



Guidance Note

(Final version replacing July version)

2017 Round Table Implementation Meeting (2017 RTIM)

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Ministry of Planning and Investment
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I. Introduction – From 2016 RTIM

Development cooperation in Lao PDR is evolving toward greater and more diverse partnerships, which are essential for achieving the goals of the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The range of stakeholders engaging in the Government-led policy dialogue and discussions (such as the Round Table Meetings and Sector Working Groups) has been expanding, covering not only the central government and traditional development partners but also National Assembly members, provincial authorities, south-south/regional partners, private sector and civil society. Lao PDR has identified, together with partners in development, 14 key action areas to enrich and enhance development effectiveness as stated in the Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan (2016-2025).

The Round Table Process was reviewed in mid-2016 in the context of a number of important ongoing changes in the country. The review concludes that the Round Table Process is seen by stakeholders as useful in bringing together Government and development partners on a regular basis, promoting connections, exchanging information, providing a platform for discussion, and enabling networking. However, the process needs to evolve to remain relevant in a changing world, with a rapidly transforming Lao economy and society and a new international architecture, a shift from MDGs to SDGs, and a changing development financing landscape.¹

Taking into consideration the review's findings and recommendations, the Government put greater efforts to ensure that the 2016 Round Table Implementation Meeting was organized and conducted in a different format and setting compared to previous years – moving away from a traditional setting towards more interactive panel and plenary discussions. As a result, the Round Table Implementation Meeting on 24-25 November 2016 was broadly perceived as a success by Government and its partners, *inter alia* due to the frank and open discussions, the continuity from last year's High-Level Round Table Meeting, the inclusive nature, the comprehensive preparations and the concrete outcomes. The Round Table Implementation Meeting was chaired by the Minister of Planning and Investment, the Governor of Vientiane Province and the UN Resident Coordinator, with around 300 participants, including Government at central and local level, National Assembly, international community, civil society and private sector.

The results of the Round Table Implementation Meeting have been translated into an instruction of the Prime Minister to line ministries, provinces and agencies concerned. To implement key discussion points of the RTM/RTIM, it needs greater partnership across development cooperation spectrums. The 8th NSEDP highlights this in a strategic manner, in particular, the contribution and mobilization of support from private sector to accelerate efforts for the achievement of the national development aspiration, in particular, graduating from the Least Developed Countries (LDC) by 2020.

Even though Lao PDR has made definitive progress in human development and on all the three criteria of LDC graduation, there is no room for complacency. Heightened commitment to human development is needed not only to reach LDC graduation thresholds, but also to face the post-graduation challenges and to reap the benefits from openness, especially its full AEC integration.

With these, 2017 represents an important year for development cooperation in Lao PDR to take stock of what have been achieved so far and what lies ahead in light of the next

¹ Please refer to the Round Table Process review report for more detailed information.

Triennial LDC review in 2018 by the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP), the voluntary 2018 SDG report, and other related events. It is also a year to further accelerate the implementation of the national development goals, in particular, various aspects of human development toward the aspiration of graduating from the status of Least Developed Countries (LDC) by 2020. While Lao PDR did not reach the threshold during the last Committee for Development Policy (CDP) review in March 2015, it has nevertheless made important progress in each of the three criteria. According to ESCAP's latest estimates, the Lao PDR has met the GNI per capita criterion for LDC graduation and may be able to meet human asset criterion in time for the 2018 review of the Committee for Development Policy if its pace of progress continues over the next few years.

II. 2017 RTIM - Aim, Over-arching Theme

2.1 Overall aim:

The Round Table Implementation Meeting (RTIM) will be organised with an overall aim of **promoting coherence and multi-stakeholder partnerships for implementation of the 8th NSEDP for realizing LDC graduation and achieving SDGs.**

It is also a forum for monitoring progress achieved in 2017 and setting priorities for 2018 in light of, among others, the UN CDP Triennial LDC review, the voluntary 2018 SDG report, and other related events.

2.2 Proposed over-arching theme of the 2017 RTIM is:

“Greater partnership for implementation of the 8th NSEDP: Realizing LDC graduation and achieving SDGs”

2.3 Special Focuses for Dialogue:

1. LDC gradation and SDG Integration
2. Realizing quality private sector investment for development
3. Investment in skills for human development
4. Further enhancing south-south and triangular cooperation: “Institutional Arrangement for Effective Development and Monitoring”

III. Key Note Presentation and Preparatory Consultations

3.1 Possible Keynote Presentation

1. Presentation of the Champasak Provincial Socio-Economic Development Plan. Implementation Progress & Challenges

- Overview: Social & Economic Profile/Status of Champasak Province
- Outcome 1. Economic Development – results and challenges (include issues related to relevant Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI) as well as efforts/success in attracting ‘Quality Private Sector Investment’).
- Outcome 2. Social Sector Development – results and challenges (include issues related to the Human Asset Index (x 4 criteria) and skills development issues in priority development sectors in Champasak).
- Outcome 3. Environmental Development – results and challenges (include environmental aspects of the EVI).
- Refer to good examples of South – South Cooperation in Champasak.

2. Main Presentation “Summary annual NSEDP progress, challenges and priorities for 2018”

- Outcome 1 (Economic) inc ref to LDC EVI status & priorities
- Outcome 2 (Social/Human) inc ref to LDC HAI status & priorities
- Outcome 3 (Environment) inc ref to LDC EVI status & priorities
- Cross-Cutting Issues
- Resourcing/Expenditures
- Priorities for 2018

3.2 Background Document

- NSEDP Progress Report for 2017.
- Continuity Report: Progress Report on Priority Recommendations arising from previous RTIMs (follow up matrix). This should be integrated into the NSEDP progress report where relevant. Progress on RTIM recommendations should also feature prominently in SWG reports to the RTIM.
- SWGs Annual Summary Report of the Results achieved during 2017.
- LDC Graduation Update.
- SDG Integration Update.

3.3 Pre-Consultations for the 2017 RTIM

2017 RTIM Pre-Consultations would mobilize policy discussion in the four selected areas for substantive policy dialogue in particular sharpening and prioritising the areas for dialogue to bring forward policy insights and identify concrete actions and supports for the achievement of the national development agenda. Like previous year, concept notes of RTIM pre-consultations will be prepared by DIC/MPI in close collaboration with relevant stakeholders. Where possible existing mechanism and ‘champions’ in the sector will be drawn upon as resources to help facilitate progress. The product of pre-consultations would be the forging of joint DP/GoL presentations and key documents into the RTIM for dialogue on the four selected areas of:

1. LDC Graduation & SDG Integration

- Information sharing on the latest economic, human and environmental criteria situation including priorities and actions needed to attain LDC graduation.
- Preparations for the 2018 Triennial LDC review and summarising the longer-term implications of LDC graduation for Laos PDR and
- Outlining the current status of SDG integration, road map, indicators, monitoring, reporting and use of statistics.
- Preparations for the High Level Political Forum for July 2018, including the National Voluntary Report.

2. Realizing quality private sector investment for development

- a. Capitalization on current initiatives on public-private partnerships, recent private sector development and the current LBF discussions and priorities organised in March 2017, to identify priority areas in which various partners can add value to the acceleration of progress in key areas, such as in i) legal environment, ii) taxation; iii) transportation and import/export procedures [links to infrastructure dialogue section below]; iv) business

- registration/licencing; v) Access to finance; iv) labour market development [links to skills dialogue section below].
- b. Identify innovative or replicable examples of how ‘quality’ private sector investments have significantly contributed to LDC criteria and/or SDG attainment in the principle sectors of:
- ◆ Agriculture
 - ◆ Industry/Manufacturing;
 - ◆ Commerce/Services such as tourism, financial service sector, etc.
- 3. Investment in skills for human development**
- Support Education SWG to look at ways of accelerating implementation of the national skills development/human resource development strategy in light of the shortage of labour market skills to help drive private sector development contributing to the development of the country in general.
 - Include reference to the youth dividend, yet Lao skilled labour is lagging behind, and higher value adding jobs are being taken up by economic migrants from neighbouring countries. Hence, discussions could be geared towards progress, challenges/bottlenecks and plan of actions to make the Lao national labour market more diverse and competitive.
- 4. Further enhancing south-south and triangular cooperation: “Institutional Arrangement for Effective Development and Monitoring”**
- Discussions over policy and institutional framework for South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation.
 - Identification of inspired south/south co-operation initiatives that fit with the priority themes which demonstrate high quality development results in terms of contribution to LDC graduation and SDG achievement across economic, social and environmental aspects, which could be included within site visits to province/s.
 - Development of key messages to be convened at the RTIM based on various initiatives and programme for social and economic prosperity and cooperation in the region.
 - Identification of a link between the Vientiane Declaration on ASEAN and the Vientiane Declaration on Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

3.4 Discussions, Consultations and Coordination at Sector Working Group Level

3.4.1 Outcome based work plan

The Sector Working Groups are the solid foundation of substantive discussions, consultations and coordination. To ensure its potential introducing outcome based work plans is an important task and it is recommended that all SWGs create their work plans, in addition to sector strategies and policies, including plan for follow up actions to implement the RTM/RTIM key recommendations/discussion points. Please note that some follow up actions were already identified by SWGs and relevant stakeholders during the 2016 and 2017 RTP retreat. Therefore, reporting on progress of their implementation primarily lies within individual SWG in consultations with members and relevant stakeholders.

3.4.2 Updated Terms of Reference

The terms of reference of the working groups need to be more focused on outcomes to be achieved. It also needs to be made explicit, which national level outcome(s) a working group would contribute to. The outcomes of a working group could include issues papers on certain topics, (sub)sector or thematic strategies, joint understanding on how to address specific issues, or an options paper to be considered at higher levels. The outcome(s) expected of each working group is guided by the RTM/RTIM follow up matrix. The focus of SWG reporting will be on the specific outcomes achieved.

3.4.3 Outcome based sectoral progress report

With what highlighted above, SWGs are requested to report and update on status of each action within their portfolios. To help and guide SWGs in preparing the progress report (See Annex 1 for reporting template). **Please share sectoral progress report with the National Secretariat of the Round Table Process by 29th September 2017.**

3.4.4 Calendar of events

Time tables with meeting dates for the RTM/RTIM and SWG meetings should be communicated to all at the beginning of the year. This will create predictability and make communications and focus on outcomes easier. To help facilitate this, a 2017 RTIM roadmap/timeframe is documented under section V of this note. Therefore, SWGs are required to submit their calendar of events to DIC/MPI on a quarterly basis.

3.4.5 Organisation of SWG meetings at different levels and key messages for 2017 RTIM

All SWGs are required to convene and actively organize their sector consultations and carrying out substantive activities. While it is important that thematic sector issues are discussed during SWGs meetings, the RTP Secretariat would like to recommend that individual SWG identify key messages at sectoral level which could be used to stimulate discussions during 2017 RTIM. The focus is on

- Overall progress update of key achievements and challenges arising from implementation of the 8th NSEDP at the national, sectoral or provincial levels. Summary reports will be prepared as part of the Background Document by each of the Sector Working Groups (SWGs) to demonstrate progress based on RTM follow up matrix.
- Effective Partnerships as the Cross-Cutting Theme: Since the core component of the Vientiane Declaration II is that of diversifying the development partnership, partnerships will feature as our core cross-cutting issue of this years' RTIM. In particular, there will be a focus on operational partnerships with the private sector, civil society and ASEAN/regional partnerships.

3.4.6 RTP Secretariat to meet with an individual SWG Secretariat

To help facilitate coordination across sectors and create common understanding on RTIM preparation, DIC/the RTP Secretariat intends to visit individual SWG Secretariat (both chairs and co-chairs focal points) during June and October 2017. A request for meeting will be sent out well in advance to coordinate the visit.

3.4.7 Meeting of chairs and co-chairs of SWGs and other related partners

DIC expects to organize at least two meetings of Chairs and Co-Chairs of SWGs leading up to the 2017 RTIM. These meetings will focus on the progress of the preparation for the 2017 RTIM and discussions over key issues for clarification and common understanding.

3.4.8 Development exhibition

Development exhibition will be organized as side event during the 2017 RTIM. All SWGs are invited to display their activities contributing to sustainable development and inclusive growth. The focus of this Exhibition or theme of the Exhibition is on effective partnership at sectoral and provincial levels for sustainable development and inclusive growth. The Exhibition will demonstrate how the Government of Lao PDR and its Development Partners and other relevant stakeholders such as private sectors and civil societies working together at different levels for the achievement of the NSED, LDC graduation and SDGs.

The Exhibition will therefore facilitate the dissemination of successful methodologies/cases/stories and other relevant materials by SWGs and other stakeholders for addressing their relevant development challenges around the NSED, LDC graduation, and SDGs implementation as well as fostering effective development partnership.

The National Secretariat of the Round Table Process will organize a briefing session with all SWGs and relevant stakeholders at least a month before the 2017 RTIM to go through all necessary arrangements for this side event.

IV. 2017 Proposed RTIM Format & Agenda

- **A Province location** for the RTIM has the advantage of taking the policy discussions ‘to the field’, where development impacts are really needed. Considerations include cost, transport, attendance, logistics and security.

4.1 Suggested Format of the 2017 RTIM

Day 1, Panel discussions and field visits

A series of sector-based panel discussions

1. LDC Graduation & SDG Integration
2. Realizing quality private sector investment for development
3. Investment in skills for human development
4. Further enhancing south-south cooperation and triangular cooperation:
“Institutional Arrangement for Effective Development and Monitoring”

Pre-consultation prior to the panel discussions on the four areas will be organised in Vientiane Capital at least two or three weeks before the RTIM itself.

Field visits are integral to the RTIM and will be identified to demonstrate concrete examples of work in progress where implementation is advanced and where there are local actors can discuss their implementation challenges, approaches and results. Discussions can be directed towards what has been critical to success, lessons learned, mechanisms and processes, together with resources and capacities that have enabled real impact on the ground. Partnerships with private sector, civil society and regional development partners are a core cross cutting theme that can be demonstrated, in particular, illustrating any “South-South” knowledge and skills transfers that have taken place, the adoption of technologies and other lessons moving forward that can accelerate implementation, as per the RTIM main theme.

Day 2, RTIM Policy Implementation Dialogue

Briefly, the RTIM includes:

- Opening Remarks
- Three key presentations on annual NSEDP implementation, plan for LDC graduation, SDG roadmap and greater partnership with private sector and other related stakeholders.
- Report of outcomes of panel discussions
- Sufficient time allocated for discussions, Q&A
- Recommendations, Summing Up and Official Closing Remarks

4.2 2017 RTIM Development Partner Debriefing with the Prime Minister (Date to be confirmed at later stage)

- A smaller group of development partners (normally around 12 to 15 development partners)
- To brief the Prime Minister on the outcomes of the 2017 RTIM
- To maintain high level of dialogue and exchange between Government and development partners that characterised the success of the 2017 RTIM.

V. Key preparatory activities and consultations leading up to the 2017 RTIM

5.1 Roadmap and timeframe

Key activities	Time Frame
1. Preparation of the 2017 RTIM Road Map	January – March 2017
2. Dissemination of the Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan – national and provincial level	Jan – May 2017
3. Preparation of the Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan monitoring framework and monitoring roll out	April - September 2017
4. Revision of Decree No.75 and development of national development cooperation strategy (including consultations with partners)	Jan – September 2017
5. Round Table Process Retreat	March 2017
6. SDG National Steering Committee meeting	April - Dec 2017 (as often as needed)
7. Meeting of RTP National Steering Committee	April-May & Oct -Nov 2017(as often as needed)
8. Guidance note for the preparation of the 2017 RTIM to all Sector Working Groups Secretariats	June – August 2017 (as often as needed)
9. Meeting of Chairs and Co-Chairs of Sector Working Groups	Quarterly (as often as needed)
10. Sector Working Group meetings (technical-executive levels)	Throughout the year

Key activities	Time Frame
11. Annual report of the implementation of 8th NSEDP (2017) and formulation of the annual Plan (2018)	Sep - Dec 2017
12. Meetings between the RTP Secretariat and SDG Secretariats	Through-out the year
13. Foreign Aid Reports (semi-annual and annual)	Timing to be determined
14. 2017 RTIM invitation set out	At least two months before the actual RTIM
15. Sectoral progress reports by Sector Working Groups	29 th September
16. 2017 RTIM Background Document	At least a month before the actual RTIM
17. Meet the press	Quarterly
18. 2017 RTIM Pre-consultations	At least a month before the actual RTIM
19. 2017 RTIM and Debriefing with the Prime Minister	End of November 2017

5.2 Focal points within DIC/MPI

For all matters relating to the overall preparation of the 2017 RTIM, please contact:

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DIC focal points for SWG related work

DIC focal points have been tasked to facilitate the effective linkage between work of SWGs and the Round Table Process in terms of both substantive and process matters. If any queries and questions about the contribution of SWGs to the Round Table Process, please kindly refer to DIC officials as listed below:

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Annex 1 – Template for SWG reporting

Name of Sector Working Groups:
SWG Chair and Co-Chairs:
SWG Secretariat Focal Points:
- Government Officials:
- Development Partners:
Technical Supporting Staffs:
- Government Officials:
- Development partners:

I. Overall progress towards sectoral outcomes and results

II. Overview of Sector Performance in 2017

Sector outputs and activities	Progress	Challenges and opportunities
A. Thematic (substantive) areas		
1. Actions/activities relating to the RTM/RTIM recommendation/discussion points		
1.1		
1.2		
2. Other substantive actions/activities		
2.1		
2.2		
B. Communication and outreach activities with the sector and across Sector Working Groups		
C. Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (in accordance to VDCAP 2016-2025) (Only narrative on each principles)		