



National Conference on Population and Development

Proceedings Report

Accelerating Socio-Economic Development through
Realization of the Demographic Dividend and Resilience

23-24 October 2023
Vientiane, Lao PDR



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1 Introduction

This proceedings report covers the 2023 National Conference on Population and Development held in Vientiane, Lao PDR, from 23-24 October 2023. Co-hosted by the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the conference was chaired by His Excellency Professor Dr. Kikeo Khaikhamphithoune, Deputy Prime Minister of Lao PDR and the MPI as the leading ministry. A total of 353 participants (193 and 160 on days one and two respectively, including 51 and 34 women and girls, respectively) were drawn from various line ministries, government and mass organizations, United Nations agencies, diplomatic corps, development partners, civil society organizations, private sector, academia and other international organizations.

1.1 Agenda for Action

This landmark, two-day conference for first time in Lao PDR brought together all stakeholders and partners around the same table to boost inter-sectoral coordination towards addressing national population and development challenges.

With the theme ‘Accelerating Socio-Economic Development through Realization of the Demographic Dividend and Resilience’, the conference was primarily positioned as a platform for the Government of Lao PDR and development partners to reach a consensus on a country-specific approach to accelerate implementation of the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDPlan) (2021-2025) and the National Population and Development Policy (NPDP) (2019-2030).

These commitments would also align and accelerate Lao PDR’s implementation of the Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD PoA) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) towards advancing women’s, children’s and adolescent health and well-being, including sexual and reproductive health and rights to achieve zero preventable maternal deaths, zero unmet need for family planning, and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices by 2030.

Importantly, the conference’s call for action will feed into the National Statement of Lao PDR at the 7th Asia Pacific Population Conference from 15-17 November 2023 in Thailand and the Commission on Population and Development in New York in April 2024.

1.2 Context

Lao PDR is in the middle of demographic transition, with declining fertility and increasing longevity resulting in a rapid age structural transition. The working age population makes up nearly 70 percent of the total population, with 30 percent comprised of young people aged 15-24 years. This provides a one-time demographic opportunity for the country to realize the demographic dividend and boost economic growth if adequate investment is urgently made in human capital development as well as investment in sexual and reproductive health, education and skills development including comprehensive sexuality education, employment, employability and entrepreneurship and most importantly gender equality and women’s empowerment. While the age structure changes favouring production over consumption are almost certain to happen, achieving a substantial demographic dividend is not automatic and needs interventions and inter-sectoral approaches at policy and operational levels.

While the age structure changes favouring production over consumption are almost certain to happen, achieving a substantial demographic dividend is not automatic and needs interventions and inter-sectoral approaches at policy and operational levels. The economic challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and global recession have also affected the financing of population and development efforts, human capital investment, and in particular implementation of the ICPD25 Nairobi commitments. During times of economic slowdown, policies to maintain demographic resilience and improve human capital development should be considered among the most urgent priorities of financing strategies and response plans. With more than 80,000 new job-seekers entering the labour market annually over the next decade, investments in the preparedness of young people are key to Lao PDR’s economic recovery and growth. Labour shortages due to out-migration for better wages could also undermine recovery prospects for labour-intensive sectors, including the agriculture, manufacturing, and services sectors.

1.3 Conference objectives

In May 2023, the Government of Lao PDR completed the ICPD30 Review and the Voluntary National Survey (VNS), including good practices, lesson learned, and challenges regarding implementation of the 2013 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development and ICPD PoA. This will be reported and discussed at the 7th Asian and Pacific Population Conference (7th APPC) in November 2023 and during the 57th session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development in 2024.

The Government of Lao PDR recently launched the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Ninth National Socio-Economic Development Plan (9th NSEDP) to take stock of overall progress towards country-specific SDG targets, other commitments and realign development strategies and priority actions. In this respect, this conference will draw on results of the VNS and ICPD30 Review and is expected to provide a forum to discuss strategic solutions to challenges. Moreover, it will provide recommendations to accelerate implementation of the ICPD PoA, and national population and development policies imperative for Lao PDR to benefit from the demographic transition, realize the first demographic dividend, and boost the country's development trajectory. The outcome of the National Conference on Population and Development is imperative for the MTR as well as the formulation of the 10th NSEDP.

The conference provided a platform to brainstorm mechanisms for inter-sectoral approaches to population and development issues in Lao PDR taking into consideration the rapid demographic shift, opportunities to reap demographic dividends and to boost economic growth, considering the existing economic challenges and austerity.

The conference's key objectives were:

- Provide an appropriate platform and forum to discuss and reflect on the achievements, challenges and unfinished businesses in the area of population and development in line with findings of the ICPD30 Review.
- Propose evidence-based strategic solutions on how the Government of Lao PDR can sustain, achieve and accelerate implementation of the NPDP 2019-2030 within the context of rapid demographic transition.
- Provide an opportunity for various stakeholders, development partners, academia and civil society organizations to discuss how to strengthen multi- sectoral approaches to demographic dividends/resilience.
- Discuss inter-sectoral management and monitoring mechanisms for implementation of NPDP (establishment of National Population Coordination Committee).



2 Summary Proceeding of the Conference

2.1 Day 1: Socio-Economic Development in the Context of the Demographic Transition in Lao PDR: Opportunities and Challenges

The first day of the conference primarily focused on “Socio-economic development in the context of the demographic transition in Lao PDR: Opportunities and Challenges”. The Chair and Co-Chair gave keynotes outlining the goals and opening remarks. Technical presentations on Lao PDR’s demographic change and how it can enhance economic growth, the ICPD30 review procedure, and the main findings of the Voluntary National Survey (VNS) were given by experts from the government and academia. To effectively interact with participants, five technical parallel discussion sessions were scheduled. UNFPA and government official expert teams moderated the five sessions, which covered the following:

- 1) Demographic dividend, education, employment, youth and women empowerment and migration.
- 2) Population, environment, and climate change.
- 3) Health and well-being, including sexual and reproductive health, maternal health and family planning.
- 4) Population data, including data digitization, national policy frameworks and governance mechanisms for socio-economic development.
- 5) Role of private sector and civil society in the context of the demographic transition.

2.1.1 Opening Remarks from the Government of Lao PDR



H.E. Madame Phonevanh Outhavong
Deputy Minister, Planning and
Investment

Underlined the importance of the conference as a critical step to prepare for the 7th Asia-Pacific Population Conference in Thailand from 15-17 November 2023. This key goals of the conference were to explore how to best realize Lao PDR’s socio-economic goals in step with population development. A particular focus would be implementation of the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021-2025) and National Population and Development Policy (2019-2030) in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals and International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action. Addressing emerging challenges in the 2030 Agenda requires collaborative solutions from the public and private sectors, social organizations, and development partners.

This involves the identification of capital sources particularly funding for the proactive development of young people and human resources to ensure Lao PDR benefits from its changing demographic structure.





This also means the public and private sectors, development partners and community must work together to support implementation of national population and development policies into their respective sectors to realize these goals and ensure no member of society is left behind.



**H.E. Professor
Dr. Kikeo Khaikhamphithoune
Deputy Prime Minister**

Emphasized the Government of Lao PDR's commitment to the International Conference on Population and Development by incorporating its content into the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan. The conference's action plan requires all countries to create policies to bring population into line with economic growth and develop a skilled workforce to meet development needs, address social issues concurrent with economic expansion, and realize a vibrant and just society.

Despite tangible steps towards these goals, Lao PDR faces key challenges including gender inequality, early pregnancy, maternal mortality and ensuring vulnerable members of society are not left behind, including ethnic groups in rural areas and low-income families, particularly women and girls. Essential health and nutrition services are not widely accessible. The economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the nutritional status and survival of children, which could have long-term impacts. Despite current economic challenges, the government will endeavour to increase funding in education and health to help meet population and development goals, particularly for family planning, lowering the rate of underage pregnancy, malnutrition, maintaining school attendance, and supporting women's employment.

These steps are essential as Lao PDR is undergoing a demographic transition. This means there is a golden opportunity to take advantage of a young workforce to accelerate national development. However, this requires investment in education, human capital, skills enhancement, and unlocking the job market. This also means the public and private sectors, development partners and community must work together to support implementation of national population and development policies into their respective sectors to realize these goals and ensure no member of society is left behind.

Finally, UNFPA in Lao PDR was warmly acknowledged for its role in organizing the conference alongside ministries, development partners, embassies and other stakeholders.



2.1.2 Keynote speeches from UN agencies

UNFPA Representative in Lao PDR

Dr. Bakhtiyor Kadyrov

Positioned the conference as an opportunity to find solutions to achieve population goals, including promotion of reproductive rights and sexual health. These solutions would include prioritizing the 2025 Census to ensure it is a significant event, invest in data essential for monitoring and establish a coordination mechanism for this work across sectors. The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) to launch the landmark Programme of Action (PoA) was highlighted for transforming the way the world views population issues to create a paradigm shift from reaching specific demographic targets to a focus on the needs, aspirations and rights of individual women, men, girls and boys. Lao PDR made renewed commitments at the ICPD25 Nairobi Summit in 2019 to accelerate the national sexual reproductive health and rights and youth empowerment agenda, promote data for development and address gender-based violence and harmful practices, including child marriage.



Despite encouraging progress, UNFPA and its government partners must maintain momentum to tackle the unfinished development agenda to achieve the SDGs and ICPD PoA.

UNFPA is encouraged by the country's commitment to take progressive steps to accelerate implementation of ICPD PoA and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNFPA and its government partners are committed to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities and young people in access to education, health and employment. Expanding access to sexual and reproductive health information and services is cost-effective action towards achieving the SDGs. Investing in life skills and comprehensive sexuality education, delaying marriage and pregnancy until adulthood to acquire knowledge and skills contributes to social and economic progress. With 60 percent of the population under the age of 30, young people are not only the future, they are the present. Despite encouraging progress, UNFPA and its government partners must maintain momentum to tackle the unfinished development agenda to achieve the SDGs and ICPD PoA. This includes making the first-ever digital Population and Housing Census a success and investing in e-civil registration, vital statistics and other administrative data systems.

In conclusion, the national government and Ministry of Planning and Investment were acknowledged as conference co-organizers, while the Governments of Australia, Luxembourg, Japan, Republic of Korea, and the United States were warmly thanked for generous contributions to UNFPA's country programme.





United Nations Resident Coordinator

Mr. Bakhodir Burkhanov

With Lao PDR set to graduate from “least developed country” status by 2026, it requires effective policies, implementation and collective support of development partners to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As such, this conference is a fitting opportunity to jointly strategize sustainable development solutions with population, gender equality, women’s and youth empowerment dynamics, as well advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Lao PDR’s progressive policies and frameworks, namely the National Population and Development Policy (2019-2030), National Youth and Adolescent Policy (2021-2030), Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health Strategy, and National Action Plan for Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Women (2021-2026) reflect the government's commitment to place the ICPD Programme of Action at the heart of its sustainable development agenda.

The conference’s mid-term review of the Ninth NSEDP is an opportunity for the government and partners to produce evidence-based solutions to address economic and climate challenges, and accelerate implementation of ICPD Programme of Action. This demonstrates a commitment to end preventable maternal deaths, meet needs for family planning, and end gender-based violence and harmful practices, including child marriage. Solutions to emerge from the conference should include prioritizing of the 2025 Census and Lao Social Indicator Survey III to inform the 10th NSEDP for 2026-2030, ways to invest in national administrative data governance systems to ensure reliable data for monitoring national and global goals as well as establishing a national coordination committee on population and development.



2.1.3 Keynote presentation on demographic change in Lao PDR and how it can enhance economic growth



**Dr. Gretchen Donehower,
University of California, Berkeley**

The importance of investing in human, physical, and societal capital for economic and prosperity is critical for Lao PDR amidst its demographic transition, whereby growth in its working-age population is higher than that of the very young or old. This was emphasized by the National Transfer Accounts project, which revealed that Lao PDR has 25 years in which population age structure changes will favour production over consumption – a "demographic dividend". If the fast-growing working age population can be used productively, economic growth will be faster and resources more plentiful for other productivity enhancing investments, such as in population health and education. After 2048, the demographic window is projected to close and these investments will become harder.

Aside from investments in education and health, policies to support reproductive health and choice are needed to continue beneficial population age structure changes.

The demographic dividend represents potential - it is not automatic. Aside from investments in education and health, policies to support reproductive health and choice are needed to continue beneficial population age structure changes and support welfare for all families. The economy must employ labour resources productively, by making

skills investments in workers and supporting women and other marginalized groups to engage in the labour force. Finally, the value of research, such as the National Transfer Accounts project, was underlined to help Lao PDR understand the role of age in the economy and achieving demographic dividends.



2.1.4 Presentation on the ICPD30 review process and the key results of the Voluntary National Survey



**Mr. Kalouna Nanthavongduangsy,
Deputy Director General, Department of Planning,
Ministry of Planning and Investment**

Lao PDR made seven commitments to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and ICPD PoA at the 2019 Summit to realize three transformative outcomes: zero maternal mortality, zero unmet family planning need, and zero harmful practices/gender-based violence. The Department of Planning is in charge of the ICPD30 Review and includes the Voluntary National Survey. With support from UNFPA and other partners, considerable progress on the ICPD was made.

The ICPD PoA's 11 priority areas are:

- 1) Poverty eradication and employment
- 2) Health
- 3) Sexual and reproductive health rights
- 4) Education
- 5) Gender equality and women empowerment
- 6) Adolescent and young people
- 7) Ageing
- 8) International migration
- 9) Urbanization and internal migration
- 10) Population and sustainable development
- 11) Data and statistics. Their key achievements will be reported at the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference (7th APPC) in November 2023 and the global review during the 57th session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development in 2024.



2.1.5 Parallel Sessions and Outcome Reporting

Following the first day's activities, the Parallel Sessions sought to address issues related to the Government of Lao PDR's ability to implement the NPDP 2019–2030 and to enhance multi-sectoral approaches to resilience and demographic dividends. The five scheduled concurrent sessions were introduced, each with a unique focus associated with a conference theme. Participants from different agencies were divided into groups based on their interests and knowledge of the topics. Five expert moderator teams facilitated the discussions by presenting the background situations. Prepared questions were asked to draw out common threads, comments, or areas of disagreement. At the end of each session, the group's rapporteur presented the outcomes to the conference. The following outcomes addressed the goals, contexts, recommendations, and suggested frameworks for monitoring:

1 Demographic Dividend, Education, Employment, Youth and Women Empowerment and Migration

Following the first day's activities, the Parallel Sessions sought to address issues related to the Government of Lao PDR's ability to implement the NPDP 2019–2030 and to enhance multi-sectoral approaches to resilience and demographic dividends. The five scheduled concurrent sessions were introduced, each with a unique focus associated with a conference theme. Participants from different agencies were divided into groups based on their interests and knowledge of the topics. Five expert moderator teams facilitated the discussions by presenting the background situations. Prepared questions were asked to draw out common threads, comments, or areas of disagreement. At the end of each session, the group's rapporteur presented the outcomes to the conference. The following outcomes addressed the goals, contexts, recommendations, and suggested frameworks for monitoring:

Moderators:

- Mr. Kalouna Nanthavongdeuangsy, Deputy Director of Department of Planning, Ministry of Planning and Investment
- Mr. Kambiz Kabiri, Policy and Census Coordinator, UNFPA
- Ms. Raniya Sobir, Economist, United Nations Development Programme

Lao PDR is currently in a demographic transition, whereby its population has gained nearly one million people in eight years. Achievements including SRH, have resulted in significant drops in deaths and maternal mortality. Improvements in women's ability to become pregnant by choice have shifted the total fertility rate from 4.4 in 2000 to 2.4 in 2022, with a decline to 2.2 by 2030 forecast. These changing patterns of mortality and fertility have triggered a rapid age structural transition. The country is now benefiting from a sizable young and working age population, creating a one-time demographic window of opportunity. The larger share of the working-age population and relatively fewer young and old dependents could lead to higher economic growth if adequate investments are made in human capital and productivity.

While the demographic dividend creates potential for faster economic growth, it is not automatic and requires interventions at policy and practice levels. The demographic dividend can only be realized if the working age population benefits from multi-sectoral investment in health including SRH, job creation, education, skills development and employability. Although NPDP goal 3 focuses on opportunities to maximize socio-economic benefits of the demographic bonus, there is still a need to develop a strategic roadmap and results framework to harness the demographic dividend.

Session Objectives:

- Discuss current population dynamics in Lao PDR, particularly the time-limited opportunity for a demographic dividend to spur economic growth. This is also considering the country is in the middle stage of a demographic transition.
- Deliberate and recommend actions, and financing mechanisms for targeted investments in education, employment, youth and women's empowerment.
- Propose actionable steps for increasing investments in adolescent girls and boys, reinvigorating the "Noi Framework" and "Noi Ecosystem" and addressing gender-based violence and harmful practices, including child marriage.



Session Recommendations:

- Establish a National Coordination Committee on Population and Development for monitoring the NPDP and closely link with the existing coordination structure.
- Reinvigorate the “Noi framework” and “Noi ecosystem” and scale-up comprehensive sexuality education to empower adolescent girls and boys in partnership with regional and global development partners.
- Prioritize and integrate population dynamics and mega-trends, such as the demographic transition, disparities, digitalization and climate change in the Mid-Term Review of the 9th NSEDP (2021-2025), accelerate implementation of financing strategy (social sector) of the 9th and 10th NSEDP (2026-2030).
- Enhance young labour force skills and match technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes, including soft skills curriculums to ensure inclusion of marginalized and people with disabilities.
- Increase private sector participation in on-the-job skills development and collaboration with universities and TVET (promote internship opportunities).
- Continue to make comprehensive sexuality education and basic life skills training accessible in and out of school to all young people at all levels, ensuring inclusive learning opportunities for all.
- Provide soft and technical skills, especially to unskilled adolescents and youth.
- Strengthen micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise development initiatives, including necessary skills development to support creation of new livelihood opportunities.
- Sustain investment in technical, vocational, skills and competencies development in urban and rural settings. Create a conducive environment for young people to start small enterprises and support self-employment. Strengthen the (targeted) social protection system.
- In addition, the monitoring framework of NPDP would be improved through action to:
Strengthen the Labour Market Information System as a tool to predict labour market trends and align the education system to labour market needs.
- Create demographic dividend profiles at national and provincial levels.
- Construct key strategic indicators for the demographic dividend, such as Support Ratio NEET indicator and National Transfer Account (NTA), through building capacity of the Ministry of Planning and Investment/Lao Statistics Bureau and sub-national statistics offices to systematically produce and report the indicators.
- Ensure availability of sex and age-disaggregated data.



2 Population, Environment, and Climate Change

Moderators:

- Mr. Kindavong Luanglath, Deputy Director, Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
- Ms. Victoria Dart, Gender-Based Violence Specialist, UNFPA
- Mr. Abduvakkos Abdurahmanov, Team Leader – Natural Resources Management, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Development Programme

Lao PDR is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts, ranking 142nd out of 181 countries in the 2020 ND-GAIN Index. This exposes communities to significant climate-related hazards exacerbated by poverty, malnourishment and the heightened vulnerability of impoverished and marginalized populations. The population annually exposed to river flooding is projected to double to more than 80,000 people by the 2030s. Rapid urbanization is leading to heat stresses. Climate change-driven disasters, like monsoon rains and floods, have adverse effects on sexual and reproductive health and contribute to gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices, such as child marriage.

Disruptions in healthcare services exacerbate health inequalities, particularly for marginalized communities, by impeding access to routine medical care, maternal health services, and increasing out-of-pocket health costs. With women and girls comprising around half of the agricultural labour force, climate change impacts directly hamper their ability to generate income and secure basic necessities, increasing their vulnerability to GBV due to aggravated household tensions, as well as increased risk of exploitation, harassment, and abuse related to displacement and lack of secure infrastructure.



Session Objectives:

- Discuss the importance of a solid data system for early warning, response, recovery, and resilience building.
- Explore how investments in health, including sexual and reproductive health, life-saving maternal and new-born health services in the aftermath of disasters, can reduce climate change impacts on people.
- Examine strategies and approaches for strengthening resilience to climate change, including investments in creating a resilient GBV prevention and response system.

Session Recommendations:

- Increase information dissemination (radio, loudspeaker, media) and early warning systems, especially to marginalized, remote and diverse ethnic communities, with health and lifesaving messaging related to climate change, such as SRH and nutrition.
- Establish stronger community-led networks of actors on climate change, a “starting small” and “bottom up” approach, by increasing volunteers in communities and the field, such as “village midwives” support before transferring to health facilities, build capacity of village health volunteers to deliver basic first aid, mental health and psychosocial support, information dissemination. Adopt a system-building approach that fosters adaptive resilience to strengthen national, provincial, district and village capacities for emergency preparedness and response.
- Increase investments in building a resilient health system, including lifesaving SRH and GBV services to enable communities to prevent, respond and recover from climate change disasters.
- Improve infrastructure to mitigate damage and alternative measures to access lifesaving care.
- Develop community plans, early warning systems and community mechanisms, shelters or evacuation facilities, WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) points, alternative healthcare facilities, strengthen coordination and referrals.
- Strengthen coordination of the National Disaster Committee.
- Generate robust country-specific evidence and a data system, with an intersectional lens, on the social and gender dimensions of climate change, including SRHR and GBV to inform national strategies and action plans on climate change, resilience building and health adaptation.
- Continue to integrate SRH and GBV into national climate change policy framework and plans.
- Invest in research on the social and gender dimensions of climate change and explore financing across the development and humanitarian nexus.

In this regard, the suggested monitoring system included in the current national frameworks would address:

- Strategy on Climate Change and Health Adaptation 2018-2025
- Nationally Determined Contributions
- Lao PDR’s Resilience Framework
- The under development of the National Adaptation Plan and 10th NSEDP

Moderators:

- Dr. Chansaly Phommavong, Deputy Director General, Department of Planning and Finance, Ministry of Public Health
- Dr. Alanya Chalernphon, Sexual and Reproductive Health Analyst, UNFPA

Lao PDR has made impressive progress in addressing SRH in the last two decades. While maternal mortality plummeted by 66 percent between 2000-2017 and infant mortality declined by 40 percent, the national maternal mortality ratio remains high. While the unmet need for contraception has fallen by 60 percent since 2000, it remains high among unmarried women (73.9 percent) with low use of modern contraception methods by married and unmarried women. Adolescent fertility is among the region's highest, with 83 births per 1,000 girls and coverage of essential health services is limited, particularly in rural and remote areas. The country is committed to achieving universal health coverage, including for SRH. The Health Sector Reform Strategy and Framework until 2025 includes SRH as a priority programme, with a focus on family planning, and safe motherhood.

The National Commitment on ICPD PoA further prioritized adolescent girl's health and wellbeing for allocation of increased resources and expansion of quality youth-friendly services, including SRH information and family planning services, as well as committing to end maternal mortality. The government adopted an innovative 'Noi 2030 Framework' as a national response, which focuses on priority areas for investment to address these challenges. In addition, to reach marginalized communities, the government has deployed 1,928 midwives nationwide. However, a further 1,000 are needed to meet demand, according to the Lao 2030 report.



Session Objectives:

- Review and reaffirm the National ICPD25 Commitments, including to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity and the unmet need for family planning, as well as ensuring youth-friendly SRH services.
- Review the investment case for “Prioritizing Health Investments for Human Capital Development”.

Session Recommendations:

- Establish a system to support the transition to practice for newly-qualified midwives.
- Improve coordination mechanisms to avoid programmatic and geographic duplication with development partners, including UN agencies and civil society organizations.
- Engage mobile health units and introduce telehealth services through trained health care human resources. The suggested monitoring frameworks from the above recommendations included:
- Scale-up investments in midwifery regulations and education, ensuring all midwives are well-trained and deployed to health facilities, especially in remote and hard-to-reach areas.
- Mobilize partnerships and increase investments in family planning.
- Address geographic and socio-economic disparities in SRHR indicators through upscaling the sub-national focus.
- Invest in youth-friendly health services.
- Ensure the effective use of domestic resources.

4 Population Data (including data digitization, national policy frameworks and governance mechanisms for socio-economic development)

Moderators:

- Mr. Phetsavanh Boudlasy, Deputy Director of Social Statistics Department, Lao Statistic Bureau, Ministry Planning Investment
- Mr. Phonexay Sithirajvongsa, M&E programme Analyst, UNFPA

As part of the government's commitment to the ICPD PoA and 2030 Agenda, and as per the Lao PDR Statistics Law (2017), generating population data and statistics is essential to enhance public governance, develop strategic long-term and mid-term visions, as well as monitor and evaluate national socio-economic development plans. The Lao Statistics Bureau has partnered with key ministries to share population data to analyze, produce reports and disseminate findings. Similarly, the government is preparing for the 5th Population and Housing Census in 2025, a first-ever digital census using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing applications for data collection and Geographic Information Systems for census mapping and cartography. The use of technology will ensure efficient data processing and the publishing of preliminary results up to four months after completion of the enumeration phase.



The census could provide around 100 key indicators to monitor national and sectoral plans as well as ICPD and SDG indicators and targets. In addition, as part of the digitization strategy, the government is developing a e-CRVS system and Health Management Information System (HMIS) with potential to generate accurate and timely data for policy and planning. However, challenges with civil registration system coverage, interoperability of the e-CRVS system as well as linkages between administrative data in the health and social sectors are still apparent.

Session Objectives:

- Review and reaffirm the centrality of data in the country's socio-economic development planning, humanitarian preparedness, response, and resilience building.
- Explore opportunities for investing and building on the first-ever digital Population and Housing Census to strengthen the national statistical and administrative data systems, e-CRVS, and data digitalization at national and subnational levels for monitoring and formulation of relevant policies and action plans.

Session Recommendations:

- Accelerate mobilization of domestic and international resources for modernization and digitization of statistical systems, including financing for the 5th Population and Housing Census, and e-CRVS.
- Establish a coordination mechanism (Technical Working Group involving sectors and development partners, CSOs and academia) to improve administrative, civil registration and vital statistics systems (e-CRVS) as well as linkages between data in different sectors, including health and social protection systems, to ensure availability of real-time data for governance and monitoring of 9th NSEDP.
- Establish a South-South triangulation cooperation with countries in the region on population statistics, capacity building and technology strengthening, including census and administrative data (e-CRVS).
- Establish a national population data platform/system with a unique identifier for individuals that can apply to all civil registrations (note: while implementing sufficient data security measures to ensure that privacy of individual data is strictly protected).
- Improve data users' access to census and survey data using digital and online platforms/tools.
- Increase technical capacities of experts in ministries and academia to use data for construction of composite indicators and in-depth analysis using new methodologies and applications, such as National Transfer Accounts and National Time Transfer Accounts as well as econometrics techniques for policy advice.
- Improve linkages between policy formulation and research through investment in evidence-based policy formulation and planning methods. Enhance usage, dissemination, implementation and promote interlinkages to ensure accuracy and sustainability.
- Promote and enhance implementation of laws and sub-laws regarding data collection and digital platforms with strict dissemination and implementation.
- Capacity building specific on data disability/gender/sampling technique

The suggested monitoring frameworks fell under the broad recommendations mentioned above and include:

- Ensure use of the 2025 Census and Lao Social Indicator Survey III to inform the 10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan for 2026-2030.
- Reinforce the national administrative data governance system.
- Develop online data dashboards and an official national statistics system.

5 Role of private sector and civil society in the context of demographic transition

Moderators:

- Mr. Vilaykham Lasasimma, Operations Manager, UNFPA
- Ms. Thiphaphone Phetmany, Board of Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Ms. Philomling Vilay, Head of Solutions Mapping, Accelerator Lab, United Nations Development Programme
- Ms. Zahra Benyahia, Communication and Partnership Expert, UNFPA

The private sector will play a key role in achieving the ICPD PoA. At the Nairobi Summit in 2019, partners across sectors from health care to technology as well as philanthropic foundations and civil society, underlined a commitment to the health and rights of women, girls and youth and pledged to work with the government and development agencies to achieve the 17 SDGs and “three zeros” by 2030. The private sector has particular strengths in delivering on the SDGs and ICPD beyond financial and social corporate responsibility. These partners also bring knowledge, innovative solutions, technology, creativity, job creation and provision of specific skills and resources. The private sector will continue to influence the SDGs and ICPD through corporate practices, investments in health, education, economy, business and environment, and promoting prosperous ecosystems, supporting human rights, addressing climate change, and strengthening local development initiatives.



Civil society organizations play an increasingly prominent role in the development sector as advocates, innovative and grassroots-driven entities with the capacity to pursue participatory and people-centred forms of development. Importantly, they also champion various initiatives to advance achievement of a demographic dividend and climate resilience to ensure no one is left behind.

Session Objectives:

- Identify the private sector’s and civil society organizations’ potential to accelerate implementation of the 9th NSEDP and NPDP aligned to the SDGs and ICPD PoA.
- Explore opportunities for the private sector to improve job creation and employment opportunities for a growing working age population in the demographic window of opportunity.

Session Recommendations:

- Synergize efforts across sectors (government, development partners, civil society and private sector) and across domains to create joint visions, complementary interventions and sustainable impact and to ensure youth have the skills needed to enter the job market and access decent jobs.
- Support co-creation and sustainability of results beyond project life-cycles.
- Engage collaboratively and sustainably in the promotion of equitable access to development opportunities for women, girls, youth and those left behind.
- Create quality employment opportunities to provide sufficient monetary value for communities and the country.
- Collaborate on income generation focused on youth, women, rural, the poorest, ethnics and those with disabilities.
- Generate data and statistics to inform work at grassroots level.
- Promote Lao PDR as an investment destination.
- Create and ensure that companies can take advantage of trade opportunities/benefits.
- Improve transport infrastructure for foreign transporters to deliver goods inside and outside the country. Review policies on private sector engagement in Lao PDR to facilitate their roles and engagement.
- Build on the labour market information system to strengthen access to quality and timely data.
- Diversify economic sectors in the upcoming NSEDP.
- Effectively and systematically use all opportunities for innovation, expertise and knowledge sharing to strengthen capacities of local actors and build a collaborative advantage where every stakeholder can bring a valuable contribution to the table.
- Establish or revitalize a formal coordination platform and review information channels to engage civil society constituents and the private sector in national sustainable development policy formulation, planning and implementation at the national, provincial, district and grassroots levels to leave no one behind and ensure provincial and district levels have access to the same level of information.
- Ensure use of all domestic resources, including the private sector, through developing a national public-private sector partnership strategy to advance the ICPD PoA through ushering in new technology, innovation and the benefits of scientific progress, and promoting entrepreneurship and job creation.
- Accelerate implementation of the criteria for 'Noi' or Adolescent Girl Friendly Business Entities as a formal platform of coordination and engagement on ICPD commitments to link different civil society and private sector actors with the government and development agencies.
- Ensure timely and systematic data collection.
- Engage the private sector to recognize and advance its role in job creation.

2.2 Day 2: Reaching Common Consensus on the National Statement and Call for Action in line with the ICPD Commitments and NPDP

The second day of the conference focused on "Reaching Common Consensus on the National Statement and Call for Action in line with the ICPD Commitments and National Population and Development Policy 2019-2030 (NPDP)". The outcomes of day one's parallel sessions, along with recommendations, strategic solutions, and the next steps to accelerate implementation of NPDP and ICPD commitments in the context of demographic transition, were presented by the representative of the Ministry of Planning and Investment. Regarding the conference's theme, the line ministries' statements on how to proceed with advancing Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)—including family planning, sexuality education, maternal health, the Noi Framework and Ecosystem, and addressing gender-based violence—were followed. Additionally, remarks and messages were given by representatives of the local governors, youth, civil society organizations, diplomatic community, and development partners. The Chair concluded the conference with a National Statement and Call for Action to expedite the implementation of the 9th NSEDP and NPDP, in line with the SDGs and ICPD PoA.



2.3 High-level plenary session

2.3.1 Presentation on recommendations, strategic solutions and the way forward to accelerate implementation of NPDP and ICPD commitments in the demographic transition context

Keynote Speakers:

H.E. Madam Phonevanh Outhavong, Deputy Minister, Planning and Investment

The speaker emphasized that key policy documents – such as the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Women (2021–2026), the National Youth and Adolescent Policy (2021–2030), the National Policy on Population and Development (2019–2030), and the Youth Law – provide frameworks for implementation of the ICPD PoA, SDGs and other national and international priorities. The importance of enhancing the quality of public health and hygiene, education and socio-economic data was also emphasized.

The key takeaways from the five Parallel Sessions of day one were:

Demographic Dividend, Education, Employment, Youth and Women Empowerment and Migration

- Establish a National Coordination Committee on Population and Development as planned in the NPDP (2019-2030) for monitoring purposes linking with existing coordination structures.
- Prioritize and integrate population dynamics and mega-trends into the Mid-Term Review of the 9th NSEDP (2021-2025) and formulation of 10th NSEDP (2026-2030).
- Strengthen the social protection system for the most vulnerable, particularly amid current macroeconomic challenges.
- Reinvigorate the “Noi framework” and “Noi ecosystem” and scale-up basic life skills and comprehensive sexuality education at all levels inclusive of those marginalized and people with disabilities.
- Improve soft skills of the young labour force, unskilled adolescents and youth to match labour market needs by engaging the private sector for on-the-job skills development and collaboration with universities and TVET to promote inclusive internship opportunities.
- Create a conducive environment for young people to start small enterprises, start-ups and support self-employment and initiatives to support job creation of new livelihood opportunities.

Population, Environment and Climate Change

- Integrate SRH and GBV in national climate change policy framework and plans as well as increasing investments in building a resilient health system, including life-saving SRH and GBV services to prevent, absorb, respond, refer and recover from climate change disasters.
- Generate robust country-specific evidence, research with an intersectional lens on the social and gender dimensions of climate change, including SRH and GBV.
- Establish a dedicated network of actors on climate change and women’s and girls’ rights, comprising government institutions, the private sector and civil society.
- Adopt a systems-building approach that fosters adaptive resilience to strengthen national, provincial and district capacities for emergency preparedness and response, including mainstreaming a Minimum Initial Service Package for SRH in crises in humanitarian emergency frameworks.

Health and Well-Being (including sexual and reproductive health, maternal health and family planning)

- Detail a costed implementation plan for midwifery and family planning that aligns with the reproductive maternal, new-born, child and adolescent health strategy.
- Increase investments in and mobilizing resources for midwifery regulations, associations and education through developing a national midwifery strategy and costed implementation plan.
- Generate evidence and address geographic and socio-economic disparities in SRHR through expanding the sub-national focus for reaching the most underserved and hard-to-reach population groups.
- Invest in youth-friendly health services inclusive of vulnerable groups as part of the next reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health strategy and costed implementation plan.

Population Data (including data digitization, national policy frameworks and governance mechanisms for socio-economic development)

- Accelerate mobilization of domestic and international resources, a South-South cooperation framework for modernization and digitization of statistical systems, including financing for the 5th Population and Housing Census.
- Ensure the use of the 2025 Census and Lao Social Indicator Survey III to inform the 10th NSEDP (2026-2030).
- Establish a coordination mechanism for capacity building and technology strengthening on census and administrative data as well as linkages between data in different sectors, including health and social protection systems.
- Improve data users' access to census and surveys' data using digital and online platforms/tools, and innovative technologies for data dissemination and accessibility.
- Strengthen linkages between policy and research, investment in evidence-based policy formulation using new methodologies such as National Transfer Account, generational economy and demographic analysis.

Private sector and civil society in the context of demographic transition

- Establish a formal coordination platform to engage civil society and the private sector in national sustainable development policy formulation, planning and implementation at the national, provincial, district and grassroots levels.
- Develop a national public-private sector partnership strategy to advance the ICPD PoA through sharing in new technology, innovation and the benefits of scientific progress, and promoting entrepreneurship and job creation.
- Accelerate implementation of the criteria for 'Noi' or Adolescent Girl Friendly Business Entities through government recognition, civil society organizations' potential projects with the subsequent inclusion of a Noi-Friendly Coalitions
- Create employment opportunities to provide sufficient monetary value for communities.

2.4 Messages from government representatives

The key messages of the government representatives reaffirming on advancing Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights including maternal health, family planning, comprehensive sexuality education, Noi Framework and Noi Ecosystem, as well as addressing gender-based violence.



The Ministry of Health is committed to ending unmet need for family planning by 2030, increasing modern contraceptive prevalence to 45 percent by 2025, and ending maternal mortality through quality SRH activities and services



Ministry of Health

Excellency Dr. Sanong Thongsana, Vice Minister

The speaker outlined how sexual and reproductive health relates to population and development work. As such, the right to obtain sexual and reproductive health services is prioritized by the health sector, contained within the RMNCAH (reproductive maternal, new-born, child and adolescent health) Strategy. As a benchmark for implementing the public health development plan, 11 indicators were established, including maternal mortality ratio, percentage of deliveries by skilled birth attendant, infant mortality rate and indirect indicators such as reductions in stunting. Based on these indicators, Lao PDR is leading ASEAN with the fastest reduction in maternal mortality due to increased skilled birth attendant deliveries. Simultaneously, there is a focus on reforming the health service system. Firstly, administrative management is being streamlined with a public health strategy (2021–2025) to achieve universal health coverage and establishing RMNCAH steering committees. Secondly, three public health schools were awarded quality certification by the International Federation of Midwives in 2023 as a result of public health resources development supported by UNFPA, with a project to train midwives from 2009 that helps train students from ethnic groups to boost take-up in these communities.

Thirdly, public health information system improvements have led to establishment of a database system to manage medical statistics for planning and policy purposes. A digital health strategy has been planned, which includes gathering data on reproductive and sexual health. Fourthly, finances will be managed to guarantee that individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds can obtain health care, including broadening health insurance coverage to enable women, youth, and children to receive cost-effective medical care. Moreover, the ministry will focus on offering family planning services across the nation, including developing licensed, skilled midwives and other staff to offer sexual health and reproductive health services.





Ministry of Education and Sports

Excellency Mr. Kingmano Phommahasay, Vice Minister

The importance of providing comprehensive sexuality education and life skills to adolescents and young people in Lao PDR was underlined, with more than 58 percent of the population under 25 years old. Adolescent pregnancy, early marriage, and high school dropouts are challenges that require solutions. Four key sets of conference-related comments are:

Firstly, the government has prioritized girls' development through numerous measures, including enhancing preschool curriculum and administration, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in primary schools, mainstreaming gender education and non-vocational teacher training. Secondly, numerous projects have addressed gender education and life skills in accordance with the Noi Framework, with UNFPA a primary partner in these projects. CSE is implemented in secondary schools, while in primary education CSE and life skills are combined, such as respect for gender roles, children's rights and equality.

We are committed to provide CSE to all young people across the country by 2030, this is a significant task which requires additional resources and more strategic partnerships.

To expand CSE education, a CSE module will be included in the curriculum along with primary teachers' capacity building. Moreover, CSE is included in primary and secondary teacher training courses. Thirdly, girls continue to face a range of challenges, including access to education, a rising dropout rate, early marriage, a lack of opportunities to acquire life and professional skills and income opportunities. In response, a range of steps are being taken to ensure equality for all girls, including those vulnerable such as children with disabilities, in accessing education, life skills and vocational training to realize their potential. Fourthly, development partners and international organizations are encouraged to increase funding for CSE and reproductive health programmes to reach girls in rural and isolated areas.

Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union

Excellency Mr. Thongchan Phoummephan, Deputy Secretary General

The speaker highlighted the landmark 2021-2030 youth development strategy developed by the Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union in collaboration with ministries and organizations. With UNFPA's assistance, it has been put into action and tracked by a national steering committee. The strategy focusses on five key areas: health and well-being, education, employment, social protection, and society's involvement in development of youth and young people. To date, it has encompassed 18 provinces and increased access to psychosocial support services via a counselling hotline in 10 provinces, with 52 trained youth counsellors (21 women). Already, more than 9,000 young people have used the hotline. A range of stakeholders have benefitted from capacity-building training focussed on HIV, sexual violence and mental health support, while community advocacy with the theme "Me, My Body, My Planet, My Future" has reached more than 13,000 youths and students. The annual International Youth Day celebration is a platform for young people to exchange ideas through innovation contests, drama and youth debates. Collaboration between ministries, agencies, provinces, international and social organizations is key to the strategy's success. The strategy will accelerate progress towards achieving SDG and ICPD commitments.





Lao Women's Union

Excellency Mrs. Lavan Southisan, Vice President

The Lao Women's Union is proud to have advanced women's rights and gender equality as reflected in international commitments, most recently ICPD25. Key steps to advance women's rights, choices and protection in Lao PDR include rolling out the Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence, with support from UNFPA. This is global good practice to identify essential services provided by the health, social services, police, and justice sectors to all women and girls who experience gender-based violence. The union and UNFPA also developed and rolled out Social, health and coordination and referral pathway Standard Operation Procedures to provide services critical to supporting the rights, safety and wellbeing of women and girls experiencing violence. It also provides a clear operating framework for hospitals and medical facilities and ensures survivors of violence receive assistance in a timely manner. A national coordination mechanism to combat violence against women will be established under the National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mother-Child with the union and various ministries.

We call upon development partners and all relevant stakeholders to work with us to accelerate our progress towards ending Gender-Based violence

These standard operation procedures are being rolled out in central and six target provinces. On violence prevention, the union is working with village chiefs and elders in six provinces to model positive masculinity and challenge gender norms that perpetuate violence. Also, communities at village level in 14 provinces have been engaged to disseminate important messaging around preventing violence against women, promoting sexual and reproductive health and keeping girls in schools through the "Women's 3 Goods" handbook. The emerging issue of online violence is also being investigated to raise awareness through campaigns.



2.5 Messages on behalf of provinces



Oudomxay province

Mr. Somchit Punyarsuk, Vice Governor

Oudomxay province is executing the 9th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan with support from the public, private and international organizations. Through developing its socio-economic potential to ensure a green and sustainable future, the province is committed to eradicating poverty and developing high-quality services and public utility systems to meet its development and population-related needs.



Savannakhet province

Mrs. Norlasin Inthisan, Deputy Director of Planning and Investment Department

With one-third of the province's population aged 0-14, more than 17,000 families now live above the poverty line thanks to ongoing efforts to eradicate poverty in rural areas. In education, six out of 15 priority key performance indicators have been achieved. In health, eight out of 11 key performance indicators have been met. The province is also focussed on producing workers to supply its factories and special economic zones, while boosting skills development.



Champasak province

Mr. Khammarn Kounnavansy, Deputy Director of Planning and Investment Department

The province is focused on building its capacity to close the gap between rural and urban provincial development. This means enhanced infrastructure and an effective education network system so all students can access learning, especially with new technologies. In health, the provincial health network is being developed to ensure those most in need can access services. This means ensuring remote areas have sufficient health workers and supplies. In terms of labour, the province is enhancing its workforce to ensure its primary industries develop in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way.

2.6 Message from youth representatives

Ms. Souksamai Somsoul and Ms. Maneeyom Anonthisaen

To reflect the aspirations of young people in Lao PDR, the speakers brought 'Noi' to life at the conference.

'Noi' represents all adolescent girls in the country, with the Noi 2030 Framework based on engaging gender-sensitive activities to help protect girls' rights: reduce out of schooling, early marriages and pregnancies, fight gender-based violence and engage men and boys positively to participate in promotion of women and girls' rights.



The 'Noi 2030 Framework' represents a golden opportunity to accelerate girls' development to realize their rights.



Despite progress, more than one-in-five of Noi's peers have dropped out of school, one-in-20 have never attended school, nearly one-in-five aged 15-19 years are married off and more than one-in-10 girls aged 15-19 years have already become mothers. With multiple pregnancies, their health continues to suffer and remains at high risk of maternal mortality and morbidity.

Investments in health, education, life skills, and other aspects of wellbeing is essential to help girls thrive to expand available opportunities free of discrimination or violence and realize fully healthy, productive, and satisfying futures. With the launch of the Noi 2030 Framework in 2016, when 'Noi' was 10 years old, the vision is she will go through all crucial life-cycle stages and turn into an empowered healthy young adult women aged 25 years.

By 2030, she will possess the necessary life skills for a healthy, responsible and fulfilling life. She will be educated and find decent employment, choose when and with whom to marry, the number of children and spacing

and contribute to community and national development. The Noi 2030 Framework represents a golden opportunity to accelerate girls' development to realize their rights and is aligned with the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals including 2,3,4,5 and 8 and contributes to national commitments on adolescents and youth, education, nutrition, population, mothers and child health. The private sector can also make a significant contribution, by adopting the 'Criteria for Noi Friendly Business Entities', prioritizing access and fulfilment of rights at the workplace.



2.7 Message from a representative of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities



Ms. Metta Thiphavong, Programme Manager, Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise, Lao PDR

As a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and ICPD, Lao PDR has made progress to realize the rights and protection of persons with disabilities with strong legal and policy frameworks for protection of women, including with disabilities. However, there remains opportunities to improve CRPD implementation, including through targeted interventions that address the needs of women with disabilities. Men and women with disabilities in Lao PDR often experience barriers to fully realizing their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and to be free from gender-based violence (GBV). UNFPA recently determined that women with disabilities are disproportionately targeted for online violence. Marginalization, discrimination and restrictions to personal autonomy can also result in survivors with

disabilities being unable to recognize or report GBV independently. However, some progress is being made, with CRPD protections translated into action through the National Plan for People with Disabilities, giving effect to the Law on Persons with Disabilities.

The government is encouraged to continue mainstreaming the needs of women and young people with disabilities into policies on gender equality, health and disability rights, with fully accessible GBV and sexual and reproductive health services for people with disabilities.

2.8 Remarks by Diplomatic Representatives and Development Partners



**European Union Delegation to Lao PDR
H.E Ms. Ina Marčiulionytė, European Union
Ambassador to Lao PDR**

Lao PDR has a growing young population with great potential. Despite progress in healthcare and education, fiscal pressures and declining spending in social sectors are threatening these achievements, with negative impacts on sustainable and inclusive growth prospects. The European Union (EU) is a key donor in numerous areas, including education, health, migration, climate change, and the empowerment of youth and women to develop human capital. Practical initiatives to advance gender equality and women's empowerment feature in every EU programme, essential components of inclusive and sustainable development. Additionally, the EU works closely with UNFPA on several projects to raise public awareness of women's rights. Finally, the EU is actively involved with youth organizations to provide the tools needed to help address future challenges.

We need to ensure that young people are prepared for the future and for the world of work.

This underlines the commitment of the EU and team Europe partners to assist Lao PDR to empower its youth and women to fully participate and benefit from inclusive and sustainable growth

Embassy of Turkiye

H.E. Mr. Orhan Isik, Ambassador of Turkiye

As part of its strong partnership with Lao PDR, Turkiye champions gender equality, ending gender-based violence and midwifery education in step with a firm commitment to the ICPD. This means promotion of women's and children's health and well-being, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. To support Lao PDR in realizing the ICPD and SDGs, the commitment and engagement of all development partners and governments is necessary. In recognition that reproductive health, the empowerment of women and gender equality are pillars of sustainable development, Turkiye remains fully committed – alongside the Government of Lao PDR, UNFPA and other development partners – to support initiatives to ensure no one is left behind and advance the rights and choices of all women and girls.



Embassy of Germany

H.E. Ms. Annette Knobloch, Ambassador of Germany

Germany considers itself one of UNFPA's strongest partners and a champion of the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) agenda. In 2022, the partnership expanded in the humanitarian field with the first multi-year agreements signed with the Foreign Office. In March 2023, the German Government launched key strategies which will see further collaboration opportunities and investment in promoting gender equality and SRHR. Through these policies, German development funds in projects tackling gender inequality and women's leadership will rise.

With Lao PDR's demographic transition and its significant implications, gender equality and women's empowerment will be integral in the national development trajectory. To support this, the importance of data collection for development with the upcoming population and housing census and development partners bridging the financing gap were underlined.



Embassy of Luxembourg

H.E. Mr. Thomas Lammar, Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

Luxembourg, as a longstanding partner of UNFPA, recognizes sexual and reproductive health, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as key pillars of sustainable development. This translates into support of the Ministry of Health to promote sexual and reproductive health, including maternal health and adolescent and youth-friendly services. Bilateral cooperation with the Lao Statistics Bureau results in use of reliable population statistics for informed decision-making. The Government of Luxembourg remains committed to advancing universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, promoting gender equality and leaving no one behind.



A continued coherent whole-of-government approach during the 7th Asia Pacific Population Conference and the Commission on Population and Development in New York in April 2024 are welcomed. This means jointly reaffirming a joint commitment to the ICPD to achieve zero preventable maternal deaths, zero unmet need for family planning, and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices by 2030.

Embassy of Australia

Mr. Dan Heldon, Deputy Head of Mission

The Government of Australia takes a comprehensive approach to advancing the rights of women and girls. This is why its new development policy, released this year, places gender equality at the heart of Australia's international efforts and builds on efforts to achieve gender equality through new policies and initiatives, including expanded support for sexual and reproductive health and rights. Lao PDR has made significant strides in a number of key health aspects, including sexual and reproductive health. While these outcomes deserve praise, further significant progress is needed, particularly in universal access to accurate, comprehensive sexuality education and combating harmful practices, particularly forced, child and early marriage.

The results over the last 20 years are a good indicator of the rewards the country can expect if these gains can be sustained. Protection of international consensus on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including the ICPD Programme of Action, is critical to global efforts to achieve these same benefits for people in all countries.



Embassy of India

Mr. Amit Kumar Gupta, Second Secretary (Political and Culture)

India and Lao PDR share long-standing religious, cultural, and people-to-people linkages. India's ongoing G20 Presidency centres on the theme "One Earth-One Family-One Future", with a key priority of reflecting the voice of the global south. A focus is digital technology, as evidenced by a digital platform tracking the routine immunization of mothers and new-born children across India, a national health insurance programme for those who cannot afford quality healthcare services and free medical treatment for about 500 million people. India is open to sharing these experiences with Lao PDR. Ongoing India-supported programmes in Lao PDR include the flagship Indian Technical and Economic Programme, under which trainings in health, skills development, education, climate and digitalization are held. Currently, about 1,500 Lao nationals have been trained under this programme.



Embassy of Canada

Ms. Heather McDermott, Senior Political Officer

It is greatly encouraging that Lao PDR's national population development policies dovetail with ICPD priorities. Canada is a strong advocate for effective implementation of ICPD Programme of Action and outcomes of previous conferences. Canada provides concrete support for the ICPD world agenda with \$1.4 billion as part of a 10-year commitment to global health and rights, especially gender comprehension, sexual reproductive health and rights globally. Through this funding, we strengthen the national health system to ensure women and girls in all diversity receive essential reproductive health aids. Lao PDR's demographic transition is a one-time opportunity to benefit from a large working age population and boost economic growth. However, investment must first be made in human capital development, including sexual reproductive health, education, gender equality and women's empowerment.





United States Agency for International Development

Mr. Michael Ronning, USAID Representative

USAID is committed to reduce maternal mortality and improve maternal and child health by working with the Ministry of Health through our Capacity Building for Maternal Child Health and Nutrition project. Adaptive learning and inclusive education support, through the Learn to Read project with the Ministry of Education and Sports, will ensure more girls and ethnic group children stay in school. This will help reduce youth and especially young girl's vulnerability to trafficking through access to skills development and legal aid. USAID is proud to support and be part of the 3rd LSIS in 2022-2023 and the upcoming 5th PHC in 2025.

Although a nationwide census is challenging, being able to ensure the data captures everyone in the country is paramount, including those living in rural and remote areas, youth and people with disabilities. USAID, through UNFPA, also strengthens government capacities in production and use of data for monitoring of SDGs, ICPD PoA in the context of a rapid national demographic transition.

Ensuring reliable and relevant data at national and sub-national levels is instrumental in not only identifying the country's progress, but also providing the government with evidence-based information critical for decision-making in its planning, budget and resource allocation and policy-making



National Statement and Call for Action

The government of Lao PDR reaffirms the statement and call for action to accelerate implementation of National Population and Development Policy (NPDP) for 2019-2030 and 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) for 2021-2025 aligned with International Conference on Population and Development - Programme of Action (ICPD PoA) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Government of Lao PDR reaffirmed its commitment to accelerate implementation of the SDGs and ICPD PoA through the NSED, sectoral strategies and policies, including the NPDP 2019-2030. This will be achieved with substantive support from development partners to achieve three transformative results: zero preventable maternal deaths, zero unmet need for family planning, and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices, including child marriage. Accelerating socio-economic development will be realized through harnessing the demographic dividend and empowering citizens to realize their full potential. As such, the conference has identified the following strategic actions:



The conference's final session chaired by H.E. Professor Kikeo Khaikhamphithoune, Deputy Prime Minister of Lao PDR outlined the National Statement and Call for Action to expedite the implementation of the NPDP and 9th NSED in line with the SDGs and ICPD PoA.



H.E. Professor Dr. Kikeo Khaikhamphithoune
Deputy Prime Minister

I. Harness the demographic dividend by:

- Establishing a National Coordination Committee on Population and Development and developing a multi-sectoral roadmap to accelerate implementation of the NPDP 2019-2030 through integration into the NSED, sectoral plans and sub-national plan.
- Reinvigorating the “Noi framework” and “Noi ecosystem” and scaling-up comprehensive sexuality education to empower adolescent girls and boys in partnership with regional and global development partners.
- Prioritizing and integrating population dynamics and mega-trends, such as the demographic transition, disparities, digitalization and climate change into the Mid-Term Review of the 9th NSED (2021-2025) and 10th NSED (2026-2030).

II. Continue to identify and develop a preparedness plan to address climate change challenges faced. by the health, protection and other social sectors by:

- Increasing investments to build a resilient health system, including life-saving sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and gender-based violence (GBV) response services through the current and next National Strategy on Climate Change and Health Adaptation and related Action Plan.

- Generating robust country-specific evidence and data focusing on the social and gender dimensions of climate change, including SRH and GBV to inform national strategies and other action plans.
- Continuing to improve and establish a dedicated network of actors on climate change and women's and girls' rights, comprising government institutions, private sector and civil society.

III. Advance people's health and wellbeing, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights by:

- Increasing investments in family planning and mobilizing partnerships and resources for national family planning programmes through developing a comprehensive family planning strategy and costed implementation plan to align with the rapidly changing situation of the world.
- Boosting investments in midwifery regulations, associations and education through developing a national midwifery strategy and costed implementation plan, ensuring all midwives are well-trained and deployed to health facilities, especially in remote and hard-to-reach areas.
- Investing in youth-friendly health services inclusive of vulnerable groups.

IV. Strengthen the population data governance system and national monitoring frameworks for socio-economic development by:

- Prioritizing and ensuring the use of the 2025 Population and Housing Census and Lao Social Indicator Survey III to inform the 10th NSEDP for 2026-2030.
- Investing in evidence generation on mega-trends, such as climate change, demographic transition, disparities and digitalization for strategic policy-making and programming.
- Reinforcing the national administrative data governance system, including civil registration and vital statistics encompassing disaggregated data, ethnic groups, education, health and disabilities, sectoral information management systems, among others, to ensure the availability of real-time data for decision-making and planning.

V. Engage and ensure the use of all domestic resources and actors, including the private sector and civil society, in support of ICPD PoA

- Ushering in new technologies, innovations and the benefits of scientific progress.
- Promoting entrepreneurship and job creation to leave no one behind.

The Government of Lao PDR strongly reaffirms its commitments to fully implement national and subnational population development plans, policies and strategies that align with the ICPD PoA and SDGs, with the support of all levels of government, United Nations agencies, development partners, civil society organizations and the private sector.

3.1 Closing remarks

The Deputy Prime Minister, as the chair, concluded the conference by extending warm gratitude to the co-chairs, national and provincial authorities, ambassadors, heads of United Nations organizations and development partners, and distinguished guests who imparted their valuable time to attend and contributed to the conference's success. He especially expressed gratitude to UNFPA in Lao PDR, as a much-valued partner, for its generous support to this conference to help the country meet its population-related goals and looked forward to continued ongoing collaboration.



Ensuring rights and choices for all since 1969

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National Conference On Population And Development