Operational Context

Lao PDR is a least developed country, ranking 137 out of 189 countries in the 2020 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 GDP per capita of USD 2,534.9 (World Bank 2019). The country is ranked 137 out of 162 countries in the Gender Inequality Index 2020. While the poverty rate in Lao PDR more than halved in the past two decades, the 2020 Global Hunger Index still rates hunger levels as “serious”.

Climate change is a key challenge facing rural population, and the country is vulnerable to climate change due to its low adaptability and high 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.

In Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mt of food distributed</th>
<th>US$ 460,000 six-month (March 2022 - Aug 2022) net funding requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>104.4 of food distributed</td>
<td>83,343 people assisted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Operational Updates

- WFP together with the Ministry of Education and Sports, organised a virtual Training of Trainers for provincial and district education officials, focused on implementation of school meals. The training consisted of four main modules: programme management, cooking, storekeeping and community mobilisation. As a next step, the officials will roll out the training to the 707 target schools, to enable the schools to start cooking school meals for the first time.

- In districts where WFP had already handed over school feeding programmes in 2019, WFP started a pilot to support officials from district education and sports offices to conduct inclusive support visits to schools. Through this pilot, officials will monitor the operation of school feeding programmes, mobilise community contribution and provide on-site coaching.

- WFP provided technical support to the 7th National Nutrition Forum, which took place on 16 February 2022. The meeting brought together approximately 250 participants and was chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, who is also the chair of the National Nutrition Committee. On behalf of the private sector, Dr. Xaybandith Rasphone, the President of the Association of Lao Garment Industry spoke at the event, highlighting the important role of businesses to improve nutrition.

- As part of the Agriculture for Nutrition project, WFP supported the district government to develop a multi-sectoral district nutrition plan in Namor district in Oudomxay province, to identify gaps in relation to nutrition, and develop joint solutions. This plan will feed into the village nutrition plans that beneficiaries develop as part of the Farmer Nutrition Schools supported by the project.

- WFP began a GIS and ICT capacity assessment of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare’s Emergency Operations Center as part of the first steps to integrate the WFP 72-Hour Emergency Assessment. Approach into emergency response arrangements in Lao PDR. Following the assessment, WFP will coordinate with the relevant government counterparts to determine a series of capacity building trainings throughout 2022.

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Further information: www.wfp.org/countries/Lao
WFP Country Strategy

Country Strategic Plan (2022-2026)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Requirement (in USD)</th>
<th>Allocated Contributions (in USD)</th>
<th>Six Month Net Funding Requirements (in USD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>79.16 m</td>
<td>32.58 m</td>
<td>0.46 m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strategic Result 1**: Everyone has access to food

**Strategic Outcome 1**: Schoolchildren in vulnerable areas have improved food security, nutrition and learning results through a sustainable national school meals programme by 2026

**Focus area**: Root causes

**Activities**:
- Provide direct support and technical assistance to the Government to strengthen and complement the national school meals programme and to facilitate a sustainable handover of the programme to the Government

**Strategic Result 2**: No one suffers from malnutrition

**Strategic Outcome 2**: Vulnerable people at risk of any form of malnutrition, in particular women and girls of reproductive age, children under 5 and school-age children, have improved nutrition outcomes in line with national targets by 2026

**Focus area**: Root causes

**Activities**:
- Provide universally accessible nutrition support services for targeted populations and nutrition-related technical assistance, advocacy and evidence-based advice to the Government and other stakeholders, including in the private sector

**Strategic Result 4**: Food systems are sustainable

**Strategic Outcome 3**: Vulnerable people in disaster-affected or at-risk areas have enhanced food and nutrition security all year round and increased capacity to mitigate and manage risks associated with climate and other shocks by 2026

**Focus area**: Resilience building

**Activities**:
- Provide assistance and technical support to targeted communities and government entities to build communities' resilience to climate and other shocks through strengthened capacity in disaster and climate risk management and social protection

**Strategic Result 1**: Everyone has access to food

**Strategic Outcome 4**: Crisis-affected populations in the Lao People's Democratic Republic are able to meet their food, nutrition and other essential needs during and after disasters

**Focus area**: Crisis response

**Activities**:
- Provide nutrition-sensitive cash-based transfers or food assistance to help meet the essential needs of crisis-affected people
- WFP held a second round of community consultations in 15 villages in Phongsaly province to finalise community asset selections aimed at improving climate resilience and reducing the risk of disasters. The villages selected a range of activities, including the improvement to community-based water systems, planting of fruit trees and diversifying crops, as well as the construction of community rice reserves and small-scale irrigation systems.

- WFP continued to support the Government's logistics preparedness capacity strengthening through district level warehouse management trainings. The fourth training included participants from Xayabouly, Luang Prabang and Houaphan provinces.

- Continuing its food assistance to returning migrant labourers, WFP provided meals in COVID-19 quarantine centres across six provinces in Lao PDR through partnerships with World Vision International and the Swiss Red Cross. In February 2022, WFP provided a total of 82,663 nutritious meals to 4,557 people, including 2,309 women.

- As part of a launch and advocacy efforts for the new Country Strategic Plan 2022-2026, WFP continued to raise awareness on its gradual shift from direct implementation to an advisory role in southern provinces.

**Story from the field**

Moud Noumsajkhong (22-years-old), lives with her husband and their two-year-old son in a small ethnic village with Khmou and Thai Lue people in Oudomxay province in northern Laos. She has become part of her village's WFP-supported women's farmer group, receiving a grant that allowed her to build a coop for her chickens and buy additional chicks. She has learned a lot about raising and caring for small livestock, allowing her to sell eggs in the village, and to continue breeding more chickens to sell.

Moud looks forward to contributing to school lunches for children in the local primary school, and is happy that one day, her son will benefit of healthy meals with his classmates.

"I have noticed that women in our village have been invisible. We were either working inside the house, or outside the village, in the fields. Now that we have our own garden and animals to take care of, which, by the way, women are much better at than men, we take charge of our lives outside of our homes," Moud says.

Photos: WFP Laos/Ildiko Hamos