



# POPULATION SITUATION ANALYSIS: LAO PDR

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## FOREWORD

The Population Situation Analysis (PSA) presented in this document is representative of UNFPA's commitment to mainstream population dynamics, reproductive health and gender issues into the Country Programme and national development strategies and plans.

In Lao PDR, UNFPA has been active since 1976 and works with the Government and national counterparts to support programmes that improve the wellbeing of women, men and young people by promoting family planning, building capacity of skilled birth attendants, promoting adolescent sexual and reproductive health information and services, advancing gender equality, and generating evidence for policy and programme development and monitoring.

As the current Country Programme of UNFPA in Lao PDR (2012-2016) will be concluded in 2016, this Population Situation Analysis was commissioned by UNFPA to support the conceptualization of the next Country Programme (CP6) covering the period of 2017-2021. The PSA, hence provides an assessment of the population and development situation of the country in order to identify the strategic focus for UNFPA support to Lao PDR in line with the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED), 2015-2020.

The PSA also provides findings and recommendations that are useful for the development of the United Nations Partnership Framework (2016-2021) and the 8th NSED.

The PSA findings highlight the significant progress and achievements in reaching the targets of Millennium Development Goals and ICPD Programme of Action in Lao PDR. The PSA also indicates the opportunities that Lao PDR can reap through the change of population age structure (demographic dividend).

In addition, the PSA identifies the need to strengthen demographic analysis and research and improve the availability and quality of data, including population projections. It also identifies the need to reduce geographic and ethnic disparities and further reduce the maternal ratio and maximize benefits of the demographic dividend by investing in strengthening human resource capacity in the country including qualified midwives; in the provision of comprehensive sexual education for adolescent and young people; in the expansion of choices and quality of family planning information and services for young people; and in greater participation of women.

By providing a comprehensive analysis on the overall situation of population and reproductive health in Lao PDR, this assessment serves as a foundation for policy making, strategic planning and programming for all stakeholders, including Government and development partners.

On behalf of UNFPA, I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all of our partners who provided invaluable inputs to the Population Situation Analysis, in particular the Ministry of Planning and Investment for coordinating dialogues and using the findings as a basis for population policy discussion. Much appreciation goes to Dr. Geoffrey Hayes, UNFPA consultant, for the hard work and professionalism in executing this analysis.



Dr. Hassan Mohtashami  
UNFPA Representative, Lao PDR



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

At some point in the five-year programme cycle, every UNFPA Country Office conducts a "Population Situation Analysis" (PSA), in order to assess population trends in the country as well as the status of reproductive health and gender equality. These analyses are prepared according to formal guidelines published by UNFPA, but adapted to the conditions of the country. The present report constitutes the PSA for Lao PDR, and has three primary objectives: (1) to provide UNFPA's analytical, evidence-based contribution to the United Nations Common Country Assessment (CCA), which is the information base from which the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) is formulated; (2) to assess the population-development situation in order to support the formulation of UNFPA's next Country Programme (CP6) covering the period 2017-2021; (3) to encourage and facilitate the incorporation of population dynamics (including Reproductive Health and Gender) into the Lao PDR's 8th Five-year National Socio-economic Development Plan (NSED) which is currently in draft form.

The PSA is conducted within a rights-based framework, with a strong focus on identifying and ultimately correcting inequality and disadvantage in various dimensions. A rights-based approach, however, goes beyond inequality as

during the development of the post-2015 Development Agenda.

## Country overview

Lao PDR is classified by the United Nations as a "Least Developed Country" (LDC) one of only three in the ASEAN region. An LDC is a country "characterized by constraints such as low per capita income, low level of human development, and structural handicaps to growth that limit resilience to vulnerabilities" and are therefore "in need of the highest degree of attention from the international community". The Lao PDR aims to graduate from LDC status by 2020, but given the present rate of socio-economic progress and the need to monitor the key indicators of LDC status over successive periods, it may be well after 2020 before such graduation occurs.

Lao PDR's GNI per capita is reported as \$1,600 as of 2014 according to the World Bank's "Atlas method". This places Laos above Cambodia's GNI of \$1,010 (the lowest in ASEAN) and below Vietnam's \$1,890. Economic growth has averaged 7.4 percent annually over the decade 2001-11 and a rate of 7.8 percent was registered in the 2013-14 financial year, a drop from 8.0 percent in the previous year. Healthy economic growth has permitted Lao PDR to become re-classified as a "lower middle-income" country from a "low income" one a clear sign

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