40% state it has advanced to some extent
- 50% think it has advanced to a small extent
- NGO:
  - 60% of UN Agencies representatives answer that it has advanced to some extent
  - 10% think it has advanced to a small extent
  - 30% do not know
- Regional institution:
  - 10% of UN Agencies representatives answer that it has advanced to a large extent
  - 70 % state it has advanced to some extent
  - 10% think it has advanced to a small extent
  - 10% do not know
- National institutions
  - 50% of UN Agencies representatives answer that it has advanced to a large extent
  - 40 % state it has advanced to some extent
  - 10% think it has advanced to a small extent

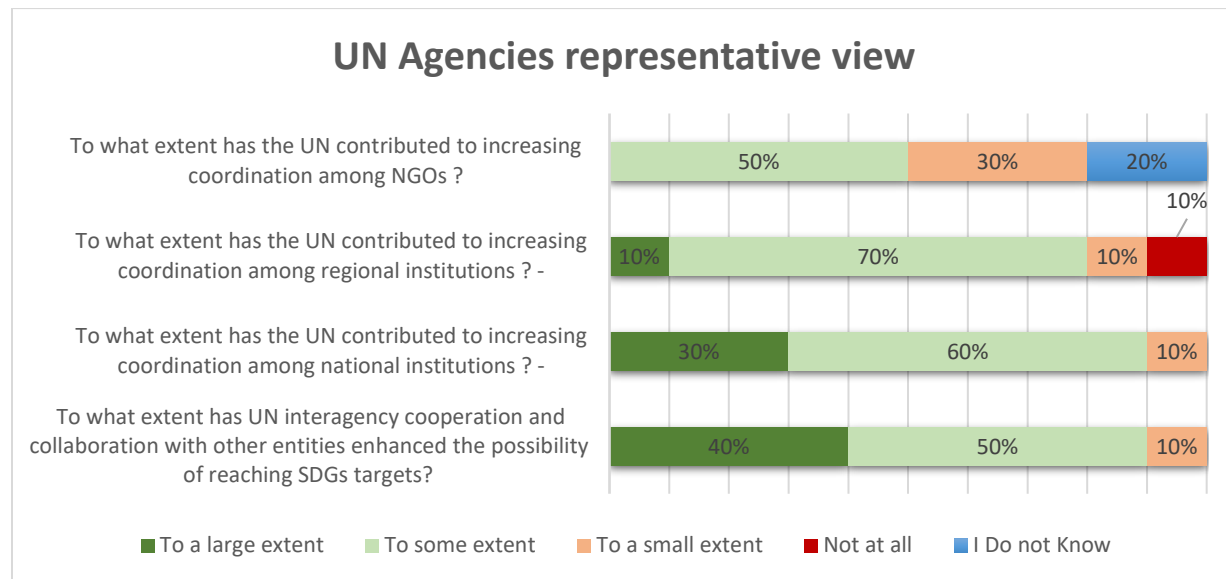


When it comes to UN contribution to increasing coordination among

- NGO:
  - 50% of UN Agencies representatives answer that it has increased to some extent
  - 30% think it has increased to a small extent
  - 20% do not know
- Regional institution:
  - 10% of UN Agencies representatives answer that it has increased to a large extent
  - 70 % state it has increased to some extent
  - 10% think it has increased to a small extent
  - 10% think it has not increased at all

- National institutions
  - 30% of UN Agencies representatives answer that it has increased to a large extent
  - 60 % state it has increased to some extent
  - 10% think it has increased to a small extent

When it comes to UN interagency cooperation and collaboration with other entities, 40 % of UN agencies representatives think that it has enhanced to a large extent the possibility of reaching SDGs targets. 50% state it has enhanced it to some extent. For 10% of UN agencies representatives, it has enhanced it to a small extent.



## Efficiency

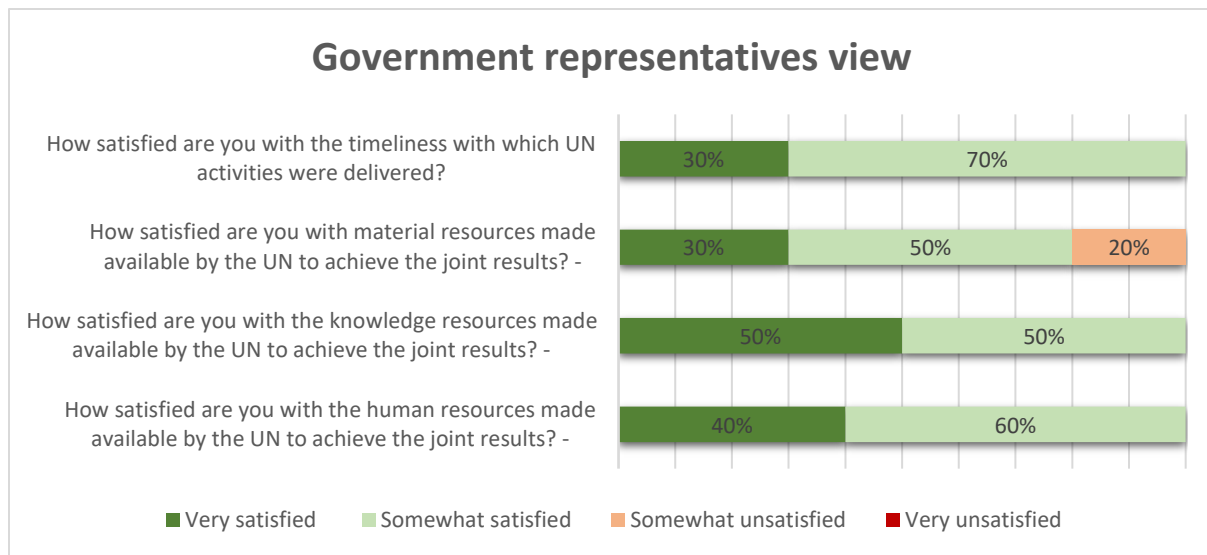
### Government representatives

30% of Government representatives are very satisfied with the timeliness with which UN activities were delivered. 70% are somewhat satisfied.

When it comes to material resources made available by the UN to achieve the joint results, **30 %** of government representatives were very satisfied; **50%** were somewhat satisfied while **20%** were somewhat unsatisfied.

Regarding the knowledge resources made available by the UN to achieve the joint results, **50 %** of government representatives were very satisfied and **50%** were somewhat satisfied.

For the human resources made available by the UN to achieve the joint results, **40 %** of government representatives were very satisfied and **60%** were somewhat satisfied.



## UN Agencies

When it comes to material resources made available by the UN to reach SDG targets, **50 %** of UN agencies representatives are satisfied; **38%** are dissatisfied while **13%** do not know.

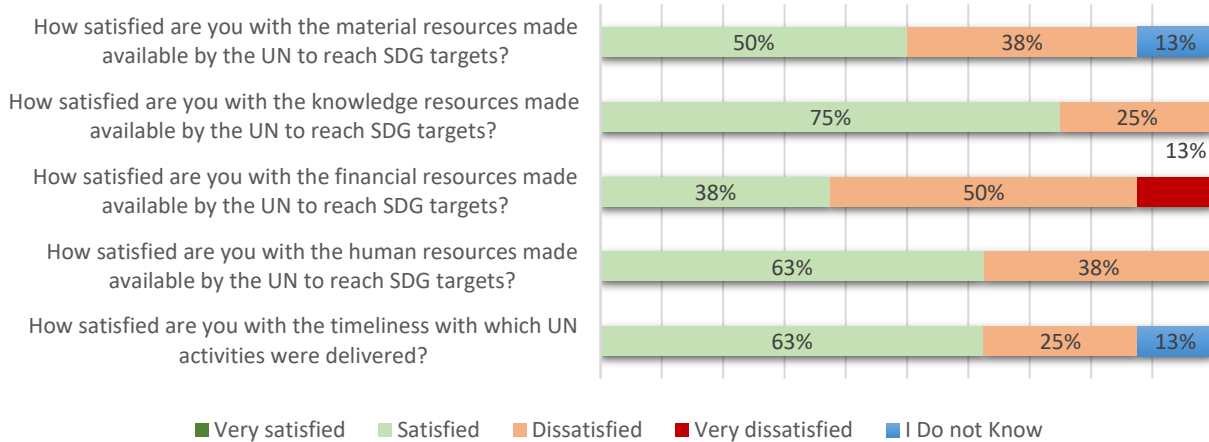
Regarding the knowledge resources made available by the UN to reach SDG targets, **75%** of UN agencies representatives are satisfied and **25%** are dissatisfied.

When it comes to financial resources made available by the UN to reach SDG targets, **38 %** of UN agencies representatives are satisfied; **50%** are dissatisfied while **13%** are very dissatisfied.

For the human resources made available by the UN to reach SDG targets, **63 %** of UN agencies representatives are satisfied and **38%** are dissatisfied.

**63%** of UN agencies representatives are satisfied with the timeliness with which UN activities were delivered. **25%** are dissatisfied while **13%** do not know.

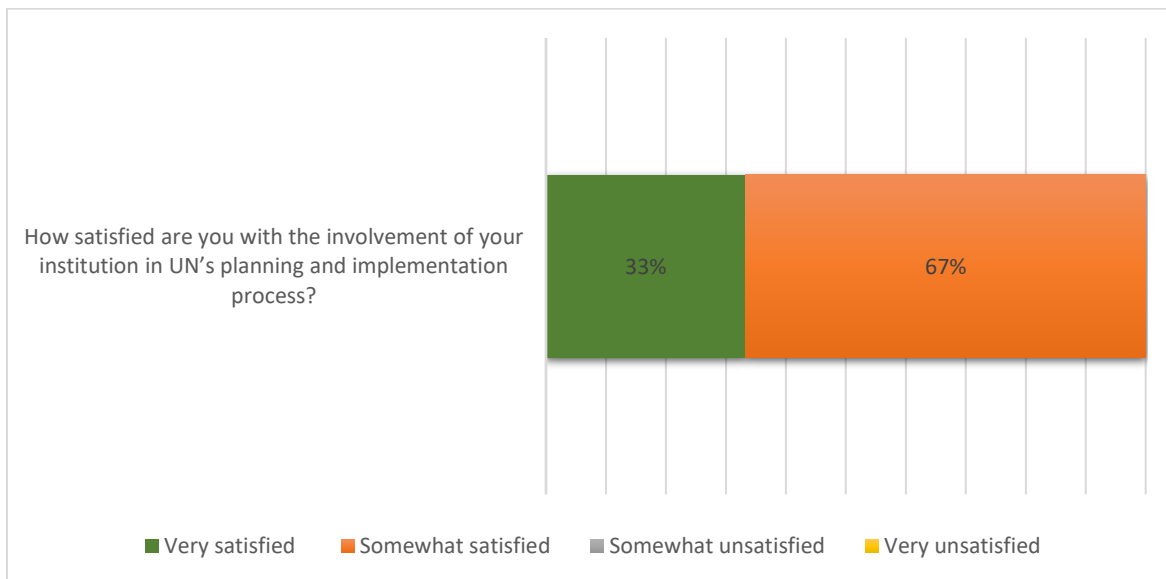
### UN Agencies representatives view



## Sustainability

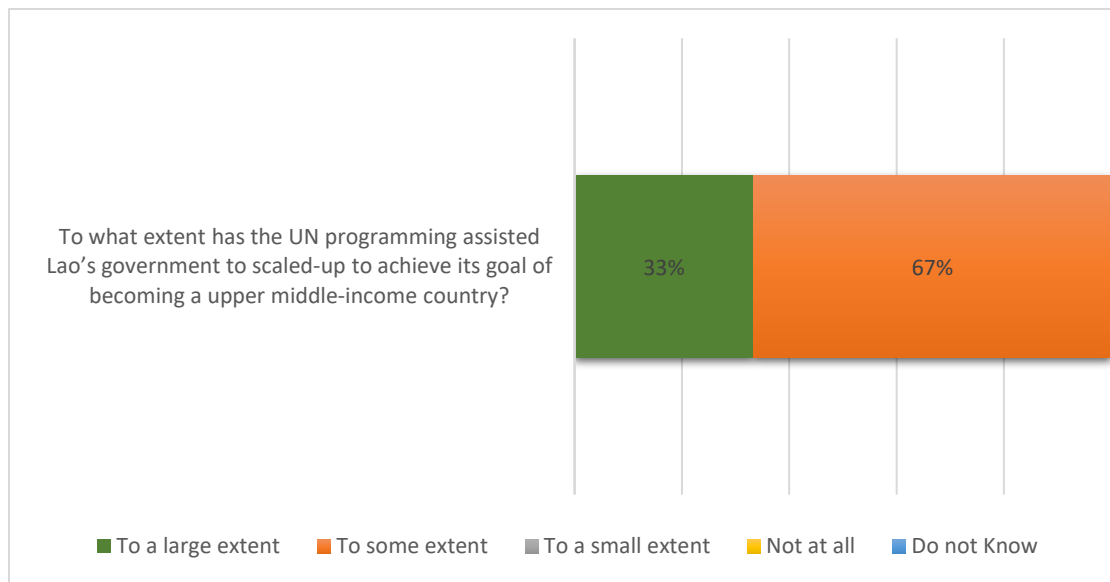
### Government representatives

**33%** of government representatives are very satisfied with the involvement of their institution in UN's planning and implementation process. **67%** of government representatives are somewhat satisfied.



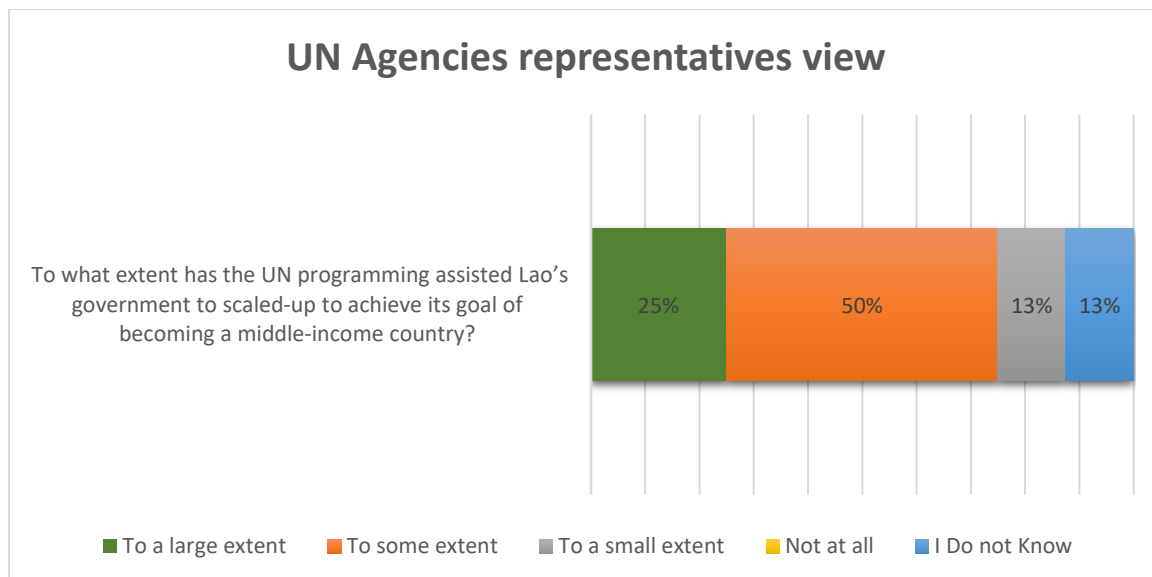
33% of government representatives state that UN programming has assisted to a large extent Lao's government to scaled-up to achieve its goal of becoming an upper middle-income country. For 67% of government representatives, it has assisted to some extent.





### UN Agencies

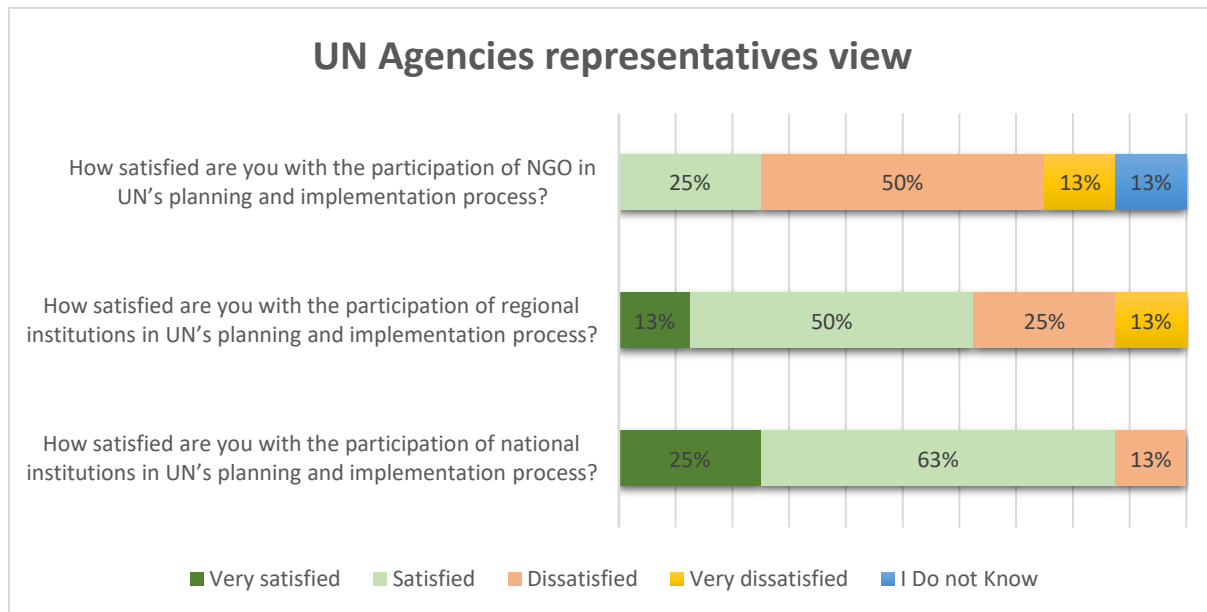
25% of UN Agencies representatives state that UN programming has assisted to a large extent Lao's government to scaled-up to achieve its goal of becoming a middle-income country. For 50% of UN Agencies representatives, it has assisted to some extent. According to 13% of representatives, it has assisted to a small extent. 13% do not know.



When it comes to the participation of NGO in UN's planning and implementation process, 25% of UN agencies representatives are satisfied, 50% are dissatisfied, 13% are very dissatisfied and 13% do not know.

Concerning the participation of regional institutions in UN's planning and implementation process, 13% of UN agencies representatives are very satisfied, 50% are satisfied, 25% are dissatisfied and 13% are very dissatisfied.

Regarding the participation of national institutions in UN's planning and implementation process, 25% of UN agencies representatives are very satisfied, 63% are satisfied, 13% are dissatisfied.



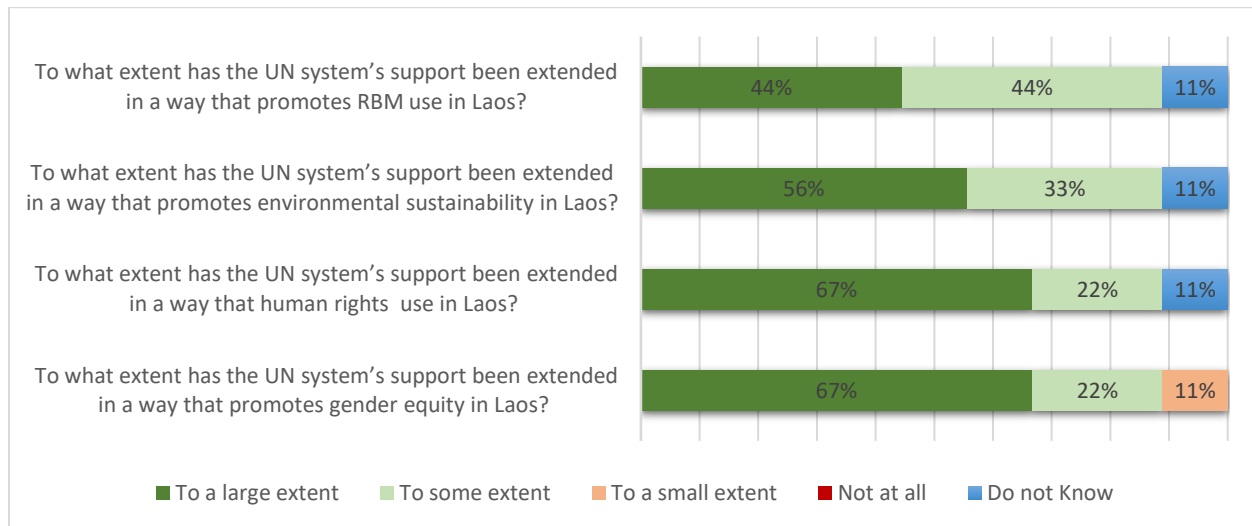
## Cross-cutting Principles

### Government representatives

When it comes to the extent of which the UN system's support has been extended in a way that promotes:

- RBM use in Lao PDR
  - 44% of government representatives answer that it has been extended to a large extent
  - 44% think it has been extended to some extent
  - 11% do not know
- Sustainability in Lao PDR
  - 56% of government representatives answer that it has been extended to a large extent
  - 33% think it has been extended to some extent
  - 11% do not know
- Human rights use in Lao PDR
  - 67% of government representatives answer that it has been extended to a large extent
  - 22% think it has been extended to some extent
  - 11% do not know

- Gender equity in Lao PDR
  - 67% of government representatives answer that it has been extended to a large extent
  - 22% think it has been extended to some extent
  - 11% state it has been extended to a small extent



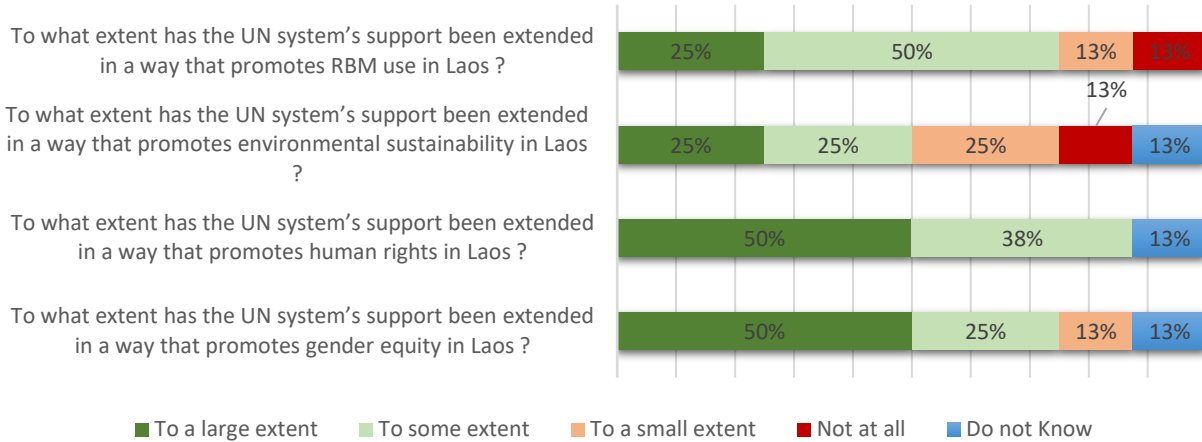
## UN Agencies

When it comes to the extent of which the UN system's support has been extended in a way that promotes:

- RBM use in Lao PDR
  - 25% of UN agencies representatives answer that it has been extended to a large extent
  - 50% think it has been extended to some extent
  - 13% state it has been extended to a small extent
  - 13% state that it has not been extended at all
- Sustainability in Lao PDR
  - 25% of UN agencies representatives answer that it has been extended to a large extent
  - 25% think it has been extended to some extent
  - 25% state it has been extended to a small extent
  - 13% state it has not been extended at all
  - 13% do not know at all
- Human rights use in Lao PDR
  - 50% of UN agencies representatives answer that it has been extended to a large extent
  - 38% think it has been extended to some extent
  - 13% do not know
- Gender equity in Lao PDR
  - 50% of UN agencies representatives answer that it has been extended to a large extent
  - 25% think it has been extended to some extent

- 13% state it has been extended to a small extent
- 13% do not know

### UN Agencies representatives view



## ANNEX 9 : TERMS OF REFERENCE



### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### FOR SERVICE PROVIDER

<b>POST TITLE:</b>	<b>International Consulting Firm to Undertake Evaluation of Lao PDR's UN Partnership Framework (UNPF) 2017-2021</b>
<b>AGENCY/PROJECT NAME:</b>	<b>UN Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO)</b>
<b>LOCATION OF ASSIGNMENT:</b>	<b>In/Out country dates anticipated with in-country visits to Vientiane, Lao PDR (to be confirmed based on Government of Lao PDR's COVID-19 national response)</b>
<b>PLACE OF ASSIGNMENT:</b>	<b>In/Out country dates anticipated with in-country visits to Vientiane, Lao PDR (to be confirmed based on Government of Lao PDR's COVID-19 national response)</b>
<b>DURATION OF ASSIGNMENT:</b>	<b>June to August 2020 (approximately 3 months)</b>
<b>STARTING DATE:</b>	<b>June 2020</b>

#### 1) GENERAL BACKGROUND

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Lao PDR, comprised of 16 UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes (AFPs) with a fixed presence in Lao PDR and those that provide their support from global and regional hubs, led by the UN Resident Coordinator (RC), supports the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Lao PDR's national development targets through sustainable and equitable socioeconomic development. The UNCT Delivers as One to help the Government and people of Lao PDR fight poverty by ensuring a rights-based approach to development, supporting sustainable use of natural resources and preservation of cultural heritage, and promoting human rights, gender equality and good governance. The UN focuses its assistance on the most vulnerable and poor, in particular women, children and youth. In support of the national development goals, the UNCT collaborates with the Government and the broader development community, including civil society and private sector. The UN System's presence and capacity in Lao PDR is focused on providing high-level advice to improve the quality of public policy, strengthen the efficiency of governance and management systems, support data-driven real time evidence for better programming and policy, and facilitate innovation and gender in public policy and programming. The UNCT's work in Lao PDR is guided by the United Nations Partnership Framework (UNPF) 2017-2021, which reflects the collective contribution and intention of the UN System to support Lao PDR's achievement of the development goals and priorities set by the Government and reflected in the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDPP) 2016-2020, in alignment with the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The UNPF is underpinned by the five programming principles of a human rights-based approach, gender equality, environmental sustainability, results-based management, and capacity development. Additionally, it considers the specific context of Lao PDR, focusing on its cultural and national heritage, its diverse ethnic groups, a phased reform process and its agricultural economy with a pronounced rural-urban divide.

The UNPF is supported by three key pillars:

1. Inclusive Growth, Livelihoods and Resilience;
2. Human Development;
3. Governance, Rule of Law and Participation in National Decision Making

Lao PDR passed the thresholds for Gross National Income (GNI) per capita and the Human Assets Index at the Committee for Development Policy's Review March 2018, thus becoming eligible for Least Developed Country graduation for the first time. Lao PDR came close to passing the third criterion, the Economic Vulnerability Index. To graduate from Least Developed Country status, the graduation threshold must be met for two of the three criteria in two consecutive triennial reviews. If it sustains its current progress until the 2021 review, Lao PDR may be recommended to graduate in 2024, following a three-year transition period.

#### UNPF Evaluation

An independent evaluation of the UNPF 2017-2021 is scheduled to take place in 2020, the penultimate year of the UNPF to assess the extent to which the UNPF outcomes are aligned and contribute to the national development priorities set forth in the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and to determine the extent to which UNPF outcomes have been attained. In addition, the evaluation will examine the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the UNPF results along with the sustainability of the UNCT's support to national development priorities. The evaluation is scheduled to take place June to September 2020 and will feed into the design of the Lao PDR's forthcoming UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2025.

The UNPF evaluation will be undertaken by an international consulting firm comprised of an evaluation team leader and both international and national team members, working under the overall supervision and guidance of the UN Task Team on Country Programming (Task Team), who report to the UNCT. The UNCT in Lao PDR is seeking the services of consulting firms with i) Extensive knowledge of the UN System and/or understanding of the UN country programming process (CCA/UNDAF/UNSDCF) ii) proven experience conducting evaluations of development effectiveness.

## 2) OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The overall objectives of the UNPF evaluation are as follows:

- Assess UNPF's overall effectiveness in advancing Lao PDR's national development agenda (8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP)
- Review results achieved during the UNPF 2017-2021 cycle;
- Review UNPF's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability against Lao PDR's national development agenda (8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP);
- Examine how the five UN programming principles have been mainstreamed in the results-based management cycle (design, implementation, and M&E) of the UNPF;
- Provide clear, actionable strategic and programmatic recommendations for improving the UNCT's contribution to Lao PDR's development priorities, taking into consideration the SDGs.

## 3) SCOPE OF WORK

The external evaluation of the UNPF 2017-2021 should contribute to:

**Support to the UN system's Delivering as One principles** to ensure the UNCT is working efficiently and effectively to implement the UNPF 2017-2021. By objectively verifying results achieved within the framework of the UNPF and assessing the sustainability of the strategies and interventions used, the evaluation will specifically:

- Evaluate how the UNPF's strategic intent and principles have been taken forward by UN AFPs, Funds and Programmes (AFPs) and identify factors that have affected UN AFPs working together;
- Evaluate the UNCT's contribution to national development results through an assessment drawing on evaluation criteria grounded in evidence;
- Identify factors that may have affected the UNCT's support and contributions through the UNPF, highlighting good practices and bottlenecks;
- Assess the performance, progress, and gaps of the UNPF's support to national goals and priorities;
- Generate a set of clear, forward-looking, and actionable recommendations logically linked to the findings and conclusions, and identify lessons learned to inform the strategies, implementation mechanism, and management of the forthcoming Lao PDR UNSDCF 2022-2025.

**Promote lessons learned from implementation of the UNPF 2017-2021** anchored around “what works, what doesn’t and why?”. This should include highlighting lessons learned on what the added value of the UNCT has been and could be in the future, considering the changing development landscape, emerging actors and how the UN System adapts to changing aid environments. It should, therefore, take into consideration not only what is covered in the UNPF, but also examine and highlight aspects not currently covered but are nevertheless relevant to Lao PDR’s current and future context. Recommendations should also include the identification of aspects that may be excluded in the UNSDCF 2022-2025.

The UNPF evaluation should be as forward looking as possible to provide lessons learned that will feed into the UNSDCF 2021-2025. It should aim to provide information for strengthening programming and results at country level, specifically informing the planning and decision-making for the UNSDCF 2022-2025. In addition, the evaluation should also examine how/whether the UNPF serves as an effective tool in support of the UNCT’s decision-making in Lao PDR. Given the global COVID-19 pandemic, to the extent possible, the evaluation should examine and assess whether the current UNPF 2017-2021 adequately addresses UNCT programmes’ preparedness for emergency situations, providing specific recommendations relevant to the formulation of the forthcoming UNSDCF 2022-2025.

The UNPF will be evaluated based on the UNPF’s strategic intent and contribution to the national development results laid out in the UNPF results frameworks. The evaluation will be inclusive and will solicit the views of key stakeholders, including to the extent possible, vulnerable, poor, and marginalized groups.

Key evaluation activities and tasks are as follows:

UNPF Evaluation: Activities / Tasks
Desk review (UNPF progress reports, AFP reports/evaluations, etc.)
First draft inception report (objectives, methods, tools) submitted to Task Team (Zoom optional)
Task Team review/feedback on first draft inception report
Penultimate draft inception report submitted for Joint Steering Committee (JSC) review
Launch of evaluation in-country: meetings with JSC (validation of penultimate draft inception report), meetings with ministries/stakeholders, data collection, JSC validation of report on preliminary findings
First draft evaluation report written and submitted to Task Team
Task Team review/feedback on first draft report
Penultimate draft evaluation report submitted and presented (via Zoom) to JSC for review and feedback
JSC review/feedback on penultimate evaluation report sent to evaluation team
Evaluation team incorporates comments/revised report
Final evaluation report submitted and presented to JSC (Zoom optional)

#### 4) DURATION OF ASSIGNMENT, DUTY STATION AND EXPECTED PLACES OF TRAVEL

The UNPF evaluation is tentatively scheduled June to August 2020 (3 months), subject to the Government of Lao PDR’s national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The evaluation will take place both in-country (Vientiane, Lao PDR duty station) and outside of country with limited travel anticipated outside of Vientiane (to be determined based on the in-country situation).

#### 5) FINAL PRODUCTS



The UNPF evaluation team are expected to deliver the following outputs (deliverable dates to be determined subject to conditions described above):

UNPF Evaluation: Outputs
<b>Output 1: Inception Report (including PowerPoint presentation)</b>
Desk review (UNPF progress reports, AFP reports/evaluations, etc.)
First draft inception report (objectives, methods, tools) submitted to Task Team (Zoom optional)
Task Team review/feedback on first draft inception report
Penultimate draft inception report submitted for Joint Steering Committee (JSC) review
JSC review/feedback on penultimate draft inception report provided at in-country validation meeting with JSC
Final draft of inception report submitted to Task Team and JSC
<b>Output 2: Report on Preliminary findings (following in-country data collection and consultations)</b>
Launch of evaluation in-country: meetings with JSC (inception report validation), meetings with ministries/stakeholders, data collection, JSC validation of report on preliminary findings
<b>Output 3: UNPF Evaluation Report (including data and infographics and PowerPoint presentation)</b>
First draft evaluation report written and submitted to Task Team
Task Team review/feedback on first draft of evaluation report sent to evaluation team
Penultimate draft evaluation report submitted and presented (via Zoom) to JSC for review and feedback
JSC review/feedback on penultimate evaluation report sent to evaluation team
Evaluation team incorporates comments/revises report
Final evaluation report submitted and presented to JSC (Zoom optional)

## 6) PROVISION OF MONITORING AND PROGRESS CONTROLS

The UNDAF evaluation team will work under the supervision of a dual-tiered evaluation management structure:

1. The **Government of Laos / UN Joint Steering Committee (JSC)** is co-chaired by a senior representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UN Resident Coordinator, with membership comprised of members of the UN Country Team and International Development Partners, is the decision-making organ for all decisions related to the UNPF evaluation including but not limited to the review and approval of all reports and deliverables.
2. The **UN Task Team on Country Programming** is comprised of designated focal points from UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes (AFPs), the RC Office (RCO), will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the evaluation and will directly supervise the evaluation firm.

Given the importance of the UNPF evaluation and the complexities involved in its design and implementation, it is critical that due time and effort is accorded to the evaluation of Lao PDR's UNPF 2017-2021. The evaluation team should ideally consist of one



international team leader and two or three additional international team members. Given the evolving COVID-19 pandemic and the Government of Lao PDR's national response, the evaluation team must also include national team members as described below, to strengthen the evaluation by providing local perspectives/insights and in case travel restrictions require an in-country/out-country evaluation team configuration.

The evaluation team leader will lead the evaluation process, working closely with team members. He/she will conduct the evaluation in a timely manner and communicate with the Task Team on a regular basis and highlight progress made/challenges encountered. The team leader will be responsible for producing high quality draft and final reports described under the deliverables section, in English (please note that all key documents, reports and presentations will need to be translated into the Lao language at the company's cost).

Evaluation team members will contribute to the evaluation process substantively through data collection and analysis. They will share responsibilities for undertaking the desk review, interviews, and field visits (if required/to be discussed) during the inception and data collection phase. They will provide substantive inputs to the inception report as well as to the draft and final evaluation reports.

## 7) DEGREE OF EXPERTISE AND QUALIFICATIONS

The evaluation team may be internationally or locally based and comprised of the following members:

### 1. International Team Leader (1 person):

- Advanced University Degree (Masters or PhD) in political science, development economics, public administration, development studies, law, human rights, or another relevant field;
- Minimum 15 years of relevant professional experience;
- A strong record in designing and leading evaluations;
- Extensive knowledge of, and experience in applying, qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods;
- Strong managerial experience organizing, leading, and coordinating evaluation teams from a distance, is an asset;
- Technical competence in undertaking complex evaluations involving use of mixed methods;
- Prior experience working with multilateral agencies;
- Knowledge of UN role, UN reform process and UN country programming processes are an asset;
- Strong experience and knowledge of five UN programming principles: human rights (the human rights-based approach to programming, human rights analysis and related mandates within the UN system), gender equality (in particular, gender analysis), environmental sustainability, results-based management, and capacity development is an asset
- Fluency in English, excellent oral, written, communication and reporting skills.

### 2. International Team Members (maximum 2 persons):

- Advanced University Degree (Masters or PhD) in political science, social science, public administration, development studies, law, human rights, or another relevant field;
- Minimum ten years of relevant professional experience;
- Have experience conducting UN related evaluations, particularly UNDAF;
- Knowledge of UN role, UN reform process and UN programming at the country level;
- A strong record in designing and leading evaluations;
- Extensive knowledge of, and experience in applying, qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods;
- Technical competence in undertaking complex evaluations which involve use of mixed methods;
- Strong managerial experience organizing, leading, and coordinating evaluation teams from a distance, is an asset;
- Prior experience in working with multilateral agencies;
- Knowledge of UN role, UN reform process and UN country programming processes is an asset;
- Strong experience and knowledge of five UN programming principles: human rights (the human rights-based approach to programming, human rights analysis and related mandates within the UN system), gender equality (in particular, gender analysis), environmental sustainability, results-based management, and capacity development is an asset
- Fluency in English, excellent oral, written, communication and reporting skills.

### 3. National Team Member(s) (maximum 2 persons)

- Advanced University Degree (Master or PhD) in the field of political science, governance, public administration, development studies, law, human rights, or another relevant field;
- Minimum five years of relevant professional experience;
- Extensive local knowledge of Lao government structure, government priorities and 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP);
- Strong knowledge of, and experience in applying, qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods;
- Technical competence in undertaking complex evaluations which involve use of mixed methods;
- Process management skills such as facilitation skills and ability to negotiate with a wide range of stakeholders (in Lao and English);
- Strong experience and knowledge of five UN programming principles: human rights (the human rights-based approach to programming, human rights analysis and related mandates within the UN system), gender equality (in particular, gender analysis), environmental sustainability, results-based management, and capacity development;
- Strong knowledge of Lao PDR socio-economic development;
- Fluency in English and Lao;
- Experience with English/Lao translation and interpretation.

**Minimum Qualifications of Firm/Organization:**

- Minimum of five years of experience in managing evaluations, producing high-quality analytical research/assessment, and providing technical advice or consulting services on issues pertaining to development;
- Back-stopping support and quality assurance systems;
- Strong record in conducting qualitative and quantitative evaluations, using UNEG norms and standards;
- Prior experience working with multilateral agencies;
- Knowledge of UN role, UN reform process and UN programming at the country level, particularly UNDAF;
- Experience in conducting UNDAF evaluations is considered a strong asset;
- Previous work experience in Southeast Asian context is desirable, together with understanding of Lao PDR context and cultural dynamics is also considered an asset.

All the members of the evaluation team should be independent from any organization involved in designing, executing, or supporting any aspect of the UNPF.

## 8) REVIEW TIME REQUIRED

Payment schedule will be on an agreed output-basis. The JSC and UN Task Team require at least two weeks for review and approval of delivered outputs before issuing payments.

## 9) SCOPE OF BID PRICE AND SCHEDULE OF PAYMENT

Fixed lump-sum output-based fees will be paid as per agreed timeframe and satisfactory certification of receipt of outputs by the UN Task Team on Country Programming and Government of Laos/UN Joint Steering Committee.

Deliverables/Description of Payment	Deliverable Timeframe
30% of the professional fees shall be paid upon submission and acceptant of below output: <b>1. Output 1:</b> Inception Report (including PowerPoint presentation)	1 week
30% of the professional fees shall be paid upon submission and acceptant of below output: <b>2. Output 2:</b> Report on Preliminary findings (following in-country data collection and consultations)	2 weeks
40% of the professional fees shall be paid upon submission of below output: <b>3. Output 3:</b> UNPF Evaluation Report (including data, infographics, and PowerPoint presentation)	As discussed/agreed

**10) PRESENCE OF THE CONSULTANT ON DUTY STATION**

If the assignment requires full time presence on UNDP premises, a sound justification on why a full-time presence is required.

☐ NONE      ☐ PARTIAL      ☒ INTERMITTENT      ☐ FULL-TIME

**11) ANNEXES TO TOR**

**This TOR is approved by:**

For National Project Director:

For UNDP Programme Unit Chief:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Signing: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Signing: \_\_\_\_\_



# Baastel

30 Years Promoting  
Sustainable Development

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