



# Guidance Note

## 2019 Round Table Implementation Meeting (2019 RTIM)

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Ministry of Planning and Investment  
February 2019

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## **I. Introduction – From 2018 RTIM**

The Round Table Process including Sector Work Groups (SWGs) continues to stimulate substantive policy dialogue on the country's development agenda, while seeking to strengthen development effectiveness and aid coordination in the country. In particular, it has been providing key recommendations for strengthening national policies and actions by the Government of Lao PDR (GOL) and its Development Partners (DPs) toward enhancement of the human impact of development cooperation.

The latest Round Table Implementation Meeting on 4 and 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018 held in Vientiane Capital (2018 RTIM) 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 RTIM, the inclusive nature, the comprehensive preparations and the concrete outcomes. Key recommendations from the 2018 RTIM (as per Annex 1) have been translated into an instruction of the Prime Minister to line ministries, provinces and agencies concerned. To implement these recommendations, it needs greater partnership across development cooperation spectrums for the remaining period of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2016-2020).

2019 is an important year for Lao PDR as the country will look into various follow up actions of various milestones and challenges encountered in 2018. Among others, some of those follow up actions are highlighted as follow:

- Greater effort to build back better after disasters encountered in 2018. It is important to come up with recovery action plans and mobilizing support at national, sectoral and provincial level which need to be implemented in a coordinated and effective manner.
- The Government will work with various partners to prepare for formulation of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP taking into consideration of results and recommendations from the mid-term review of 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP done in 2018. The formulation of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP also comes in a time that the country has recently met the two out of three criteria of the LDC graduation. Therefore, it is important to put greater efforts on how to sustain and accelerate the development momentum for the next LDC reviews in 2021 and 2024. This is a timeframe which is in line with the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP timeframe. Therefore, the formulation of the next five-year plan will have strong elements of LDC graduation.
- The 5<sup>th</sup> National Human Development Report (NHDR) published in 2017 provides useful recommendations and key policy issues relating to the LDC graduation. Therefore, 2019 is a time to take stock on how a progress in implementing those key recommendations. This will form a basis for a preparation of 6<sup>th</sup> NHDR taking into account key results of various national surveys done in 2018. When done, key results of the 6<sup>th</sup> NHDR will also inform and provide useful inputs for the formulation of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP.
- 2019 is also an important year for work on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as it is a follow up year from the first SDG Voluntary Review Report which was presented in New York during the High Level Political Forum in July 2018. While the work at the national level is on-going, it is important that various partners work together to ensure that SDG indicators are properly mainstreamed, integrated into and monitored at sectoral and provincial level.

The organization of the Round Table Implementation Meeting in 2019 is an important task as it will not only look into the implementation of the last year RTIM key

recommendations but also discuss and consult on key content of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP which will need to be finalised in time for the next Party congress scheduled for 2020.

## **II. 2019 Round Table Implementation Meeting**

### **2.1 Overall aim:**

With the background highlighted in the previous section, the overall aims of the 2019 Round Table Meeting (RTM) are:

1. To further enhance effective development cooperation particularly the implementation of the Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan (VDCAP) for better results relating to: three outcomes and cross cutting areas of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP synchronising with the implementation of the Prime Minister's Instruction on the 2018 RTIM; disaster recovery action plan including indicative support at national, sectoral and provincial levels; and follow up actions on the SDG localization and LDC graduation, particularly the SDG and LDC indicators which need to be monitored and reported against on an annual basis
2. To review and consult on drafting of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and its linkage with the budgetary process.

### **2.2 Proposed over-arching theme of the 2019 RTIM:**

Potential themes could be:

1. Effective development cooperation to accelerating the implementation of the remaining period of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and preparation of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP
2. Greater partnership for effective development cooperation to accelerating the implementation of the remaining period of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and preparation of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP
3. Greater efforts for the implementation of the remaining period of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and preparation of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP
4. Others as appropriate

### **2.3 Discussions, format and location and other related matters**

Building on the constructive momentum of the past few years, it will be important to plan early for the theme for the 2019 RTIM. Major activities already taking place in 2018 and early 2019 include:

- preparation for the dissemination of the Prime Minister's Instruction on the implementation of the 2018 RTIM key recommendations,
- VDCAP implementation survey and the global survey on partnership for effective development cooperation including the preparation of the ODA strategy and revision of its Decree.
- updating the SDG roadmap and list of SDG indicators which will be monitored and reported against on an annual basis
- finalisation of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP Mid-Term Review (MTR) and preparation for the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP

- finalisation of the Post Disaster Need Assessment and preparation of recovery action plan including indicative supports from various partners,
- follow up workshops on the LDC graduation review and

Hence, the following may be considered to build on this momentum, these themes and add further coherence to the approach being taken:

### 2.3.1 Proposed substantive areas for discussion

The main content and priority for discussions at the 2019 RTIM will be based on effective development cooperation for the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP implementation, the preparation of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and some other works being carried as highlighted above.

#### Main discussion at the RTIM

- **Effective Development Cooperation for the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP implementation and consultation on potential actions for the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP:** dedicated sessions on: Achievements, Lessons Learned & Recommendations.

#### Key areas for discussion leading up to the RTIM

- **Sectoral and cross cutting specific issues** will be discussed and consulted at Sector Working Group level and then outcomes will be reported at the 2019 RTIM. Background Document will highlight what discussed at SWG level in more detail.
- **SDG Localization at sectoral and provincial levels and a follow up from the 2018 LDC Review:** A further dedicated session on SDG localization at sectoral and provincial levels (particularly, the integration of the SDG indicators/targets into the sectoral and provincial development plan) and follow up actions from LDC review findings
- **A review of the implementation of the Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan (VDCAP)** in light of the third global survey on partnership for effective development cooperation including its integration into SWG activities.
- **Financing for Development and Public Financial Management:** A financial overview which would include both public (national and international), and private investment (Lao and foreign). This could include a stock take to date as well as projections and aspirations for the second half of the plan. From the public finance perspective, it would include issues such as the macro-economic framework, national budget, tax reforms and revenue generation. It could highlight Gov't progress on transparency and corruption. From the private sector, it could include volumes of investment and projections.

### 2.3.2 Location

2019 RTM will be organised in one of the norther provinces. This will allow participants to discuss and consult on various aspects of effective development cooperation for the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP implementation and the drafting of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP taking into consideration of provincial dimension into account. It is also an opportunity to bring what are discussed at sectoral level and at the pre-consultations to provincial level to ensure common understanding for effective and accountable implementation at the local level.

### **2.3.3 Pre-consultations**

Potential key RTIM pre-consultations, which will be organised through out the year before the actual RTIM, could be:

1. Consultations on results and findings of the global survey on partnerships for effective development cooperation to inform the progress made against various actions of the VDCAP.
2. Technical and high level consultations – 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP preparation
3. Series of consultations for preparation of sectoral disaster recovery action plan
4. SDG localization – national forum on monitoring and reporting on progress made against the SDG indicators, SDG roadmap, SDG communication strategy and other related matters
5. Series of SWG meetings
6. Follow up workshops on the LDC graduation
7. Series of consultations on thematic areas that need further researches to help accelerate the implementation of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and the preparation of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP
8. Others as appropriate

### **2.3.4 2019 RTIM field visits**

Throughout the year, field visits could be organised in collaboration with provincial authorities. SWGs are encouraged to lead and design how the field visits could be organised. Different types of projects/programmes (ODA projects, PIP, public-private partnerships, South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation and others as appropriate) will form the integral part of the visits. Date, time and locations of the visits will be notified later.

A day prior to the actual RTIM, another field visit (in one of northern provinces in Laos) could be organised by nominated SWG in consultation with the RTP Secretariat for high level delegations.

Different types of projects/programmes (ODA projects, PIP, public-private partnerships, South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation and others as appropriate) will form the integral part of the visits. Date, time and locations of the visits will be notified later.

### **2.3.4 Proposed structure and format of the RTM dialogue**

#### **Day 1 – Technical Forum and then RTIM Field Visits and then Baci Ceremony**

Panel discussions will be the main focus of the Technical Forum with an emphasis on provincial development initiatives and strategies which will be linked to effective development cooperation for the implementation of the remaining period of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and the formulation of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP.

- Three to four panel discussions will be organised in accordance to specific themes of effective development cooperation contributing to the realization of the outcomes and cross cutting of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and preparation for the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP.
- Results of SWG meetings and pre-consultations organised in Vientiane will be used to guide panel discussions.
- The intention is to receive provincial feedbacks and inputs to further enrich key messages capturing national, sectoral and provincial elements to be delivered and deliberated at the actual RTIM Policy forum.

On field visits after the Technical Forum, SWGs are encouraged to organise relevant field visits which could be linked to the RTIM if possible.

In addition to field visits which could be organised by SWGs through the year, RTIM field visits could be organised by nominated SWGs in consultation with the RTP Secretariat.

## **Day 2 – High Level Dialogue**

### **Morning session – High Level Segment**

1. 2019 RTM Opening and Keynote Address
2. Coffee Break
3. Executive Progress Summary: Effective Development Cooperation for the Implementation of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and preparation for the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP
4. Plenary Discussion
5. Executive Progress Summary: SDG Localization and LDC graduation
6. Plenary Discussion
7. Lunch

### **Afternoon session**

8. Sectoral and provincial development strategies/plans (One or two key focused areas will be selected)
9. Plenary Discussion
10. Mean of implementation (planning and budgetary process, financing for development, public financial management....etc)
11. Plenary Discussion
12. Coffee Break
13. Wrap-Up and Official Closing Remarks

### **III. Discussions, Consultations and Coordination at Sector Working Group Level**

#### **3.1 Outcome based work plan**

All SWGs have been requested to create outcome based work plans. This requires –  
- identifying actions/activities/initiatives contributing towards the achievement of sector outcomes and outputs (some of those highlighted in i) the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP M&E framework, ii) SDG indicators, and iii) 2018 RTIM key policy recommendations.

#### **3.2 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.

#### **3.3 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 2019 RTIM roadmap/timeframe is documented under section IV of this note. Therefore, SWGs are required to submit their calendar of events to DIC/MPI on a quarterly basis, to be reflected on the RTP website <https://rtm.org.la/>.

#### **3.4 Organisation of SWG meetings at different levels and key messages for 2019 RTIM**

All SWGs are required to convene and actively organize their sector consultations and carrying out substantive activities including field visits if possible. In addition, some parts of discussions and consultations at SWG level could be around the key recommendations from the 2018 RTIM as per Annex 1. 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 2019 RTM.

#### **3.5 RTP Secretariat to meet with an individual SWG Secretariat**

There is still a need to strengthen the ‘policy dialogue’ efforts within the SWG meetings, as many are reported to be rather stifled by process, speeches and protocol. Further efforts are needed in this regard, perhaps through the leadership of SWG secretariat. To help facilitate coordination across sectors and create common understanding on RTM preparation, DIC/the RTP Secretariat intends to visit individual SWG Secretariat (both chairs and co-chairs focal points). A request for meeting will be sent out well in advance to improve its coordination.

### **3.6 Meeting of chairs and co-chairs of SWGs and other related partners**

DIC expects to organize at regular meetings of Chairs and Co-Chairs of SWGs leading up to the 2019 RTIM. These meetings will focus on the progress of the preparation for the 2019 RTIM and discussions over key issues for clarification and common understanding.

### **3.7 Development exhibition**

Development exhibition will be organized as side event during the 2018 RTM. All SWGs are invited to display their activities contributing to sustainable development and inclusive growth. 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 2019 RTIM to go through all necessary arrangements for this side event.

### **3.8 Field visits prior to the RTIM**

SWGs are encouraged to take lead and design field visits which are in line with the concept of the 2019 RTIM. As highlighted early, different types of projects/programmes (ODA projects, PIP, public-private partnerships, South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation and others as appropriate) will form the integral part of the visits. The field visits should be ideally organised at least a month before the RTM. The RTP Secretariat will send out a letter to all SWGs to inform about a concept and rationale behind the organization of the field visits. In particular, a request will be made to identify and consult on SWGs who will potentially lead field visits.

## **IV. Key preparatory activities and consultations leading up to the 2019 RTIM**

### **4.1 Roadmap and Timeframe**

<b>Key activities</b>	<b>2019 Timeframe</b>	<b>Key agencies in charge</b>
1. Preparation of national responses for the global survey on partnership for effective development cooperation	January	DIC/MPI
2. Preparation of the 2019 RTIM Road Map and Guidance Note	January/February	DIC/MPI
3. Round Table Process Retreat	February	DIC/MPI
4. Dissemination of the Prime Minister Instruction on implementation of the 2018 RTM policy recommendations	February – March	DIC/MPI
5. Follow up actions/workshop on LDC graduation	March- May	DOP/MPI, LSB/MPI, DIC/MPI and DIO/MOFA
6. Meet the press	Quarterly if possible	DIC/MP
7. Revisions and finalization of the SDG roadmap, SDG indicators, SDG communication strategy/action plan, etc..	Jan-July	DIO/MOFA
8. Series of SWG meetings	Throughout the year	SWG Secretariat
9. SWG outcome based Annual Work Plan (AWP), calendar of events and updated Terms of Reference	End February	SWG Secretariats
10. Meeting of the National Steering Committee on Round Table Process	April and other times as needed	DIC/MPI
11. Finalization of the 2019 RTM Roadmap and Guidance Note (This includes decision made on a province to host the 2019 RTIM, format, key agenda items and other key important aspects)	March to June	DIC/MPI
12. Dissemination of the 2019 RTM guidance note/roadmap to all SWGs and relevant stakeholders	End of March (Draft version) and then May-June (revised version based on guidance from the National Steering	DIC/MPI

Key activities	2019 Timeframe	Key agencies in charge
	Committee)	
13. RTIM preparatory meetings and discussions with SWGs who could potentially lead the 2019 RTIM field visits	As often as needed	DIC/MPI and representatives from a provinces
14. Finalization survey and attend senior meeting on the global partnership for effective development cooperation (Note: this will be done in line with the roll out of the first monitoring of the VDCAP	April-July	DIC/MPI
15. Series of consultations at national, sectoral and provincial levels on preparation of the 9 <sup>th</sup> NSEDP	Feb – October	DIO/MOFA, DOP/MPI and LSB/MPI
16. High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development	July	DIO/MOFA
17. Meeting of Chairs and Co-Chairs of Sector Working Groups (Policy level)	Quarterly (as often as needed)	DIC/MPI
18. Meetings of SWG Secretariats and RTP Secretariat (Technical level) – before: the RTP retreat, meeting of chairs and co-chairs, pre-consultation and other key policy consultations as appropriate	Every two months	DIC/MPI and SWG Secretariats
19. Preparation of Foreign Aid Report and preparation of ODA review	Jan-Oct	DIC/MPI
20. 2019 RTM invitation set out	At least two months before the actual RTM	DIC/MPI
21. 2019 RTM Background Document to be sent out to all RTM participants	At least two weeks before the actual RTM	DIC/MPI
22. RTM pre-consultations will be mainstreamed into SWG meetings and a proposal to have extra pre-consultation on MTR including SDGs and LDC	At least a month or two before the actual RTM (Sept – Oct)	SWGs, DIC/MPI, DOP/MPI, LSB, DIO/MOFA
23. 2019 RTM and Debriefing with the Prime Minister	End of November or Early December (exact timing will be confirmed later)	DIC/MPI

Please note that updated information on activities, consultations and other related matters about the Round Table Process including Sector Working Groups will be published through the recent revamped RTP website (<http://rtm.org.la>) on a regular basis.

## 4.2 Focal points within DIC/MPI

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## **Annex 1 – Key recommendation from 2018 RTIM**

### **Outcome 1 – Economic Development**

#### **1. Structural economic transformation toward sustainable, long-term, and green growth – targeting non-resource-based diversification.**

Within the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP outcome 1, promoting ‘inclusive economic growth’, the Government has been putting greater efforts toward structural economic transformation which should be pursued towards sustainable, long-term, green growth, targeting non-resource-based diversification.

#### **2. Macroeconomic stability.**

The Government re-confirmed that achieving macroeconomic stability is an essential requirement for durable growth. Delegates discussed a number of current risks and vulnerabilities, as well as Government initiatives for tackling the challenges of growing public debt, revenue shortfalls, fiscal consolidation, management of the financial sector and strengthening buffers to shocks. Development partners reaffirmed their continued support to the Government with policy advice and technical assistance on these issues.

#### **3. A link between planning and budgeting.**

The Government’s initiative towards greater integration between development planning and budgeting was welcomed. This will greatly assist development partners align assistance to national development priorities, and enable greater predictability and sustainability of public sector investments. Decentralization of budgets has also been a priority for the Government. The recent momentum towards enhanced transparency and accountability was regarded as a further positive step.

#### **4. The role of the private sector.**

It was extensively discussed as a catalyst and important partner to development. Without adequate engagement of the private sector, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will remain out of reach and unattainable. There was a strong consensus for strengthening development dialogue with the private sector and for improving the operating conditions that would be attractive for quality private sector investment.

#### **5. Quality, efficiency and safety of the infrastructure, power, and water sectors.**

The Government has been putting great efforts, which are also welcomed by Development Partners, on ensuring the quality, efficiency and safety of the infrastructure, power and water sectors – in particular the strategic review of existing and new hydropower investments and projects in line with international standards.

#### **6. Connectivity and integration.**

Round Table delegates had opportunity to visit the site of the Lao-China railway, which provided evidence of the rapid transformation in connectivity and integration that is taking place in the region.

#### **7. Further improvements to an enabling environment for contributions of various stakeholders at local level such as NPAs and INGOs**

It is an on-going process for further improvements to an enabling environment under the national regulatory framework to ensure meaningful contributions of various stakeholders at local levels such as NPAs and INGOs.

## **Outcome 2 – Social Development**

### **8. Human capital development and poverty reduction.**

Within outcome 2 of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP regarding ‘enhancing human development’ consultations converged on the themes of human capital development and poverty reduction.

### **9. Levels of investment in human capital and skills development.**

In support of the economic transformation strategy outlined in Outcome 1 Round Table participants suggested that levels of investment in human capital and skills development would need to be increased.

### **10. Tackling rural poverty and inequalities.**

Whilst both the Government and Development Partners acknowledge the significant achievements that have occurred in poverty reduction, a yet more ambitious effort to tackling rural poverty and inequalities would be desirable in line with the universal goal of ‘leaving no one behind’.

### **11. Determined perseverance to address food insecurity and malnutrition.**

Delegates were reassured to learn that rates of food insecurity and malnutrition are reducing. The Government highlighted that determined perseverance is required in this area for sustainable results to be realized. This goal is fundamental to seeing the country climb the human assets index, which is vital to secure LDC graduation.

### **12. Greater efforts to address UXO issues.**

Similarly, progress was acknowledged in reducing UXO casualties and the clearance of contaminated land - yet the challenge ahead still remains vast.

### **13. Maternal and child mortality.**

Maternal and child mortality rates have significantly reduced. However, the rates are still among the highest in the region. Initiatives that support adolescent girls, prevent early marriage and early pregnancy, and achieve gender equality were very much welcomed.

## **Outcome 3 – Environmental Development**

### **14. Post Disaster Need Assessment.**

Regarding the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP Outcome 3: ‘Improved Environmental Protection’ - the international community continues to express its solidarity and support to the Government and people of Lao PDR in light of the tragic flooding that occurred this year. The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) in response to the flooding benefited from strong leadership by the Government, supported by the World Bank, European Union and United Nations as well as other partners. This was a powerful example of Government leadership, coordination and collaboration.

### **15. Lessons learnt from PDNA and “Build back better” principle.**

From the PDNA we learned that the rural infrastructure and agricultural sectors were particularly vulnerable to natural disasters, which are closely linked to food security, nutrition and public health. Across all sectors, the recovery and reconstruction presents an opportunity to apply the ‘build back better’ principle.

### **16. Climate change adaptation and natural disaster management across all sectors and into all provinces.**

Exposure to this natural disaster re-focused the collaborative efforts that are necessary to support climate change adaptation and natural disaster management across all sectors and into all provinces. This includes finalization of the law on disaster prevention and control, and building resilience and capacities, for example, through early warning systems, especially with those communities at greatest risk. It also brought to light the necessity of financial preparedness through insurance initiatives which have recently become available in the region.

## **Cross-Cutting Areas**

### **17. The importance of the rule of law as the foundation for equality and development.**

With regard to the cross-cutting areas of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSED, there was a highly constructive discussion regarding progress towards a rule of law state by 2020 and improved access to justice. All participants acknowledged the importance of the rule of law as the foundation for equality and development.

### **18. Awareness of people's rights and obligations under the law and to strengthen institutional capacity for implementation and enforcement.**

Consultations recognized that a number of important legal reforms have either been introduced by Government or are being introduced. These include revisions to the national constitution, human rights legislation and the codifying of criminal and civil laws. These reforms continue to bring domestic laws into alignment with international norms, noting that the next Universal Periodic Review is scheduled to take place in 2020. On-going efforts are needed to help to raise awareness of people's rights and obligations under the law and to strengthen institutional capacity for implementation and enforcement.

### **19. Support to decentralization initiatives.**

Participants benefited from a clear presentation on decentralization, including the strengthening of People's Provincial Assemblies and local administrative and service delivery functions. Development partners expressed their willingness to continue their assistance in this regard.

### **20. Further strengthen participation of local communities and other stakeholders in poverty reduction.**

In an environment of constrained public resources, the Government is committed to further strengthen participation of local communities and other stakeholders such as private sector, civil society and others in poverty reduction, where they have the capacity and the reach.

### **21. Gender equality, the advancement of women, statistical disaggregation and other vulnerable groups.**

Progress and challenges regarding gender equality and the advancement of women were outlined in our consultations. Statistical disaggregation is increasingly taking place, which is welcome. This data will aid in the planning and targeting of services towards communities in greatest need and for promoting inclusive growth – especially in respect of vulnerable women, the disabled and communities in remote areas.