



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Lao PDR Country Brief March 2020



Operational Context

Lao PDR is a least developed country, ranking 140 out of 189 countries in the 2018 Human Development Index. It has one of the lowest population densities in Asia. 23 percent of the population lives below the national poverty line (USD 1.25/day), with a gross national income per capita of USD 2,270 (World Bank 2017). The country is ranked 64 out of 144 in the Global Gender Gap Index 2017. While Lao PDR has managed to reduce the proportion of hungry poor to 23 percent, the 2017 Global Hunger Index still rates hunger levels as “serious”.

Climate change is a key challenge facing rural livelihoods, and the country is vulnerable to climate change due to its low adaptability and its dependence on climate-sensitive natural resources. Changing climate patterns, combined with poor access to both markets and diverse livelihoods, further worsen the situation in remote upland areas, where 25 percent of households are food insecure.

WFP has been present in Lao PDR since 1975.



Population: **6.5 million**

Human Development Index: **140 out of 189**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

Chronic malnutrition: **33% of children between 6-59 months**

In Numbers

US\$ 1.15 million six-month (Apr-Sep 2020) net funding requirements

137,318 mt of food distributed

99,183 people assisted



Operational Updates

Since 24 March, WFP has suspended physical presence of all staff at the field-level in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and activities are conducted remotely or postponed. WFP is coordinating with other UN agencies and partners on assessing the potential impact of COVID-19 - particularly for food security - and preparing for a possible response. Despite this context, the following activities were conducted in March:

- With active follow-up from WFP, the USD 657,000 (LAK 5.9 billion) allocated by the Ministry of Education and Sports to the 821 schools in the eight provinces that are part of the national school meals programme has now been fully transferred to the respective provinces. Schools that have yet to receive the funds will have the cash transferred to them after schools re-open.
- The Prime Minister's decree to integrate school meals into the national budget was revised by the Ministry of Education and Sports, with support from WFP. The decree is now ready to be presented more broadly to different government sectors.
- In Sanamxay District in Attapeu Province, WFP's village nutrition plans were completed and approved. Under these plans, WFP intended to complete the construction of groundwater systems and rice banks in April. However, delays are foreseen as field activities become impossible as a result of COVID-19.
- WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations received confirmation that their joint proposal was approved by the French Alimentary Aid Program. WFP will implement cash assistance and resilient recovery of flood-affected communities in southern Lao PDR, through creating assets that enable villagers adapt better to climate change. Through the USD 362,000 one-year intervention, WFP aims to support 16,500 beneficiaries (8,100 women) from 3,000 households.
- During 10-13 March 2020, WFP and FAO conducted a joint monitoring mission to assess the implementation of a pilot project on providing climate services to five schools in Salavan Province. Through discussions with teachers, students and parents, it was found that weekly bulletins are proving to be useful in furthering students' understanding of weather, climate, and the use of the agrometeorological information. However, the mission found that there is room for improvement in transmitting the knowledge from students to parents.
- WFP has published its [Farmer Nutrition School Household Impact Survey](#). According to it, 76 percent of the women who participated in the farmer nutrition sessions perceived that their nutrition status improved.

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Further information: www.wfp.org/countries/lao-peoples-democratic-republic

Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021)

| Total Requirement (in USD) | Allocated Contributions (in USD) | Apr-Sep 2020 Net Funding Requirements (in USD) |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| 78.72 m | 55.17 m | 1.15 m |

Strategic Result 1: Everyone has access to food

Strategic Outcome 1: Schoolchildren in remote rural areas have sustainable access to food by 2021.

Focus area: Root causes

Activities:

- Provide policy support, technical assistance and transfer of capacities
- Accelerate the implementation of the Government's plan of action of the school meals programme
- Support a national process for community and Government hand-over of the schools.

Strategic Result 2: No one suffers from malnutrition

Strategic Outcome 2: Stunting levels among children under 2 in provinces with high levels of malnutrition meet national levels by 2025.

Focus area: Root causes

Activities:

- Provide technical assistance for evidence-based policy dialogue
- Stimulate access to local specialized nutritious food for children aged 6 to 23 months
- Develop a social behaviour change communication and establish farmer nutrition schools.

Strategic Result 4: Food systems are sustainable

Strategic Outcome 3: Vulnerable households in climate-sensitive districts are more resilient to seasonal and long-term shocks and stresses.

Focus area: Resilience

Activities:

- Build community resilience through the creation of productive assets and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Strategic Result 5: Developing countries have strengthened capacities to implement the SDGs

Strategic Outcome 4: National and local governance institutions are strengthened to improve service delivery, especially in hard-to-reach areas, by 2025.

Focus area: Root causes

Activities:

- Invest in national capacity for food and nutrition security governance
- Enable communities to lead and own their food and nutrition security solutions
- Enhance government capacity at all levels to prepare for and efficiently respond to natural disasters.

- After three months of food delivery for 40 community rice banks in Kaluem and Sanamxai Districts of Attapeu Province, WFP is continuing to provide technical support for the village management committees to ensure that regulations are properly applied. About 40 percent of all rice banks have already disbursed and repaid three-month loans, 50 percent have pending loans, and 10 percent are in the process of disbursement. WFP is planning to provide training and hermetically sealed rice bags for each village in order to ensure long-lasting rice quality.
- The Government is formulating a new National Plan of Action on Nutrition (2021-2025). WFP will support the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in their respective sector plan formulation process.

Story from the field



Dao and her garden. Photo: © UN in Lao PDR/Olga Nilova

Dao Keopasert is a Village Facilitator at Houaychai Village, Oudomxai Province. She leads sessions in the village's Farmer Nutrition School.

Dao says that in her village, women used to be skinny, even during pregnancy. Now, with mothers and children eating better, everyone is healthier and stronger. "I have noticed that the children learn better when they eat better," Dao smiles.

"The garden grants have really made a difference. The women and families have started planting a variety of vegetables, understanding slowly through the information we share at the Farmer Nutrition School that eating the same vegetables all the time may not give our bodies everything we need. The grants have also enabled people to buy and raise small animals, which again helps to make our food more varied."

Donors

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