

Summary and Follow-up Actions of the Key Discussion Points/Focus Action Areas
from the 2018 Round Table Implementation (4th and 5th December 2018)

*Zero Draft for discussion only
As of 12 February 2019*

Key Discussion Points/Focus Action Areas arising from the 2018 Round Table Implementation Meeting	Note: All information below are documented to stimulate discussions and consultations only. If they are not accurate, please add, adjust, change, delete and edit as appropriate.			
	Potential follow-up initiatives/plans to take key discussion points/Focus Action Areas forward (Please note some actions are extracted from the 8 th NEDP mid-term review key follow up actions)	Lead Implementing National Agencies	Lead Supporting Partners	Relevant SWGs (coordination and facilitation)
Outcome 1 – Economic Development				
1. Structural economic transformation toward sustainable, long-term, and green growth – targeting non-resource-based diversification. <i>Within the 8th 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.</i>	1. Preparation of a roadmap for structural economic transformation including green growth with clear indicators and targets specified under the 9 th and 10 th NSEDP.			
	2. Continued efforts of the Government to remove growth constraints of the non-resource industrial sector.			
	3. Improving the business environment and increasing agricultural productivity.			
	4. Unlocking the potential of the services sector is one of priorities for the remainder of the 8 th NSEDP period and beyond.			
	5. Continued efforts by the Government on the shift to toward a greener and more resilient growth model, as outlined in the new Green Growth Strategy, and mainstreaming green growth priorities and targets into national and sector strategies.			
	6. Strengthening non-farm rural job creation and productivity which are in line with the Government direction.			
	7. Supporting the development of stronger and more competitive SMEs (e.g., in handicrafts, artisanal wares, higher value-added agriculture products) through increasing access and provision of capital, training, and infrastructure, and through implementation of the SME road map to improve firm and sector-level competitiveness.			
	8. Accelerating productivity in the agriculture sector, including through further implementation of the Agricultural Development Strategy 2020. Specific initiatives include improving agricultural production infrastructure, upgrading technology, strengthening farmers’ associations, improving irrigation systems, and improving access to inputs.			

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	9. Development and implementation of the national rural employment strategy to promote decent livelihood and rural productivity.			
	10. Continued emphasis on building new and strengthening existing transport infrastructure as critical support for reaching many 8 th NSEDP targets across all outcome areas, including expanding and enhancing connectivity through roads, railways, waterways, and aviation.			
	11. Balancing support to commercialization with ensuring food security and access to nutritious foods for all communities (e.g., as highlighted in the 8 th 5-Year Agriculture and Forestry Development Plan (2016-2020)).			
	12. Continuing support for farmers' organizations, rural finance, and insurance mechanisms to improve productivity, equity, and resilience through modernization.			
	13. Implementing strategies for strengthening youth participation in agriculture activities.			
	14. Intensifying efforts in implementation of trade and private sector reforms, including through implementation of Prime Ministerial Order No. 2 on the Ease of Doing Business, and speed regulatory reforms relating to trade and the business enabling environment (e.g., reducing NTBs and streamlining regulatory and administrative procedures for business registrations and investment approvals).			
	15. Others, as appropriate, to be identified during the 2019 RTP retreat by relevant Government Ministries/Agencies, SWGs and other partners.			
2. Macroeconomic stability. <i>The Government re-confirmed that achieving macroeconomic stability is an essential</i>	1. Managing public debt sustainably, such as through the Public Debt Management Law and the Public Procurement Law, emphasizing borrowing on concessional terms.			

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<p><i>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.</i></p>	2. Reducing foreign currency lending risks, identifying NPLs, and strengthening capital buffers.			
	3. Strengthening management of state-owned banks.			
	4. Improving tax administration and collection, such as by closing tax exemptions, introducing new excise taxes, and reviewing the capital gains tax.			
	5. Reviewing and strengthening the regulatory framework for business to help facilitate investments.			
	6. Improving inclusiveness of the financial sector to improve access to credit and lower risks.			
	7. Continued efforts for expenditure reform, including measures to end off-budget expenditure, eliminate nonessential outlays, and reorient spending towards improvements in health, education, and social assistance.			
	8. Maintaining approach to managing the exchange rate by allowing movement gradually within the band while putting in place conditions for greater exchange rate flexibility over the medium-term.			
	9. Avoiding or minimizing potential damages caused by contingent liabilities.			
	10. Developing well-functioning financial intermediaries to mobilize domestic savings for public investment.			
	11. Others, as appropriate, to be identified during the 2019 RTP retreat by relevant Government Ministries/Agencies, SWGs and other partners.			
3. A link between planning and budgeting.	1. Development of a concept note/plan for better linkage between planning and budgeting.			

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<p><i>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.</i></p>	2. Development of a new MTEF (including PIPs) linked to NSEDP and synchronization of existing national databases to generate baselines for the implementation of the MTEF.			
	3. Operationalization of the 8 th NSEDP M&E framework (LDC and SDGs integrated) through participatory and inclusive process.			
	4. Emphasising on greater integration between planning, financing, and monitoring and evaluation, building on ongoing PFM reform initiatives.			
	5. Strengthening longer-term planning, costing, and financing to 2030 to support SDG achievement. This includes enhancing the monitoring framework and its links to Lao PDR's localized SDG targets and ministerial plans, along with the development of cost estimates to help guide financing strategies.			
	6. Strengthening the consistency of ministerial development plans and their linkages with each other and the NSEDP, such as the possibility of standardizing plans that link activities to financing.			
	7. Improving technical coordination and information sharing between ministries for greater coherence at both national and provincial levels.			
	8. Strengthening development and implementation of financing strategies, including the Government's recently drafted public finance strategy. Such efforts include consolidating and providing a clear implementation plan to help facilitate both increased and more coordinated support from development partners.			
	9. Continuing initiatives for greater transparency of financing activities of government and non-state actors to help guide a coherent and informed approach to development plan implementation.			
	10. Carry out a comprehensive mapping exercise of development finance, including to help identify financing gaps.			

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	11. Developing clear breakdown of past and future expenditures across sectors and actors to support development of a financing strategy to enable implementation of prioritized activities.			
	12. Re-invigorate the aid management platform to better track international commitments and disbursements, ensure alignment with plan priorities, and enforce partner accountability.			
	13. Introduce better tracking of financial need, planned and approved budgets, and spending, taking advantage of good practices in selected ministries to model practices in a phased manner across government.			
	14. Others, as appropriate, to be identified during the 2019 RTP retreat by relevant Government Ministries/Agencies, SWGs and other partners.			
<p>4. The role of the private sector.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	1. Promoting and revitalizing the Lao Business Forum, and integrate it into the round table process.			
	2. Promoting partnership with private sector at community-level to ensure equitable development.			
	3. Promoting linkage between vocational training and labour market.			
	4. Developing Doing Business Reform plan.			
	5. Others, as appropriate, to be identified during the 2019 RTP retreat by relevant Government Ministries/Agencies, SWGs and other partners.			

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<p>5. Quality, efficiency and safety of the infrastructure, power, and water sectors.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	1. Improving implementation of the Environment and Social Impact legislation			
	2. Exploring a possibility to establish an inventory of Corporate Social Responsibility – what are the big companies doing in terms of CSR? How much do they spend and what are they doing?			
	3. Standardizing fiscal regimes for mining and hydropower			
	4. Ensuring quality infrastructure development and prioritizing investment in infrastructure			
	5. Continuing efforts to establish a comprehensive national power development plan in the energy sector, which includes a power development plan and a transmission line development plan based on accurate power demand forecasts.			
	6. Others, as appropriate, to be identified during the 2019 RTP retreat by relevant Government Ministries/Agencies, SWGs and other partners.			
<p>6. Connectivity and integration.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	1. Accelerating infrastructure development, budgeting for and carrying out period maintenance			
	2. Carrying out regular updates on matters relating to connectivity and integration			
	3. Strengthening the necessary linkages to support better access to markets and more efficient trade, including prioritizing suitable infrastructure (e.g., energy and telecommunications) and transport linkages (e.g., road, rail, and water).			
	4. Strengthening the design and enforcement of legal frameworks and procedures to help facilitate trade, including the commitments related to AEC and WTO membership. This includes reducing import tariffs to zero on goods imported from other ASEAN countries and continuing efforts to remove NTBs, such as by simplifying and harmonizing customs procedures and standards.			

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5. Strengthening the capacity of domestic industries and firms to develop and trade products that are internationally competitive and demanded by regional and global markets (e.g., integration of SMEs into global value chains, and the development of a skilled labour force).				
6. Implementing the Trade Facilitation Roadmap covering 2017-2020 that lays out a path towards more deeply integrating Lao PDR into international trade.				
7. Continuing to explore bilateral trade-related arrangements in addition to regional and global agreements.				
8. Continuing structural reforms related to the regulatory and business environment, such as through increased transparency and streamlining procedures to help lower transactions costs.				
9. Prioritizing institutional and human resource development support from development partners to enhance self-sufficiency, including assistance from multilateral partners that target LDCs.				
10. Making use of concessional financing arrangements with development partners and adopting prudent approaches to non-concessional borrowing to ensure debt sustainability—both before and after LDC graduation.				
11. Adapting as necessary the Round Table Meeting mechanism to strengthen effective development partnerships, including by enhancing the contribution of the private sector, shifting the development dialogue further into discussion and agreement on implementation mechanisms, and strengthening monitoring of commitments in the context of the VDCAP II.				
12. Strengthening analysis of different regional integration programs in the Lao PDR to better develop comprehensive strategies for maximizing the benefits of a regional approach at the national level.				

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	13. Others, as appropriate, to be identified during the 2019 RTP retreat by relevant Government Ministries/Agencies, SWGs and other partners.			
7. Further improvements to an enabling environment for contributions of various stakeholders at local level such as NPAs and INGOs <i>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.</i>	1. Streamlining the registration process for civil society organizations including improving the MOU process			
	2. Organising regular forum to discuss key matters concerning the application and operationalization of the national regulations and guidelines			
	3. Others, as appropriate, to be identified during the 2019 RTP retreat by relevant Government Ministries/Agencies, SWGs and other partners.			

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Outcome 2 – Social Development				
8. Human capital development and poverty reduction. <i>Within outcome 2 of the 8th NSEDP regarding 'enhancing human development' consultations converged on the themes of human capital development and poverty reduction.</i>	1. Targeting the poor in planning, budgeting, and programme delivery through appropriate targeting below the district level, and with different sectors working in a coordinated and convergent approach			
	2. Accelerating interventions such as providing poor communities with access to services, education, and support to livelihoods, all of which are known determinants of poverty levels			
	3. Strengthening social protection systems to cover vulnerable groups and widen the scope of social protection schemes, including through the implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy			
	4. Tapping into domestic capital, through public-private partnerships in local economic development, and incentives for investments that do their sourcing from local firms and workers.			
	5. Others, as appropriate, to be identified during the 2019 RTP retreat by relevant Government Ministries/Agencies, SWGs and other partners.			
9. Levels of investment in human capital and skills development. <i>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.</i>	1. Strengthening TVET and skills development coordination mechanism and programs to develop the human capital required to increase the ability of people to take on new opportunities, especially through partnerships with the private sector to match demand and supply of skills. National qualification of skills mechanism requires further strengthening.			
	2. Improving the quality of education across different levels, including primary and secondary, non-formal, and higher. This includes through teacher recruitment,			

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				training, and retention; curriculum review; and introducing assessments of student comprehension and mastery.
3.				Enhancing understanding of employment patterns in the country, including differences across demographic groups and geographical areas, as well as through continuing the systematic conduct of labour force surveys in order to monitor progress in labour force capacity.
4.				Implementing and enhancing linkages between key Government initiatives to help develop the labour force, including the National Human Resource Development Strategy (NHRDS) to 2025, the Law of Education, the TVET Development Plan 2016-2020, and the Higher Education Development Plan 2016-2020.
5.				Increasing collaboration between training institutions and private sector firms, such as through internship programs and on-the-job training.
6.				Exploring further the human capital training programs stipulated in international agreements with ASEAN and other countries.
7.				Increasing access to information for potential migrants to support informed decision-making about going abroad for work.
8.				Developing regular migration channels that are less costly, time consuming and complex.
9.				Expanding the services provided to migrant workers to assist with return and reintegration.
10.				Encouraging the development of affordable and migrant-friendly remittance and banking services.
11.				Strengthening skills development initiatives to include business training and entrepreneurship development-related courses.
12.				Enhancing understanding of the limitations to entrepreneurial development and SME growth in Lao PDR, including through research and participatory

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	consultations, and developing targeting responses to remove constraints and promoting a culture of entrepreneurship.			
	13. Strengthening SME support service centres both from inside and outside government, such as the SME Service Centre at LNCCI.			
	14. Reviewing and streamlining as appropriate systems and cost for registering and operating SMEs.			
	15. Improving availability of SME finance and supporting efforts to increase access, including through non-bank financial products.			
	16. Developing targeted support initiatives for SME accounting and financial management, including through provision of advisory services, training, and technology.			
	17. Introducing measures to assist SMEs to take advantage of increased trade openness and new opportunities arising from WTO accession and AEC integration.			
	18. Others, as appropriate, to be identified during the 2019 RTP retreat by relevant Government Ministries/Agencies, SWGs and other partners.			
<p>10. Tackling rural poverty and inequalities.</p> <p><i>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'.</i></p>				

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<p>11. Determined perseverance to address food insecurity and malnutrition.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Balancing the support to commercialization of agriculture with the support to food security and access to nutritious foods for all communities. This is discussed in the previous section on Challenges. It is also reflected in the Eighth Five-Year Agriculture and Forestry Development Plan (2016-2020). 2. Continuing support to farmer organizations, rural finance, and insurance mechanisms as a way to improve productivity, equity, and resilience through modernization. This is reflected within the Agriculture Development Strategy to 2025 and Vision to 2030, and within the Eighth NSEDP's Outcome 1, Output 1, which calls for sustained and inclusive economic growth. 3. Revisiting the Government's Green Growth Strategy to include major themes within the agriculture sectors' policy documents, such as improving access to nutritious foods for all communities, supporting equitable access to markets, finance, and risk management for all farming communities, and improving the equity of commercialization through farmer organizations and other market governance mechanisms. The Government's Green Growth Strategy does not currently reflect the two main priorities under (i) and (ii). 4. Adjusting the monitoring and evaluation indicators for the Green Growth Strategy to reflect the changes made. 5. Accelerating the implementation of the National Nutrition Strategy to 2025 and Plan of Action 2016-2020 through better targeting and convergence on high-risk districts, and promoting behaviour change interventions. The increased and high rates of wasting are a particular concern, and call for urgent review and actions. 6. Strengthening efforts to engage the water and sanitation sector and increase focus on ending open defecation and improving access to improved water sources 			

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	7. Strengthening service delivery to the most deprived, using participatory strategies, such as empowering village health volunteers, the LWU, farmer groups, and village extension workers with the required knowledge and support. The goals for health and nutrition will only be met if there are human resources such as community health workers below health centre level to support caregivers and families.			
	8. Building the capacity of institutions and universities to produce trained, skilled nutrition professionals.			
	9. Strengthening the legal framework for the protection, promotion, and support of breastfeeding.			
	10. Others, as appropriate, to be identified during the 2019 RTP retreat by relevant Government Ministries/Agencies, SWGs and other partners.			
<p>12. Greater efforts to address UXO issues.</p> <p><i>Similarly, progress was acknowledged in reducing UXO casualties and the clearance of contaminated land - yet the challenge ahead still remains vast.</i></p>	1. Strengthening national capacity for coordination and efficiency			
	2. Ensuring the quality of operational data in the national database, in order to enable proper data analysis and a more robust evidence-based reporting			
	3. Developing policy and procedures to “main-stream” UXO survivors into health, education and employment services			
	4. Assisting line ministries to incorporate UXO in their planning and budgeting			
	5. Developing a comprehensive funding mobilization strategy to expand beyond traditional donors			
	6. Continuing to strengthen the capacity of the Lao Army in humanitarian mine action and identifying and promoting emerging technologies to improve the performance and efficiency of operations.			

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13. Maternal and child mortality. <i>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.</i>	1. Improving staff capacity and performance, which will require continued strengthening of staff capacity to meet required standards at each level, institutional arrangements to ensure better staff deployment, and the implementation of incentive policies for staff, especially for those in remote areas.			
	2. Improving health facilities, networks and referral systems by ensuring implementation of the “Five Goods, One Satisfaction” Policy (Good Reception, Cleanliness, Comfortability, Diagnosis, Treatment and Patient Satisfaction), in parallel with expanding the national health insurance system.			
	3. Addressing the causes of maternal and child mortality and malnutrition through upgrading maternal and child health services, including referral systems, basic emergency obstetric and neonatal care (BEmONC) and comprehensive emergency obstetric and neonatal care (CEmONC) services, and preventing malnutrition through behavioural change communication interventions, especially in remote areas.			
	4. Improving the quality of food and drug monitoring and analysis, including traditional drugs.			
	5. Improving the health management information system and integrating the many systems ² into one to obtain robust and timely data for use in monitoring, planning, and improving the services at different levels.			

²District Health Information Software (DHIS2), civil registration and vital statistics system (CRVS), the 10th revision of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD10) and eHealth, which is health information made accessible on cellular phones

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	6. Strengthening health budget planning and management with priority to national health programmes/projects.			
	7. Mobilizing resources, including private investment and ODA in health care.			
	8. Enhancing programme/project management, especially effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting.			
	9. Others, as appropriate, to be identified during the 2019 RTP retreat by relevant Government Ministries/Agencies, SWGs and other partners.			

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Outcome 3 – Environment Development				
<p>14. Post Disaster Need Assessment.</p> <p><i>Regarding the 8th 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.</i></p>	<p>Post-disaster recovery. The Government will need to prioritize post-disaster recovery to help restore lives and livelihoods. The implementation of the PDNA recommendations will need to be supported by development partners. The PDNA is expected to provide an indication of how the disaster has affected development gains during this NSEDP period. Implementing the recommendations on actions to enhance preparedness and resilience is a priority, given that flooding now affects Lao PDR frequently.</p>			
<p>15. Lessons learnt from PDNA and “Build back better” principle.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>				

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<p>16. Climate change adaptation and natural disaster management across all sectors and into all provinces.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthening the governance of the natural resource sectors. Reversing deforestation and forest degradation, and reversing biodiversity loss are national priorities for Lao PDR. The capacity to manage forests needs to be strengthened, including for ensuring stronger oversight arrangements over salvage logging, enforcing the ban on illegal timber trade, combating poaching, and wildlife trafficking, and preventing illegal mining. 2. Strengthening implementation of existing national policies and action plans relating to ecosystems and natural resources. These include the Eighth NSEDP 2016-2020, Vision 2030, National Climate Change Strategy (2010), Forestry Strategy to the Year 2020 of the Lao PDR (2005), Renewable Energy Development Strategy (2011), Sustainable Transport Development Strategy (2010), Climate Change Action Plan of Lao PDR for 2013-2020, National Adaptation Programme of Action (2009), the Second National Communication to the UNFCCC (2013) and the National REDD+ Strategy (to be approved by June 2018). 3. Promoting private sector involvement and community benefit sharing. Projects affecting protection forests are required to contribute funds for natural resource management. These include hydropower projects, which are required to contribute one percent of the total value of the sale of the electricity per annum. The Government has also established the Forest Resource Development Fund from various sources, which needs to be made financially sustainable. With support from development partners, the government will need to continue expanding existing initiatives, such as payment for environmental services and payment from preserving forests for carbon sequestration (e.g., REDD+). 4. Others, as appropriate, to be identified during the 2019 RTP retreat by relevant Government Ministries/Agencies, SWGs and other partners. 			

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Cross-cutting				
<p>17. The importance of the rule of law as the foundation for equality and development.</p> <p><i>With regard to the cross-cutting areas of the 8th NSEDP, 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.</i></p>	1. Strengthening legal capacity and ethics amongst lawyers and establishing an accountable mechanism to ensure unbiased judgements,			
	2. Enhancing collaboration with stakeholders (Government agencies, development partners, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and civil society organizations) in the implementation and monitoring of the legal sector action plan,			
	3. Reviewing the Legal Sector Master Plan and propose amendments aligned with the current trend of the development of the rule of law,			
	4. Organizing a National Conference on the Rule of Law for deepened understanding and awareness among stakeholders,			
	5. Aligning the Rule of Law with international standards (e.g. International Law on Treaties),			
	6. Taking a systematic approach to address anti-corruption,			
	7. Continuing to strengthen the judicial system, including consideration of the establishment of administrative court and developing the administrative code,			
	8. Developing an amendment to the law on judgment enforcement in 2019,			
	9. Systematically developing an insolvency mechanism to improve the business environment, and			
	10. Combatting trans-national crime and strengthening the criminal justice system.			
	11. Others, as appropriate, to be identified during the 2019 RTP retreat by relevant Government Ministries/Agencies, SWGs and other partners.			

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<p>18. Awareness of people’s rights and obligations under the law and to strengthen institutional capacity for implementation and enforcement.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	1. Strengthen the capacities of the National Assembly and the PPAs, and ensure budget support for these institutions. Since PPAs have an independent role and oversight over the Executive, clearer separation of PPAs from the Executive will be needed and this requires a shift away from the dependence on the Executive for office, budget, and other functions. The public and the private sector will need education on the mandate, roles, and responsibilities of PPAs.			
	2. The system for the resolution of complaints should be formalized, with reporting back requirements to the National Assembly and PPAs by the Executive.			
	3. The NPA decree will be clarified further. The related guidelines, formulation, and implementation of the legal framework, and the collaboration and partnership will need to be consistent with the Vientiane Declaration.			
	4. Others, as appropriate, to be identified during the 2019 RTP retreat by relevant Government Ministries/Agencies, SWGs and other partners.			
<p>19. Support to decentralization initiatives.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	1. Continued Sam Sang implementation. An action plan and indicative budget scenarios should be developed for roll out / implementation of relevant aspects of Sam Sang.			
	2. The positive lessons in relation to DDF have been learned and are being applied, including a simple and effective public expenditure framework, a model for blended financing of local services (co-financing from multiple sources), applied capacity development in support of Sam Sang implementation, an effective model for budget assignment system to districts, and accountability to local citizens through citizen surveys.			

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	3. Others, as appropriate, to be identified during the 2019 RTP retreat by relevant Government Ministries/Agencies, SWGs and other partners.			
<p>20. Further strengthen participation of local communities and other stakeholders in poverty reduction.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	1. Using innovative means to reach and educate communities in remote areas, such as the community radio programmes in Xieng Khouang, Sekong, Oudomxay and other provinces and relevant districts, which have been able to reach vulnerable groups, especially women and girls, with radio installed in mobile phones			
	2. Exploring a possibility to expand legal aid clinic			
	3. Application of systematic community based approach in the policy formulation, implementation, and M&E			
	4.			
<p>21. Gender equality, the advancement of women, statistical disaggregation and other vulnerable groups.</p> <p><i>Progress and challenges regarding gender equality and the advancement of women were outlined in our consultations. Statistical disaggregation is increasingly taking place,</i></p>	1. Improving the implementation, enforcement, and monitoring of national gender equality laws, policies, and instruments. These include (a) the existing family law, which does not allow marriage before the age of consent; (b) the 2016-2020 Women's Development Plan, (c) the National Gender Equality Development Plan; (d) the Second National Strategy on Gender Equality (2016-2025), (e) the National Law on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Children, (f) the National Action Plan on Eliminating Violence against Women and Children, and (g) CEDAW.			

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<p><i>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.</i></p>	<p>2. Strengthening national capacity to generate gender statistics and enable gender-sensitive planning. Directives and Notifications have been issued by the Prime Minister’s Office (In May 2000 and January 2005) on the inclusion of sex-disaggregated statistics in policy and planning, on gender-sensitive development programs/projects, and on the implementation of sex-disaggregated statistics by all sectors. Disaggregation of data by sex and age has improved, although this is still inconsistent. Moreover, many areas such as employment, migration, incomes, disability, domestic violence, ethnicity, and residence need robust gender statistics. Data on violence against women and girls need to be regularly collected and monitored with due consideration of the principles to ensure women’s safety and confidentiality.</p>			
	<p>3. Developing measures to combat violence against women. Appropriate detection, response, and protection mechanisms are required as well as strengthened institutional capacities. A strong coordinating body and a clear referral system within and across the sectors are also required.</p>			
	<p>4. Harnessing the full potential of Lao women’s participation in the market economy as entrepreneurs, employees, and consumers. Appropriate strategies and policies to reduce the gender equality gap in employment will need to be further developed, such as specific support to women SME owners, and to the expansion of vocational training and counselling centres for women.</p>			
	<p>5. Addressing the issues that prevent adolescent girls from reaching their full potential. A focus on the adolescent girl will help to accelerate progress towards all SDGs, and in particular SDGs 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8.</p>			
	<p>6. Accelerating the progress towards targets for youth on literacy and employable skills, including the use of ICT. To this end, the MoES is expanding programmes on TVET, and enhancing the national base of fundamental competencies and skills among children and young people. More participation from the private sector will be needed.</p>			
	<p>7. Enhance statistical capacity to improve the timeliness, reliability, and access</p>			

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	8. Look beyond data collection and focus on the analysis of findings which is significant for ensuring effective development cooperation			
	9. Encourage the collection of gender disaggregated data which can help better target initiatives that promote gender equality and women's empowerment			
	10. Regularly carry out a User Statistic Satisfaction Survey			
	11. Establish comprehensive set of Lao specific indicators with baselines (beyond the indicators that have been integrated into the 8 th NSEDP)			
	12. Implementing the National Drug Control Master Plan (2016-2020) and focusing on implementing activities on Community-Based Treatment (CBT) and alternative development for replacing opium poppy cultivation within the 9 prioritized activities.			
	13. Others, as appropriate, to be identified during the 2019 RTP retreat by relevant Government Ministries/Agencies, SWGs and other partners.			