

2023 Annual Round Table meeting: Draft Report for Sectoral Units
RTIM 2023: Sector Working Group Reporting Template

This report is a joint report between the chairman and the co-chairman of the sector unit. Please consult with the sub-sector unit under your sector unit as appropriate, and attach the documents related to this report.

This is a joint report of SWG Chair and Co-chairs. Please consult with your sub-sector working groups as appropriate, and consider annexing relevant documents to this report.

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1. Main objectives and targets of Sector Working Group in 2023 (1/2 page)

The health sector development plan 2023 aims to continue the implementation of the IX 5-year Health Sector Development Plan (2021-2025), the implementation of the IX National Social-Economic Development Plan (2021-2025), the implementation of the third phase of the Health Sector Reform Strategy, aiming to contribute to achieving Universal Health Coverage by 2025, graduating the LDC by 2026 and achieving the SDGs 2030, which specifically contributes to the people of all ethnic groups to be healthy, have a high average life expectancy, and have a new lifestyle that does not pose any health risks.

The main health indicators annual year of 2023 are:

1. Underweight children under 5 (%) to remain 17%
2. Stunting among children under 5 (height for age) to remain 29%
3. Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) to achieve 24/1,000
4. Under-5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) to achieve 34/1,000
5. Maternal mortality ratio(per 100,000 live births) to achieve 130/100,000
6. Births attended by skilled health professionals (%) to achieve 83% of the target population
7. Pentavalent 3 vaccine coverage (%) to reach 95% of the target population
8. Households with access to rural water supply (%) to 93% of the target population
9. Households using latrines (%) to reach 83% of all families
10. National Health Insurance Coverage (%) to reach 95 % of the total population
11. Model health village certification (%) to reach 83% of all villages.

2. What are the key results and impacts achieved within your sector in 2023 against the 2022 RTIM policy recommendations , and 9th NSEDP , SDGs and sector strategies? (1-2 pages)

In referring to the policy recommendation of the annual round-table meeting 2022, and the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan, the National Sustainable Development Goals and the sector's strategic plan. In 2023, the health sector had focused to complying the policy recommendations of the 2022 Annual Roundtable meeting by focusing on improve quality of health care services and progress to achieve 11 indicators with high responsibility which can be summarized as below:

1. Promote management of UHC, especially access to health services, upgrade knowledge and skills of health personnel and primary health care in order to deal with outbreaks of various diseases such as covid-19 and others;

In 2023, the health sector continued to implement the 9th 5-year HSDP, 2021-2025, which focused disease prevention and health promotion, with a strong emphasis on improving the quality of health care services, coverage and equity. These included improving the quality of care in combination with extended health care network into remotely areas through enhanced strategic planning and resource allocation aims at primary care level using all available data geographically mapped; and improved coverage of NHI, NSSF in order to ensure all Lao people who live in both urban and rural areas can receive health care service equally without financial hardship, reduce OOPs and ensure people have good health, reduce illness and death, and live longer. Furthermore, the health sector endorsed the Human Resources for Health Development Strategy by 2030 in alignment with the National Human Resources Development Strategy by the Ministry of Education and Sports to strengthen competent and motivated HRH. At the same time, the sector also emphasized to provide health education campaigns to change people's behaviour of lifestyle and living environment, strengthened surveillance system; and responded to disease outbreak of seasonal diseases and the COVID-19 pandemic in a timely manner.

The achievements so far included: 94.5% of the population is covered by NHI, 84.7% of all villages are certified as model health villages, 4 provinces have more than 2,000 villages that can stop open defecation, and the COVID-19 vaccines coverage has increased to meet the government targets. The 1st dose of the COVID-19 vaccines covered 86.5%, the 2nd dose covered 77.9%, the 1st booster covered 33.9%, and the 2nd booster covered 7% of the total population. Management of infectious diseases such as dengue, diphtheria, and tuberculosis has improved, and the health sector controlled the spread of epidemics effectively. All these significantly contribute to people's good health, so they can contribute to the development of socio-economic in the country including graduation from the Least Developed Country Status.

2. Focus on health sector priorities implementation to accelerating the achievement of 11 health indicators approved by the National Assembly and achieving the SDG targets by 2030;

- Together with the improvement of health services, the health sector focuses on the achievement of 11 indicators that is approved by the National Assembly as well as acceleration of the achievement of SDG targets by 2030 in collaboration with relevant sectors at the central and sub-national levels, neighbouring countries and development partners in order to raise funding and improve technical support for the implementation of health sector priorities. According to the efforts in implementing the health sector priorities in 11 months in 2023, it is observed that 8 indicators are achieved, 3 indicators are potentially not achievable in 2023 as below:

❖ 8 indicators achieved

1. Model health village certification in 2023 is 89.4% of the total villages (target 83%).
2. Access to clean water supply in 2023 is 93.25% of the target population (target 93%).
3. Latrine use in 2023 is 84,58% of the target population (target 83%)
4. Underweight among children under 5 is 14.8% (estimate from LSIS II), 2023 target is 17% of target population.
5. Stunting among children under 5 is 27,3% (estimate from LSIS II), 2023 target is 29% of target population.
6. Infant mortality rate in 2023 is 10,9/1,000 of live births (target 34/1,000 child)
7. Under 5 mortality in 2023 is 12,4/1,000 child live births (target 34/100,000 child)
8. Maternal mortality rate in 2023 is 37/100,000 of live births (target 130/100,000)

❖ 3 indicators are not achievable

1. Skilled birth attendance in 2023 is 77,3% of target population (target 83%)
2. Penta 3 vaccine coverage in 2023 is 87,1% of target population (target 95%)
3. The National Health Insurance coverage in 2023 is 94,5% of the total population (target 95%)

3. Increase coordination between the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Planning and Investment to facilitate adequate budget support to health sector.

In order to make the health sector to have an appropriate level of budget for the implementation of the key priority tasks of the health sector, the Ministry of Health paid much attention to coordinate with related sectors such as the Ministry of Planning and Investment, the Ministry of Finance and the National Assembly through several consultation meetings. From this coordination in 2023, the Ministry of Finance has approved an additional budget of 50 billion kip for the national health insurance scheme which they had already received 180 billion kip before, at least this could solve the financing issues and to purchase medicine, medical equipment, and service fees for provincial and district hospitals partially. As part of efforts to mobilize more resources for health, pro-health tax discussions have been facilitated in close collaboration with MOF and MPI through a set-up of the pro-health tax committee for the usage of revenues from the Tobacco Control Fund, conducting the tax revenue analysis through pro-health taxes, and starting to explore the options for the modification of the Investment License Agreement. Moreover, the Government budget allocation of USD 1.6 million to procure vaccines for 2023 indicated the government's strong commitment to co-financing for the immunization program.

3.a Building on the recommendations of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the 9th NSEDP, what are the SWG's key priorities for 2024? (1 page)

The health sector indicators, annual targets for 2024 are:

1. Underweight children under 5 (%) to reach 16%
2. Stunting among children under 5 (height for age) to reach 28%
3. Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) to reach 22/1,000
4. Under-5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) to reach 32/1,000
5. Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births) to reach 120/100,000
6. Births attended by skilled health professionals (%) to reach 84% of the target population
7. Pentavalent 3 vaccine coverage (%) to reach 95% of the target population
8. Households with access to rural water supply (%) to reach 94% of the target population
9. Households using latrines (%) to reach 84% of all families
10. National Health Insurance Coverage (%) to reach 94.5 % of the total population
11. Model health village certification (%) to reach 84% of all villages.

In addition, in order to achieve the set goals above, the health sector has also identified priority focus tasks: In 2024, will pay attention to some of the following priority tasks:

- Continue to enforce and improve/revise the laws and legislations for the development/improvement of public health with the dissemination of laws and legislations that have already been promulgated to be effective and have a better result than ever, especially in the area of disease prevention, health promotion, control of private hospitals and private clinics.
- Pay attention to improving the quality of health services in both urban and rural areas along with strengthening the health service network per the three-builds (Sam Sang) policy and the PHC policy by accelerating the development of model health villages, declaring open defecation free provinces, and strengthening surveillance work and response to communicable diseases outbreaks, food and drug control safety to ensure consumer safety.
- Enhance coordination and collaboration with other relevant sectors and development partners to focus on achieving the 11 indicators, especially for those that have not yet achieved by developing a focused plan with a strong focus on provinces and districts that have not yet achieved.
- Use digital technologies in health management and information, planning, monitoring and evaluation, including the development of a modern health system.
- **Improving sustainable health financing**
 - Ensuring availability of essential medicines, specifically critical life-saving medicines, and commodities across all levels of service delivery
 - Increase the government budget allocation for the National Health Insurance (NHI) scheme and conduct the reform of it through the revision of the NHI Law and relevant regulations/policies to improve the sustainability of it
 - Addressing the renewal of the Investment License Agreement (ILA) by the end of 2024 to enable the enforcement of the pro-health tax increase according to the Tax Law and relevant regulations
 - Preparing for smooth donor transition from Gavi's support by 2025 and others in the coming years
- **Enhancing the capacity of HRH**

- Increasing the number of competent/qualified HRH according to the target set in the Human Resources for Health Development Strategy by 2030
- Implementing the health education reform to strengthen the quality of health education in Lao PDR
- Improving the distribution of HRH with a strong focus on the primary care level: health centres (HCs) and district hospitals (DHs)

3.b Building on the recommendations of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the 9th NSEDP, what are the SWG's key priorities for the conceptualization of the 10th NSEDP? (1/2 page)

In order to prepare for the development of the 10th 5-year national socio-economic development plan (2026-2030), the health sector has set the following priorities in alignment with priorities of the Health Sector Reform Strategy to achieve UHC and contribute to achieving all the health-related SDGs and the 10th NSEDP goals:

- Continue to improve and upgrade the health service network for better quality gradually, especially the upgrading and improvement of the public health sector at the grassroots level as well as district hospitals and health centers and ensuring adequate supply of medicines and medical equipment.
- Improve the quality of health services by continuing to focus on maternal and child health services, nutrition, health insurance, improving and developing the patient referral system at the community level. In addition, we must continue to focus on integrated activities in order to reduce a gap in access to health services of people in remote areas and for better access to treatment of various infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, AIDS and malaria;
- Focus on training and upgrading of health personnel, specifically specialists including nurses and midwives, according to the MOH plan to meet the HRH standards at each level of service delivery. At the same time, the MOH will improve the curriculum of health education to ensure the quality of health education.
- Improve sustainable health financing for preparing for a smooth donor transition (particularly Gavi transition from 2026) and for strengthening the financial sustainability of the NHI scheme by increasing domestic government budget for health and NHI reforms to sustain what the country already achieved and make progress towards achieving universal health coverage and other Sustainable Development Goals, requiring strategic engagement with development partners.
- Continue to strengthen the digitization of healthcare to leverage digital technologies for enhancing healthcare delivery. Improving the five strategic priorities identified in the Digital Health Strategy—governance, workforce, infrastructure, standards, and applications create a foundation for streamlined health services and data-driven decision-making.

4. Lessons learned for the SWG, MTR of the 9th NSEDP? (1/2 page)

Through the implementation of two and a half years, some important lessons can be learned as follows:

1. Good practices

- The health sector focused on close coordination with related sectors both at the central and sub-national levels, among south-south cooperation, social organizations and development partners, so that the health sector receives financial support and technical assistants. These provided enabling conditions for the health sector to implement the MOH's priority interventions. At the same time, Lao people are able to understand better of primary health care work and their own health, which could contribute to achieving many health indicators approved by the National Assembly to the health sector.
- The health sector has focused on improving the health service network system, upgrading infrastructure and medical equipment both at the central and sub-national levels, along with training to improve competencies and upgrade the existing health personnel and improving the referral system to deliver the quality healthcare services gradually.
- In close collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Sports and other line Ministries, the health sector had made enormous efforts and good achievements to strengthen primary health care to enhance community engagement and build ownership to improve health at the grassroots level. With this effort, the Lao people see the importance of primary health care and individual health and contribute to the achievement of the health sector indicators approved by the National Assembly.
- The health sector continues to improve the health services coverage, the infrastructure and health services commodities at central and subnational levels together with the capacity building for doctors and nurses and improve the referral system to ensure the effective health service delivery in the country.
- The health sector revised and developed the necessary health laws and regulations such as Public Health Law, Primary Health Care Law and Health Care Law to govern the implementation of the health sector's priorities, maximize the health sector's achievements and pilot the hospital autonomy in 3 central hospitals such as Mahosot, Mittaphab and Setthathirat hospitals.

2. Challenges:

- The hospital infrastructure of some provincial, district hospitals and health centers does not meet standards. In many hospitals, various types of health equipment are lacking, obsolete, and malfunctioning, which affects the delivery of health services. Human resources for health in rural areas are limited in terms of number of health workers and competency, which impacts the trust of the community in health services, leading them to prefer the provincial or central hospitals over local health facilities in the area, and for those who have the financial capacity to use health services abroad.
- Limited government budget for the health sector to improve infrastructure, purchase medicines and medical products, implement the national health insurance scheme, and implement strategic health activities, combined with the economic downturn, financial crisis and high inflation in recent years, have led to stock out of medicines and medical products, increased stress, and difficulties to improve the quality of health care and service delivery.