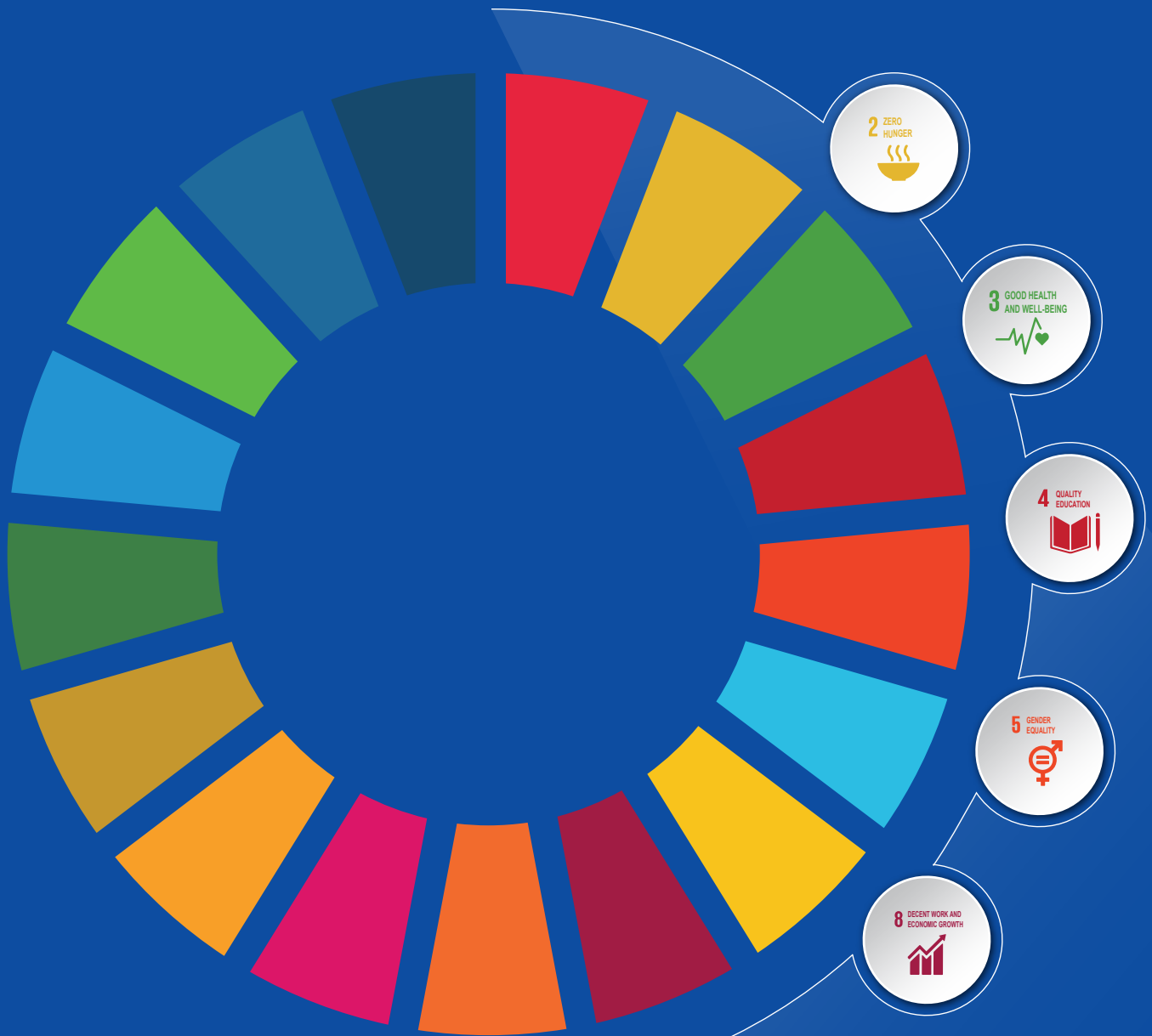




# Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy 2021-2030



The Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union

August, 2021



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## LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Peace Independence Democracy Unity and Prosperity

Prime Minister

No. 625/ PM

Vientiane Capital, 22 December 2020

### **Decree on Endorsement and Enforcement**

#### **Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy 2021-2030**

- Based on the Law on Government No. 04/NA, dated 8 November 2016
- Based on the Law on the Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Organization No. 15/NA, dated 3 May 2017
- Based on the letter of the People's Revolutionary Youth Union No. 870/LYU, dated 13 November 2020.

#### **Prime Minister Issues the Decree**

Article 1 Endorse and enforce the Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy 2021-2030

Article 2 The People's Revolutionary Youth Union takes the lead and coordinates with other relevant sectors to effectively and efficiently disseminate and implement the strategy, as well as to periodically report to the government

Article 3 Ministries, government organizations, provinces, the capital and other relevant stakeholders

Article 4 This Decree shall become effective from the date of its signature onward.

Prime Minister



H. E. Thongloun Sisoulith



## Preface

Secretary General, The Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union

The Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy has been drafted for the first time in the history of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) and is a very important strategy because the country has a very young population, accounting for a large proportion of the population and representing the main future labor force in all areas of work. In the past, the Lao PDR did not have a specific strategy for adolescents and youth development. The 7th National Youth Congress conceived seven programs and 40 projects, with the Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy falling under Program 2, "Institutional empowerment of adolescents", and Program 3, "Protecting the rights and interests of adolescents and youth and preventing adolescents and youth from engaging in unhealthy behaviors", to promote the Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union (LPRYU) at all levels and in all sectors concerned in their development plans and action plans in relation to adolescents and youth as a whole. It is also the intention to continue developing the National Youth Development Index, which in turn contributes to the development of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Youth and International Development Index.

As a result, the LPRYU has consulted with concerned ministries, relevant organizations, international organizations, young people and civil society organizations about the importance of developing the Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy. The initial ideas for the development of the strategy, together with the action plan, were developed and adopted. In order to ensure the effective operationalization of the drafting process, coordination mechanisms and implementation mechanisms were established. These mechanisms included the establishment of a National Steering Committee, a technical team and a secretariat. Then formulated and defined the priority areas by identifying questions for research in each area and desk reviews were conducted for each of the priority areas, The United Nations networks, mainly the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), provided technical and financial support throughout all stages of the development of the Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also provided support in this process.

This strategy is based on the Law on the Lao Revolutionary Youth Organization, amendment version 2019, the results of a UNFPA-LPRYU joint study "Adolescents and Youth Situation Analysis", conducted in 2014, and the 5-year strategic plan of the LPRYU. The discussion to develop the Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy was started in 2016.

It also utilized existing technical documents and information from various sources (secondary data) to identify problems and the needs of adolescents and youth. This was to ensure that the strategy is developed based on the contextual needs. The draft Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy (2021-2030) was then prepared, presented and consulted on through several technical meetings, stakeholder consultations and steering committee meetings.

The secretariat implemented the measures necessary to ensure the effective participation of adolescents and youth. The youth leadership, having authority to make decisions on the process of drafting the strategy, has been engaged to ensure that the directions of the strategy are consistent with the requirements, needs and desires of adolescents and youth in the country without discrimination based on any grounds. The aim is for comprehensive development of adolescents and youth to ensure that no one will be left behind.

In order to ensure appropriate implementation of the strategy with full seriousness by the sectors concerned with programs related to adolescents and youth development, there is a need for all concerned parties, as well as people of all ethnic groups, to support and contribute to the implementation of the strategy as best they can.

In order to ensure the full and proper implementation of the strategy by the sector concerned, as the representative of the LPRYU, I am grateful to all of you who have contributed experiences and expertise to the development of this historic Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy. Hopefully this strategy will be useful for the actual implementation of youth and adolescent development initiatives by each sector concerned. Nevertheless, this strategy may not be as comprehensive as it should be. The LPRYU welcomes feedback on this strategy to ensure that its implementation is complete and comprehensive. We will be pleased to consider all the feedback to further improve this strategy.

**The Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union**

**Secretary-General**



**H. E. Alounxay Sounnalath**



## Message

Representative, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Lao PDR

With over half of the population below 25 years of age, Lao PDR has one of the youngest populations in the region, which will be the driving force for the socio-economic development of the country in coming years. The next two decades will provide a window of opportunity for realizing a “demographic dividend”, an accelerated economic growth, if the adolescents and young people are educated, empowered and have access to decent employment and economic opportunities. Lao PDR can realise a demographic dividend by strategic, timely human capital investments focusing on adolescents and young people that could, in turn, transform the social and economic fortunes of the country.

Lao PDR has made considerable progress in the last few decades in expanding access to education, reducing maternal mortality, increasing girls’ access to schooling and reducing poverty. However, challenges to human capital remain: high rates of school dropout (especially dropout of adolescent girls at secondary level), adolescent pregnancy, early marriage and child labour, all of which the COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating.

Protecting the rights of adolescents and young people and addressing their needs for reproductive and sexual health care, education, essential life-skills, protection and vocational skills can improve health and development outcomes for them as well as for the nation. Innovations like the Noi framework are a good example of investing in adolescents.

I am pleased that this first Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy was developed through a consultative process, engaging the youth reference group, line ministries, civil society organizations, international agencies and development partners. It reflects the situation, needs and solutions relevant to the diverse youth in Lao PDR and highlights priority areas of action. Using global and local good practices, it provides guidelines on facilitating the education, employment, protection, leadership and participation of adolescents and young people comprehensively. The solutions recommended in this strategy are evidence based, practical and inclusive.

I believe this strategy is key to translating the vision of leaving no young person behind into reality. The roll-out of this strategy at national, provincial, district and local levels, in the coming years, will facilitate human capital development and realization of the rights of adolescents and young people. Timely implementation will significantly contribute to realizing the commitments towards the International Conference on Population and Development

Program of Action and achieving the outcomes of the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan, graduation from least developed country status and Sustainable Development Goals.

The United Nations Population Fund congratulates the Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union and the Government of Lao PDR for reaffirming the rights of adolescents and young people. UNFPA will continue to provide our support for Lao youth.



**Ms. Mariam A. Khan**

**Representative,  
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA),  
Lao PDR**



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# I. INTRODUCTION

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# 1. General context

## 1.1. International and regional context

In general, global and regional economic growth is slow and uncertain. The economies of the United States of America, European Union and People's Republic of China grew at a slower pace than expected. Fortunately, the economies of Southeast Asia (Thailand and Vietnam), which are major trading partners of Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), continue to grow well (MPI, 2017). However, unemployment is a major issue for youth around the world. According to the United Nations Youth Report 2015, unemployment affects more than 73 million youth around the world. In some developed countries, the youth unemployment rate has climbed above 50%. In low- and middle-income countries, underemployment in the informal sector<sup>1</sup> is considered the primary employment challenge faced by youth (UN Youth Report, 2015).

Globally, youth participation in decision-making processes related to their lives is relatively low. As a group, youth are not adequately represented within formal political structures and have no clear direction, as evidenced by the low rates of parliamentary involvement and political participation in recent years. Over the past few decades, youth have been gradually moving away from engagement in institutionalized structures. At the same time, the rise of social media and the advance of new information and communications technology (ICT) and mobile technologies have provided youth with greater opportunities to engage.

As youth face delayed or fractured entry into the labor market, governments are focusing on promoting youth entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship has the capacity to provide many youths with real employment possibilities and opportunities (World Youth Report, 2015). All initiative and skills development come through both formal and informal education. Education is universally acknowledged as the key to development and improving youth livelihoods. Therefore, many countries prioritize education as the key to other areas of development. The global community has developed and adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which address the development of adolescents and youth. Furthermore, there are global development programs designed specifically for youth. However, despite improvement in primary education in developing countries, secondary education and higher education has not made good progress. Globally youth and adolescents face many issues in relation to their health and well-being, particularly sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), alcohol consumption, substance abuse and other issues. This is because of their poor sanitation, poor basic hygiene and persistent risky behaviors particularly in developing countries (UN Youth Report 2015).

<sup>1</sup> Informal sector refers to the economic sector that is unstable, unofficial, not yet regulated and not fully protected by laws (International Labour Organization 2018), <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=778>



## 1.2. National socio-economic context

The Lao PDR continues to maintain political, social and economic stability, as compared to many other countries in the region. The business and production of the majority of the population continues to operate normally. The development of human resources, poverty reduction, and access to education and health care services has improved, and the culture and tradition of the nation have been preserved and disseminated widely. The environment, forestry resources and the maintenance of water sources has been taken seriously; the utilization of natural resources has been improved. The government is ready to respond to disasters and the National Green Growth Strategy has been developed and adopted by the government.

The Lao PDR is experiencing rapid and stable economic growth. The country aims to graduate from the status of least developed country (LDC) by 2024<sup>2</sup>. Despite per capita income reaching \$2,330 in 2017, 23.2% of the population still live below the national poverty line (ADB, 2018). Economic growth remains heavily reliant on natural resources. Many development projects are not able to provide sufficient jobs to youth and the government is making efforts to move towards more diverse, inclusive and sustained growth (VNR, 2018). Certainly, adolescents and youth are a driving force in the country's social and sustainable economic development. Hence, investments in adolescents and youth are crucial to achieving the goals of the 9th 5-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021-2025) and the SDGs (2030).

## 1.3. Demographic profile

The Lao PDR has a young population with over half (50.8%) of the population aged between 10 and 35 years<sup>3</sup> (Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB), 2015). This population age group is the driving force for the economic development, social welfare and prosperity of the country both now and in the future. Therefore, having the right strategy and appropriate investment in youth and adolescents is a defining factor in national development. Investments in adolescents and youth are central to improving other aspects such as health, workforce development, poverty reduction, increasing gender equity and furthering the social and economic development of the country. Although in the past Lao PDR developed several policies and development programs to address the needs of adolescents and youth, there is a need to explicitly spell out actions by the national government. There is a clear need to develop a strategy to cater to the unique needs of adolescents and youth and ensure that the strategy is for the youth and by the youth. This can be reflected in how youth and adolescents are actively engaged in drafting the strategy as well as its implementation to ensure that their needs and expectations are met. This Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy is aligned with the SDGs, the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan and government's 2030 vision, placing youth at the center of development, aiming to capitalize on the demographic dividend.

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<sup>2</sup> *The first round of assessments (total to declare the status) has already passed two out of the three major criteria in 2018 (UNDP, 2018)*

<sup>3</sup> *National Statistics Bureau (LSB, 2015), <https://lao.unfpa.org/en/publications/results-population-and-housing-census-2015-english-version>*

In Lao PDR, the age structure has been changing in an advantageous direction as the population moves through the demographic transition. This means that over the next two decades the huge adolescent and youth population of today will become the working age population of the future. Therefore, this represents a “window of opportunity” to invest in adolescent and youth development as it will result in a “demographic dividend”. The demographic dividend will arise from the declining dependency ratio caused by a growing labor force relative to fewer young and old dependents (MPI, 2018).

According to the 4th National Population and Housing Census 2015, there is a total of 3,298,643 adolescents and youth aged between 10 and 35 years in the country. It is estimated that 64% of the total adolescents and youth population reside in rural areas. Approximately 12% of these adolescents and youth reside in remote areas without road access. They face multiple challenges and vulnerabilities, such as not being able to attend any form of education and lack of access to information and social services. In addition, many youths in rural areas are exposed to early marriage, unplanned pregnancy and child labor (LSB, 2015).

## 2. Adolescent-youth development

### 2.1. Definition of adolescents and youth

There is no universal definition of adolescents and youth. Therefore, country-based definitions vary. UNESCO suggests that the definition may differ according to changes in demographic, economic and socio-cultural contexts (UNESCO, 2018). The World Health Organization defines “youth” as being between the age of 10 and 24 years. Within this age group, “adolescents” as a sub-group are defined as those between the age of 10 and 19 years. Adolescents are further disaggregated between “early adolescents” aged 10-14 years and “older adolescents” aged 15-19 years.

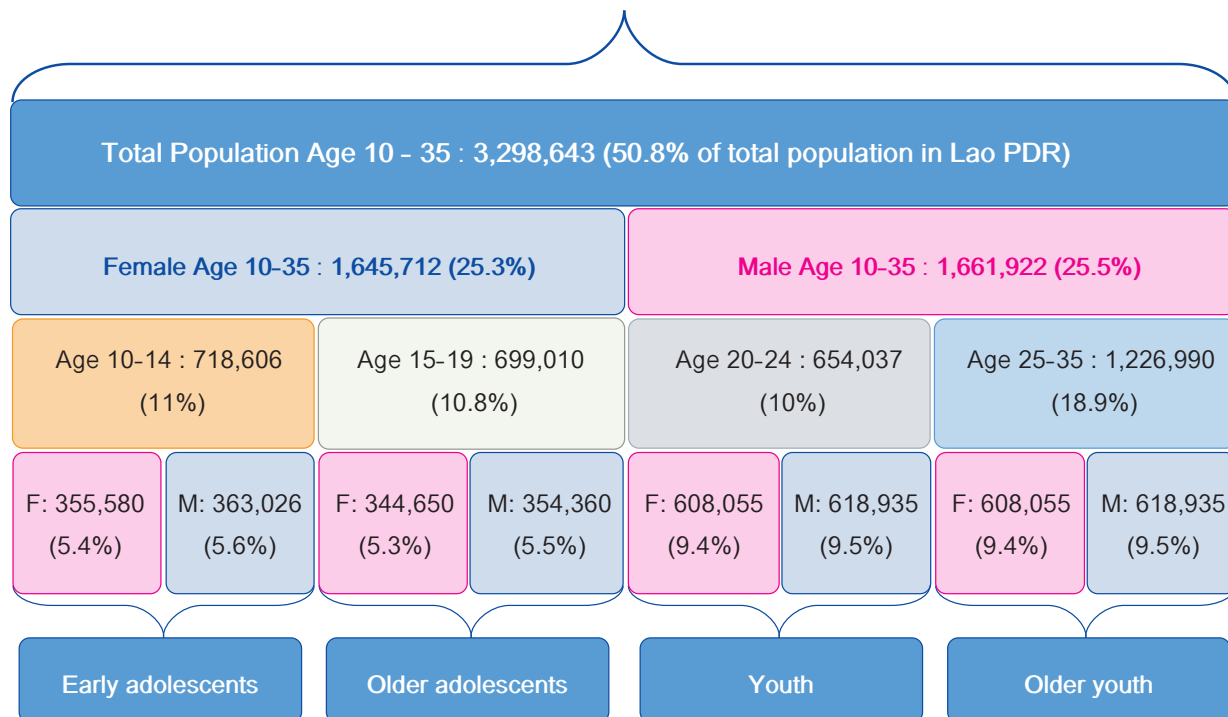
At the regional level, the delimitation differs from that of the World Health Organization. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ASEAN Youth Development Index (AYDI) defines youth as 15-34 years, which is different from the definition given by the Lao People’s Revolutionary Youth Union (LPRYU). LPRYU defines youth as being between the ages of 15 and 35 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2017; LPRYU, 2017).

The LPRYU has defined the sub-groups as follows:

- *Youth 15-35 years of age*
- *Pioneers 9-14 years of age*
- *Junior Pioneers 6-8 years of age.*

This Lao Youth and Adolescent Development strategy covers all adolescents and youth from the age of 10-35 years in Lao PDR.

All adolescents and youth covered in the policy



This Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy covers the age range as suggested by the LPRYU. Most importantly the authorities making decisions in developing strategy and addressing youth related issues take into account the unique needs of different age groups. All stakeholders must understand the unique needs of adolescents and youth compared to those of adults. The specific needs and issues faced by each sub-group of adolescent and youth population must be understood. By implication, different approaches are required to address the needs of each sub-group.

## 2.2. Achievements

In the past the LPRYU and its members across the country were able to maintain five legacies of youth from previous generations, in particular loyalty to the party, sacrifice and standing firm. In general youth have not caused issues that the authorities have had to address. The awareness campaign is active and uses new approaches and tools to address the circumstances and needs of adolescents and youth. These include discussion platforms on different topics, caravans, advocacy on road safety, anti-human trafficking, the environment, use of social media, careers and dreams of youth. Other issues covered are organizational development including legislation (laws, strategies), creating social organizations and training within the country and overseas.

The LPRYU also works on improving plans and mechanisms, improving integration of LYU, ministries, organizations and provinces, with the grassroots level focusing on professional development of youth to meet the labor market demand. Promoting young entrepreneurs mainly through teaching young people on production, services, the garment industry, beauty

salons and other vocations is also one of the key focus areas. Talent promotion includes new entrepreneur promotion, creativity competition, national talk show competition, sports and art competitions, adolescents and junior adolescents and youth leadership training through youth and adolescent camps. The camps provide training on leadership roles and public speaking. Many adolescents and youth have participated in these camps.

Social volunteer activities have been organized and improved significantly through emphasis on the youth slogan:

**“Where there is hardship, youth will conquer,  
where there are challenges youth will overcome,  
where there is a demand from the country youth will volunteer”**

and raising the flag on the youth mission **“Youth Volunteer to Rescue the Victim”**. International cooperation activities to disseminate the directions of the Party’s international collaboration and the visits of leaders particularly to countries with strategic friendship have been very successful. There is a good relationship with countries in the region and globally. Lao PDR hosts and chairs the ASEAN Youth Ministers Forum.

In relation to ICT, LPRYU have provided training on media production and journalism across the country to more than 50 participants. Media networks have been developed or upgraded to use mass media to reach out to youth. For example, the Modern Youth Radio (Saonoum Xinsai Yukmai) station on FM 90.0 MHz is hosted by the Central LPRYU (on air from 6hr to 11hr), and Radio AM 567 KHz and 103.7 MHz is hosted by the National Radio. There is also a monthly magazine, weekly newspaper and TV program “Pheuan Sao Noum” (Youth’s Friends) on air on Lao national TV for 4 hours per week. LPRYU has a website that is operational ([www.lpryu.gov.la](http://www.lpryu.gov.la)) and Facebook page titled “Lao Youth Union”.

LPRYU at all levels has contributed significantly to the development of the nation. They have coordinated with authorities at all levels and those agencies concerned with addressing social issues at the household level, through disseminating, encouraging and mobilizing people to understand and strictly comply with the laws, aiming to build strong families, villages and towns. These actions are intended to prevent any negative impact on the development process, particularly substance abuse and trade, illegal trade, theft and other crimes that usually involve adolescents and youth.

LPRYU has been involved in the implementation of the friend-helps-friend project to prevent negative impacts on youth to reduce school dropout rates, prevent accidents on the road and any actions that lead to violation of the law, and to encourage involvement in sports, encourage people at all levels and from all walks of life to unite and take ownership in tackling social challenges in families and society, especially the challenges faced by young women. Promoting good mental health for youth and adolescents through building the basic infrastructure for facilitating youth development, such as construction of the Youth Union and Pioneer Club, and training center for youth and adolescents, which are equipped with all needed facilities.



## 2.3. Constraints and challenges

Several existing surveys and studies highlight major issues related to youth and adolescents, particularly inequality in access to education, health services and development opportunities. These surveys and studies include the Population and Housing Census (2015), Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS, 2017), the Labor Force Survey 2018 and the Adolescents and Youth Situation Analysis (2014). These sources highlight that, while some segments of the adolescents and youth population in Lao PDR enjoy good health, education and employment opportunities, along with having access to safe and appropriate recreation, there are significant disparities in access to education, health services and social security schemes, based on environmental conditions and unfavorable opportunities. This indicates that there is disparity between diverse adolescent and youth groups in terms of access to social services such as education, health services, and social protection between regions, ethnic groups, and gender and wealth quintiles.

Adolescents and youth from certain ethnic groups face particular challenges. Those from non-Lao Tai communities face the difficulty of being educated in a language that is not their mother tongue. It has a direct impact on their ability to learn the foundational skills required to graduate from primary education. Despite the national strategy on inclusive education, children with disabilities face difficulties in attending school, even if they are able to enroll at a school.



Strategies and programs need to support not only the needs of adolescents and youth, but also to support duty bearers who work closely with adolescents and youth. In particular service providers have to recognize the impact of their work on adolescents and youth. This requires strict compliance with age specific provisions as stated in the law. There should be a warning or prohibition regarding drinking alcohol and other substances which negatively impact their health. The families have to take care of their children, educate them and monitor their activities which may violate the law.

Where there are issues among youths, parents need to talk to them or report these to the authorities to find a way to solve the problems. Teachers need to pay more attention to their teaching, providing knowledge that highlights the importance of education. Teachers need to report risky activities of students to their parents. There is also a need to build the capacity of teachers to enable them to perform their jobs effectively and meet the needs of adolescents and youth. Teachers also need to monitor the progress of adolescent and youth development achievements. Therefore, it is clear that Lao PDR must develop a strategy that focuses on adolescent and youth development, particularly those adolescents who are vulnerable and engaged in risky behaviors in relation to their health and safety.

In general, Lao PDR has many strategies and legislation that have been enacted in the past. However, the implementation of the strategies and enforcement of laws remains limited partly because of the lack of effective institutional arrangements for law enforcement and also the lack of understanding of people regarding these strategies and laws. This is a limitation for meeting the needs of adolescents and youth and protecting their rights.

Therefore, the Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy (2021-2030) is aimed at reinforcing and reiterating actions within existing strategies and laws by identifying areas that need stakeholder capacity to be improved to address the issues and meet the needs of adolescents and youth. Furthermore, the previous analysis and studies indicated a lack of funds to support development activities related to adolescents and youth. This means that the government needs to significantly increase investments in education, health, social services, employment and livelihood sectors to enable the next generation of Lao youth to reach their full potential and to contribute to the country's protection and development in line with the saying "youth is the backbone of the nation". Investing in youth must ensure that their needs, aspirations and concerns are taken into account through the strategy's formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. To achieve this, concerned parties must foster their full and equal participation in all spheres of society. The full participation of adolescents and youth will ensure that the needs and interests of marginalized groups such as those who are exploited, abandoned, abused or discriminated against are taken into account.

## 2.4. The need to have a Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy

The Adolescents and Youth Situation Analysis (AYSA) was undertaken in 2014 as an assessment of the situation of adolescents and youth in Lao PDR in order to assist the LPRYU to develop a long term and forward looking strategy for adolescent and youth development. The AYSA showed that there is generally a positive environment for Lao youth. However, the analysis also indicated that there is currently no functioning mechanism for facilitating inter-sectoral collaboration. Youth are included in some of the sectoral strategies and programs, but there is no specific national strategy for adolescents and youth in the country.

Psychologists suggest that learning opportunities and ability changes over time as a person grows. The “window” of opportunity for learning is wide open when a person is younger. In other words, learning opportunities occur more while a person is an adolescent or youth. Beyond this period the window of opportunity will start to shrink and learning is limited. Therefore, adolescents and youth are a critical life stage during which individuals must have the opportunity to develop the capabilities required for realizing their full potential and achieving healthy and fulfilling lives. In addition, psychologists also confirm that children learn and develop based on their age. Health status and care from family and society are also important factors in stimulating children’s learning and development. Transitions from adolescence to adulthood require multi-sectoral investments that recognize the diverse needs and vulnerabilities at different phases and that these needs change rapidly throughout this period of transition. Early adolescents between the ages of 9 and 14 years comprise the biggest population sub-group of adolescents by age in Lao PDR, namely 718,606 girls and boys, or 11% of the total population of the country (Population and Housing Survey, 2015). This group is often neglected in developing strategies and development plans; therefore, it is a crucial age group for the Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy. Generally, adolescents and youth between the ages of 10 and 35 years have different opportunities and social status. Therefore, this strategy places special emphasis on marginalized adolescents and youth to ensure that the strategy is inclusive of all.

Moreover, adolescents and youth are globally recognized as key stakeholders for the sustainable development of society, programs, strategies and the global development goals such as the World Program of Action for Youth (UN, 2010). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015) and ASEAN Youth Development Index (ASEAN Secretariat, 2017) also consider adolescents and youth as main stakeholders of sustainable development. The World Program of Action for Youth also provided a strategic framework and practical guidelines to the member states parties for national action and international support to improve the situation of youth.



Therefore, this Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy aims to fill in the above strategic gaps. It is to be used as a tool for facilitating and coordinating the parties concerned working in the area of adolescents and youth development. This strategy represents the commitment of the government to ensure that all adolescent and youth are provided with equal opportunities to develop their full potential. This strategy is formulated based on a consultative process with relevant stakeholders from central to local levels, including line ministries, mass organizations, international agencies, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs) and young people, to define key priority areas to be considered under this strategy. The key priority areas have been identified as health “including sexual and reproductive health, education” including technical and vocational training, employment, entrepreneurship, civil engagement and participation and social protection.





## II. VISION, OBJECTIVES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES



# 1. Vision

All adolescents and youth in the absence of discrimination develop comprehensively, possess good attributes, physical and intellectual strengths and progressive minds. All are kind and friendly, able to lead a safe and healthy life, and will support each other to realize their full potential, and all contribute to the protection and development of the nation.

## 2. Objectives

### 2.1. Overall objective

The overall objective of the Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy (2021-2030) is to set the direction for the development of all adolescents and youth from all ethnic groups to become a strong force. The State-Party's ideology will be inherited by educating adolescents and youth to become thoughtful and well behaved, to preserve and expand the good culture and fine traditions of the nation and all ethnic groups, to possess a unity and solidarity of mind, to be industrious and to become a strong force in defense and security, in socio-economic development and environmental protection. Adolescents and youth must have access to quality education, vocational skills and training so that they are knowledgeable about modern science and technology, are innovative, know foreign languages and understand wider society and international culture to build a good environment. Adolescents and youth in rural areas must be encouraged to adapt their way of life for the better. Specific projects at national level address poverty and livelihood improvement. Adolescents and youth are encouraged to have a good attitude and not to engage in social disorder or violating the law, to raise awareness of, understand, respect and follow the law and constitution, to eliminate unlawful behavior and to ensure all adolescents and youth enjoy equal rights before the law and protect the rights and legitimate interests of the youth. Increasing investments in adolescents and youth will make them the most knowledgeable, skillful and most valuable human capital of the nation and enable them to link with the region and the world.

### 2.2. Specific objectives

The Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy has the following specific objectives:

1. To ensure that all adolescents and youth in the country contribute meaningfully to the mission of protection and development of the country.
2. To ensure equal rights for all adolescents and youth in the country; this is a foundation for addressing gender inequalities in the political, socio-economic and cultural spheres.

3. To promote investments in adolescents and youth development by the government, development partners, civil society, private sector, and all relevant sectors in the areas of protection, development, and participation of adolescents and youth inclusively.
4. To be used as a reference for monitoring and evaluation of the strategy and ensuring that all sectors responsible for adolescent and youth development make sure that no one is left behind in the pursuit to achieve the SDGs by 2030.
5. To raise awareness of issues related to youth and ensure commitment from all to the development and protection of adolescents and youth, including family, community, educational institutions, concerned agencies and society.



## 3. Guiding principles

### 3.1. General principles

The Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy is based on the principles that are in harmony with Lao values, culture and society as expressed by the following statements: Lao people have a tradition of bravery, hard work, “go step on dogs, come step on frogs” love for each other and the country. Lao people have a sentiment of solidarity and like to extend their generosity to others as expressed by the LPRYU slogan: **“Where there is hardship, youth will conquer; where there are challenges, youth will overcome; where there is a demand from the country, youth will volunteer.”** The strategy also takes account of the international and regional conventions and declarations that have been endorsed by the country. These principles provide direction for the development and implementation of the strategy.

This strategy is based on the following general principles:

1. Ensure transparency in coordination with relevant stakeholders in implementation.
2. Ensure national, scientific and public characteristics are upheld on the basis of the strategy of the State and Party.
3. It must be in line with the constitution and laws of Lao PDR.
4. It must be appropriate and consistent with the heritage, culture and fine traditions of the nation.
5. It must be appropriate and consistent with socio-economic development currently and in the future.

### 3.2. Specific principles

The Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy is based on the following specific principles:

1. Adolescents and youth actively, equally and inclusively participate in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the strategy. Conditions hindering this participation must be addressed to ensure accountability, transparency and sustainability of consequent programs and activities.
2. It is recognized that appropriate investments in adolescents and youth development will contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and other development goals of the nation.
3. Comprehensive gender equality is promoted in all aspects of society to ensure equal participation of men and women.
4. The strategic directives are founded on a human rights-based approach, including the principle of non-discrimination within a human rights-based framework, in line with the country's global and regional commitments.
5. The strategy will place special emphasis on and include affirmative actions for vulnerable adolescents and youth who face difficulties in society.



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# III. PRIORITY AREAS OF THE STRATEGY

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# 1. Health and well-being

## 1.1. Situation analysis on health and well-being

Adolescence and youth are generally considered as healthy phases of life. A number of initiatives in the country have contributed positively to the health and well-being of adolescents and youth. However, socio-cultural practices, societal transformation, migration and risky behaviors are increasing health risks for adolescents and youth. Health concerns for adolescents and youth in the country are as follows (source LSIS and AYSA):

1. Early marriage: nearly one in four (23.5%) girls aged 15-19 years are married or in a relationship, and 19% of women aged 20-24 years had experienced childbirth before the age of 18 years. A growing percentage of youth have their first sexual intercourse at around 15 years of age, which may result in unwanted pregnancy, leading to school drop outs (LSB, 2018).
2. The average adolescent birth rate in Lao PDR is one of the highest (83 births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19) in the region, with marked differences between urban (42) and rural areas without roads (136) resulting in poor health and barriers to self-development (LSB, 2018).
3. Malnutrition: nutrition is a concern particularly among rural adolescents and youth. The prevalence of anemia among girls aged 15-19 years is 42.6% (LSB, 2018).
4. Access to skilled birth attendance: One third of women in Lao PDR continue to give birth without access to a skilled birth attendant, and the difference between urban and rural areas (89.7% and 34.1%) is significant. Therefore, pregnancy and childbirth, pose a significant risk to young women, particularly those from rural settings.
5. Access to contraception is limited: the average number of children born per woman in Lao PDR has decreased from 3.2 to 2.7 within a span of 6 years (between 2011 and 2017). The total unmet need for contraception among women, aged 15-19 years is 22.6% and 21.0% for women aged 20-24 years.
6. Access to family planning: the unmet need for family planning continues to be high, in that nearly two third (75%) of unmarried women have an unmet need for family planning compared to 14.3%, among married women. This reflects the challenge for unmarried women to access contraceptives in the country.
7. Unprotected sex: some youth do not adopt safe sex practices, which often results in unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions, as well as a high risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and increased risk of HIV infections. Young people have limited access to adolescent and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health information and services.

8. The HIV prevalence rate in the general population is low (0.2%), but high-risk behaviors are not uncommon among youth, such as multiple sexual partners and low condom use. Three quarters of them lack comprehensive knowledge about HIV/AIDS, one in four girls and one in five boys aged 15-19 years have had sexual intercourse, and only 0.7% of young women aged 15-19 years and 1% of men aged 20-24 years are using condoms.
9. Alcohol and substance misuse (yabaa and tobacco) are emerging as major concerns among adolescents and youth.
10. Access to counseling: access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health counseling, information and services is limited for both married and unmarried youth. The cost of services, attitude of health workers, self-censorship, fear of social stigma and the perceived lack of confidentiality discourage adolescents and youth from seeking the health services and information they need.

## 1.2. Strategy and legal framework

Several health-related laws protect the rights of adolescents and youth to access health care, and protect them from potential harm. The rights of youth to access health care is ensured by Article 4 of the Law on Health Care (2005), which states that all people in Lao PDR, including youth, regardless of their sex, age and race, have the right to health care. In terms of overall health sector policies and strategies, the Ministry of Health guarantees everybody (including youth) access to general health care and care for sexual and reproductive health. These rights are also protected by the National Reproductive Health Strategy (Ministry of Health, 2005).

## 1.3. Strategic directives

For adolescents and youth to realize their full potential, it is important that they remain in good health, adopt healthy lifestyles and do not harm their own health. Access to the right information and knowledge on sexual and reproductive health, maintaining healthy relationships, and embracing healthy and positive behaviors are indisputable for healthy choices that have a lifelong impact. Addressing early marriage, adolescent pregnancies, poor nutrition, improving access to Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) services, including contraception, and promoting healthy lifestyles emerge as priority areas for focus.

1. Adopt a multi-sectoral and multi-pronged approach to prevent early marriages and adolescent pregnancies by encouraging families to keep girls in school, promoting higher education and enhancing employment opportunities.
2. Prevent early marriage by creating awareness of the ill effects of early marriage and strengthening mechanisms to implement and enforce the Law on Family Registration.





3. Improve nutrition and reduce the prevalence of anemia among adolescents, especially girls, by strengthening programs such as provision of school meals, promoting vegetable gardens, growing organic vegetables, deworming and iron supplementation and through communication campaigns to change behavior on nutrition and hygiene.
4. Improve access to health services and skilled birth attendants and increase institutional delivery rates to improve maternal health with a focus on rural areas without a road network.
5. Promote adolescent and youth friendly health services with improved access to services, Reproductive Health (RH) commodities and a trained health workforce and ensure privacy and confidentiality.
6. Enhance access to contraceptives for adolescents and youth regardless of marital status by ensuring the availability of information and free commodities at health facilities and through village health workers in remote and hard to reach areas.
7. Include coverage of Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) services under the National Health Insurance Scheme to reduce out of pocket expenses for services to adolescents and youth.
8. Enhance access to information, counseling and services for prevention, screening and treatment of sexually transmitted infections and HIV through facility and community based approaches.



9. Promote responsible behavior among adolescents and youth by strengthening and expanding comprehensive sexuality education in schools and technical and vocational institutions.
10. Promote healthy lifestyles, including prevention of substance misuse through awareness campaigns that target youth through the Lao Youth Union (LYU), Lao Women's Union (LWU) and educational institutions.
11. Give the mental health of adolescents and youth priority by increasing investments in research and by strengthening existing services to expand psychosocial counselling in schools and health care facilities.
12. Promote research on the issues related to the health and well-being of adolescents and youth to create research evidence for strategy and programming.
13. Introduce or adopt a system to record age disaggregated data, which will provide data on access to health care by different age groups.
14. Implement the family law, particularly to stop underage marriage before the legal age for marriage.
15. Educate people about Unexploded ordnance (UXO) and its potential impacts on physical and mental health and the threats posed by them to ethnic people, youth and adolescents.
16. Raise awareness about food safety and food consumption in the entire population, including youth, to encourage consumption of appropriate and nutritious food with "three cleans": food and drink and living in a clean environment.

17. Promote hygiene education and run active awareness raising campaigns for mothers to receive antenatal and post-natal care, including immunization.
18. Raise awareness about road safety, accidents and the use of appropriate protective helmets.
19. Use ICT to connect doctors in the city with inexperienced health staff in rural areas so that adolescents and youth in rural areas are able to access quality services.



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## 2. Education, sports and training

### 2.1. Situation analysis on education, sports and training

Lao PDR has made continuous progress towards universal primary education, and the national target of a net enrollment ratio of 98% for both girls and boys has nearly been achieved. Secondary education gross graduation rates, which are much lower than gross enrolment rates, indicate significant dropout during the secondary cycle. From 2012 to 2017, the lower secondary gross graduation rate increased to approximately 73%, while the upper secondary gross graduation rate is 45%. Non-completion of secondary education may be due to the low demand from communities or grade repetition in secondary school, which may lead to loss of interest and dropping out. Important education statistics are as follows (Voluntary National Review, 2018):

1. Literacy rates reflect gender differentials, with lower literacy among young women compared to their male counterparts. Among the 15- to 24-year-old males, around 85% are literate compared to 78% of females, and the literacy levels are much lower among the age group 25-34 years, which is at 76% (male) and 62% (female). It is further observed that girls from some ethnic communities and lower wealth quintiles are more educationally disadvantaged than others Education and Sports Sector Development Plan (ESSDP) 2016-2020.
2. 42% of girls in the age group of 15-17 years are out of school, more than 1 in 20 never attended school and one fifth dropped out of school.
3. Despite improvements in achieving gender equity in enrollment and retention at primary level, significant disparities remain between boys and girls attending and completing secondary education. This is especially high in some rural areas and from those with poor socio-economic status.



4. Lack of financial and parental support, concerns about the physical infrastructure, and geographic distance are some of the key barriers identified to girls continuing education (AYSA).
5. Despite greater demand and opportunities for technicians in agriculture, construction and various other sectors, there is low demand for technical and vocational education and training (TVET), as is evident from the low levels of enrollment. This is probably because technical education is either undervalued when compared to university education or there is a lack of awareness.
6. There is a need to focus on programs that can promote employability and entrepreneurship to create a work ready youth workforce.
7. Sport institutions from central to local level must improve the standard of Lao sports, develop facilities and provide adequate sports equipment.
8. Sports among adolescents and youth not only improves physical and mental fitness but also promotes healthy lifestyles, discipline, leadership and team spirit among them. Sport is quite popular among Lao people, and different kinds of games are organized at all levels such as workplaces, villages and communities.
9. Opportunities for sports are not equitable in all regions or across groups. Sports organizational structure needs strengthening from the central to local levels to improve the standard of sports; a basic infrastructure needs to be established or improved and sports equipment needs to be made available equitably.

## 2.2. Strategy and legal framework

Article 6 (amended) on the Rights of Citizens to Education (Education Law, 2015) states that all citizens, regardless of their nationality, origin, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, physical or socio-economic status have an equal right to quality education and lifelong learning based on relevant laws and regulations. This starts from the age of 6 years. Upper secondary education is optional, and not available in every setting. The right to obtain education is further protected by the Law on Protection of Rights and Interests of the Child (2007).

The current plan of the Ministry of Education and Sports, is to prioritize universal access to primary school education as compulsory. Through the Education Sector Development Framework (2009-2015) the ministry seeks to improve access to basic education for girls, children with special needs and children living in remote areas. The ministry is also responsible for TVET and creating an environment for youth to appreciate the value of TVET and not follow the crowd. The ESSDP 2016-2020 and 2021-2025 endeavor to achieve the goals set out under the plan.





## 2.3. Strategic directives

### a) Education and training

The Lao Adolescent and Youth Development Strategy underscores the importance of developing a productive workforce that can make a sustainable contribution to the economy of the country and help in graduating from LDC status. To achieve this objective, the adolescents and youth of the country must have equitable access to high quality education and opportunities to develop the necessary skills to match the market demand so that they are gainfully employed. To achieve this objective, we have set out the following:

1. Government institutions, society and families must support adolescents and youth to focus on education and development to become good citizens, possess good attributes and capabilities, provide access to jobs, become skillful, love and enhance their culture and the fine traditions of the country.
2. Increase the number of girls attending school at all levels and ensure that young girls, especially from rural settings, stay in school through options such as improving infrastructure and providing incentives, scholarships and school meals.
3. Track school dropouts at secondary level, especially girls, and connect them to learning opportunities. Explore the scope for bridging courses and vocational training that can help develop a skilled labor force in the country.
4. Facilitate a smooth transition from school to work through career counseling support in schools as well as in TVET centers.

5. Attract adolescents and youth to join technical and vocational education programs by offering scholarships, improved infrastructure and residential facilities and through advocacy campaigns through the LYU and LWU.
6. Expand scholarships based on merit and means to support education, particularly higher education.
7. Promote counselling and training of youth in sectors to match skills and market demand and to ensure that sufficient workforce is available within the country.
8. Strengthen and promote vocational education with a focus on the poorest and most underserved districts of Lao PDR. Include trades in TVET that have a market demand within the country as well as internationally.
9. Integrate comprehensive sexuality education in schools and into technical and vocational training programs to build knowledge and skills among adolescents so that they make informed decisions in life, adopt healthy behaviors and grow up safely.
10. Encourage adolescents and youth to become skilled technicians and professionals and promote science and modern information technology to meet the socio-economic needs and accelerate the development of rural areas of Lao PDR.
11. Integrate education for sustainable development into curricula, training courses, and sports and recreation activities to raise awareness of the importance of natural resource conservation and caring for the environment
12. Promote the use of ICT in teaching and learning to promote new media literacy to ensure that youth are equipped with media navigation skills, so that they are protected from harm that may come from the media.
13. Prioritize lifelong learning and expand flexible learning and non-formal education programs. Integrate lifelong learning into sectoral human resource development plans, particularly for professional development of the youth workforce.
14. Promote global citizenship education, mutual respect and understanding, and the ideals of peace, solidarity and tolerance among different races and ethnic groups within the country and internationally. Children and youth should be informed of cultural differences in their own societies and given opportunities to learn about different cultures as well as tolerance and mutual respect for cultural and religious diversity.



## **b) Sports and recreation**

1. Create conditions for youth to learn skills, to play sports of all kinds, both indigenous and international, as well as internal and external activities.
2. Strengthen sports and science for youth and adolescents, expanding the basic technical network to meet the needs of young people to be able to practice and develop as trainers, referees, physiotherapists and athletics.
3. Create a basic infrastructure, including sports and recreation facilities for teaching and learning. Improve arts facilities, providing teachers and encouraging young talented people to preserve the culture and customs of the country as well as creating opportunities for youth in performance arts domestically and internationally.
4. Promote recreational activities among adolescents and youth to promote relationships, creative thinking, self-confidence and improve their physical and mental well-being.
5. Promote groups of vulnerable adolescents and youth such as Nang-Noi Girls Groups (NNGGs) to develop essential life skills along with sports and recreation.







## 3. Employment and entrepreneurship

### 3.1. Situation analysis on employment and entrepreneurship

In general, the state of employment and entrepreneurship in Lao PDR is similar to the international situation. Youth with no experience still face difficulty in accessing employment. In addition, access to entrepreneurship support remains limited.

1. The unemployment rate for the country is at 9.7% and the unemployment rate is higher in the age group of 20-29 years (Labor Force Survey, 2017).
2. Every third person in Lao PDR is employed in the informal sector (35%), and when informal engagement “in the formal sector” (enterprise and households without a labor contract) is included the rate increases to 83%. Also, there are more women in the informal sector compared to men.
3. Traditional employment does not provide youth with opportunities to move out of the poverty cycle. Youth accounted for 37% of underutilized labor “not fully meeting their need for employment”,<sup>4</sup> reflecting the difficulties they faced in fully taking part in the labor market.
4. Employment opportunities vary significantly between urban, rural and off-road locations, and between boys and girls. There is a mismatch between the skill sets of youth and the jobs in the market. Besides this, educational attainment is still very low.
5. Women in employment are younger than men with 18.6% of women aged 15-24 years employed against 15.5% of men. Adolescents and youth in rural areas face challenges such as not being able to access labor market information or find employment, lack of experience when applying for jobs, pressure from socio-cultural conditions, and pressure from family that makes job seeking difficult.
6. The majority (87%) of youth migrate to other countries for economic reasons. However, out of the 127,000 migrants, only a few lived for more than 6 months abroad.
7. Youth are migrating within and outside Lao PDR without adequate safeguards for their health and legal status requirements. Girls and young women also face the risk of being trafficked to neighboring countries for marriage and sex work.

<sup>4</sup> Work that is not sufficient to meet the needs of workers, such as no work available for the whole year, mismatch of skills and unemployment.

## 3.2. Strategy and legal framework

For formal sector workers, the Labor Law of 2013 covers severance pay, regulates sick leave for all workers and the temporary continuation of wages or salaries in case of employment injury and occupational disease, and stipulates a maternity benefit and lump-sum child birth grant (Article 99), which is further specified in the Social Security Law. For formal sector workers, the Social Security Law of 2013 covers unemployment benefits, sick leave and sickness benefits for social security fund members, and regulates benefits in case of loss of working capacity as a result of work-related and non-work-related conditions (after the expiration of the period of continued wage payments). Workers outside the formal economy are eligible to join the contributory social security scheme under the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) on a voluntary basis, with the benefits package excluding work injury and unemployment benefits. However, the number of registered voluntary members is still very low and expanding its coverage remains a challenge.

## 3.3. Strategic directives

1. Promote training to upgrade skills and competencies to build competitiveness and link with national standards and quality employment through government and private investment to promote access to both domestic and international labor markets.
2. Conduct assessment of market needs in the country as well as the demand in neighboring countries such as Thailand, where the Lao youth mainly migrate, and design specialized skills development training to match the demand.
3. Increase investments in traditional sectors of agriculture, forestry and fisheries to create “decent work” in rural areas leading to improvements in the standard of living in rural areas and at the same time promote emerging sectors such as ICT and tourism for the youth.







4. Organize massive awareness generation programs on the rights and entitlements of adolescents and youth with respect to migration and employment to ensure safe migration.
5. Disseminate knowledge of climate change that affects livelihoods, especially in agriculture and fisheries.
6. Encourage youth to set up small and medium sized enterprises by facilitating access to finance, marketing and management for business establishment.
7. Map villages and clusters from where there are high volumes of youth migrating and conduct massive awareness programs. The awareness programs will focus on addressing the issues such as labor trafficking, sex trafficking and trafficking for marriage.
8. Develop market driven TVET courses and utilize indigenous knowledge to exploit market niches in services and labor supply.
9. Promote the creation of jobs that are green, clean and resilient to climate change in all sectors.
10. Promote employment by creating a labour market information system, including labour skill development.





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Using New Teaching Methods, New Forms, Models, Styles, and Approaches to Improve Teaching Effectiveness for Improving Educational Quality and Skills of Students



Implemented by the National Education Superintendence, Ministry of Education and Sports in Collaboration with Provincial and District Education Superintendence, Department of Technical Vocational Education (DTEV), and Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)



## 4. Social protection

### 4.1. Situation analysis on social protection

The findings of AYSA (2014) shows that protecting children and adolescents remains a challenge in Lao PDR because enforcement of laws is not strict enough. Many of the problems raised in the report are about protecting adolescents and youth at risk or the younger generation who are the victims of violence, exploitation, labor rights abuse and neglect. These issues include young married adolescents and youth being forced to work and engage in sex work.

1. The Countrywide Gender Assessment 2012 observed the issue of trafficking and reported that women and youth who are victims of trafficking are often forced to engage in prostitution and domestic servitude. Drinking alcohol is a problem for both young men and women. This is attributed to advertisement, lack of strict controls and the attitude of society to drinking alcohol. Many people view adolescents drinking as normal practice.
2. Alcohol abuse causes accidents and can lead to the use of other drugs and also unsafe sex. In addition, health insurance and social protection coverage for farmers is still limited, and therefore their risks remain high. Poverty reduction and growth of economic consumption are not consistent with the country's economic growth or gross domestic product, as the economic growth relies mainly on natural resources and there are not enough employment opportunities (VNR, 2018).
3. Adolescents and youth are also affected by the widespread use of the internet and mobile phones, giving access to information that has not been screened, which may mislead adolescents and youth and they may be victims of online crime as a result<sup>5</sup>. Regional and international integration make migration easier and increase the number of migrants. Some migrants are illegal which puts them at higher risk. Road safety measures are not sufficient and also drinking puts youth at risk of road accidents.
4. Substance abuse is a major problem among adolescents and youth, resulting in addiction, and so protection and prevention measures are required. Although adolescents and youth are a strategic priority, the prevention and protection has not been effective, and young migrants both at home and abroad are at risk and have limited access to social services, particularly related to health, social security and legal services (VNR, 2018).

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<sup>5</sup> Law on Information Communication Technology (2016).

## 4.2. Strategy and legal framework

The Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children (2007) defines a range of areas where children (all under the age of 18) must be protected<sup>6</sup>. Article 2 of the law provides for the protection of children. The law also stipulates the protection of disadvantaged children and those with disabilities, the provision of free education and necessary learning materials, and assistance and exemptions to support disadvantaged children, children from remote areas and children from poor families (Article 29) and access to vocational training (Article 30). Article 3 defines the rights of children and the responsibilities of parents, society and the State. Article 8 stipulates that the basic responsibility of the State is to create a strategy on education and capacity building for its children. Articles 46 and 47 of the law define the prevention of drug abuse among adolescents and youth groups and provide them with conditions and facilities for treatment, rehabilitation and understanding of the dangers and effects of addiction as well as providing vocational training to encourage greater social participation. Article 48 prohibits children from using drugs, drinking alcohol and smoking. Also children are not allowed to serve in night clubs, guest houses, hotels and restaurants and to use the services of those sites in an improper and inappropriate way. Article 49 prohibits parents, guardians and others from injuring or abusing children and prohibits children from working in prohibited sites or accessing prohibited substances. Article 53 of the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Benefits of Adolescents and Youth has identified four sectors that provide non-issuable remedies without the court, including village tribunals, district justice or municipal councils, investigators and prosecutors. Article 69 refers to a criminal case where the child is a guilty person, child labor cases, civil cases involving children and other cases involving children.

The Anti-Trafficking Law, Article 48, deals with the provision of educational and vocational training to survivors or children who are victims of trafficking. In addition, the strategy has been developed to ensure that youth affected by human trafficking have access to education and training so that they can access employment.

The Labor Law, Article 10, sets out the use of “young” workers, less than 18 years of age, but not less than 14 years old, to work and with no extended working hours. In special cases, employers can hire 12-year-old workers but only allow them to do light work.

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<sup>6</sup> Disadvantaged children are defined in the appendix.



### 4.3. Strategic directives

1. Raise awareness among adolescents and youth across the country about the effects of all kinds of addictive drugs, such as amphetamines, alcohol, etc.
2. Promote safe driving and traffic regulations.
3. Promote the Labor Law, welfare and safety in the workplace to ensure that labor exploitation and safety issues are addressed and workers receive their rights and legitimate benefits.
4. Provide training and awareness raising for adolescents and youth to learn about the use of ICT and to educate themselves about the negative effects of social media in order to avoid becoming victims of online crimes and harassment.
5. Raise awareness about the effects of UXO on the body and livelihoods of ethnic populations, especially adolescents and youth.
6. Promote health insurance to ensure it is accessible to adolescents and youth who are disadvantaged economically, culturally and socially.
7. Organize registration system campaigns for migrants from other provinces and responsible authorities at each level.
8. Promote the protection of the rights of migrant workers, their health care and access to welfare services.
9. Strengthen the enforcement of the Labor Law and the Anti-Trafficking Law (2016) and the implementation of the Minimum Wage Decree and others to ensure that youth receive fair benefits from labor and to prevent human trafficking, physical abuse, mental harassment and other forms of exploitation.
10. Promote and assist addicts to access rehabilitation and services to help them return to normal life.
11. Encourage families and societies to participate in recognizing, understanding and supporting those who used to be victims of addiction to substances to ensure their social acceptance and developmental opportunities.
12. Develop schools or educational institutions to be the safest places for adolescents and youth.

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## 5. Civic engagement and participation

### 5.1. Situation analysis on civic engagement and participation

The results of AYSA (2014) show that participation of adolescents and youth is limited to their contribution to social activities such as traditional festivals and tasks and labor with varying gender roles. This participation is mainly in the form of labor contributions to collective activities for solidarity and a spirit of volunteerism. Participation in decision-making in relation to their livelihoods at all levels is limited by many factors, such as low levels of education, especially among young women and youth in rural areas.

The attitudes of those responsible for youth participation have significant scope for improvement. Adolescents and youth continue to be seen as passive recipients of decisions made for them by others instead of being active participants in the decision-making processes. However, Lao PDR is open to adolescents and youth to take part in the decision-making process to address their issues and ensure that their aspirations receive attention, their basic needs are met and their voices are heard and taken into consideration.

### 5.2. Strategy and legal framework

The Law on Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union (2009) defines the roles and responsibilities of the LPRYU. The predominant role of the LPRYU is awareness raising around the key social and health problems pertinent to youth, including migration, education, drug use, traffic law enforcement, cultural protection and communicable diseases. While many youths are not members of the LPRYU, the organization actively seeks to engage and mobilize all youths to participate in their community and civil society.

The revised Law on the Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union (2017) sets the scope of the rights and responsibilities by adding the additional rights and responsibilities of the LPRYU, the Central Committee, the Secretariat, the Standing Committee and the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary Generals. A new Article is added on the Rights and Responsibilities of the Inspection Committee Chairman of the Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union.

The Law on LPRYU is the first law for Lao youth especially for the LPRYU. As stated in Article 2, the LPRYU Committee is responsible for the development of policies, strategies and legislation for all adolescents and youth.

The rights of adolescents and youth under the age of 18 to participate are clearly defined in the Law on the Protection of Children's Rights and Interests (2007). Article 7 on Child Participation states that the government, societies and families must create conditions for children to participate in activities and express their views in all matters affecting them. Article 6 refers to the protection of adolescents and youth from discrimination, race, ethnicity, language, belief, religion, physical conditions and socio-economic status.

Youth have the right to vote at the age of 18 and they can be elected to political office when they are 21 and older, as set out in Article 6 of the Law on Elections (2015). Every young person can enter the military at the age of 18, under the Law on National Defense and Security (1995), Article 3.

### 5.3 Strategic directives

1. Run awareness campaigns for adolescents and youth not to engage in negative behaviors such as early marriage, violence against women, including sexual violence, drug abuse, alcoholism and trafficking.
2. Encourage all sectors in society, including the public and private sector, international agencies, INGOs and CSOs to increase investment in the development of adolescents and youth.
3. Create an enabling environment for promoting the participation of adolescents and youth at all levels (central to community level) in holistic development processes as well as matters that affect their lives.
4. Promote and increase investment in establishing Nang-Noi mentor led safe spaces to provide vulnerable adolescent girls opportunities to build their social, health, cognitive and economic assets, vocational skills, protection and participation.
5. Assist adolescents and youth in building basic skills, knowledge, good attributes and capacities for expanding LPRYU membership and participation in youth associations.
6. Promote participation of Lao adolescents and youth in national and international forums and youth exchange programs.
7. Run awareness campaigns for adolescents and youth participation in protection and promotion of the environment by increasing their environmentally positive knowledge, attitudes and practices.
8. Create opportunities and spaces for youth to freely express their ideas and ensure freedom of expression of youth and link these expressions to organizations representing and addressing adolescents and youth concerns, rights and benefits.
9. Support youth-led organizations and initiatives to enhance their contribution to the mission of protection and development of the country.
10. Strengthen networks and partnerships among governments, youth-led organizations, academia, CSOs, NGOs, private sector, media and the UN system to enhance commitment and support for holistic youth development.



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# IV. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENT

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## 4.1. Leadership and oversight

The leadership and oversight of the LPRYU would be improved at all levels from central to local level on the implementation of this Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy in line with the Socio-Economic Development Plan, the National Population and Development Policy, sectoral development strategies and the needs of adolescents and youth. Adolescents and youth must have a spirit of independence, ownership and self-reliance and engage themselves in the implementation of this strategy.

The LPRYU will take leadership of the implementation, will disseminate this strategy and will coordinate with ministries and equivalent organizations, local government organizations and other stakeholders. Related organizations shall acknowledge and coordinate effective implementation of the Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy.

A National Steering Committee will be established to guide implementation of this strategy. The committee must be led by the Secretary General of the LPRYU to supervise and monitor the planning, implementation and monitoring of the strategy.

The Vice Ministers of Planning and Investment, Health, Education and Sports, Labor and Social Welfare, Foreign Affairs, Vice President of the LWU, and Vice President of the Lao Trade Federation will be members of this committee. The National Steering Committee will meet once a year to discuss and review the implementation of the previous year and to plan implementation for the next year. The committee meetings will be organized by the LPRYU.



As a result of many ministries and agencies implementing this strategy, the coordination mechanism must be developed by the relevant ministries and agencies. The LPRYU is the center of coordination, facilitation, and monitoring and will work in close coordination with relevant ministries and agencies at all levels to ensure effective implementation of this strategy.

## **4.2. Capacity building**

The LPRYU focuses on leading youth organizations across the country. Youth at the local level should be able to take the leadership on guiding adolescents and youth for the development of the country, improving roles and responsibility, and recruiting human resources by coordinating with the Provincial Party Committee, ministries and organizations. The capacity of LPRYU will be strengthened to review and strengthen the organizational structure of the organization at each level to ensure higher and better quality participation of adolescents and youth.

## **4.3. Coordination**

The coordination at the central level will be led by the National Coordination Committee, a national level committee headed by the Deputy Secretary General of LPRYU. The committee will meet twice a year to ensure planning, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of the strategic and programmatic interventions of this strategy.

The Deputy Heads of the Bureau for the Ministry of Planning and Investment, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Minister of Home Affairs and Ministry of Justice, Deputy of LYU, Vice President of LWU and Vice-president of Lao Trade Union will be the members of this committee. The National Coordination Committee meeting will be held by the LPRYU. This committee will coordinate with relevant sectors to enhance the role of the Lao Front for National Construction, mass organizations, social organizations, local authorities, families and the media in order to participate in the dissemination and implementation of this strategy.

At the provincial level, the provincial coordination committee will coordinate and supervise the strategy's implementation. It will also be responsible for coordination between the provincial and central levels. The provincial coordination committee will be led by the Provincial and Capital Vice Governor. This committee will meet twice a year to ensure the planning, implementation, reviewing and monitoring of the implementation of the strategy and consequent programs in the provinces. This committee will consist of the Provincial LPRYU and the head of provincial departments: Department of Planning and Investment, Department of Public Health, Department of Education and Sports, Department of Labor and Social Welfare, Department of Home Affairs, Department of Justice, Lao Trade Union, Provincial Women's Union and Provincial Youth Union. Provincial coordination committee meetings will be hosted by the Provincial Youth Union.



## 4.4. Financing and budget allocation

The Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy will be implemented by various ministries, agencies and mass organizations from central to local levels depending on their roles. Relevant ministries are required to enact necessary legislation, allocate budgets and develop programmes and projects required to implement this strategy within their jurisdiction. Additional budgets as needed will be allocated by the government to ministries and public agencies based on their annual plans.

Relevant ministries and government agencies will set annual budgets by holding adolescent and youth development work as a priority. The sector budget spending will be reviewed to assess the needs of adolescents and youth as defined in this strategy.

In addition, technical and financial support from international organizations, development partners and the private sector will also be mobilized to increase investment in the implementation of the guidelines set out in this strategy.

The LPRYU will establish a fund for the development of disadvantaged youth with special focus on adolescent girls. This has to be supported by specific legislation to formalize resource mobilization. Funding resources may come from the state budget, international organizations, development partners, CSOs and the private sector.





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# V. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

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The progress of the implementation of this strategy will be tracked on an annual basis at national and provincial levels. The strategy will be reviewed and revised every 5 years to incorporate needs based updates and revisions in the strategy based on the progress of the implementation of the strategic directives as well as the changing socio-economic and development environment of the country. The LPRYU will take leadership of the review and revision of this strategy in close coordination with the National Steering Committee and all concerned government ministries and other bodies at the national and provincial levels.



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# VII. APPENDIXES

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# Appendix 1: Noi 2030 Framework

## The Noi 2030 Framework – Achieving Gender Equality & Empowerment of Adolescent Girls

Noi represents all **700,230** adolescent girls aged 10-19 in Lao PDR.\*\* The unfinished MDG agenda has proven that adolescent girls have been left behind. The SDGs aim to reach those left furthest behind.

Noi was created as an advocacy tool to raise awareness, build partnerships and increase investments in adolescent girls that enable them to achieve their full potential. Noi was launched on the International Day of the Girl Child in 2016.

### SDG 2

The high adolescent birth rate is a root cause of the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition, with a **42.6% prevalence rate of anaemia in girls aged 15-19,\*** increasing the risk of stunting in children.

### SDG 3

Gender inequality is intrinsically linked to the **adolescent birth rate** which remains one of the highest in the region at **83 per 1,000** and increases the risk of maternal mortality.

### SDG 4

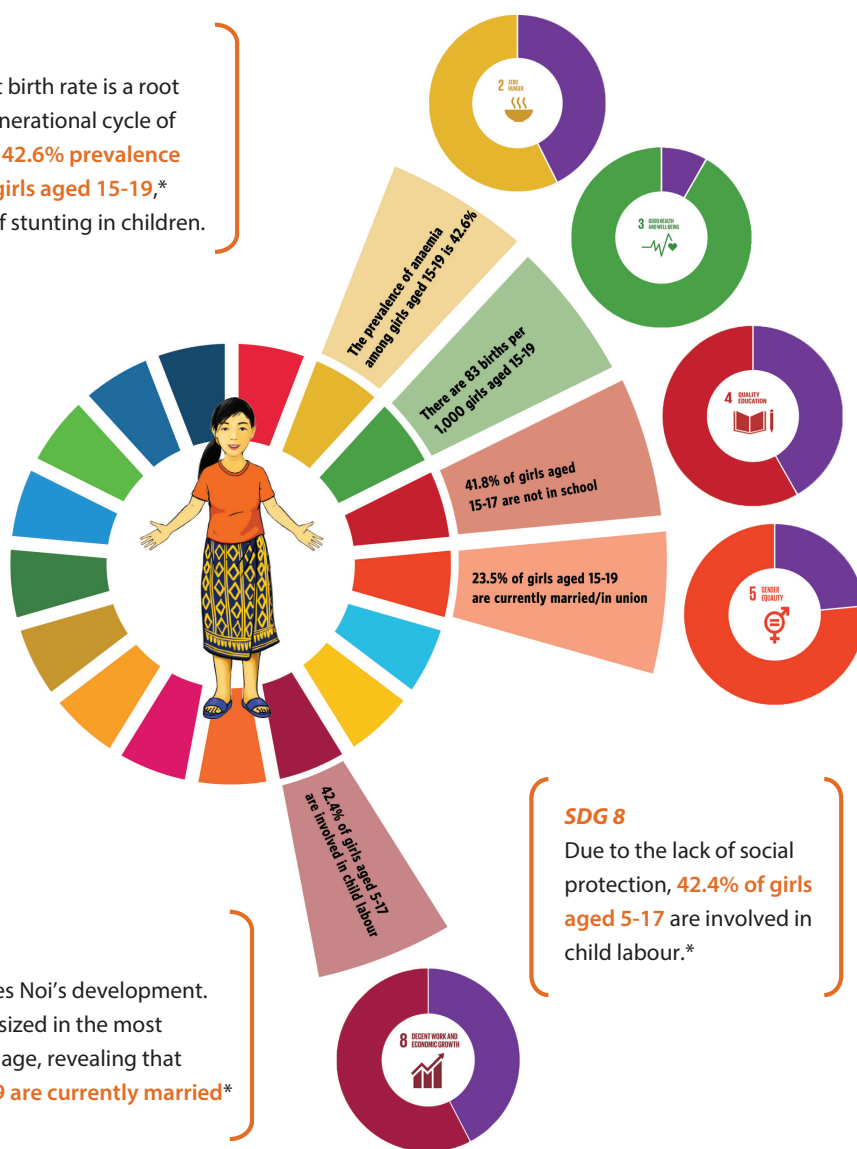
**41.8% of girls aged 15-17** are currently out of school,\* keeping them behind in developing their social and economic potential.

### SDG 5

Gender inequality impedes Noi's development. This is particularly emphasized in the most recent data on child marriage, revealing that **23.5% of girls aged 15-19 are currently married\***

### SDG 8

Due to the lack of social protection, **42.4% of girls aged 5-17** are involved in child labour.\*



Noi's progress is closely monitored through five indicators aligned with the global SDG framework until 2030 when she turns 25, using the available disaggregated data on adolescents generated by the Lao Social Indicator Survey every 5 years.

A holistic approach to addressing Noi's obstacles accelerates the progress towards the SDGs, inducing a virtuous circle with a poverty reduction outcome, benefitting Noi, her community and the nation.

\* Lao Social Indicator Survey (2017)

\*\* Census (2015)



**Appendix 2:**

**National Organizational Structure**



● **National Steering Committee**

H.E. Mr. Alounxay Sounnalath	Secretary General of LYU
Ms. Khambay Khattiya	Vice Minister of Labour and Social Welfare
Ms. Vilavone Phanthavong	Deputy Secretary General of LYU
Mr. Bualan Siripanya	Vice Minister of Education and Sports
Associate Prof. Dr. Phouthone Muangpak	Vice Minister of Health
Ms. Vanpheng Keonakhone	Vice President of Ethnic Affairs Committee, National Assembly
Mr. Khammoun Viphongxay	Vice Minister of Home Affairs
Brigadier General, Mr. Somvang Thammasith (PhD)	Vice Minister of Public Security
Mr. Vanna Duangphachah	Vice President of Lao Federation of Trade Union
Ms. Thoummaly Vongphachanh	Vice President of LWU

Mr. Keochaleun Xiayingyang  
Standing Committee, Director General of Training,  
National Front for Construction

Brigadier General,  
Mr. Thongvanh Kongmany  
Deputy Director General of Political Army,  
supervision of mass organizations

#### ● **National Technical Committee**

Dr. Phaivanh Keopaseuth  
LYU Committee Secretary, Ministry of Health

Mr. Souliya Sidavong  
LYU Committee Secretary, Ministry of Justice

Lieutenant Colonel,  
Mr. Soutchay Mahavong  
Deputy Head of LYU Army Office,  
Ministry of National Defense

Lieutenant Colonel,  
Ms. Nuan Thephavong  
Committee, LYU Deputy Secretary,  
Ministry of National Defense

Mr. Toulavanh Normeungseth (PhD)  
Committee, LYU Deputy Secretary,  
Ministry of Education and Sports

Mr. Daophet Meungphonhong  
Committee, LYU Deputy Secretary,  
Ministry of Industry and Commerce

Mr. Viengkong Inthalangsy  
Deputy Director General of Planning and  
International Cooperation,  
Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

Mr. Khanthong Southimat  
Deputy Head of Cabinet,  
Lao Federation of Trade Union

Mr. Chansitha Thammavong  
Deputy Director General of Planning,  
Ministry of Planning and Investment

Ms. Amala Keonouchanh (PhD)  
Deputy Director General of Planning and  
Cooperation , Ministry of Home Affairs

Ms. Chongchith Chanthalanon  
Deputy Head Office of National Commission for Ad-  
vancement of Women and Mother–Child (NCAWMC)

Ms. Sisamouth Chanthavong  
Director Head of Mass Organisation Relations, Ethnic  
Affairs Committee, National Assembly

Mr. Vandy Chansombath  
Director Head of Research Division,  
National Front for Construction

#### ● **National Implementation Committee**

Dr. Inpong Thongphachanh  
Deputy Secretary Committee LYU of Ministry of Health

Ms. Vilayvanh Bouphanouvong  
Director Head of Planning, Finance and  
Cooperation, NCAWMC

Mr. Athilack Oudomdeth	Director Head of Labour Protection, Lao Federation of Trade Union
Ms. Monthong Inthavong	Deputy Head Director of Planning and Evaluation Division, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
Captain, Mr. Boualay Sisoulath	Deputy Head Director of Training and Personnel Division, Ministry of Public Security
Mr. Viengmany Volavong	Deputy Head of LYU, Department of Personnel, Ministry of Justice
Mr. Lasy Keolangsy	Technical Officer, Department of Planning and Cooperation, Ministry of Home Affairs
Mr. Soulichanh Phetmany	Technical Officer, Division of Mass Organization Relations, Ethnic Affairs Committee, National Assembly
Mr. Bounnaphonh Sengkhamyong	Technical Officer, Research Center for Strategy Development, Ministry of Planning and Implementation

- **Strategy Drafting Technical Committee**

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Ms. Mina Sivilay	Deputy Director General, Department of Youth Training
Ms. Sikhayphet Sengmany	Director of Research and Statistics Division, LYU
Mr. Noucha Yiamachang	Director of Legislation Division, Department of Personnel, LYU

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Mr. Tej Ram Jat (PhD)	Head of Adolescent and Youth Team
Mr. Syvongsay Changpitikoun	Program Officer, Adolescent and Youth
Dr. Deepa Prasad	Consultant, Adolescent and Youth

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Mr. David Young	International Consultant, Regional UNESCO Office, Bangkok, Thailand
Mr. Thongdeun Nanthanavone (PhD)	National Consultant, Lao PDR



### **Appendix 3: Process of formulation of the strategy**

Based on the key findings from the AYSA conducted in 2014 and the 5-year strategic plan of the LPRYU, the LPRYU initiated the process of developing the Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy (NYADS) in 2016. The NYADS has been developed through a participatory, inclusive and broad-based consultative process led by the LYU.

At the beginning, discussions were held with the concerned line ministries, youth organizations and other concerned stakeholders on the importance of developing a national adolescent and youth development strategy in Lao PDR. At the same time the capacities of the LPRYU were strengthened in the strategy development process. A concept note on developing NYADS along with a road map was developed and endorsed. In order to ensure smooth facilitation of the process of the development of NYADS, a well-defined coordination and institutional mechanism was established. This mechanism included setting up of a Technical Committee at the LPRYU, a Youth Reference Group (YRG), a Technical Task Force (TTF) having experts and subject matter specialists, a Strategy Drafting Technical Team (SDTT), the NYADS Secretariat at LPRYU and a National Steering Committee having higher level leadership from the concerned line ministries. It was followed by development of an extensive framework and chapter outline for the NYADS with guiding questions and annex having reference documents. The UNFPA provided technical and financial support throughout all stages of the development of the NYADS and the UNESCO also provided support in this process.

Several rounds of well-designed, planned and facilitated consultations and meetings were organized with the LPRYU Secretariat, YRG, TTF, steering committee, youth organizations, concerned line ministries and other relevant stakeholders. One key component in the strategy development process was to build the capacity of LPRYU, the YRG and other relevant key stakeholders on different steps of the strategy development process, including youth participation and qualitative information gathering. The participation of adolescents and youth was ensured at all stages of the process adopted for the development of the NYADS.

Systematic measures were taken to ensure active engagement of adolescents and youth with decision makers in the strategy formulation process and to ensure that the strategic directions of the NYADS are aligned with the needs, demands and aspirations of adolescents and youth. Diverse groups of adolescents and youth, such as out of school, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex, and adolescents and youth with disabilities, were consulted. Adolescents and youth were also trained to develop strategies and methodologies on youth issues and concerns in Lao PDR, which were used while developing different chapters of the strategy.

The existing reports, documents and literature were reviewed and new quantitative and qualitative data were collected on key issues and concerns of adolescents and youth. These data were analyzed and used in the development of NYADS. The relevant international documents, guidelines, reports and strategy documents were consulted for regional and global good practices, lessons learned and guidance. At the same time, focus was given to the context specific local strategic actions and solutions. In order to provide sound technical and operational support, national and international consultants were hired during the process of the development of NYADS, who worked closely with the LYU Secretariat.

The first draft of the NYADS was developed and shared with the key stakeholders. Based on the feedback and suggestions, the second draft was prepared. The second draft was presented to the members of the inter-ministerial committee. Based on the feedback and inputs from this meeting the third draft of the NYADS was prepared and shared with the concerned national and international stakeholders as well as the LPRYU provincial committees for their review and feedback. This draft was also presented in a meeting having representatives from the steering committee, concerned line ministries, UN agencies and other national and international organizations. Several smaller technical meetings were organized at the LPRYU to discuss and incorporate the feedback. The fourth draft was presented to the steering committee, and the final draft was submitted to the office of the Prime Minister for endorsement.

## Appendix 4:

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



## Noi 2030

*"...half of our population are young people and half of these young people are girls. They are our current and future labour force. To enable the country to fully realize the demographic dividend, we must ensure that young people in particular adolescent girls, who are often lagging behind, are at the heart of our countries development agenda".*

H.E. Dr. Khamlien Pholsena, Vice Minister of Ministry of Planning and Investment  
11 October 2016, International Day of the Girl Child







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