



WFP Lao PDR Country Brief

May 2020

World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES



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**

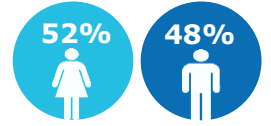
Chronic malnutrition: **33% of children between 6-59 months**

In Numbers

US\$ 1.5 million six-month (June – Nov 2020) net funding requirements

668.066 mt of food assistance distributed

99,220 people assisted



Operational Updates

- WFP, together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), published a [survey report](#) which measures the impact of COVID-19 on food security and agriculture, and identifies bottlenecks and affected populations/provinces. Some key findings include disproportionately negative impacts on cash crops, negative impacts on the sale of farmers' produce due to movement restrictions, decreased food availability, increased prices for certain commodities, and increased unemployment for daily labourers.
- WFP is planning a targeted response to support immediate food security needs as well as longer-term resilience of vulnerable communities. This includes assistance to returning migrant workers in quarantine camps, conditional assistance to build community resilience, unconditional assistance to particularly vulnerable households, WASH interventions at WFP-supported schools, and nutrition interventions for targeted populations.
- In May, WFP began providing the remaining food stocks at its supported schools as take-home rations, to support children and their families during these challenging times – this distribution coincides with the lean season, and also ensures that remaining stocks are not spoiled. A total of approximately 943 mt of food is scheduled to be distributed to 88,703 students across 925 schools in 8 provinces. This consists of 574 mt of rice, 292 mt of lentils and 58 mt of fortified cooking oil from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as well as 18 mt of canned fish from the Government of Japan.
- WFP received the next consignment, consisting of 1,290 mt of rice and lentils in May to be used for the school feeding programme for the 2020-2021 school year. Additional consignments of lentils and cooking oil are scheduled to arrive in June. A handover ceremony was held on 19 May, in which U.S. Ambassador to Lao PDR, Dr. Peter Haymond reaffirmed the value of school feeding programmes. He said, "School lunches are proven to help students achieve better academic results, and to encourage higher attendance for all students, especially females and underrepresented groups. The U.S. stands together with the people and government of Laos to support the pursuit of this country's development goals."

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Country Strategic Plan (2017-2021)

| Total Requirement (in USD) | Allocated Contributions (in USD) | June – Nov 2020 Net Funding Requirements (in USD) |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 78.7 m | 55.1 m | 1.5 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)

- WFP signed an agreement with Health Poverty Action to set up two community rice banks in Sanamxay District, as part of the French-funded nutrition project in Attapeu and Khammouane provinces responding to the 2018 flood emergencies.
- WFP has started testing climate smart approaches in five model villages by planting fruit trees, shaping school and community gardens and planting upland rice, using local crop varieties that adapt well to the effects of climate change. These approaches will enhance community resilience to climate change, while supporting community-driven school feeding.

Story from the field



Bounpheng and her children. Photo: © WFP Laos/Vilakhone Sipaseuth

Bounpheng Jinya is a 26-year-old farmer from Lang Pha village in Luang Namtha province. Her family owns a sugarcane farm. Under normal circumstances, traders would have come and bought her produce after the harvest in April, which was a crucial income earning period for the family. Due to the lockdown, since traders were not allowed to travel to the village. Bounpheng's family had to borrow money from a neighbor.

Bounpheng's biggest worry was about more than just having sufficient food or income. "I was so worried about what would happen if the lockdown would go on for a long time, especially around education. I can't read or write, so I can't do what my children's teacher told us to do for them. I was lost, as I couldn't even read what the assignments said, much less teach my daughter anything."

Bounpheng came to the local school to collect 2.77kg of rice, 2kg of lentils, 2 cans of fish and 400ml of cooking oil, distributed by WFP as a take-home ration to the parents of every student. "It's enough to help us cope for a few weeks, and that is a big help already until we find ways to earn some income," Bounpheng says.

Donors

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