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# Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy 2021-2030

Lao PDR has a young population with over half of it aged between 10 and 35 years old. Youth are the driving force for the economic development, social welfare and prosperity of the country. Therefore, having the right strategy and appropriate investment in youth and adolescents is a defining factor in national development. The Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy is aligned with the SDGs, the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan and government's 2030 vision, placing youth at the center of development.

## Vision

All adolescents and youth in the absence of discrimination develop comprehensively, possess good attributes, physical and intellectual strengths and progressive minds. All are kind and friendly, able to lead a safe and healthy life, and will support each other to realize their full potential, and all contribute to the protection and development of the nation.

## Guiding principles

### General principles

The Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy is based on the principles that are in harmony with Lao values, culture and society as expressed by the following statements: Lao people have a tradition of bravery, hard work, "go step on dogs, come step on frogs" love for each other and the country. Lao people have a sentiment of solidarity and like to extend their generosity to others as expressed by the LPRYU slogan: **"Where there is hardship, youth will conquer; where there are challenges, youth will overcome; where there is a demand from the country, youth will volunteer."** The strategy also takes account of the international and regional conventions and declarations that have been endorsed by the country. These principles provide direction for the development and implementation of the strategy.

### Objective:

The overall objective of the Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy (2021-2030) is to set the direction for the development of all adolescents and youth from all ethnic groups to become a strong force and:

- 1 To ensure that all adolescents and youth in the country contribute meaningfully to the mission of protection and development of the country.
- 2 To ensure equal rights for all adolescents and youth in the country; this is a foundation for addressing gender inequalities in the political, socio-economic and cultural spheres.
- 3 To promote investments in adolescents and youth development by the government, development partners, civil society, private sector, and all relevant sectors in the areas of protection, development, and participation of adolescents and youth inclusively.
- 4 To be used as a reference for monitoring and evaluation of the strategy and ensuring that all sectors responsible for adolescent and youth development make sure that no one is left behind in the pursuit to achieve the SDGs by 2030.
- 5 To raise awareness of issues related to youth and ensure commitment from all to the development and protection of adolescents and youth, including family, community, educational institutions, concerned agencies and society.



## Health and well-being

- 1 Adopt a multi-sectoral and multi-pronged approach to prevent early marriages and adolescent pregnancies by encouraging families to keep girls in school, promoting higher education and enhancing employment opportunities.
- 2 Prevent early marriage by creating awareness of the ill effects of early marriage and strengthening mechanisms to implement and enforce the Law on Family Registration.

- 3 Improve nutrition and reduce the prevalence of anemia among adolescents, especially girls, by strengthening programs such as provision of school meals, promoting vegetable gardens, growing organic vegetables, deworming and iron supplementation and through communication campaigns to change behavior on nutrition and hygiene.
- 4 Improve access to health services and skilled birth attendants and increase institutional delivery rates to improve maternal health with a focus on rural areas without a road network.
- 5 Promote adolescent and youth friendly health services with improved access to services, Reproductive Health (RH) commodities and a trained health workforce and ensure privacy and confidentiality.
- 6 Enhance access to contraceptives for adolescents and youth regardless of marital status by ensuring the availability of information and free commodities at health facilities and through village health workers in remote and hard to reach areas.
- 7 Include coverage of Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) services under the National Health Insurance Scheme to reduce out of pocket expenses for services to adolescents and youth.
- 8 Enhance access to information, counseling and services for prevention, screening and treatment of sexually transmitted infections and HIV through facility and community based approaches.
- 9 Promote responsible behavior among adolescents and youth by strengthening and expanding comprehensive sexuality education in schools and technical and vocational institutions.
- 10 Promote healthy lifestyles, including prevention of substance misuse through awareness campaigns that target youth through the Lao Youth Union (LYU), Lao Women's Union (LWU) and educational institutions.
- 11 Give the mental health of adolescents and youth priority by increasing investments in research and by strengthening existing services to expand psychosocial counselling in schools and health care facilities.
- 12 Promote research on the issues related to the health and well-being of adolescents and youth to create research evidence for strategy and programming.
- 13 Introduce or adopt a system to record age disaggregated data, which will provide data on access to health care by different age groups.
- 14 Implement the family law, particularly to stop underage marriage before the legal age for marriage.
- 15 Educate people about Unexploded ordnance (UXO) and its potential impacts on physical and mental health and the threats posed by them to ethnic people, youth and adolescents.
- 16 Raise awareness about food safety and food consumption in the entire population, including youth, to encourage consumption of appropriate and nutritious food with "three cleans": food and drink and living in a clean environment.
- 17 Promote hygiene education and run active awareness raising campaigns for mothers to receive antenatal and post-natal care, including immunization.
- 18 Raise awareness about road safety, accidents and the use of appropriate protective helmets.
- 19 Use ICT to connect doctors in the city with inexperienced health staff in rural areas so that adolescents and youth in rural areas are able to access quality services.



## Education, sports and training

### a) Education and training

- 1 Government institutions, society and families must support adolescents and youth to focus on education and development to become good citizens, possess good attributes and capabilities, provide access to jobs, become skillful, love and enhance their culture and the fine traditions of the country.
- 2 Increase the number of girls attending school at all levels and ensure that young girls, especially from rural settings, stay in school through options such as improving infrastructure and providing incentives, scholarships and school meals.
- 3 Track school dropouts at secondary level, especially girls, and connect them to learning opportunities. Explore the scope for bridging courses and vocational training that can help develop a skilled labor force in the country.
- 4 Facilitate a smooth transition from school to work through career counseling support in schools as well as in TVET centers.
- 5 Attract adolescents and youth to join technical and vocational education programs by offering scholarships, improved infrastructure and residential facilities and through advocacy campaigns through the LYU and LWU.
- 6 Expand scholarships based on merit and means to support education, particularly higher education.
- 7 Promote counselling and training of youth in sectors to match skills and market demand and to ensure that sufficient workforce is available within the country.



- 8 Strengthen and promote vocational education with a focus on the poorest and most underserved districts of Lao PDR. Include trades in TVET that have a market demand within the country as well as internationally.
- 9 Integrate comprehensive sexuality education in schools and into technical and vocational training programs to build knowledge and skills among adolescents so that they make informed decisions in life, adopt healthy behaviors and grow up safely.
- 10 Encourage adolescents and youth to become skilled technicians and professionals and promote science and modern information technology to meet the socio-economic needs and accelerate the development of rural areas of Lao PDR.
- 11 Integrate education for sustainable development into curricula, training courses, and sports and recreation activities to raise awareness of the importance of natural resource conservation and caring for the environment
- 12 Promote the use of ICT in teaching and learning to promote new media literacy to ensure that youth are equipped with media navigation skills, so that they are protected from harm that may come from the media.
- 13 Prioritize lifelong learning and expand flexible learning and non-formal education programs. Integrate lifelong learning into sectoral human resource development plans, particularly for professional development of the youth workforce.
- 14 Promote global citizenship education, mutual respect and understanding, and the ideals of peace, solidarity and tolerance among different races and ethnic groups within the country and internationally. Children and youth should be informed of cultural differences in their own societies and given opportunities to learn about different cultures as well as tolerance and mutual respect for cultural and religious diversity.

## b) Sports and recreation

- 1 Create conditions for youth to learn skills, to play sports of all kinds, both indigenous and international, as well as internal and external activities.
- 2 Strengthen sports and science for youth and adolescents, expanding the basic technical network to meet the needs of young people to be able to practice and develop as trainers, referees, physiotherapists and athletics.
- 3 Create a basic infrastructure, including sports and recreation facilities for teaching and learning. Improve arts facilities, providing teachers and encouraging young talented people to preserve the culture and customs of the country as well as creating opportunities for youth in performance arts domestically and internationally.
- 4 Promote recreational activities among adolescents and youth to promote relationships, creative thinking, self-confidence and improve their physical and mental well-being.
- 5 Promote groups of vulnerable adolescents and youth such as Nang-Noi Girls Groups (NNGGs) to develop essential life skills along with sports and recreation.



## Employment and entrepreneurship

- 1 Promote training to upgrade skills and competencies to build competitiveness and link with national standards and quality employment through government and private investment to promote access to both domestic and international labor markets.
- 2 Conduct assessment of market needs in the country as well as the demand in neighboring countries such as Thailand, where the Lao youth mainly migrate, and design specialized skills development training to match the demand.
- 3 Increase investments in traditional sectors of agriculture, forestry and fisheries to create “decent work” in rural areas leading to improvements in the standard of living in rural areas and at the same time promote emerging sectors such as ICT and tourism for the youth.
- 4 Organize massive awareness generation programs on the rights and entitlements of adolescents and youth with respect to migration and employment to ensure safe migration.
- 5 Disseminate knowledge of climate change that affects livelihoods, especially in agriculture and fisheries.
- 6 Encourage youth to set up small and medium sized enterprises by facilitating access to finance, marketing and management for business establishment.
- 7 Map villages and clusters from where there are high volumes of youth migrating and conduct massive awareness programs. The awareness programs will focus on addressing the issues such as labor trafficking, sex trafficking and trafficking for marriage.
- 8 Develop market driven TVET courses and utilize indigenous knowledge to exploit market niches in services and labor supply.
- 9 Promote the creation of jobs that are green, clean and resilient to climate change in all sectors.
- 10 Promote employment by creating a labour market information system, including labour skill development.



# Social protection

- 1 Raise awareness among adolescents and youth across the country about the effects of all kinds of addictive drugs, such as amphetamines, alcohol, etc.
- 2 Promote safe driving and traffic regulations.
- 3 Promote the Labor Law, welfare and safety in the workplace to ensure that labor exploitation and safety issues are addressed and workers receive their rights and legitimate benefits.
- 4 Provide training and awareness raising for adolescents and youth to learn about the use of ICT and to educate themselves about the negative effects of social media in order to avoid becoming victims of online crimes and harassment.
- 5 Raise awareness about the effects of UXO on the body and livelihoods of ethnic populations, especially adolescents and youth.
- 6 Promote health insurance to ensure it is accessible to adolescents and youth who are disadvantaged economically, culturally and socially.
- 7 Organize registration system campaigns for migrants from other provinces and responsible authorities at each level.
- 8 Promote the protection of the rights of migrant workers, their health care and access to welfare services.
- 9 Strengthen the enforcement of the Labor Law and the Anti-Trafficking Law (2016) and the implementation of the Minimum Wage Decree and others to ensure that youth receive fair benefits from labor and to prevent human trafficking, physical abuse, mental harassment and other forms of exploitation.
- 10 Promote and assist addicts to access rehabilitation and services to help them return to normal life.
- 11 Encourage families and societies to participate in recognizing, understanding and supporting those who used to be victims of addiction to substances to ensure their social acceptance and developmental opportunities.
- 12 Develop schools or educational institutions to be the safest places for adolescents and youth.



# Civic engagement and participation

- 1 Run awareness campaigns for adolescents and youth not to engage in negative behaviors such as early marriage, violence against women, including sexual violence, drug abuse, alcoholism and trafficking.
- 2 Encourage all sectors in society, including the public and private sector, international agencies, INGOs and CSOs to increase investment in the development of adolescents and youth.
- 3 Create an enabling environment for promoting the participation of adolescents and youth at all levels (central to community level) in holistic development processes as well as matters that affect their lives.
- 4 Promote and increase investment in establishing Nang-Noi mentor led safe spaces to provide vulnerable adolescent girls opportunities to build their social, health, cognitive and economic assets, vocational skills, protection and participation.
- 5 Assist adolescents and youth in building basic skills, knowledge, good attributes and capacities for expanding LPRYU membership and participation in youth associations.
- 6 Promote participation of Lao adolescents and youth in national and international forums and youth exchange programs.
- 7 Run awareness campaigns for adolescents and youth participation in protection and promotion of the environment by increasing their environmentally positive knowledge, attitudes and practices.
- 8 Create opportunities and spaces for youth to freely express their ideas and ensure freedom of expression of youth and link these expressions to organizations representing and addressing adolescents and youth concerns, rights and benefits.
- 9 Support youth-led organizations and initiatives to enhance their contribution to the mission of protection and development of the country.
- 10 Strengthen networks and partnerships among governments, youth-led organizations, academia, CSOs, NGOs, private sector, media and the UN system to enhance commitment and support for holistic youth development

Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union

Phonthan Road, Vientiane Capital, P.O. Box 736  
[www.lpryu.gov.la](http://www.lpryu.gov.la) [www.nit.gov.la](http://www.nit.gov.la)



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Box 345, Lane Xang Avenue, Vientiane, Lao PDR

 [lao.unfpa.org](http://lao.unfpa.org)

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