



WFP Lao PDR Country Brief

January 2024

World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES



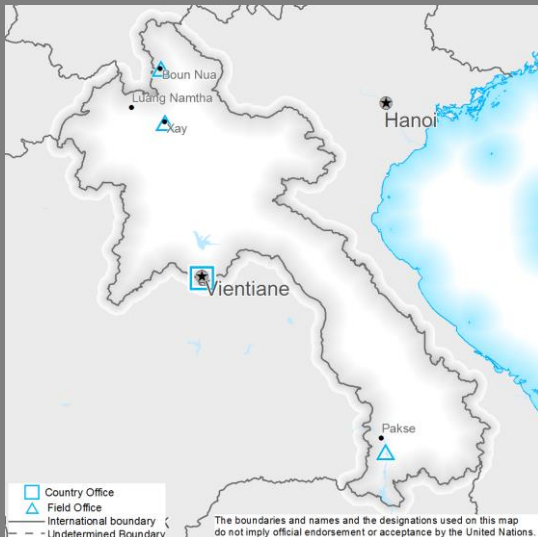
Blending of fortified rice kernels with locally cultivated glutinous rice ©WFP/Lee Sipaseuth

Operational Context

Lao PDR is a least developed country, with one of the lowest population densities in Asia. Eighteen percent of the population lives below the national poverty line (US\$1.25/day), with a GDP per capita of US\$ 2,088.40 (World Bank 2022). The country is ranked 120 out of 177 countries in the Gender Inequality Index 2021. While the poverty rate in Lao PDR more than halved in the past two decades, the 2022 Global Hunger Index rates hunger levels as “moderate”.

Climate change is a key challenge facing the rural population, and the country is vulnerable 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 over 20 percent of households are food insecure.

WFP has been present in Lao PDR since 1975.



Population: **7.37 million**

2021/2022 Human Development Index: **140 out of 191 countries**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

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

In Numbers

111 mt of food distributed

US\$0.96 million six-month (February-July 2024) net funding requirements

74,579 people assisted in January



Situation update

WFP’s mobile food security monitoring from September 2023 revealed that:

- Food insecurity is disproportionate across the country, with an average of 1 in 7 families found to be food insecure (14 percent). A third of families in Sekong province are food insecure.
- 1 in 5 families has insufficient food consumption (21 percent).
- Rural households are nearly twice more likely to be food insecure than urban households (16 percent vs. 9 percent respectively).
- 46 percent of families use food-based coping strategies to make ends meet, while 58 percent use livelihood-based coping strategies.
- Families worry most about rising food prices (29 percent) and lack of jobs/livelihoods (15 percent).

Operational Updates

- WFP started dispatching food to school in January. Annual programme planning meetings for implementing school meals programmes with support from the US Department of Agriculture were held in two districts with the participation of provincial and district education authorities. Farmers received information on the support they will receive under the smallholder agriculture component of the programme.
- On 12 January, the Vice Minister of Health, Dr. Snong Thongsna, led a delegation with representatives from various ministries and partners to observe the rice fortification process at a rice milling company in Savannakhet Province. WFP locally sourced 150 mt of rice which was blended with fortified rice kernels. This will help address micronutrient deficiencies through the national school meals programme. The pilot is done in partnership between the ministries of Health and Education, through a contractual agreement with a private miller.

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Country Strategic Plan (2022-2026)

Total Requirement (in US\$)	Allocated Contributions (in US\$)	Six Month Net Funding Requirements (in US\$)
85.93 m	69.09 m	0.96 m

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

Donors

Asian Development Bank (ADB), China, European Union, France, Germany, Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme, Ireland, Japan, Lao PDR, Luxembourg, Republic of Korea, Russia, United States of America and private donors

- WFP, in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, delivered a second and last training on hazard, vulnerability and assessments (HVCA). HVCA aims to increase technical knowledge and capacity in data collection and analysis focused on climate change, disaster risk reduction, disaster management cycle, hazard identification and ranking, seasonal calendar, and vulnerability and disaster risk mapping. This aims to identify community activities that reduce disaster risk and enhance climate resilience. Following the training, community consultations commenced in late January and will be completed in February 2024.
- WFP, in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and Lao Red Cross, organized an After-Action Review and Closing Meeting for the Lean Season Response during the rainy season of 2023 for 110,000 vulnerable people in 16 districts. The closing meeting brought together representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare at both national and provincial levels, Lao Red Cross, Swiss Red Cross and WFP, providing insights for future crisis responses.

Story from the field



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Champa and King are two sisters who live in a faraway Naxiengdee village, Lao PDR's northern Oudomxay province. Their mother is a single mother and a farmer who is the sole breadwinner of their family.

The family has been impacted by high living costs, and although Champa and King love going to school, they dread the daily long walk on an empty stomach.

Naxiengdee Primary School has been receiving support in the form of school meals since 2019. Daily hot lunches actively encourage both boys and girls to attend school regularly.

Such as Champa and King, who, together with their friends, can't wait until lunch is served every day, for all students. For the sisters, school meals make a big difference.

"We love the food, and we are excited to arrive to school every day," they say in unison, smiling their mischievous smile.