

### 3rd Brief :

# The 5th Population and Housing Census of Lao PDR

December 2022

## "Counting Everyone, Because Everyone Counts"

The Government of Lao PDR has conducted four Population and Housing Censuses (PHCs) since 1985. The last PHC was conducted in March 2015. Census results have provided key statistics on the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the Lao population. These statistics are essential for the formulation, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), and assessment of national socio-economic development plans, national population and development policies, and exploring solution strategies to emerging population issues. The country is preparing for the next census to continue tracking population changes and updating information on the progress towards the implementation of the 9th NSEDP 2021-2025, formulation of the 10th NSEDP 2026-2030, as well as the progress toward the achievement of the ICPD PoA and SDGs.

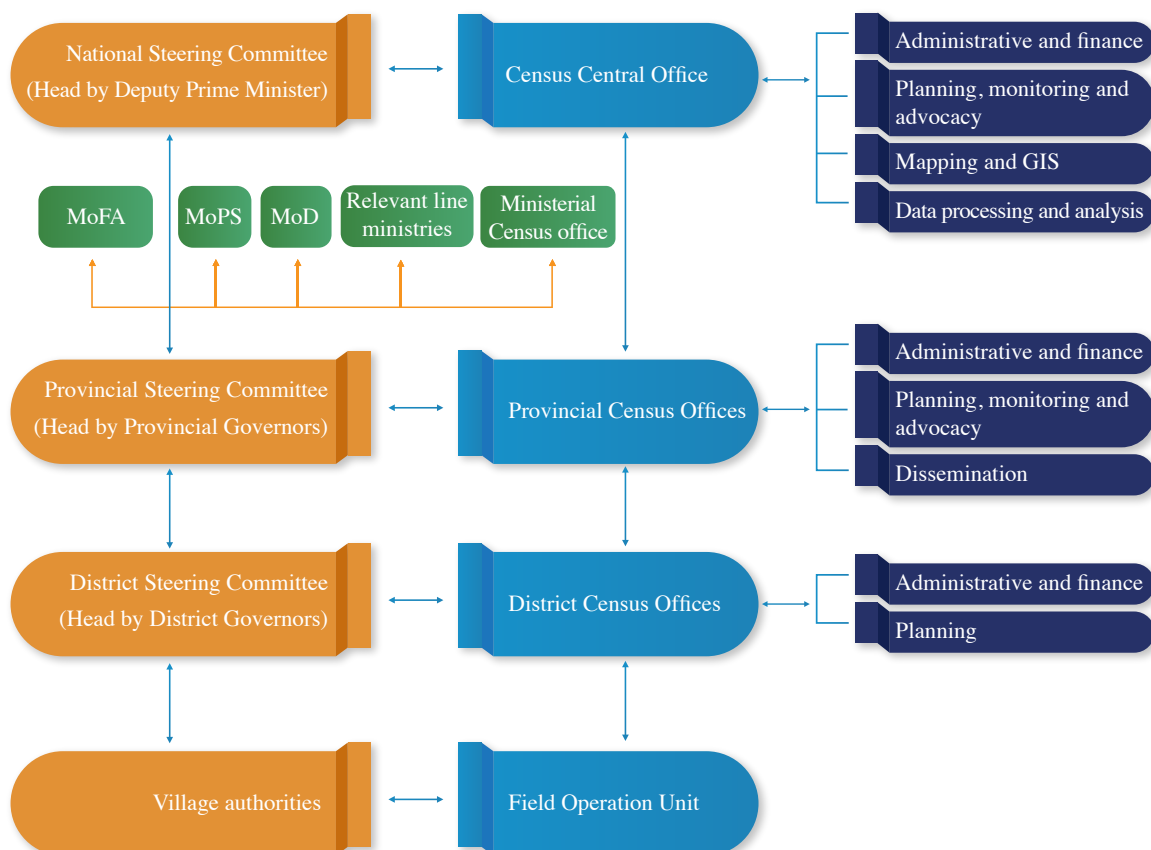
Up to 107 of the 231 indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals require population data for monitoring, and the census is a key source. The census also provides data on disadvantaged regions and vulnerable groups, such as the poor, the old, people living with disabilities, migrants, and adolescents and young girls. Census provides the basis for deriving samples of households for national surveys and the production of granular baseline population data, disaggregated by age and sex for development planning, that are also critical for contingency planning and response to disasters and humanitarian settings.

The Fifth Lao Population and Housing Census is planned for March 2025, with the census' moment scheduled at midnight between the night of 1st to 2nd March 2025. Although this may seem like a long time in the future, it is not. Population and Housing Census is amongst the Government's largest and most complex peacetime operations, requiring long and meticulous preparation. As such, the Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB), the Ministry of Planning and Investment, in close collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), have been preparing since 2021 for the upcoming census.

A PHC requires multiple technical and financial partnerships. In addition to the Government of Lao and UNFPA. To ensure effective and smooth preparation of the census, USAID has committed support through provision of long-term technical assistance to the census, while the World Bank is also a confirmed partner for the PHC electronic cartography.

## Census Management structure

The organizational structure of the census comprises three administrative levels: 1) the National Steering Committee will be in charge of all aspects of the organization of the census at national level, 2) the Provincial Steering Committee coordinates census activities at provincial level, and comprises work units such as administrative, finance, planning, monitoring, and advocacy and research-analysis and dissemination, 3) the District Steering Committee is responsible for census activities at district level and has work units related to administration, finance, planning and monitoring.



## Application of digital, innovative technologies for Lao PHC

For the 2025 PHC, two important innovations will be used: a) digital questionnaires will be administered through tablets (Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing - CAPI). All data gathered in the field will be transferred to the LSB census server through the internet. Data editing and checking will be completely automated, and the time-consuming data entry and manual checking of the paper questionnaires will no longer be required. The introduction of CAPI methodology in the census is expected to significantly increase the data quality and decrease the data handling time. b) Digital census maps of the enumeration areas will be produced and integrated into the digital questionnaires using global positioning system (GPS) capabilities. The preparation of digitalized maps will be an important improvement over the previous census.

To ensure effective use of technologies in 2025 PHC and a smooth transition from paper-based to CAPI census and digital mapping, UNFPA has facilitated two comprehensive assessments of IT and GIS systems in Lao PDR including a proposed detailed timeline and budget. The results of the two assessments have been shared with relevant development partners, including the World Bank which will support LSB in census cartography.

Adopting new technologies and utilizing CAPI methodology in 2025 PHC, giving the opportunity to LSB to release the preliminary results of the census earlier than the previous round, since the data capturing and processing will be done faster and more accurately. The government of Laos and development partners could expect to see the first results of the census 3 to 4 months after the completion of the census fieldwork and Post Enumeration Survey.

In collaboration with academics and high caliber international experts, facilitated by UNFPA, LSB will develop fifteen analytic thematic reports based on the census data focusing on vulnerable groups, gender dimensions, regional and sub-regional analysis as well as disaggregated data. In addition to the thematic analysis, a representative sample of census data will be expected to be available for research purposes.

## Budget Estimate and Resource Gaps

Currently, the LSB with UNFPA's technical support has developed a detailed budget for the 2025 PHC. The current estimate (medium cost scenario) is that the census will cost around US\$ 19.9 million. This amount can vary throughout the census process and, if necessary, be adapted. For instance, transport costs may change, the dollar exchange rate may vary, or activities may be adapted. The table below summarizes the main components of the census budget:

### Summary Provisional Budget 5th Lao PHC 2025\* Medium Cost Scenario\*\*

Census activities	Indicative budget
1. Cost of international personnel	2,341,748
2. Human resource development LSB	104,402
3. Census preparation (Equipment, cartography, training & publicity)	13,403,943
4. Census fieldwork	3,853,396
5. Data processing	81,973
6. Census products and results	144,047
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>19,929,509</b>

\*Detailed budget will be available at request

\*\*The medium cost scenario is based on the use of tablet devices and a 3-weeks census enumeration period.

The census costing scenarios could vary based on the use of different handheld devices (smartphones or tablets) for data collection as well as a possible extension to the census enumeration period (3- week or 4-week duration).

\*\*\*UNFPA, World Bank and USAID have already committed financial and technical assistance

A large part of the equipment cost will be for the procurement of tablets. The use of handheld devices such as tablets for census enumeration not only supports effective data collection and data handling of census, but also strengthens LSB capacity for continuing with modern data collection methods since the majority of these devices will be reused in future statistical surveys by LSB. The use of digital devices has also been considered an environmentally friendly approach to conducting census since it prevents the use of millions of paper sheets and printouts.

Despite the current economic constraints, the Government of Laos aims to cover nearly 55 percent of the total cost of the census, while it is expected that development partners will cover the rest. Although the Government plans to cover a large part of all costs, there is still a need for substantial technical, in-kind, and financial support to the Government of Laos to conduct a successful census.

## Scale of PHC 2025

To collect the data from circa 1.4 million households in 18 provinces, within a three-week period in March 2025, the number of field personnel required is estimated at 13,151. This includes enumerators, supervisors, and an extra 10 percent of field personnel to compensate for no-show and dropouts. Enumerators are expected to be mainly the civil servants and government officials. Taking into account the magnitude of census operations, LSB is preparing for adequate technical and financial assistance to train the enumerators. This includes a series of master training, training of trainers, training of enumerators and supervisors.

## Principles of cooperation between the Government of Lao PDR and UNFPA

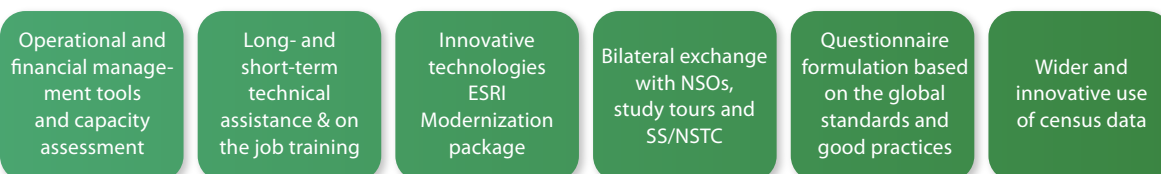
The Government of Lao PDR requested UNFPA to provide and coordinate technical, logistic, and financial support for the 2025 Population and Housing Census. Given the UNFPA's mandate to assist member countries in strengthening national capacities to collect, analyze and use population data, UNFPA has committed to supporting the LSB, ensuring quality census data for development planning and monitoring purposes. The cooperation between UNFPA and the Government of Lao DPR will follow a number of basic principles:

- a. **Cooperation with stakeholders:** A close collaboration with stakeholders within the Government and amongst development partners will be maintained throughout the census process to brief and consult.
- b. **Capacity building and institutional development:** throughout the census process, emphasis will be placed on the capacity building of staff from LSB in various census fields. This includes training courses, study tours, and on-the-job training.
- c. **Technical support:** UNFPA is providing a long-term expert for the Census and short-term experts who will provide assistance in specialized areas. UNFPA's regional and global Census network and expertise will be available to the Lao census as required. The basic principle of technical support will always involve a maximum transfer of knowledge from the expert to the staff of LSB. In relevant stages of the technical support (development of the questionnaires, tabulation, and the analytical reports) census stakeholders will be invited to contribute.
- d. **Quality assurance:** UNFPA and LSB are committed to the highest standards of quality for the 2025 Lao PHC. UN Principles and Recommendations will be followed. A number of typical actions will be taken to assess the coverage and content quality of the census, throughout the census process. These will include: independent international observers to monitor the census fieldwork. Shortly after the census, a Post-Enumeration Survey (PES) will be organized to assess the coverage and content of the census.
- e. **Genderizing the census:** Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) approach will be incorporated in each phase and every output of the census. The Government of Lao PDR and UNFPA will ensure that gender realities of the population are captured adequately, in the organization, in the content and results of the census.

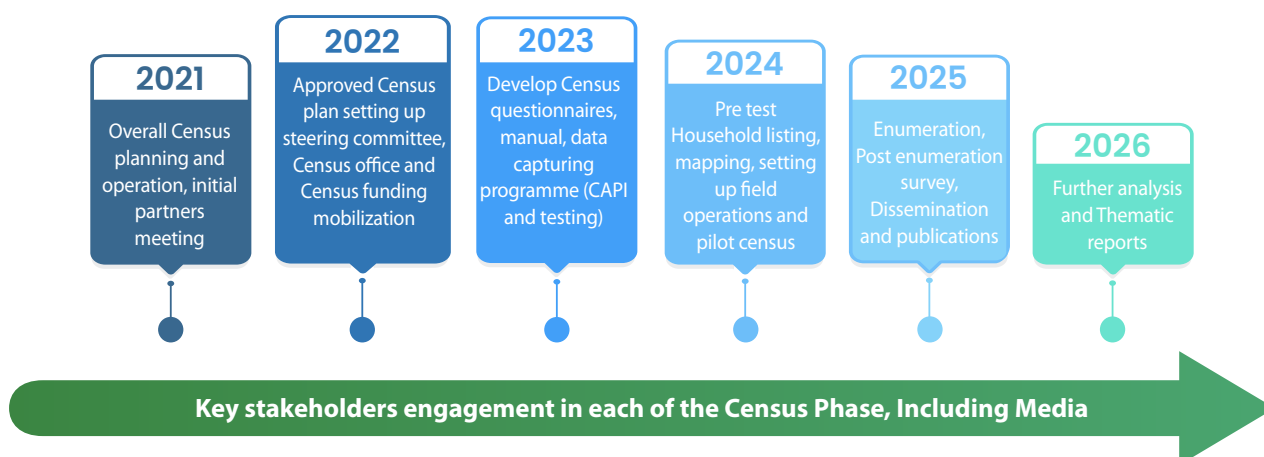
# UNFPA's Support to PHC 2025 at a Glance

UNFPA Institutional Capacities and Expertise to Support Census at Global, Regional and Country Levels (UNFPA Strategy for 2020 round of PHC)

UNFPA Lao PDR will coordinate and manage technical and financial resources on behalf of government and development partners



## ROAD MAP FOR PHC 2025



## Potential Risks and Mitigating Measures Uncertainties:

Each census faces risks, some can be prevented and some cannot. A risk mitigation plan is being finalized for the census based on the most significant risks that might affect the census operation:

Potential risks	Possible mitigation measure
Financial limitations of both government and international community to support the census, taking into account the ongoing economic challenges and downturn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resource mobilization strategy will be developed to secure funds from multiple sources.</li> <li>Contingency plans and mitigating measures in census operation using various budget scenarios and Plan Bs will be available on time.</li> </ul>
Considering the CAPI methodology, severe problems with the internet during the census period can have an effect on data collection and transmission to the center.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alternative solutions for data transmission to the central database such as using internal applications via Bluetooth will be adopted.</li> </ul>
Lack and delay in provision of technical support to LSB for capacity building and training especially in the field of CAPI and GIS might affect the census quality and execution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Census multi year master work plan including backstopping plan for technical expertise will be developed to ensure timely technical support.</li> <li>ToRs of every external expert will include a training component.</li> </ul>
Delays in decision making within Government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These may have a knock-on effect on all subsequent census activities, early planning and regular communication will be maintained to avoid significant delay.</li> </ul>

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