

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR)¹ is a one-party parliamentary socialist republic, divided into some 16 provinces, as well as the Vientiane municipality and the Xaysomboun special zone. The provinces are further subdivided into districts and villages. Elections are organized to elect members of the Provincial People's Council. Voters in Laos choose from among LPRP candidates only. The heads of local administrations including provincial governors, capital city mayors, district governors, municipality chiefs, and village chiefs are directly appointed.²



Unless otherwise indicated, all the information in this profile is taken from the previously published Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).³

1. NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION

The **9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP 2021-2025)** integrates the SDGs. This has meant changes for the NSEDP, since the planning process (formulation, implementation and monitoring) has now to be based on the **SDG Multi-Stakeholder Partnership (MSP)** framework.⁴ The **SDG Roadmap** was finalized and approved by the National Steering Committee in 2019. It was prepared based on a series of consultations with both national and international partners. It focuses on institutional strengthening and partnerships. The Roadmap includes awareness-raising strategies, multi-stakeholder consultations and dialogue, mechanisms to create horizontal and vertical policy coherence, budgeting for the future, and plans for monitoring, reporting and accountability. The **SDG Advocacy and Communication plan** was developed based on the recommendations from the first VNR published in 2018. One of its main focus areas is to increase SDG awareness, "especially at the local levels" (see VNR, 2021, p. 23).

1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

The President issued a Decree in 2017 appointing the Prime Minister to chair the **National Steering Committee for SDG implementation**. Its 26 members are drawn from all concerned ministries, ministry-equivalent agencies, and mass organizations. The Committee oversees the coordination and implementation of the SDGs through the NSEDP and the sectoral development plans of various ministries up to 2030, including the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation results. The Committee then appointed the **National SDG Secretariat** in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and SDG focal points in relevant line ministries to lead and take ownership of each SDG.

To further help facilitate the **Multi Stakeholder Partnership Framework for the SDGs** at sectoral level, Lao PDR has created a partnership and coordination forum called **Sector Working Groups (SWGs)**. Currently, there are 10 SWGs which are covering more or less various key sectors for implementation of the SDGs. The creation of the SWG mechanism has also helped to improve collaboration between the government and partners. Chaired by the relevant ministries, each SWG now plays a critical role in supporting the preparation of the sector development plans fed into 9th NSEDP formulation, implementation and review, especially ensuring that sector priorities are reflected in national plans.

1. The Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) has been controlled by the communist Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP). This party, in alliance with the Vietnamese communists, carried out the revolution that ended in its seizure of power and the abolition of the monarchy. Top government positions—beginning with the president, who is head of state, and the prime minister, who is the head of government—are selected from high-ranking party members who constitute a Central Committee with the Politburo at the head.

2. UCLG, 2021, Towards the Localization of the SDGs, https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/hlpf_2021.pdf

3. See: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19385Lao_Final_VNR_19_June_2018_web.pdf (2018); https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/279472021_VNR_Report_Lao.pdf (2021)

4. The planning process is now more transparent. The government now shares with donors, provinces and the public, information on how the NSEDP is formulated, implemented and monitored.

1.2 VNR ELABORATION PROCESS

The 2021 VNR was prepared by the **SDG focal points** from line ministries under lead coordination of the **National SDG Secretariat**. It was also developed based on a strong partnership with development partners and all national stakeholders which takes place at several levels, from the National SDG Secretariat and the various line ministries and departments including **provincial authorities** from all 18 provinces. The latter have also been engaged with the aim to increase their understanding of the SDGs and implement relevant strategies in each province. At the national level, the **Round Table Process** is a platform for the engagement of all national, sectoral, provincial and international stakeholders including private sector, CSOs, academia, and others to engage in the policy dialogues which have implications for the SDG implementation in the country.

1.3 MONITORING

Currently, around 60% of SDG indicators have been integrated into the 8th NSEDP (2016-2020), and on-going discussions have been made on how the rest of SDG indicators will be fed into the 9th NSEDP (2021-2025) and 10th NSEDP (2026-2030). The 2021 VNR provides an outline of the assignment of SDG indicators to relevant line ministries for implementation and reporting; there is no role allocated to LRGs (see VNR, 2021, p. 23). There is however, a sub-subsection stating that “engaging local administrations in systematic implementation and monitoring is critical”. The VNR affirms that the government has already initiated institutional strengthening within local administrations by:

- ▶ seeking their inputs for the mid-term review and conclusion of the 8th NSEDP and the development of the 9th NSEDP with strong focus on SDG implementation;
- ▶ developing the 9th NSEDP M&E framework with data disaggregated by sectors and provinces;
- ▶ and potentially using an SDG open platform which will highlight various data to monitor SDGs at national, sectoral and provincial levels.

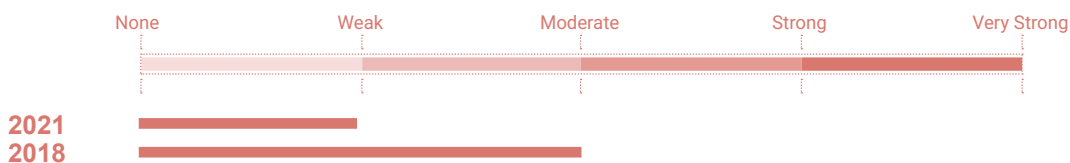
The VNR adds that “at provincial level, efforts are on-going and more actions will be needed in coming years to build capacity of provincial officials to engage in all aspects of statistical work.”

2. LRGs INVOLVEMENT IN SDG LOCALIZATION

The 2021 VNR does not mention any LRG participation in the National Steering Committee for SDG implementation. Provincial authorities were involved in the 2021 VNR process, but their participation was still limited.

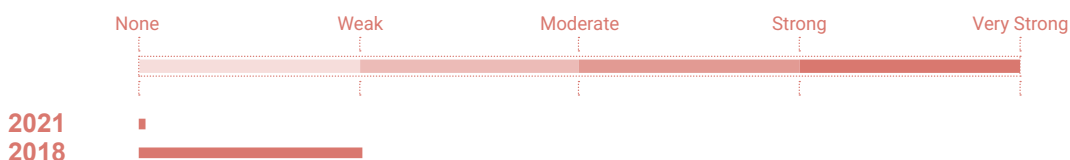
2.1 LRGs PARTICIPATION

▶ In the VNR process



Comments: Provincial authorities were involved - but their participation was still limited.

▶ In national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation



Comments: There is no LRG participation in the National Steering Committee for SDG implementation. The 2021 VNR makes reference to the need to increase vertical collaboration with the provinces, but it does not feel like any concrete actions, let alone outcomes, have been taken in this direction beyond minor mentions to “training and capacity building”.

This assessment is based on the information collected in the VNRs and in the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments’ annual survey on the localization of the SDGs.

2.2 VNR REFERENCES

In general, the 2021 VNR makes reference to the need to increase vertical collaboration with the provinces, but it does not feel like any concrete actions, let alone outcomes, have been taken in this direction beyond minor mentions to “training and capacity building”. Subsection 3.5 (see VNR, 2021, p. 75) is called “Central-local relations and balanced development across the country”. It reflects that there is limited local autonomy. For example, regarding public service provision, the VNR states that the government is redefining central-local relations: the provinces as the strategic units, the districts as the planning and fiscal units, and the villages as the implementation units. Within this framework, each ministry has gradually defined the central, provincial, district and village levels of responsibility, as part of a fully integrated approach to improving the management and delivery of public services. The subsection only mentions central-local relations in terms of public service provision, construction and maintenance of rural roads and agricultural production and related activities, and from a top-down perspective. Moreover, there is a sub-subsection that compiles the inputs from provincial authorities and local communities on: equality; participation; monitoring and evaluation; advocacy and awareness-raising and capacity building (see VNR, 2021, p. 16). There is also a sub-subsection on Local Administration and Service delivery which explains the legislative changes implemented in the last period (see below). Overall, there is consistent reference in the 2021 VNR to the need for adopting a “whole of government” approach, including at the provincial level (see VNR, 2021, p. 15).

2.3 SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND CASES

No reference.

2.4 VOLUNTARY SUBNATIONAL AND/OR LOCAL REVIEWS (VSRs / VLRs)

Not applicable.

2.5 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

No reference.

3. RELEVANT INFORMATION

General comments: The administration framework was updated in line with government policies including amendments to the Law on Government, the Law on Local Administration and Regulations on City and Municipality. The 2021 VNR mentions legislative changes affecting local administration and service delivery (see VNR, 2021, p. 85): “Updates to the Constitution and laws promulgated in a few years were progressively applied. These updated laws including amendments to the Law on Government, the Law on Local Administration and Regulations on City and Municipality, have helped to clarify the roles and responsibilities amongst the offices of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers and Heads of Ministry-equivalent organisation; and clarify further the mandates, roles and functions between levels of government and administration”.

3.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION

Women’s share in the National Assembly in 2019 was 27.5%, while it was 31.8% for Provincial People Assembly. At other subnational levels and in managerial positions women’s representation is much lower. It can be noted that the 2021 VNR puts emphasis on issues of ethnic equality and women empowerment.

3.2 COVID 19

The government will mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak through measures such as: (i) reprioritizing spending and mobilizing additional resources to support well-targeted social assistance to affected households and businesses; (ii) accelerating reforms to promote diversification and improve competitiveness in the private sector; and (iii) more and better investment in human capital and social protection system to enhance economic resilience in the longer term. Other measures, related with green growth, resilience, risk management, labor and migration have been undertaken.

4. SDG INDICATORS⁵

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|---|-------|-------------|
| 5.5.1. (b) Proportion of seats held by women (%) in local governments | | 32.2 (2018) |
| 6.1.1. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (%) | Urban | 27 (2020) |
| | Rural | 12 (2020) |
| 6.2.1. (a) Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services (%) | Urban | 63 (2020) |
| | Rural | 60 (2020) |
| 11.1.1. Proportion of population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing (%) | | 21.1 (2018) |
| 11.6.1. Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed (%) | | - |
| 11.6.2. Air pollution – annual means of particulate matter in cities (population weighted) | | 20.5 (2016) |
| 11.b.2. Proportion of local governments that have adopted local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies (%) | | - |

5. The data used for this table come from the UN SDG Indicators Database. See: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/UNSDG/IndDatabasePage>. More information on the country's progress towards the SDGs here: <https://country-profiles.unstatshub.org/lao>