

Lao PDR and UNFPA Commit to Working Together to Achieve the ICPD and SDGs



What's up in Laos?

Towards achieving universal access to SRHR and implementation of the ICPD PoA
For **People** - through **Progress** - with **Partners**

Bi-monthly Newsletter: September - October 2024

UN Secretary-General Visits Lao PDR and Highlights ASEAN-UN Partnership

UN personnels in Lao PDR welcomed Secretary-General António Guterres for his visit to Lao PDR, held alongside his attendance to the 14th ASEAN-UN Summit. The visit underscored the ASEAN-UN partnership and commitment to leave no one behind.



World Contraception Day 2024 in Lao PDR "A Choice for All: Freedom to Plan, Power to Choose"

The World Contraception Day celebration in Vientiane Capital underscored the importance of contraceptive choices in empowering individuals to make informed

The celebration, organized by the Ministry of Health and UNFPA was attended by a diverse group of partners from the Government, civil society, media, and youths, was engaging. It showcased the dynamic talents of youth through a series of captivating performances, including music, dance, theater, and debates. Various provinces joined the celebration by organizing awareness raising activities, through the support of midwives to educate youth and couples about SRHR and contraception use.



Health ministry, UNFPA mark World Contraception Day

Times Reporters

World Contraception Day was marked in Vientiane on Wednesday with a vibrant and engaging event organised by the Ministry of Health and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The event took place at the Vientiane Youth Centre and showcased the dynamic talents of youth through a series of captivating performances, including music, dance, and theatre. Additionally, a thought-provoking debate between university students addressed key topics in sexual and reproductive health.

Under the theme, "A Choice for All: Freedom to Plan, Power to Choose", the event underscored the importance of contraceptive



Activities marking World Contraception Day on Wednesday brought together UNFPA representatives, government officials, students, and young people to highlight the significance of contraception for family planning

choices in empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.

In the lead-up to the main event, various side activities were held across

different provinces to further promote family planning access and the Vientiane Youth Centre organised outreach programmes in schools and utilised social media platforms to spread

awareness.

Recent progress in family planning in Laos is encouraging. According to the 2023 Lao Social Indicator Household Survey, the demand for contraceptives, satisfied from 71.7 to 74.8 percent. Despite these gains, challenges remain, particularly among adolescents aged 15-19 and unmarried women, in gaining access to family planning services.

This is particularly notable in the increase in the adolescent birth rate which rose from 83 per 1,000 in 2017 to 89 per 1,000 in 2023.

Minister of Health Dr Bounfeng Phoummalaysith expressed his appreciation to UNFPA and all partners for their support.

"We will continue to collaborate with all partners to enhance sexual and reproductive health and rights. Our goal is to address unmet needs in family planning and ensure that pregnancies occur by choice, supported by informed decisions that uphold bodily autonomy and health," he said.

Key commitments by the government include increasing investments in family planning and mobilising resources for national family planning programmes through a comprehensive strategy and costed implementation plan.

The Ministry of Health, through its Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child, and Adolescent Health Strategy, is dedicated to

improving the availability of sexual and reproductive health information and services.

Dr. Bakhtiyor Kadyrov, UNFPA Representative to Lao PDR, emphasized, "Addressing the unmet need for family planning requires greater investments in the health workforce, strengthening national supply chain management system, reaching adolescents and youth and enhancing women's and girls' agency. Accelerating progress towards ending the unmet need for family planning can both contribute to and result from women's empowerment and gender equality, a valuable result and a critical element of economic development."

Flood Response

Supporting the Floods Affected Populations in Lao PDR

This year, severe flooding impacted several northern provinces, including Bokeo, Luang Namtha, Xayaburi, Luang Prabang, Houaphanh, and Vientiane Capital. In response to this, UNFPA, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, distributed 300 dignity kits to women and girls in Pak Seng District, Luang Prabang Province, and Khop District, Xayabuli Province. In addition, dignity kits valued at \$20,200 (466 units) supported by the Government of Australia were handed over to the Lao Women's Union (LWU) to support the affected populations in provinces of Luang Prabang, Xayaburi, and Luang Namtha.



Health

UNFPA Hands Over 3,000 Contraceptive Items to Luang Namtha Provincial Department of Health

UNFPA handed over 3,000 contraceptive items to the Luang Namtha Provincial Department of Health to help restore crucial healthcare services for the community when it is needed most.



Gender

Empowering Healthcare Heroes Against GBV

This year, 96 dedicated healthcare providers from 9 district hospitals in Vientiane Capital and the Mother & Child Hospital have acquired vital skills to deliver lifesaving care to women and girls experiencing violence. Thanks to the generous support from Australia and the technical expertise of UNFPA, healthcare workers have undergone comprehensive training on the Standard Operating Procedure for the Health Sector to respond to the needs of women and girls subject to violence. This training equipped them with the necessary knowledge to identify signs of violence, provide essential clinical care for survivors, and connect them with the existing support services.



Strengthening Male Engagement in Luang Namtha Province

Trained male Village Chiefs and elders led crucial training sessions across villages in Luang Namtha Province. The initiative aimed to engage men in the essential work of preventing violence against women and enhancing sexual and reproductive health in their communities. To date, UNFPA has trained 195 Master Trainers—male village chiefs and elders—equipping them with the skills to challenge traditional gender norms. Together, they have reached 2,926 community members.



The Gender Working Group in Lao PDR Meet to Unite Efforts for Gender Equality and Ending GBV

The Gender Working Group in Lao PDR co-chaired by UNFPA, ADB and EU gathered to discuss the way forward to making meaningful progress towards gender-sensitive

and inclusive development through strong and unwavering partnership. The meeting highlighted updates from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Beijing platform & ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit, alongside vital discussions on flood response efforts.



ASEAN Unites to Combat Online GBV and Create Safer Digital Spaces

The Faculty of Education of the National University of Laos, with the support of UNFPA, presented important findings on "Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Lao PDR" at the ASEAN Regional Symposium on Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) in Bangkok, Thailand. The Symposium created a safe space for CSOs, frontline GBV service providers, digital rights activists, and academia to exchange regional experiences and develop actionable recommendations.



Adolescents and Youth

Lao PDR Hosts the Third ASEAN Youth Dialogue 2024

The third ASEAN Youth Dialogue (AYD) took place in Luang Prabang, from 6 to 8 October 2024, under the theme: "Enhancing Comprehensive and Resilient Supports for Sustainable ASEAN Youth Development". The event, organized by the Lao Youth Union in collaboration with UNFPA and UNICEF, brought together 33 senior officials and youth representatives from across ASEAN countries and Timor-Leste to tackle pressing regional challenges and shape the future of ASEAN youth development. The AYD fostered discussions on health, well-being, education, entrepreneurship, and social inclusion, with youth identifying solutions and offering recommendations at the culmination of the Dialogue.



Celebrating the International Day of the Girl Child 2024 and the 18th Birthday of Noi

The Ministry of Education and Sports and UNFPA, in collaboration with local and international partners gathered to celebrate the International Day of the Girl Child and the 8th anniversary of the Noi Framework under the theme: "Girls' Vision for the Future". Highlighting adolescent pregnancy as the focal point of this year's IDGC helped shedding the light on the unique national challenges posed by persistent harmful social norms, gaps in data and capacity, and the socio-economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants made a series of commitments to ensure that no adolescent girl is left behind in realizing her rights and choices by: strengthening multi-sectoral collaboration, promoting adolescent-centered programming, empowering adolescent girls, advancing national progress and raising awareness.



Lao PDR Hosts the 9th Adolescent Research Day

The Lao Tropical and Public Health Institute (Lao TPHI), the Ministry of Health (MoH), and UNFPA convened the ninth Annual Adolescent Research Day (ARD) in Vientiane Capital, focusing on “Digital Pathways in Relation to Gender Inequality and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Adolescents”. This event highlighted recent research findings on adolescent health and development, with a particular emphasis on the necessity of timely analysis to address the challenges faced by adolescent girls. Established in 2016 under the Noi Ecosystem Approach, the annual ARD has become a vital platform for researchers, policymakers, and development partners to exchange insights and promote evidence-based advocacy, policies, and interventions for adolescents aged 10-19.



Population and Development

Genderizing the Census

The Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB) with UNFPA support is taking a significant step forward in improving the gender dimensions of the upcoming census. A groundbreaking initiative was launched to equip the LSB with the tools and knowledge necessary to effectively integrate a gender perspective into all aspects of the census process. Through a three-day workshop on Genderizing the Census, LSB has reviewed the census questionnaire and manuals to ensure the 5th census in Lao PDR is gender inclusive and gender sensitive.



Luxembourg Joins the Efforts to Support the 5th Population and Housing Census

The Luxembourg Government granted 500,000 Euros to UNFPA to support the Lao Statistics Bureau in the preparation of the 5th Population and Housing Census, planned for 2025. The contribution aims to strengthen the technical, operational and communication capacities and interventions of the Lao Statistics Bureau to ensure the census implementation follows international standards. This includes a particular focus on communication strategies and thematic reports highlighting education, maternal mortality, reproductive health, and gender equality.



UNFPA in the news

(Images can be clicked to read more)

Vientiane Times
<http://www.vientianetimes.com>

Health Ministry: UNFPA marks World Contraception Day

The Ministry of Health today celebrated the 20th anniversary of the World Contraception Day (WCD) on September 26, 2024. The event was held at the National Convention Center in Vientiane, Laos. The Minister of Health, Dr. Phommavong Phommavong, presided over the ceremony, which was attended by UNFPA representatives and other officials. The event highlighted the importance of family planning and reproductive health services in Laos. UNFPA has been supporting the Ministry of Health in various ways, including providing technical assistance and funding for contraceptive services. The Minister expressed gratitude for UNFPA's support and commitment to improving reproductive health outcomes in Laos.

Opinion
www.vientianetimes.com

A choice for all: Freedom to plan, power to choose

Freedom to plan and power to choose are essential for a woman's well-being and the development of a country. In Laos, the government and UNFPA are working together to provide women with access to a wide range of contraceptive options. This includes modern methods like pills, injectables, and implants, as well as traditional methods like condoms and natural family planning. The availability of these options allows women to make informed decisions about their reproductive health. UNFPA is committed to ensuring that all women have the information and resources they need to exercise their right to choose. This is a key goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is essential for achieving gender equality and sustainable development in Laos.

ASEAN youth shape the future at dialogue in Luang Prabang

ASEAN youth representatives gathered in Luang Prabang, Laos, for a dialogue session on October 4, 2024. The session was part of the ASEAN Youth Dialogue series, which aims to engage young people from across the region in discussions about their future and the challenges they face. The participants, representing various ASEAN countries, shared their views on issues such as education, employment, and social justice. They also discussed ways to strengthen regional cooperation and address common challenges. The dialogue was moderated by UNFPA staff and provided a platform for young people to voice their concerns and propose solutions. The session was a success, with participants gaining valuable insights and building relationships that will continue to shape the future of the region.

Govt, UNFPA staff take new steps to combat violence against women

The Government of Laos and UNFPA have taken new steps to combat violence against women (VAW) in Laos. This includes the implementation of a national action plan and the establishment of a multi-sectoral working group. The action plan outlines key strategies and interventions to prevent and respond to VAW, including strengthening legal frameworks, improving law enforcement, and providing support services for survivors. The working group, led by UNFPA, brings together representatives from various government ministries, civil society organizations, and the private sector. This collaborative approach is essential for addressing the complex nature of VAW and ensuring that all women in Laos are protected and supported. UNFPA continues to provide technical assistance and funding to support these efforts.

PM calls on ASEAN youth to drive development



Prime Minister Sonney Siphandone.

Times Reporters

Prime Minister Sonney Siphandone has called on ASEAN youth to take a leading role in driving socioeconomic development across the region, highlighting their vital contribution to the future of the ASEAN Community. Speaking at the ASEAN Leaders' Intergovernmental Conference on ASEAN Youth on Wednesday, which included leaders from ASEAN countries, Timor-Leste, and youth representatives, Dr. Sonney highlighted the importance of youth cooperation in achieving the goals outlined in the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint. He also encouraged young people to build cooperation among themselves in various areas in a constructive and responsible manner, in order to contribute to socioeconomic development. Youth

Govt. partners reiterate need to empower young women




Minister of Education and Sports, Phommavong

and introducing the spirit of being on one behind... The Ministry of Education and Sports, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) gathered in Vientiane to discuss the need for gender equality and the empowerment of women in Laos, which was held at the Centre Point Hotel in Vientiane.

The event also celebrated the 8th anniversary of the National Day of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, which was designed to address critical issues facing young women in the country, including discrimination, gender inequality, and limited access to education and healthcare. The event also featured a panel discussion on the path to actively empower them.

Key partners, including the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Lao Women's Union (LWU), and the Lao Women's Union (LWU) to support flood-affected areas in Luang Prabang, Xayaboury and Luang Namtha provinces. This initiative has been made possible through the generous support of the Australian Government.

Women, girls affected by recent floods get essential




The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on Oct 25 handed over dignity kits valued at US\$ 20,200 (466 units) to the Lao Women's Union (LWU) to support flood-affected areas in Luang Prabang, Xayaboury and Luang Namtha provinces. This initiative has been made possible through the generous support of the Australian Government.

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Publications

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Understanding Pathways to Adolescent Pregnancy in Lao PDR

Research Brief - 2023

This brief is developed based on the regional research led by UNFPA and UNICEF, entitled: "Understanding Pathways to Adolescent Pregnancy in Southeast Asia: Findings from Lao PDR"

Background

Adolescent pregnancy remains a pressing concern for girls in Lao PDR, hampering their ability to pursue their dreams and aspirations. When girls become pregnant but by choice or against her will. It is a violation of their human rights and imposes significant barriers to their personal, educational, social and economic development. The consequences of early pregnancies are vast, perpetuating cycles of inequality and impeding progress towards gender equality.

Early childbearing

Percentage of women aged 20-24 years who have had a live birth before the age of 18

Year	Percentage %
2011	18.2
2017	18.4
2023	17.4

Adolescent birth rate

The age-specific fertility rate for women aged 15-19 years old represents the annual number of births in women aged 15-19 years old per 1000 women in the same respective age group

Year	Rate
2011	94
2017	83
2023	89

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Big's Journey: From Struggles to Champion of Rights and Choices in Lao PDR

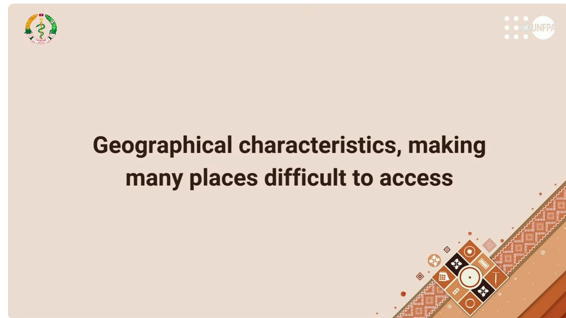
Big's Journey: From Struggles to Champion of Rights and Choices in Lao PDR

Big's journey is a testament to turning personal hardships into opportunities for change. "I want to be a model for others—to show that being yourself and believing in yourself is possible, no matter the challenges,"

Watch our recent videos

(Images can be clicked to watch)

at A Glance



Celebrating the International Day of the Girl Child 2024 and the 18th Birthday of Noi in Lao PDR



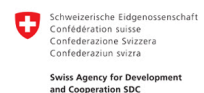
Celebration of World Contraception Day 2024 in Lao PDR



Mr Pio Smith speech for thr 3rd ASEAN Youth Dialogue in Lao PDR



UNFPA Lao PDR is grateful to the following donors for their assistance as we work towards delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled:



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