



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Lao PDR Country Brief April 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** (inconsistent)

Income Level: **Lower middle**

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

In Numbers

US\$ 1.28 million six-month (May – Oct 2020) net funding requirements

7.724 mt of food distributed

10,128 people assisted



Operational Updates

- As a result of COVID-19 and the government-instituted lockdown measures, most field-level activities were suspended during the month of April. However, preparedness measures were advanced, as well as preparations for the distribution of take-home rations at schools. During the end of April, WFP – in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and with the support of partners – also rolled out a perceptions survey for the impact of COVID-19 on food security and agriculture. Results will be shared in May.
- In light of school closures and food needs in vulnerable communities, WFP prepared to distribute take home rations to 88,703 students across 925 schools in 8 provinces - Phongsaly, Oudomxay, Luangnamtha, Luangprabang, Salavan, Sekong, Attapeu and 15 schools in Nakai District in Khammouane Province, where WFP provides school feeding in partnership with EDF-Lao. A total of 943 mt of rice, lentils, fortified cooking oil and canned fish are scheduled to be distributed in May.
- The Government endorsed two guidelines – developed jointly with WFP - on cash-based transfers. The guidelines will be distributed to all schools which receive mid-day meals.
- While implementation of some field-level activities in the French-funded nutrition project in Khammouane and Attapeu provinces was suspended, other activities continued through the ownership of communities. The distribution of specialized nutritious food in Khammouane and Attapeu provinces proceeded in April through the health centres and communities, with WFP providing remote monitoring and support, particularly to mitigate risks of COVID-19 transmission. Remote monitoring also revealed that implementation of the garden/livestock grants was ongoing, with households purchasing small animals and inputs to improve home gardens. Completion of village nutrition infrastructure in Attapeu was put on hold.

Contact info: ildiko.hamos@wfp.org / Partnerships and Communications Coordinator

Country Director: Jan Delbaere

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

Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021)

Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	May- Oct 2020 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
78.72 m	55.16 m	1.28 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)

- During April, WFP continued supporting the Lao PDR Cash Working Group by advancing preparedness measures for cash-based transfers through facilitating the development of Cash and Voucher Assistance Guidelines and a minimum expenditure basket for the country. This minimum expenditure basket is defined as what a household requires to meet their essential needs, on a regular or seasonal basis, and its average cost. This is useful in helping identify cash transfer values to beneficiaries.

Story from the field



Thin and Yuro. Photo: © WFP Laos/Vilakhone Sipaseuth

When Thin Kitphasone from Houay Yen Village in Khammouane Province of Central Laos found out about her pregnancy, she was quite worried. At 27 years of age, she was much older than most women in Lao PDR are at their first pregnancy. In addition, her village was flooded during her pregnancy.

In the Farmer Nutrition School, she learnt about a diversified diet for herself and her baby. Against common practice in her village, she chose to follow the advice of the nutrition advisors and ended up giving birth to a healthy boy named Yuro. Both herself and Yuro received Nutributter from WFP. “I am convinced that the things I learned helped myself and my son. Now I share my knowledge with friends and neighbours.”

Thin also started a kitchen garden with WFP’s grant, so she can feed Yuro well in the long term.

Donors

USA, Australia, Japan, France, Russia, Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme, Government of Lao PDR, Private Donors