



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES



WFP Laos Country Brief November 2019

In Numbers

389.195 mt of food distributed

US\$ 1.93 million six months
(December 2019-May 2020) net
funding requirements

110,358 people assisted
in November 2019

Operational Context

Lao PDR is a least developed country, ranking 139 out of 189 countries in the 2017 Human Development Index. It has one of the lowest population densities in Asia. 23 percent of the population lives below the national poverty line (US\$ 1.25/day), with a gross national income per capita of US\$ 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 2015 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.



Income Level: **Lower middle**

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

Operational Updates

- WFP organized a warehouse management training for 29 staff members of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in November. WFP's Logistics Cluster preparedness staff and RedR Australia trained the participants in how to receive, store, and track distribution of relief items. This assists the Government to ensure that commodities stored in a warehouse are safe, secure and easily deployable in the case of an emergency.
- WFP participated in a government-led After Action Review in Pakse, Champassak Province, which looked at logistics and coordination aspects of the emergency response to this year's floods in the South of the country. WFP made recommendations concerning the activation of the Logistics Cluster in case of disasters.
- WFP organized an event on sexual and gender-based violence for its staff titled *Orange Our WFP World*. The event was led by the communications team and focused on personal experiences of staff around the connection between violence and gender equality. The team will deploy to all field offices in the coming months to ensure all field staff knows how to protect themselves and beneficiaries.
- WFP is currently commissioning a study titled *Drivers of Food Choices*, looking at food taboos and customary practices of seven ethnic groups in three provinces of Lao PDR. Food taboos especially around pregnancy and after child birth are particularly prevalent in remote, ethnic areas of the country. The results of the study will allow WFP to design tailored behaviour change communication messages in order to alter habits detrimental to health.
- Following incidences of floods and drought across the country in 2019, a Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) was jointly organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and WFP in November. The primary purpose of the Assessment Mission was to provide an accurate picture of the extent and severity of crisis-induced food insecurity, so that timely and appropriate action can be taken

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Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021)

Total Requirement (in US\$)	Allocated Contributions (in US\$)	Dec 2019 – May 2020 Net Funding Requirements (in US\$)
78.72 m	49.21 m	1.93 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.

Operational Updates (continued)

to minimize the impact of the crisis on affected populations. The results of the mission are expected to be released in March 2020.

- Design and coordination work continues on the Green Box, a package containing over 60 engaging teaching materials for primary school students on the topics of nutrition, hygiene and environment.

Story from the field



Saovin, a 17-year-old mother from Sekong Province in southern Laos belongs to the Katu minority. Her 1-year-old daughter sits in her lap as she replies to questions from a research team. *Drivers of Food Choices* is a study commissioned by WFP, looking at what factors influence members of the many ethnic groups living in Lao PDR in their choices of what their daily meals will look like.

In Saovin's eight-persons household, people eat together. She is the one who cooks most of the family's meals, but her husband usually buys supplements like meat, since he is the person making decisions around finances. The family has a vegetable garden at the outskirts of the village, so leafy greens and other nutritious vegetables are integral to the family's staple diet. White rice, as opposed to the Lao staple glutinous rice is the main constituent of a meal. Meat is usually foraged in the jungle by Saovin's husband or bought.

"After giving birth to my daughter, I was living on rice, salt and chicken for three months," Saovin says. This strict code of eating is part of the Katu tradition of food taboos, which are monitored by elders. In her family, it is her parents-in-law who have a strong say in these matters.

Customary practices influence food choices – a heightened understanding of these mechanisms will allow WFP to design targeted initiatives for the benefit of communities in Lao PDR.

Donors

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