

Brief 1: The 5th Population and Housing Census of Lao PDR

March 2021

“Counting Everyone, Because Everyone Counts”

A population census covers everyone in the country at the same time and serves as benchmark data on population and its characteristics. It provides a snapshot of the number of people, their demographic characteristics, their spatial distribution and economic characteristics, as at a reference date, for all administrative areas up to the lowest level i.e village. They allow detailed disaggregation of data by small geographic areas and small population groups. 45% of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators require reliable disaggregated population data, and geographically precise data are vital to identifying and serving those with the greatest need first. Accurate and reliable census data are at the core of the National Social and Economic Development Plans (NSED) and SDG’s monitoring at national and subnational levels and for addressing the needs of those who are left behind. In Lao PDR, a PHC is conducted every 10 years pursuant to the country’s Statistics Law No.03/NS, dated June 30, 2010 (amended 11 May 2017) and the United Nations recommendation on the frequency of conducting a nationwide census.

The Government of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic had, through the Lao Statistical Bureau (LSB) in the Ministry of Planning and Investment, conducted four decennial PHCs in 1985, 1995, 2005, and 2015. These censuses had provided valuable insights to the Government in terms of planning for development and decision making.

Census Year	Enumerated Population	% Change as per the Previous Enumerated Population	Intercensal Annual Growth Rate (%)
1985	3,584,803		
1995	4,574,848	27.62	2.47
2005	5,621,982	22.89	2.08
2015	6,492,228	15.47	1.45
2025	?	?	?

Enumerated Population and Intercensal Annual Growth Rate of Lao PDR

Why is PHC important for Lao PDR?

The collected data provide actionable intelligence to the Government and other stakeholders - including businesses, students and development partners - in their work towards the welfare of the people. In particular, PHC 2025 will contribute to:

- ❖ The data collected on socio-economic and housing conditions will allow for the identification of vulnerable individuals, LNOB-(Leave No One Behind) and households for targeted interventions.
- ❖ The review and development of the 9th and 10th National Socio-Economic and Development Plan (NSED), the assessment and preparation for the final 5 years of the 2030 Agenda and the

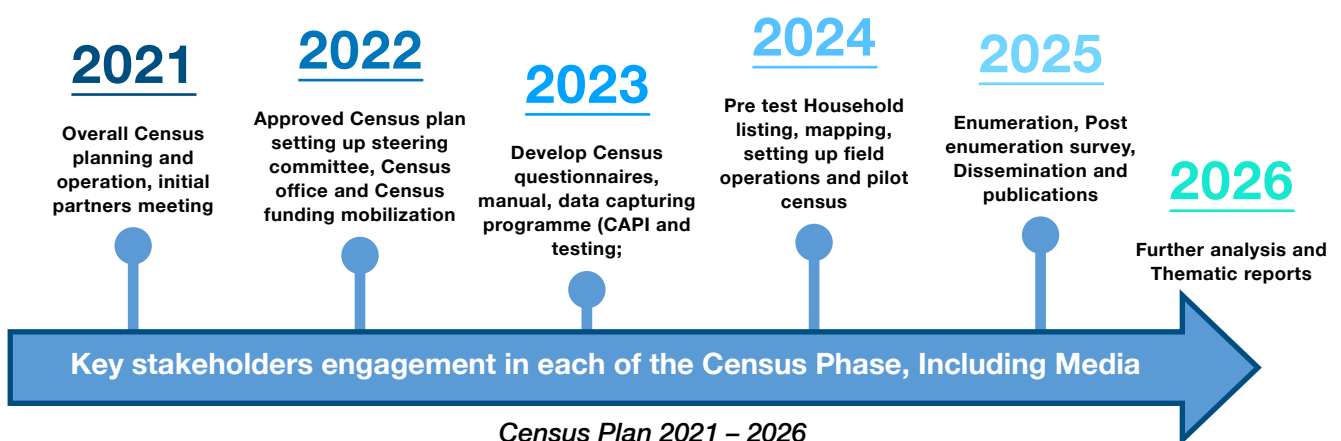
Sustainable Development Goals, and a better planning for Lao PDR after the possible graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) in 2024.

- ❖ Poverty reduction by mapping groups and/or areas that need special attention.
- ❖ Develop and maintain an efficient sampling frame for national sample surveys (Lao Social Indicator Survey, Lao Economic Survey, Labour force, among other household surveys.).
- ❖ The formulation of private sector business plans and marketing strategies, in line with the LNOB approach, making use of the available data (such as characteristics of the labour force and target clients).
- ❖ Births, deaths, marriages and other key registration activities that will rely on the available data to validate administrative procedures and surveys through Civil Registration Vital Statistics (CRVS), District Health Information System (DHIS2), among others.
- ❖ Evidence-based decision making and planning in both the public and private sector to formulate policies and programmes to spur economic growth and development.

2025 PHC Plan

Traditionally, censuses in Lao PDR have been conducted using paper questionnaires which could have exposed census data to different types of human errors throughout the census processes, especially during mapping, enumeration and data processing. Recent technological developments have offered many opportunities to modernize the census operations, especially with regard to constructing census maps, data capturing and validation of census data and dissemination of census results. The government of Lao PDR through the Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB) plans to adopt this new innovations and environmental-friendly approach in the conduct of the upcoming 5th PHC. The **de jure** method will be adopted for 5th census enumeration as has been done in the previous censuses. Everyone who is present in Lao PDR on the 1st March 2025, will be counted regardless of sex, age, status, citizenship, ethnicity, etc. Going green will save the country from printing approximately over 2 million household questionnaires. With this new approach, we aim to reduce processing time and inefficient use of resources, improve reliability and reduce human errors thanks to the satellite imagery for **mapping** and innovative Geographic Information System (**GIS**) for the Enumeration Areas (**EA**), along with **CAPI** (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) for data capturing and Online data transmission.

ROAD MAP FOR PHC 2025



Budget Estimate and Resource Mobilization

In 2015, the budget for carrying out the census was approximately **10 million USD** (including in kind contributions) for a population of approximately 6.5 million inhabitants. The Government contributed 55% of the total cost and the rest was covered by development partners (UNFPA, SDC, World Bank, UNICEF, Government of China, amongst others). The population of Lao PDR is estimated to be around 7.8 million in 2025. Therefore, an approximate estimate of the costs for the next PHC is around **16 Million USD** using the minimum global cost of 2.05 USD to count each person. While the Government will be funding part of the 2025 PHC as in the past, we are seeking both technical, in-kind, financial support and partnerships for a successful census. The key process listed below will facilitate the census planning.

1. Establishment of a **PHC Steering Committee**, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister. It is the highest body for strategic direction and oversight and is the decision-making authority on the census: reviews and approves the PHC implementation, governance, and management arrangements; facilitates the coordination and collaboration among the Government, the donors, and other involved partners.
2. Set up of **technical Working Groups** (co-chaired by the LSB) for the management of different aspects of the PHC planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, e.g.:
 - a. **PHC Finance Group**: acting as a Donors' Coordinating Body, in charge of the coordination and harmonisation of the funding dynamics and requirements for the census;
 - b. **PHC Innovation Group**: focusing on the methodologies of collection, presentation, dissemination of the disaggregated data (statistical capacity assessment and strengthening for the PHC implementation; mapping and CAPI development; quality assurance and documentation; data processing and analysis; report writing and dissemination; post enumeration survey; in-depth analysis/series monographs for key census topics; etc.);
 - c. **PHC Operations Group**: in charge of the management of all procedural and operational processes related to the implementation of the PHC including the procurement of materials and equipment needed (e.g. 18,000 tablets, High Performance Computers for mapping, servers for the census, GIS and satellite imageries, Internet connectivity support, etc.);
 - d. **PHC Communications Group**: in charge of “unpacking” the data to make them policy-relevant, user-friendly, attractive, and easily accessible to people, donors, and Governments. It is open to organisations, media experts, and journalists able to provide strategic inputs to harmonise the information related to the PHC, create links among the work of the different working groups, and organise periodical press conferences to raise awareness on and draw attention to the census.
3. Recruitment of a **Chief Technical Advisor** by UNFPA to the technical supervision and support to the LSB on the census planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases.

Contact Us:

Ms Thirakha Chanthalanouvong, Director General, Department of Social Statistics,
Lao Statistics Bureau, Tel: +856 20 22242815, email: thirakha12@gmail.com

Ms Mariam A. Khan, Representative
UNFPA Lao PDR, Tel: +856 20 55508793, email: mkhan@unfpa.org

Mr. Phonexay Sithirajvongsa, National Programme Analyst (M&E)
UNFPA Lao PDR, Tel: +856 20 55061085, email: sithirajvongsa@unfpa.org