

SDG 16 Plus Report Draft

Chapter 1 – Introduction

This report analyzes the progress that Lao PDR has made from 2015 to 2020 in achieving the targets of SDG 16 Plus, which includes 12 targets from Goal 16 and 24 targets from seven other goals. This report also discusses an SDG goal unique to Lao PDR, SDG 18 Lives Safe from UXO, as it is linked to Goal 16’s vision of achieving peaceful societies free from violence. The concept SDG 16 Plus has been developed to capture the interlinkages between SDG 16 and all other SDGs – SDGs cannot be realized without a peaceful, just, and inclusive society and vice versa. A desk review has been conducted to collect data on the 36 targets of SDG 16 Plus. The review included key national surveys, such as the Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS), and reports published by international development and local civil society organizations.

Unfortunately, data is limited for many of the targets, and measuring five-year progress for some of the targets has not been possible. Some of the targets only have data from 2015 or earlier. For example, nationwide data on population subject to physical, sexual and emotional violence has been made available through the Lao National Survey on Women’s Health and Life Experiences (LNS-WHLE) conducted in 2014, but this survey has not been conducted again since then. Similarly, data on school attendance rate of children with disabilities has been collected through the Population and Housing Census in 2015, which used the Washington Group’s Short Set of Questions. However, this census has not been conducted again since 2015 as the census is conducted every ten years. Another key issue is that data for some indicators has not been officially collected. These include fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries (target 8.8), proportion of population that have convenient access to public transport (target 11.2), proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services (target 16.6), and many others.

Despite these limitations, the report offers the most recent data available for many of the SDG 16 Plus targets (see Chapter 3) and provides an analysis of the current situation in Lao PDR for these targets based on the available data. We hope that this report will help the development community become aware of what data is available for SDG 16 Plus and what key data is still missing and needs to be collected.

Chapter 2 – Please refer to the Regional Report

Chapter 3 – Understanding SDG 16 Plus

This section presents the availability of nationwide data for all 36 targets of SDG 16 Plus as well as the gaps in data. The first table presents key national data collection instruments for SDG 16 Plus. The second table presents data for SDG Goal 16, and the third table presents data for the other seven SDG goals. The last table presents findings for SDG 18 – Lives Safe from UXO. All data sources are indicated in parenthesis.

Key national data collection instruments

Name	Authority	Frequency	Last Conducted
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Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS)	Lao Statistics Bureau	Five years	2017
Population and Housing Census (PHC)	Lao Statistics Bureau	Ten years	2015
Labor Force Survey (LFS)	Lao Statistics Bureau	Five Years	2017
Lao National Survey on Women's Health and Life Experiences (LNS-WHLE)	National Commission for the Advancement of Women Lao Statistics Bureau	-----	2014
Violence against Children Survey (VACS)	National Commission for Mothers and Children Lao Statistics Bureau	-----	2014

SDG 16: 12 Targets

The government of Lao PDR has improved data collection mechanisms for some SDG 16 indicators, most notably for indicators relating to violence against children and women. Data on birth registration has been collected through national surveys and has been disaggregated by sex, wealth index, region, and other key factors. Despite some progress in data collection, data on many indicators for SDG 16 are missing. Some of the key missing data are rate of human trafficking, homicide rate, transparency in budget planning and execution, and reporting of victimization.

Target	Available Data	Missing Data
16.1 All forms of violence	<p><i>Homicide Rate in 2015, total and by sex and age (WHO Violence Info)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homicide rate per 100,000 population: 10.7 Homicide rate by sex per 100,000 population: F=2.5, M=11.3 Homicide rate by age per 100,000 population: 0-14=2.0, 15-29=13.0, 30-44=8.4, 45-49=3.9, 60 plus=3.2 <p><i>Ever-partnered women subject to physical, sexual, and emotional violence in the previous 12 months by a husband/partner in 2014 (LNS-WHLE)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical violence: 4.0% Emotional violence: 10.5% Sexual violence: 3.1% 	<p><i>Recent homicide rate</i></p> <p><i>Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live</i></p> <p><i>Recent proportion of female population subject to physical, sexual, and emotional violence</i></p> <p><i>Proportion of male population subject to physical, sexual, and emotional violence</i></p>
16.2 Violence against children	<p><i>Percentage of children age 1-14 years by child disciplining methods (non-violent, physical, psychological) experienced during the past month by sex in 2017 (LSIS)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only non-violent discipline: F=25.1%, M=22.9% Psychological aggression: F=64.7%, M=66.9% Physical aggression: F=30.9%, M=36.2% Any violent method: F=67.5%, M=70.4% <p><i>Violence (physical, sexual, emotional) experienced during childhood by young women and men aged 18-24 in 2014 (VACS)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical: F=15.0%, M=16.9% 	<p><i>Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age, and form of exploitation</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual: F=7.3%, M=12.0% Emotional: F=24.2%, M=17.7% Any: F=34.3%, M=35.1% <p><i>Number of Lao national trafficked to Thailand and returned to Lao PDR in 2015 (Trafficking in Persons from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar UNODC Report)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult Male: 4 Male below 18 years: 2 Adult Female: 23 Female below 18 years: 78 	
16.3 Rule of law and access to justice	<p><i>Citizens knowledge of how to access legal services in three provinces (Oudomxay, Xiengkhouang, Champasak) (UN Country Analysis Report 2015)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of people who know how to submit a grievance to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Village Mediation Units: 65% Police: 67% Proportion of people who know how to approach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lawyers: 22% Prosecutors: 28% Courts: 43% 	<p><i>Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms</i></p> <p><i>Unsentenced detainees as proportion of overall prison population</i></p> <p><i>Proportion of population who have experienced a dispute in past two years and who accessed a formal or informal dispute resolution mechanism</i></p>
16.4 Illicit financial flows, stolen assets, organized crimes	<p><i>Average illicit financial flow from 2004-2013 (Global Financial Integrity)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 664 million USD 	<p><i>Proportion of seized, found, or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments</i></p>
16.5 Corruption and bribery	<p><i>Corruption Perception Index in 2019 (Transparency International)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Score of 29, Rank 130/198 <p><i>Bribery Incidence (percentage of firms experiencing at least one bribe payment request across 6 public transactions) in 2018 (World Bank Enterprise Survey)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40.3% 	
16.6 Effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels		<p><i>Primary government expenditures as a percentage of original approved budget, disaggregated by sector (or by budget codes or similar)</i></p> <p><i>Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services</i></p>
16.7 Inclusive and participatory decision-making	<p><i>Share of women among public institution employees in 2017 (VNR 2018)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 45% 	<p><i>Public institution employees disaggregated by ethnic group and person with disabilities</i></p> <p><i>Proportion of people who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and ethnicity</i></p>
16.8 Participation in global governance		<p><i>Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations</i></p>
16.9 Legal identity	<p><i>Percentage of children under age 5 registered with civil authorities or family book in 2017 (LSIS)</i></p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total=73.0%, F=73.1%, M=72.8% 	
16.10 Public access to information	<p><i>Freedom of the Press Index Score in 2020 (Reporters Without Border)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 64.28, rank 172/180 <p><i>No freedom of information right in Lao Legal framework (UN Country Analysis Report 2015)</i></p>	<i>Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists, and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months</i>
16.a Institutions and policies for violence prevention	<i>No application by Lao PDR for accreditation of National Human Rights Institutions in 2019 (OHCHR)</i>	
16.b Non-discriminatory laws and policies		<i>Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law</i>

Other SDG Goals: 24 Targets

The table below shows data availability for indicators of the other SDG goals. LSIS II provides various useful national data on these indicators. One such example is data on social transfers or support coverage, which include health insurance coverage and percentage of households receiving support for school tuition or other school related costs (see 1.b). This data shows the extent to which government support reaches vulnerable populations, including poorest households. LSIS II also provides data of net attendance ratio, child labor, and child marriage disaggregated by sex, wealth quintile, region, and other factors. However, various targets have missing data, especially targets for SDG goals 10, 11 and 17. Some of the missing data are proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against, rate of occupational injuries, and recruitment cost born by employee during migration.

Target	Available Data	Missing Data
1.b Institutions and policies for poverty eradication	<p><i>General government expenditure on health in 2016 (VNR)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of total government expenditure: 6.12 Percentage of GDP: 1.51 <p><i>General government expenditure on education in 2016 (VNR)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of total government expenditure: 12.59 Percentage of GDP: 4.24 <p><i>Health insurance coverage for women and men ages 15-49 years, and children ages 5-17 in 2017 (LSIS)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> F=15.4%, M=14.0%, Children=10.3% <p><i>Percentage of households who have received external economic support in 2017 (LSIS)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21.0% <p><i>Percentage of households receiving school tuition or school related support in the last three months in 2017 (LSIS)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.7% 	<i>General government expenditure on social protection</i>

4.5 Equal access to education	<p><i>Parity indices (GPI, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth) for net attendance ratio from primary school to upper secondary school in 2017 (LSIS)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary School: GPI=0.99, rural/urban=0.92, bottom/top=0.79 • Lower Secondary School: GPI=1.04, rural/urban=0.64, bottom/top=0.30 • Upper Secondary School: GPI=1.03, rural/urban=0.47, bottom/top=0.11 <p><i>School attendance rate for children with disabilities aged 6 to 17 in 2015 (Disability Monograph)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aged 6 to 10: 53.10% • Aged 11 to 14: 44.90% • Aged 15 to 17: 22.10% 	
4.7 Education on human rights, gender equality, fundamental freedoms		<p><i>Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment</i></p>
4.a Safe and Inclusive Education Facilities	<p><i>Percentage of primary schools that have WASH facilities meeting national standards in 2015 (VNR)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 53% <p><i>Percentage of schools with access to safe and adequate handwashing water facilities based on national standards in 2017 (VNR)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63% 	<p><i>Percentage of schools with access to electricity, internet and computers for pedagogical purposes, infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities, basic drinking water, and single sex basic sanitation facilities (toilets)</i></p>
5.1 Discrimination against women and girls	<p><i>Ratified Convention of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1981</i></p> <p><i>Revision of Constitution and several laws, including Law on Education, to provide for gender equality (Concluding Observations CEDAW 2018)</i></p>	<p><i>Enforcement mechanisms and extent of implementation of measures</i></p>
5.2 Violence against women and girls	<p><i>Ever-partnered women subject to physical, sexual, and emotional violence in the previous 12 months by a husband/partner in 2014 (LNS-WHLE)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical violence: 4.0% • Emotional violence: 10.5% • Sexual violence: 3.1% <p><i>Total lifetime prevalence sexual violence against women by non-partners from the age of 15 in year 2014 (LNS-WHLE)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5.3% 	<p><i>Recent data on violence against women</i></p>
5.3 Child and forced marriage	<p><i>Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in union before age 15 and before age 18 in 2017 (LSIS)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before age 15: 7.1% • Before age 18: 32.7% 	
5.5 Women's participation and leadership	<p><i>Proportion of seats held by national parliaments in 2016 (IPU)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27.52% <p><i>Percentage of firms with a female top manager in 2018 (World Bank Enterprise Survey)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 43.1% <p><i>Share of women among public institution employees in 2017 (VNR 2018)</i></p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45% <i>Proportion of women in local governments in 2018 (Gender Development Association)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial Governors: 0% • Deputy Provincial Governors: 8% • District Majors: 6% • Village Chiefs: 2.6% 	
5.c Policies and legislation for gender equality		<i>Whether system to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment available or not</i>
8.5 Equal pay for work of equal value	<i>Unemployment rate in 2017 (LFS)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total=9.4%, <i>Youth unemployment rate, aged 15-24 in 2017 (LFS)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total=18.2% <i>Female employees earn on average 0.5 million LAK less per month than men (LFS)</i> <i>Average time spent on unpaid domestic labor and caregiving (CARE Rapid Gender Analysis Covid-19)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • F=4 hours per day • M=30 minutes per day <i>Employment rate for populations 10 and over in 2015 (Disability Monograph)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People without disabilities: 68.4% • People with disabilities 46.5% 	<i>Unemployment rate disaggregated by sex</i>
8.7 Child labor, child soldiers, forced and modern slavery	<i>Proportion of children engaged in economic activity classified as child labor by sex and age in 2017 (LSIS)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-11 years: T=35.0%, F=35.7%, M=34.3% • 12-14 years: T=22.6%, F=21.4%, M=23.7% • 15-17 years: T=6.8%, F=6.0%, M=7.4% <i>Proportion of children engaged in household chores classified as child labor by sex and age in 2017 (LSIS)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-11 years: T=1.8%, F=2.7%, M=1.0% • 12-14 years: T=4.7%, F=5.6%, M=3.7% • 15-17 years: T=1.7%, F=2.0%, M=1/5% 	
8.8 Safe and secure working environments	<i>Ratified five of eight ILO Fundamental Conventions and one of four ILO Government Priority Conventions; conventions for freedom of association and bargaining have not been ratified (UN Country Analysis Report 2015)</i>	<i>Fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries per 100,000 workers, by sex and migrant status</i>
10.2 Social, economic and political inclusion		<i>Proportion of people living below 50% of median income, by sex, age, and persons with disabilities</i>
10.3 Equal opportunity laws, policies and practices		<i>Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law</i>
10.4 Policies for greater equality		<i>Labor share of GDP</i> <i>Redistributive impact of fiscal policy</i>
10.5 Improve regulation and monitoring of financial markets	<i>Bank of Lao PDR laws and related regulations revised and enacted toward compliance with international standards in 2016 (VNR)</i>	<i>Financial soundness indicator</i>
10.6 Country		<i>Proportion of members and voting rights of</i>

representation in the global institution		<i>developing countries in international organizations</i>
10.7 Safe migration	<i>Recruitment-related costs for Lao-Thailand migration (What's the Incentive? Comparing regular and irregular migrant work experience from Lao PDR to Thailand)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • THB 15,000-THB 21,000 • Average salary in Thailand for 131 regular migrants in 2015: THB 6,555 	<i>Recruitment cost born by employee as a proportion of monthly income earned in country of destination</i>
11.1 Safe housing	<i>Percentage of household members living in households cooking with polluting fuels and technology in poorly ventilated locations in 2017 (LSIS)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40.5% <i>Availability of improved water source for drinking water in 2017 (LSIS)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 83.9% <i>Availability of improved type of sanitation facility in 2017 (LSIS)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 73.8% 	
11.2 Safe transport		<i>Proportion of population that has convenient access to public transport by sex, age, and persons with disabilities</i>
11.3 Inclusive urbanization		<i>Ratio of land consumption rate to population growth rate</i> <i>Proportion of cities with a direct participation structure of civil society in urban planning and management that operate regularly and democratically</i>
11.7 Safe public spaces		<i>Average share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use for all, by sex, age, and persons with disabilities</i>
17.1 Institution and policies for tax collection		<i>Total government revenue as a proportion of GDP, by source</i> <i>Proportion of domestic budget funded by domestic taxes</i>
17.10 Equitable trade system		

SDG 18 – 4 Targets

The National Regulatory Authority for UXO/Mine Action Sector in Lao PDR (NRA) provides regular data on casualties from UXO and clearance of UXO contaminated land through its annual reports.

Target	Available Data	Missing Data
18.1 Zero annual casualties from UXO accidents	<i>Total casualties (injuries and deaths) (NRA Annual Report)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2015: 42 • In 2018: 24 	
18.2 UXO contamination cleared from high	<i>Hectares cleared (NRA Annual Report)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2015: 2961 	

priority areas and villages defined as poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2018: 3670 <i>Number of villages defined as “poor” with confirmed hazardous areas remaining to be cleared (VNR)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2016: 2,389 In 2017: 2,389 	
18.3 Identified UXO survivor’s health and livelihoods needs meet	<i>Percentage of registered active-age UXO survivors unable to earn sufficient income with access to basic income security (VNR)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2016: 4.5% In 2017: 5% <i>Percentage of registered UXO survivors mainstreamed into health, education and employment services (VNR)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2016: 13.4% In 2017: 16.5% 	
18.4 Ensure all remaining UXO activities can be fully funded by the government		<i>Percentage of UXO activities funded by the government</i>

Chapter 4 – Leaving No One Behind (LNOB)

Critical to realizing SDG 16 Plus is the principle of Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), which entails reaching the most vulnerable group of people in development efforts and working to eradicate inequality, discrimination and exclusion. This chapter discusses the current situation of different vulnerable groups (poorest households, women and girls, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities) in Lao PDR. In reality, these groups often intersect, but the groups have been divided to understand the different factors that lead to vulnerability and exclusion.

Poorest households

While absolute poverty has been steadily declining in Lao PDR, inequality has also been rising as Table 1 indicates.

	1992-1993	2012-2013	2018-2019
Poverty Rate	46%	24.6%	18.3%
Gini coefficient	0.311	0.360	0.388

Table 1: Poverty Rate and Gini Coefficient in Lao PDR¹

Recent national data also shows that the poorest households, who are mostly concentrated in rural areas, have not benefited equally from Lao PDR’s economic growth.² Table 2 below

¹ Peter Warr, Sitthiroth Rasphone and Jayant Menon, *Two Decades of Rising Inequality and Declining Poverty in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic* (Asia Development Bank, 2015); Lao Statistics Bureau and World Bank, *Poverty Profile in Lao PDR: Poverty Report for the Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey 2018-2019* (Vientiane, Lao PDR: Lao Statistics Bureau, 2020).

² Lao Statistics Bureau, *Lao Social Indicator Survey II 2017, Survey Findings Report* (Vientiane,

shows the parity index for bottom/top wealth quintiles for various targets of SDG 16 Plus.

Indicator	Parity Index (Bottom/Top)
1.b: Health insurance coverage for women	0.05
1.b: Health insurance coverage for men	0.05
1.b: Proportion of households who have ever received economic assistance	0.44
1.b: Received any social transfer or benefits in the last 3 months	0.44
4.5: Primary school enrollment	0.79
4.5: Lower secondary school enrollment	0.30
4.5: Upper secondary school enrollment	0.11
8.8: Economic activity considered as child labor for children age 5-11	1.33
8.8: Economic activity considered as child labor for children age 12-14	2.10
11.1: Access to improved source of drinking water	0.59
11.1: Access to improved type of sanitation facility	0.25
16.9: Birth registered with a civil authority	0.58

Table 2: Parity index bottom/top wealth quintiles for various SDG 16 Plus targets³

Household in the bottom wealth quintile are much less likely than households in the top wealth quintile to be covered by health insurance or to receive any social transfer or benefits. Poorer households are also less likely to have access to adequate drinking water and sanitation facilities. Children in poorer households are less likely to attend school, especially at the lower secondary and upper secondary level, and to have their birth registered with a civil authority. They are also more likely to be involved in economic activity considered as child labor. The Ministry of Education and Sports have made some efforts to support poor children, such as issuing a decree to provide stipends to poor students and implementing the National School Lunch Program, yet more effort will be needed to reach all children in need. According to LSIS II, only 4.8 percent of children in poorest households have received support for school tuition or school related fees in the last three months.⁴

Women and girls

Lao PDR has made some progress in improving the lives of women and girls. Near gender parity for primary school attendance (GPI of 0.99) has been achieved, and women hold 27.52% of the seats in national parliament, a higher number than the world average.⁵ Moreover, the amended Labor Law in 2013 prohibits discrimination in hiring and firing of women due to pregnancy or maternity status.⁶ However, many women and girls, particularly those who live in rural areas, belong to ethnic minority groups, and/or come from poorer backgrounds, still suffer from various disadvantages. For instance, while gender parity indices have improved for different education levels, within the poorest quintile, the GPI for lower

Lao PDR: Lao Statistics Bureau and UNICEF, 2018).

³ Lao Statistics Bureau, *Lao Social Indicator Survey II 2017*

⁴ Ministry of Education and Sports, *ESDP 2016-2020: Mid-Term Review Report* (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2018); Lao Statistics Bureau, *Lao Social Indicator Survey II 2017*

⁵ Lao Statistics Bureau, *Lao Social Indicator Survey II 2017*; IPU Parline, "Lao People's Democratic Republic: National Assembly," IPU, https://data.ipu.org/node/92/data-on-women?chamber_id=13502.

⁶ UN Country Analysis Report 2015

secondary school attendance and for upper secondary school attendance is 0.92 and 0.58, respectively.⁷ This suggests that poorer households may prioritize education for boys over girls due to financial difficulties. Moreover, while opportunities for women to participate politically at the top government level has increased, the opportunities are minimal for rural women, as can be seen in the much lower rates of women in leadership at subnational levels, with women constituting only 2.5% of village leaders. More information on participation will be discussed in Chapter 6. Child marriage, while prohibited under law, is still widely practiced and affects the wellbeing of many girls, especially those in rural areas. Even in urban areas, 20.9 percent of women ages 20-24 years married before the age of 18, and this number jumps to 49.3 percent in rural areas without road access.⁸

Ethnic minorities

Lao PDR is ethnically diverse, with 50 officially recognized ethnic groups. The majority ethno-linguistic group, Lao-Tai, accounts for about 65 percent of the population.⁹ The ethnic minority groups can be roughly divided into three ethno-linguistic families: Mon-Khmer, Hmong-Mien and Chinese-Tibetan. Compared to the Lao-Tai majority group, ethnic minority groups tend to be concentrated in remote mountainous regions where social services may be difficult to access. As Table 3 shows, ethnic minority groups lag behind economically and socially. Around a third of Mon-Khmer (32.7%) and Hmong-Mien (38.4%) are poor, compared to one-tenth of Lao-Tai. Moreover, ethnic minority children are less likely to attend both primary and secondary schools compared to Lao-Tai children. One of the reasons accounting for this disparity is that secondary schools are located far from remote villages where ethnic minorities are generally concentrated. Just 16 and 5 percent of ethnic minorities live in a village with a lower- or upper-secondary school, respectively, compared with 31 and 16 percent among the Lao-Tai.¹⁰

Indicators	Lao-Tai	Mon-Khmer	Hmong-Mien	Chinese-Tibetan
1.b: Poverty Rate (2019)	10.6%	32.7%	38.4%	18.1%
1.b: Health insurance coverage for women	19.9%	7.0%	5.4%	9.6%
1.b: Health insurance coverage for men	17.7%	7.0%	7.7%	7.0%
4.5: Primary school enrollment	93.9%	82.8%	87.9%	87.4%
4.5: Lower secondary school enrollment	71.3%	44.4%	57.1%	43.2%
4.5: Upper secondary school enrollment	48.4%	19.3%	28.5%	28.3%
11.1: Access to improved source of drinking water	91.5%	67.5%	78.1%	80.2%

⁷ Lao Statistics Bureau, *Lao Social Indicator Survey II 2017*

⁸ Lao Statistics Bureau, *Lao Social Indicator Survey II 2017*

⁹ Open Development Laos, "Ethnic Minorities and Indigenous People," Open Development Laos, <https://laos.opendevlopmentmekong.net/topics/ethnic-minorities-and-indigenous-people/>.

¹⁰ Obert Pimhidzai and Linh Houng Vu, *Lao Poverty Policy Brief: Why are Ethnic Minorities Poor?* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group, 2017).

11.1: Access to improved type of sanitation facility	84.6%	52.4%	65.4%	53.3%
16.9: Birth registered with a civil authority	80.1%	59.3%	70.0%	73.3%

Table 3: Comparison of different SDG indicators among the main ethno-linguistic group¹¹

As mentioned above in the “Women and Girls” section, ethnic minority women tend to be more disadvantaged than majority Lao-Tai women. In addition to rural-urban disparities, this may be due to traditional gender norms being more entrenched among some ethnic minority groups. As Table 4 shows, girls below the age of 18 are more likely to marry among ethnic minority groups, and ethnic minority women are more likely to believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife for disobeying gender norms. Moreover, girls in Hmong-Mien groups are less likely to attend secondary schools than boys.

Indicators	Lao-Tai	Mon-Khmer	Hmong-Mien	Chinese-Tibetan
4.5: Gender parity indices for lower secondary school enrollment	1.07	1.01	0.91	0.80
4.5: Gender parity indices for upper secondary school enrollment	1.06	0.90	0.94	1.27
5.2: Proportion of women who believe husband is justified in beating his wife for disobeying gender norms	25.3%	36.3%	39.2%	44.8%
5.3 Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in union before age 18	26.2%	38.9%	56.9%	36.8%

Table 4: SDG Indicators on gender-related issues among ethnic minority groups¹²

People with disabilities

In general, there is very limited national data on people and children with disabilities. The Disability Monograph of Lao PDR offers the most recent and comprehensive national data.¹³ The Monograph is based on data from the 2015 Population and Housing Census (PHC), which used the Washington Group’s Short Set of Questions for the first time. While the PHC report from 2015 only provides information on the prevalence of disability, the monograph offers an in-depth analysis of key socio-economic indicators, some of which are listed in Table 5. As the table shows, people with disabilities face severe socio-economic disadvantages compared to people without disabilities. Only 53.10 percent of children with disabilities attend primary school compared to 87.40 percent of children without disabilities. Moreover, people with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed than people without disabilities, and youth with disabilities are seven times more likely than youth without disabilities to be neither in employment, nor in school, nor in training.

Indicators	People without disabilities	People with disabilities
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¹¹ Lao Statistics Bureau, *Lao Social Indicator Survey II 2017*; Lao Statistics Bureau, *Poverty Profile in Lao PDR*

¹² Lao Statistics Bureau, *Lao Social Indicator Survey II 2017*

¹³ Lao Statistics Bureau and Humanity and Inclusion in Lao PDR, *Disability Monograph of Lao PDR: From the 2015 Population and Housing Census* (Lao Statistics Bureau).

4.5: Literacy Rate for population age 6 and over	86.02%	52.95%
4.5: Proportion of children currently attending school, age 6 to 10	87.40%	53.10%
4.5: Proportion of children currently attending school, age 11 to 14	85.60%	44.90%
8.5: Employment rate for populations age 10 and over	68.4%	46.5%
8.5: Unemployment rate for populations age 10 and over	1.3%	4.0%
8.5: Youth population (age 15 to 24) not in employment, education, or training	4.3%	27.8%

Table 5: SDG indicators comparing people without disabilities and people with disabilities¹⁴

The Monograph’s disaggregated gender data also reveals that double discrimination is faced by women and girls with disabilities. Women with disabilities are 2.25 times less literate than men with disabilities and are less likely to be employed than men with disabilities (see Table 6 below).

Indicators	Men with disabilities	Women with disabilities
4.5: Literacy Rate for population age 6 and over	89.91%	40.04%
8.5: Employment rate for populations age 10 and over	54.9%	38.1%

Table 6: SDG indicators comparing men and women with disabilities.

Chapter 5: SDG 16 Plus and Fundamental Freedoms

The fundamental freedoms of expression, assembly, and association are crucial in ensuring the effective implementation of SDG 16 Plus goals. They provide citizens and civil society organizations the ability to raise their concerns to the government and other relevant power holders and monitor the progress of implementation in a transparent and inclusive manner. Lao PDR guarantees these freedoms in its constitution and has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) since September 2009. Unfortunately, these freedoms are curtailed through the Penal Code and various official decrees. In its concluding observations from November 2018, the Committee of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) raises concerns regarding these restrictions, such as state control over the media and the criminalization of online criticism of the Government and Lao People’s Revolutionary Party.¹⁵ The Committee also draws attention to restrictions imposed on freedom of association, including a lengthy registration process for non-profit associations, broad powers of authorities to monitor and curtail associations’ activities, and criminalization of unregistered associations.¹⁶

Although fundamental freedoms in the Lao PDR are contradictory and conditional, the government of Laos has recently given some indication of progress regarding increased willingness to consider opening up freedom of expression, assembly, and religion. During Lao

¹⁴ Lao Statistics Bureau and Humanity and Inclusion in Lao PDR, *Disability Monograph*

¹⁵ United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), *Concluding Observations on the Initial Report of Lao People’s Democratic Republic* (United Nations, 2018).

¹⁶ UN ICCPR, *Concluding Observations*.

PDR's review under the United Periodic Review (UPR) in January 2020, the Lao government accepted recommendations from various countries on these topics, including ten recommendations on freedom of expression (including one on media freedom and one on freedom of opinion), three on freedom of assembly, and two on freedom of religion¹⁷. Such steps, perhaps encouraged by the targets of the SDGs, are key to Lao PDR's ability to achieve the targets of SDG 16 Plus. Regardless, it is still worth noting that many recommendations on ensuring fundamental freedoms under the UPR review of January 2020 were not accepted by the Lao PDR, especially those regarding freedom of assembly and those that called for revising or repealing specific legislation such as Article 65 of the Penal Code, an article restricting propaganda against the State¹⁸. As long as the government of Lao PDR is unwilling to make such adjustments to its law and penal code, it will not be able to fully achieve the aims of SDG 16 Plus.

In spite of remaining resistance regarding freedom of assembly, some progress has been made in this area as well. In April 2009, the Prime Minister signed the Decree of Associations, allowing for central registration of local associations for the first time. Since then, many civil society organizations have been established.¹⁹ Moreover, in recent years higher level government officials have started to recognize the importance of civil society's role in realizing the SDGs. During the Round Table Implementation Meeting (RTIM) of 2019, government officials and development partners noted that CSOs "should be given more space and role to support the Government of Lao PDR in localizing SDGs and implementing SDGs" as well as opportunities to "interact with the sub-national and national governments to formulate policies."²⁰ Some of the CSOs' efforts in the implementation and monitoring of SDG 16 Plus are discussed in Chapter 7.

All in all, the role that SDG 16 Plus has played directly in influencing increased allowance of fundamental freedoms is not clear, however it is clear that some progress is being made. Easing restrictions on freedom of assembly and expressions of the government's willingness to allow for increased freedom of expression are promising signs, and will be integral to progress on SDG 16 Plus.

Chapter 6 – Examples of progress/lack of progress in SDG 16 Plus

Participation and Decision-Making Opportunities for Marginalized Groups

¹⁷ United Nations Human Rights Council, *UPR of Lao People's Democratic Republic (3rd Cycle-35th Session): Thematic list of recommendations*.

¹⁸ United Nations Human Rights Council, *UPR of Lao People's Democratic Republic (3rd Cycle-35th Session): Thematic list of recommendations*.

¹⁹ Asia Development Bank, *Civil Society Briefs: Lao People's Democratic Republic* (Asia Development Bank, 2011).

²⁰ Department of International Co-operation Ministry of Planning and Investment, *Report and Proceeding Round Table Implementation Meeting 25th and 26th November 2019 Luang Prabang Province* (Ministry of Planning and Investment, 2019).

Enhancing the participation of women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in decision-making opportunities is crucial to ensuring national and local development initiatives meet and respect the needs of these vulnerable groups. There has been progress in increasing women's opportunities in decision-making at the national level. Between the 7th and 8th legislature, there was a 2.5 percent increase of women as elected officials, and women currently hold 27.52 percent of the seats in national parliament, a higher number than the world average.²¹

Women in Lao PDR hold 27.52 percent of seats in national parliament.

However, women constitute only...

- *0 percent of Provincial Governors*
- *8 percent of Deputy Provincial Governors,*
- *6 percent of District Majors,*
- *2.6 percent of Village Chiefs.*

However, women face significant barriers in decision-making at the provincial and local levels. As of 2018, there were no female Provincial Governors, and women constituted only 8 percent of Deputy Provincial Governors, 6 percent of District Majors and 2.6 percent of Village Chiefs.²² One of the reasons for limited participation of women at the local level may be the strict criteria for gaining political affiliation at every level of governance. Eligibility for earning Party Membership is based on a minimum level of education, economic status, and reputable moral-standing, and women face difficulties in meeting this requirement as they tend to have less opportunities to obtain higher levels of education and participate in formal employment compared to men.²³

There are limited national data on the participation of people with disabilities at the national and local level, but existing evidence suggests that people with disabilities face significant challenges in this area. In its concluding observations, the Committee of the ICCPR raises concerns regarding the barring of persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities from political participation. Moreover, a study conducted by SNV and Humanity & Inclusion in Savannakhet Province shows that people with disabilities may be excluded from decision-making processes at the village level as well.²⁴ Three village heads interviewed for this study noted that they rarely invited people with disabilities to their meetings, which are conducted between one to three times per month. Women with disabilities in the study group face double discrimination, and were less likely than men with disabilities to attend meetings and training activities. More research and data are needed to understand the scope and depth of discrimination in participation experienced by people with disabilities in Lao PDR.

Violence against women and their access to justice

²¹ Gender Development Association (GDA), *Key Challenges in Gender Development since the 2nd UPR Cycle of Lao PDR* (Gender Development Association, 2019); IPU Parline, "Lao People's Democratic Republic: National Assembly."

²² GDA, *Key Challenges in Gender Development*

²³ GDA, *Key Challenges in Gender Development*

²⁴ SNV in Lao PDR. *Understanding factors that affect people with disability in having access to WASH facilities and services in three districts, Savannakhet province* (Vientiane, Lao PDR: SNV in Lao PDR, 2020).

Some progress has been made to protect women against gender-based violence, notably in the legal and policy framework. The government of Lao PDR has criminalized marital rape, established reporting mechanisms, and developed relevant National Action Plans to address root causes of violence.²⁵ Support services for victims have also improved in recent years. Women can now receive free legal aid through the Lao Bar Association, and the Lao Women's Union (LWU) has established 16 centers for counseling and protection of women and children across 16 provinces, and 1 in Vientiane Capital.²⁶

Challenges still remain, especially with access to justice for victims of gender-based violence. Despite the fact that about a third of ever-partnered women (30.3%) experience some form of violence during their lifetime, most women do not report their cases. Nearly half of the women (43.2%) who encountered partner violence did not report the incident due to embarrassment and fear of social stigma, and less than 30% sought help from official agencies.²⁷ Besides the fear of social stigma, low reporting may also be due to the way in which cases of gender-based violence are typically addressed. Oftentimes, cases will go through the customary system first, involving family or village elders, and then go through Village Mediation Units. Only a few cases go through formal systems involving police and courts.²⁸ Even more problematic, many members of Village Mediation Units and law enforcement personnel have limited capacity on how to address cases in a gender-sensitive and confidential manner.²⁹

Safe Migration and Human Trafficking

This section will cover migration of Lao citizens to Thailand. Though migration is not limited to Thailand, it is the primary destination country for Lao migrants, and information regarding other destination countries is limited³⁰. Every year, many people from Lao PDR migrate to Thailand, usually looking for better employment opportunities. Estimates of the total number of labor migrants from Lao PDR working in Thailand range between 100,000 to 500,000.³¹ Positive changes have been made recently to ensure safe migration between the two countries. The Thai Government established Post-Arrival and Reintegration Centers at borders with Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Myanmar to provide trainings and information to regular migrant workers and opened several Migrant Worker Assistance Centers across the country.³² In 2016, Thailand and Lao PDR signed a revised Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a mandatory employment contract for use in Thailand. Previous MOUs and

²⁵ GDA, *Key Challenges in Gender Development*

²⁶ UN CEDAW, *Concluding Observations*; GDA, *Key Challenges in Gender Development*

²⁷ Lao Commission for the Advancement of Women and Lao Statistics Bureau, *Lao National Survey on Women's Health and Life Experiences 2014: A Study on Violence against Women* (Lao PDR: National Commission for the Advancement of Women, 2015).

²⁸ Pimpisa Sriprasert and Athena Nguyen, *CARE Rapid Gender Analysis Covid-19 Lao People's Democratic Republic* (CARE, 2020).

²⁹ UN CEDAW, *Concluding Observations*

³⁰ International Labour Organization, *Triangle in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note: Lao PDR (July-September 2019)*

³¹ Trafficking in Persons from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar to Thailand UNODC Report August 2017

³² International Labour Organization and United Nations Development Programme, *Human Trafficking Vulnerabilities in Asia: What's the Incentive? Comparing Regular and Irregular Migrant Experiences from the Lao People's Democratic Republic to Thailand* (Thailand: ILO and UNDP, 2018).

guidelines did not require employers in Thailand to provide workers from Lao PDR with a labor contract, leaving many migrant workers vulnerable to unfair and possibly exploitative working conditions.³³

However, various challenges remain in ensuring a safe migration environment. Despite the formal MOU between Lao PDR and Thailand, most migrants do not enter Thailand through legal migration channels. This is mainly due to high costs and lengthy bureaucratic processes associated with the legal channel, and the fact that salaries do not much differ between regular and irregular migrants. According to interviews with regular and irregular migrants conducted by ILO and UNDP in 2015 and 2013, respectively, regular migrant workers had a mean salary of THB 6,500 while irregular migrant workers had a mean salary of THB 6,864.³⁴ The number of migrants with irregular status in Thailand is not known, but there is a general consensus that irregular migration occurs at a large scale. The UNODC estimates that on average approximately 44,000 migrants are smuggled from Lao PDR to Thailand.³⁵

This is a concerning situation as irregular migrants may face an increased risk of abuse and exploitation. According to the previously mentioned interviews by ILO and UNDP, irregular migrant workers tend to face more difficult working conditions in Thailand compared to regular migrant workers.³⁶ While 95 percent of regular migrant workers had a regular 8 hour working day and 99 percent of them worked 6 days per week, 36 percent of irregular migrant workers worked 9 to 11 hours and 31 percent of them worked 12 hours or more per day. 63 percent of the irregular migrants worked seven days a week. The working hours of irregular migrant workers indicate breaches in the Labor Protection Act of Thailand, which stipulates that daily and weekly working hours should not exceed 8 and 48 hours respectively. Moreover, while 92 percent of regular migrant workers indicated that they had all required documents to live and work in Thailand, only 13 percent of the irregular migrants indicated the same.

Another challenge is identifying victims of human trafficking. Very few cases of trafficking from Lao PDR to Thailand are officially identified each year. Table 7 shows the number of Lao nationals trafficked to Thailand and returned to Lao PDR from 2013 to 2015 according to data from Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.³⁷ As the table shows, women, especially female minors, are most likely to become victims of trafficking.

Year	Adult Male	Male < 18 years	Adult Female	Female < 18 years
2015	4	2	23	78
2014	0	0	42	115
2013	9	7	23	71

Table 7: Lao nationals trafficked to Thailand and returned to Lao PDR from 2013-2015

³³ International Labour Organization, *Human Trafficking Vulnerabilities in Asia*

³⁴ International Labour Organization, *Human Trafficking Vulnerabilities in Asia*

³⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Trafficking in Persons from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar to Thailand* (Bangkok, Thailand: UNODC, 2017).

³⁶ International Labour Organization, *Human Trafficking Vulnerabilities in Asia*

³⁷ UNODC, *Trafficking in Persons from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar to Thailand*

*according to Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare*³⁸

Women's Access to Safe and Inclusive Employment Opportunities

Ensuring women's access to safe and inclusive employment opportunities is crucial to achieve gender equality and guarantee women's freedom to work. Some progress has been made in recent years. In 2013, the Lao Government amended the Law on Labor. The amended law includes a clause on equal employment between men and women and provisions for women's occupational safety, health, and maternity benefits and protection.³⁹ Moreover the Law on Social Security adopted in 2013 allows for all informal workers to voluntarily contribute to the National Social Security Fund.⁴⁰

However, many challenges still remain. Even though an equal share of men and women make up the working population, women tend to work in lower paid jobs and tend to be excluded from the formal sector.⁴¹ According to ILO's Decent Work Country Programme in 2017, 61 percent of women in the labor force are unpaid family workers. Factors that contribute to this situation are traditional norms and discriminatory stereotypes, and low education levels among women, especially in poor and remote communities.⁴² Another concerning issue which has been raised by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women is the lack of a sufficient legal mechanism to address sexual harassment in the workplace. While the revised Law on Labor has a clause on sexual harassment and states that an employee may seek compensation if he or she becomes a victim of such harassment, the law does not provide a definition of harassment.

A third concerning issue is that while in general appropriate protective laws and policies are in place, enforcement may remain inadequate. In a study conducted by the Gender Development Association (GDA) in Mad District, Vientiane Province, most female participants did not have knowledge and awareness of basic social protection services, including enforcement of minimum wage.⁴³ While this study was conducted in only one district, the results suggest that enforcement of the Law on Labor and information dissemination regarding the Law has not reached the whole population, especially those in rural and remote areas.

Chapter 7 – Role of Parliamentarians and CSOs in SDG 16 Plus

Role of Parliamentarians

The Lao PDR is a single-party state, and the National Assembly consists almost exclusively of members of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party. The National Assembly primarily fills the

³⁸ UNODC, *Trafficking in Persons from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar to Thailand*

³⁹ GDA, *Key Challenges in Gender Development*

⁴⁰ GDA, *Key Challenges in Gender Development*

⁴¹ United Nations in Lao PDR, *Country Analysis Report: Lao PDR* (Vientiane, Lao PDR: United Nations in Lao PDR, 2015).

⁴² GDA, *Key Challenges in Gender Development*

⁴³ GDA, *Key Challenges in Gender Development*

role of approving the decisions of the Party so that they can be formalized as law.

The National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) is the means through which Lao PDR implements most development action related to SDGs, and is formally endorsed by the National Assembly. In the past five years, the relevant NSEDP was the 8th NSEDP (2016-2020), which was closely related to the SDGs, with 60% of its indicators linked to SDG indicators⁴⁴. Most action and monitoring related to SDGs is delegated to individual ministries, with SDG 16 being the primary responsibility of the Ministry of Home Affairs, meaning the National Assembly has little additional involvement after approving the NSEDP.

In addition to ensuring the 8th NSEDP was linked to the fulfillment of the SDGs, the National Assembly has also been involved in some direct actions relevant to the implementation of SDG 16 Plus. For instance, the National Assembly was active in engaging with the USAID-funded LUNA project, which involved increasing transparency and accessibility of Lao laws to the general public through an online, public gazette of legal regulations at the national and provincial levels⁴⁵. Such action ensures government transparency, enhancing access to justice and supporting increased inclusivity through this broadened access.

Role of Lao Civil Society

Local Civil Society Organizations play an important role in achieving the 18 Lao SDGs (17 international SDGs and SDG 18 – Lives Safe from UXO) through continuous effort and local expertise. CSOs work under relevant government ministries in line with the priorities of the National Socio-Economic Development Plan in order to make contributions to achieving the 18 SDGs, including SDG 16 Plus.

The Government of Lao PDR has improved the working environment for Lao CSOs in previous years, in particular improving its relationships and increasing collaboration with CSOs at the local and national levels, as well as facilitating increased relationships between CSOs. In addition, it has continued to approve new organizations that have applied to register as local CSOs. This has resulted in a current total of 188 CSOs, with 85 CSOs that have been officially approved (56 Non-Profit Associations-NPAs and 29 Foundations) and 103 CSOs whose applications are processing under Decree 238 on NPAs, which underwent revision in 2017.

The Lao CSO Coordination Office (LCCO) is a national CSO network that focuses on capacity building, coordination, partnership, information exchange, learning and policy engagement at the local, national, regional and international levels. LCCO includes 64 CSO members from 16 provinces in Lao PDR. The network is also divided into nine sector working groups: law and good governance, environment, health, labor and social welfare, education, decent work and economic growth, agriculture, gender and science and technology.

In 2018, LCCO organized a national CSO consultation workshop on the SDGs and the Voluntary National Report (VNR) to discuss the draft VNR and consolidate inputs to provide comments

⁴⁴ Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Planning and Investment, “SDG Indicators”

⁴⁵ USAID, *Lao PDR-U.S. International and ASEAN Integration (USAID LUNA II)*

to the VNR and national SDGs process. A CSO statement with recommendations was submitted to UNDP and the government of Lao PDR included the CSOs' feedback in the VNR report of July 2018. Lao CSOs have participated actively in events and activities related to SDG implementation at the regional and global level, including the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2018, Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (APFSD), ASEAN Civil Society Conference (ACSC/APF), Sustainable Development Goal Festival, ASEAN Ministers on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (AMRDPE), Asia-Pacific Forum on Climate Change, PyeongChang Global Peace Forum (PPF), Partners for Review (P4R), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

At the National level, CSOs (including INGOs and NPAs) welcome the Round Table Implementation Meeting (RTIM), national reporting on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and other consultations and dialogues organized by the government as opportunities to contribute and provide inputs into national action on the SDGs and other national-level development work, as well as to be able to review the implementation and monitoring of government law, policy and strategies. CSOs appreciate the recognition that the Government has extended to its members at all levels. The support extended to the CSO network will help ensure that members contribute effectively to the development process based on their existing expertise. The CSO network also recommends that the Government to continue to maintain dialogues with civil society, and to continue to create an enabling environment for constructive participation of and partnership with CSOs. In the past, the government has done this by opening opportunities for CSO involvement in consultation processes and in providing recommendations on topics such as the development of the 2030 agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), development and implementation of the National Social Economic Development Plan (8th&9th NSEDP), national laws, policies and strategies, Disaster Risk Management, poverty reduction, response to the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, health, governance, nutrition, food security, and human rights (for women, children, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and others). Thanks to the local participatory process of planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, CSOs have been able to have an important impact on local and national development.

Chapter 8 – Recommendations

Recommendations to the National Government

Ensure that all national data collection instruments collect data that is disaggregated by sex, age, disability, ethnicity, and wealth quintiles. Lao PDR has made significant progress in collecting disaggregated data. This is shown by the Lao Social Indicator Survey, which contains data disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, wealth quintiles, and many other key factors. However, there is still very limited data on people with disabilities, and some national surveys, such as the Labor Force Survey, do not provide disaggregated data by ethnicity. Increasing disaggregated data for all national surveys would allow for more strategic and targeted policy making and actions.

Develop data collection mechanisms to gather baseline data for some SDG indicators. Many of the SDG indicators still lack baseline data. These include proportion of male population subject to violence (Target 16.1), proportion of population satisfied with last experience of public services (Target 16.6), fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries (Target 8.8), and many others.

Establish a national human rights institution that complies with the Paris Principle. This recommendation was given by the Human Rights Committee in its Concluding Observations of 2018.⁴⁶ Establishing such an institution would be crucial to conduct effective and transparent monitoring of SDG 16 Plus and other SDG goals.

Improve information dissemination on laws and policies and strengthen enforcement measures. The government of Lao PDR has made significant progress in aligning its national laws with international laws and conventions. It ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 2009. The amended Labor Law in 2013 prohibits discrimination in hiring and firing of women due to pregnancy or maternity status. However, there are concerning issues around enforcement of these laws. For example, many women who experience gender-based violence do not report the incident due to fear of embarrassment and social stigma. Female participants in GDA's study did not have knowledge and awareness of basic social protection services, including enforcement of minimum wage. Effort will be needed to improve information dissemination on laws and policies and strengthen enforcement measures to address these issues.

Recommended National Indicators

In addition to the recommendations given above, it is also recommended that the following indicators be used to monitor Lao PDR on its progress on the SDG 16 targets.

1. Percentage of early child marriage in the past year, disaggregated by gender (Target 16.2)
2. Percentage of children who experienced any corporal punishment (physical or psychological) in all settings (Target 16.2)
3. Proportions of positions (by gender, persons with disabilities, and ethnic groups) in public institutions (national and local legislatures, governors, public service, and judiciary) compared to national distributions (Target 16.7)
4. Press Freedom Index by Reporters without Borders (Target 16.10)
5. Extent to which the rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly are guaranteed in law and practice (Target 16.10)

⁴⁶ UN ICCPR, *Concluding Observations*

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