



**Summary Report
Round Table Implementation Meeting 2023**

**13 February 2024
Vientiane, Lao PDR**

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I. Executive Summary

The Government of Lao PDR organized the annual Round Table Implementation Meeting (RTIM) for 2023 on the 13th February 2024 at the National Convention Centre, Vientiane Capital in Lao PDR. The meeting was co-chaired by the Minister of Planning and Investment (MPI) and the UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC). The 2023 RTIM was held under the theme of **‘Accelerating the Implementation of the results of the 9th National Social Economic Development Plan Mid-Term Review for achieving SDGs and LDC graduation’**.

During the RTIM 2023, the focus was on discussing the implications of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) for development priorities over the remaining years of the Plan and for the development of the 10th NSEDP. The event highlighted the importance of stabilizing the macroeconomy, investing in human capital, and promoting sustainable use of natural resources. Emphasis was also placed on strengthening the private sector to drive economic diversification and create job opportunities.

The discussions at the event departed from previous years’ format by including two parallel panel sessions, focusing on key development issues, and highlighting the commitment to sustainable, green, and inclusive development, to provide a platform for open discussions on development issues among the Government, development partners, civil society organizations and the private sector.

The 2023 RTIM also addressed Laos’ third Voluntary National Review and the Lao PDR Smooth Transition Strategy (STS) for graduating from the category of Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Furthermore, the event covered the 4th Round of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) and discussed the Round Table Process (RTP) Guideline. These discussions aimed to strengthen cooperation and coordination in development efforts.

Key discussions include:

1. The alignment of development planning and budget formulation to ensure the effective formulation and implementation of the upcoming 10th NSEDP. This will streamline the process and enhance the coherence of development strategies. The meeting discusses the need to operationalize the 9th NSEDP Financing Strategy and integrate the medium-term budget framework developed by the Ministry of Finance into the 10th NSEDP formulation led by the Ministry of Planning and Investment. This alignment will facilitate a more efficient and coordinated approach to achieving development goals.
2. Prioritize and emphasize the utilization of data derived from the 5th Lao PDR Population and Housing Survey 2025, as well as the Lao Social Index Survey (LSIS), in the formulation of the 10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) for the period 2026-2030. This particularly pertains to enhancing policies and priority plans at both sectoral and local levels.
3. Structural economic transformation is crucial to address the root causes of economic instability. Key areas for reform include: (i) Revenue mobilization and expenditure management to create more space for social spending; (ii) Public debt management; (iii) State-owned enterprise reform; (iv) Contingent liability management through an improved public-private partnership governance framework; (v) Financial sector stability; (vi) Business environment reforms. The implementation of these reforms is crucial but delayed, emphasizing the need of immediate action.

4. Discuss the need to improve the utilization of existing funds and implementation of the Government's projects by enhancing procurement, contract management and financial oversight, along with boosting capacity in environmental and social governance. Effective fund usage will not only attract more funding from ODA and the private sector but is also crucial post-LDC graduation.
5. Discuss the need to focus on developing potential sectors of the Lao PDR, including agricultural production, mining, energy, processing, service sectors, in an environmentally friendly manner.
6. Improve the business environment to boost private sector growth and attract quality, sustainable investments, with a focus on enhancing competitiveness and fostering a conducive business environment for domestic business.
7. Foster the development of human resources as a cornerstone for facilitating transformation; elucidate the imperative to prioritize investments in social sectors; Continue to mobilize additional funding from domestic and international sources, while also engaging the private sector in development efforts to ensure sustainable financing for the development of human capital.
8. Discuss the rule of law and promote a better environment for civil society organizations to contribute to the implementation of NSEDP.
9. Seek to improve preparedness in various aspects to deal with natural disasters by further strengthening the implementation of disaster prevention and control work, improving early warning systems, risk studies and disaster risk reduction plans, and focusing on helping high-risk communities.

These recommendations will be shared with the Prime Minister's Office for consideration in the preparation of forthcoming instructions to ministries.

II. Background

The RTIM 2023 is held annually to address the key priorities of Lao PDR. This event convenes representatives from all government ministries, provinces, international development partners, the private sector, civil society, and other stakeholders. The Government of Lao PDR views the outcomes of the meeting as highly representative and consultative, helping to shape policy options for the country's development effectively.

As 2023 marks the halfway point in the implementation of the 9th NSEDP for the period 2021-2025, the organization of the 2023 RTIM holds significant importance to review both the progress made, and the challenges encountered in the first half of the implementation of the 9th NSEDP. Given the complex circumstances and challenges in Lao PDR, including the prolonged and severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic and financial difficulties, and the frequent occurrence of natural disasters, it is important to identify and prioritize actions that will accelerate progress in the remaining years of the 9th NSEDP to achieve its goals.

Under the theme: **'Accelerating the Implementation of the Results of the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan Mid-Term Review for Achieving SDGs and LDC Graduation'**, the RTIM 2023 discussed the following agenda items:¹

1. The MTR of the 9th NSEDP, 9th NSEDP Financing Strategy and Lao PDR Resilience Framework.

¹ See 'Appendix 1: 2023 RTIM agenda'.

2. Third Voluntary National Review of progress towards the SDGs and the Lao PDR Smooth Transition Strategy (STS) for LDC Graduation (2022-2026 with a vision to 2030) and Beyond.
3. Economic Situation and Way Forward to Sustainable and Green Growth
4. Human Capital and Sustainable Economic Development
5. Development Cooperation (The 4th Round of Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation and the RTP guideline).²

The RTIM 2023 was chaired by H.E. Mr. Khamjane Vongphosy, Minister of Planning and Investment, and co-chaired by Mr. Bakhodir Burkhanov, UN Resident Coordinator to Lao PDR, with participation of more than 300 representatives³ including vice ministers, vice presidents of standing committees, vice presidents of ministry equivalent organizations, vice governors of provinces and the Capital, representatives of line ministries and equivalent organizations, and provincial departments of planning and investment from 17 provinces and the Capital, ambassadors, heads of international organizations, and representatives from embassies, civil society organizations and the private sector.

III. KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

1. **The MTR of the 9th NSEDP, Financing Strategy and Lao PDR Resilience Framework**⁴

The presentation by H.E. Mme Phonevanh Outhavong, Vice Minister of Planning and Investment, highlighted the progress and challenges faced in implementing the 9th NSEDP. The presentation covered updates on the six outcomes of the 9th NSEDP, key thematic areas on which the Government needs to focus, and the development direction for the remaining plan duration.

Additionally, two important policy documents, namely the 9th NSEDP Financing Strategy and the Resilience Framework, developed to support the implementation of the Plan were also presented.

2. **The Third Voluntary National Review and the Lao PDR STS for LDC Graduation (2022-2026 with a vision to 2030) and Beyond**⁵

The second presentation delivered by H.E. Phoxay Khaykhamphithoune, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, delved into ‘the Third Voluntary National Review of progress towards the SDGs and the Lao PDR STS for LDC Graduation (2022-2026 with a vision to 2030) and Beyond.’

3. **Panel Discussions**

The preceding presentations delivered by the Vice Minister of Planning and Investment and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, set the stage for two in-depth thematic panel discussions.

3.1 **Panel Discussion 1 on ‘Economic Situation and Way Forward to Sustainable and Green Growth’**⁶

Panel Discussion 1 centred on the current economic situation and the way forward for the country to diversify its economy to facilitate sustainable and green growth. The discussion addressed challenges and outlined both short- and long-term strategies.

² See ‘Appendix 2: Background Document’ for details on policies and strategies.

³ See ‘Appendix 8: List of Participants’.

⁴ See ‘Appendix 3: Presentation on the 9th NSEDP Mid-Term Review, the 9th NSEDP Financing Strategy and Lao PDR Resilience Framework’

⁵ See ‘Appendix 4: Presentation on the Third Voluntary National Review and the Lao PDR Smooth Transition Strategy for LDC Graduation (2022-2026 with a Vision to 2030) and Beyond’

⁶ See ‘Appendix 5: Results of Panel Discussion 1’.

Representatives from key institutions, namely the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Bank of Lao PDR, Embassy of Germany, World Bank, and Lao National Chamber of Commerce provided insights on priority development issues. The session, facilitated by the Development Research Institute of the Ministry of Planning and Investment, encouraged an inclusive dialogue among the diverse group of participants.

Based on the discussion, the following critical challenges were identified:

1. Macroeconomic instability: This includes high inflation rates, exchange rate fluctuations, unsustainable debt levels, low revenue, and challenges in monetary management.
2. Quality of growth: This involves enhancing the investment climate, promoting production diversification, creating job opportunities, increasing public investment, ensuring fair social benefit distribution, and addressing outward migration trends.
3. Climate change impacts: This covers the effects on agricultural production, natural conservation, biodiversity loss, energy generation, livelihoods, land degradation, and deforestation.

In response to these challenges, the following short-term recommendations were proposed:

1. Enhance revenue mobilization and achieve monetary stabilization through the urgent implementation of ongoing tax reforms, including raising taxes on luxury items, alcohol, and tobacco.
2. Implement measures for debt restructuring to address the issue of unsustainable debt.
3. Improve public-private coordination by enhancing transparency to attract vital investments.
4. Optimize spending towards the social sector to ensure equitable distribution of resources.

For long-term sustainability, the following recommendations were put forward:

Implementing concrete measures that would set the foundation for sustainable economic transformation. This could be achieved through:

1. Prioritizing investments in human capital, focusing on the education and health sectors;
2. Improving the business environment to attract foreign investments for sustainable economic growth; and
3. Implementing on climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts as a comprehensive strategy and promoting mechanisms for green finance.

3.2 Panel discussion 2 on ‘Human Capital for Sustainable Development’⁷

Panel Discussion 2 focused on human capital for sustainable development and featured panellists from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Lao Youth Union, Embassy of Japan, and UNICEF.

The session, moderated by the National University of Laos, highlighted the importance of investing in education, health, and social protection, aligning with the priorities outlined in the **MTR of the 9th NSED**. Participants actively engaged in discussions about existing challenges and put forward both short-term and long-term strategies..

Based on the discussion, the following critical challenges were identified:

1. Lagging sector indicators.

⁷ See ‘Appendix 6: Results of Panel Discussion 2’.

- Inequitable access to education and social services, particularly for the poor and vulnerable populations.
 - Low student performance and preschool enrolment, alongside escalating drop-out rates.
 - Health concerns including underweight and stunting among children under 5 years, and inadequate National Health Insurance coverage.
 - Limited social security coverage for informal workers and high rates of violence against children and early marriage.
2. Inadequate and inefficient resource allocation.
- Limited government budget allocation for education, health and social protection compared to the government's commitment.
 - The share of non-wage recurrent budget for quality improvement is limited.
 - Sustainability of the National Health Insurance scheme, limited funds for basic health supplies and vaccines.
 - Shortage of qualified teachers and healthcare professionals, coupled with poor distribution.
 - Inadequate coordination between job placement efforts and labor market needs. Weak safety measures / infrastructure and limited incentives for workforce participation and skill development.
3. Weak intersectoral coordination
- Weak advocacy and engagement with parents and community and the private sector on the importance of education.
 - Insufficient and outdated labor laws for effective workforce development and social protection across sectors, fragmented data management for effective policy planning and resource allocation across sectors and partners.

In response to these challenges, the following short-term recommendations were proposed:

1. Prioritize key areas and utilize innovative approaches.
- Utilize information systems and technology for informed policy decisions across sectors.
 - Education sector: focus on continuous professional development, robust school management, equitable teacher distribution, and early childhood education.
 - Health sector: focus resources on key priorities, enhance coordination to eliminate duplication.
 - Social sector: update labor laws, expand social security coverage, improve infrastructure, and enhance labor skills.
2. Align external support with government priorities
- Coordinate foundational learning prioritization and community engagement in education.
 - Integrate ODA plans into annual and 5-year health programs.
 - Collaborate to monitor resource gaps and facilitate data-based planning and budgeting in social sectors.

For long-term sustainability, the following recommendation was put forward:

Mobilizing additional resources from domestic and international sources and engaging with the private sector in a structured manner for sustainable financing for human capital, especially in the context of donor transition and LDC graduation.

4. Development Cooperation (The 4th Round of Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation and the RTP guideline)

H.E. Mme. Phonevanh Outhavong, Vice Minister of Planning and Investment, delivered a presentation on activities related to effective development cooperation focusing on two specific items namely, the 4th round of Global Partnership monitoring exercise of Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) and revised Round Table Process (RTP) operational Guidelines.⁸

On the GPEDC issues, the following three key objectives of the Global Partnership monitoring exercise were presented:

1. Increase the effectiveness of the coordination mechanism for development.
2. Monitor the implementation tasks related development cooperation in the Lao PDR and ensure their alignment with the Vientiane Declaration.
3. To learn, exchange lessons and experience with other countries at regional and international levels.

To achieve the objectives, a roadmap to implement the Global Partnership monitoring exercise was presented as follows:

1. February 2024: Coordinate with concerned stakeholders, especially development partners to establish focal points for coordination. Organize a high-level meeting to initiate the Global Partnership monitoring exercise in Lao PDR.
2. February - April 2024: Data Collection.
3. May - June 2024: Data review and transfer.
4. July - September 2024: Disseminate results of the assessment.
5. October 2024 – 2026: Translate results into a workplan.

As for the RTP Guideline, the Vice Minister presented the key features of RTP Guideline, a key reference document for the operation of the Sector Working Groups to contribute to national development plan implementation. The Guideline has the following objectives:

1. To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of Sector Working Groups (SWGs) as well as the RTP as the main development cooperation mechanism in Lao PDR.
2. Enable SWGs to implement coordination mechanisms among the Government and development partners effectively.
3. Provide directions for SWGs to discuss and resolve within and between SWGs.
4. Support alignment and coherence of SWGs' work plans to contribute to the NSEDP.

The RTP Guideline underscores the key responsibilities of chair and co-chair of SWGs. These duties include creating and presenting annual SWG work plans to the RTP secretariat. These plans are crucial for effectively managing the implementation of activities within each SWG and cross-sectoral works.

Additionally, the role of the RTP secretariat (Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Planning and Investment) was emphasized in overseeing the implementation of annual SWG work plans through quarterly meetings with all SWG secretariats.

⁸ See 'Appendix 7: Presentation on Development Cooperation'.

Following the presentation, participants reached a consensus to endorse the RTP Guideline, expecting it to encourage the work of the SWGs. Specifically, they emphasized that the development of annual SWG work plans should guide the effective implementation of quarterly SWG meetings across all SWGs. Holding regular quarterly SWG meetings would create opportunities to involve non-state development actors, including the private sector, Non-Profit Associations (NPAs), and NGOs, in discussions and leverage their potential to contribute to the NSEDP's implementation.

Participants underlined the crucial role of the RTP Secretariat within the Department of International Cooperation of MPI in ensuring that the guideline is fully adhered to by all SWGs. The importance of utilizing data sources such as the 5th Lao PDR Population and Housing Survey 2025 and the Lao Social Index Survey (LSIS) in their efforts was also stressed.

VI. Conclusion and Way Forward

In his remarks, Mr. Bakhodir Burkhanov, UN Resident Coordinator to the Lao PDR, underscored that the Round Table Implementation Meeting marks not a singular event but rather a pivotal part of an extensive and continuous process. He emphasized that the true measure of success and progress lies in the actions taken between these meetings. The next step involves encouraging Sector Working Groups (SWGs) to facilitate comprehensive sector-wide discussions led by Government chairs and supported by development partner co-chairs.

H.E. Mr. Khamjane Vongphosy, Minister of Planning and Investment and Chair of the RTIM 2023, commended all participants for their valuable contributions and productive discussions, particularly acknowledging the detailed insights provided by development partners, the private sector, and NGOs aligned with the meeting agenda. He stressed the importance of the proposed strategies and priorities for implementing actions during the remaining years of the 9th NSEDP and in preparation for the 10th NSEDP. The chair also highlighted the significance of endorsing the RTP Guideline as a key outcome of the meeting.

The chair summarized the discussions in the following priorities:

1. Focus on unlocking the full potential of Lao PDR across sectors such as agriculture, mining, energy, processing, and services while prioritizing environmentally sustainable practices.
2. Prioritize measures to broaden the revenue base by enhancing state financial management mechanisms, particularly through modernization efforts to increase accessibility and efficiency in revenue collection.
3. Enhance and streamline regulations to support effective state and socio-economic management, creating a conducive environment for attracting high-quality foreign investments.
4. Invest in developing human capital to serve as a foundational driver of transformation, ensuring sustainable economic growth through prudent budget allocation in alignment with annual government conditions.
5. Diversify funding sources domestically and internationally, actively engaging the private sector in development initiatives to secure sustainable financing for advancing human capital development.

The RTIM unanimously agreed to the following recommendations:

1. Continue to accelerate the implementation of the 9th NSEDP to complete the national development priorities as approved by the National Assembly, and continue to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the priorities of Least Developed Country (LDC) graduation into its implementation. This can be done through:

- a. Ensuring adequate budget allocations for human resource development in terms of both quantity and quality;
 - b. Implementing laws and regulations to effectively manage the economy and ensure peaceful society;
 - c. Focus on reducing the development gap between urban and rural areas;
 - d. Eliminating violence against women and children;
 - e. Eradicating poverty; and
 - f. Boosting the competitiveness of the domestic business sector by fostering a more conducive business environment;
2. Increased attention to be paid to promoting the implementation of Financing Strategy to support the implementation of the 9th NSEDP.
 3. Seek to improve preparedness in various aspects to deal with natural disasters by further strengthening the implementation of disaster prevention and control work, improving early warning systems, risk studies and disaster risk reduction plans, and focusing on helping high-risk communities.
 4. In the preparation of the 10th NSEDP (2026-2030):
 - a. Prioritize the use of data from the 5th Lao PDR Population and Housing Survey 2025 and the Lao Social Index Survey (LSIS), especially in policies and priority plans of sectors and localities;
 - b. Develop clear and coherent plans to support sustainable economic transformation as the long-term strategy to address economic and financial difficulties;
 - c. Integrate development of the plan with the Medium-Term Budget Framework and estimates of the cost of priority policies to ensure adequate resourcing of the national plan.
 5. Endorsement of the RTP Guideline.

V. Appendices

- Appendix 1: [2023 RTIM Agenda](#)
- Appendix 2: [Background Document](#)
- Appendix 3: [Presentation on the 9th NSEDP Mid-Term Review, the 9th NSEDP Financing Strategy and Lao PDR Resilience Framework](#)
- Appendix 4: [Presentation on the Third Voluntary National Review and the Lao PDR Smooth Transition Strategy for LDC Graduation \(2022-2026 with a Vision to 2030\) and Beyond](#)
- Appendix 5: Result of Panel Discussion 1: Economic Situation and Way Forward to Sustainable and Green Growth
- Appendix 6: Result of Panel Discussion 2: Human Capital for Sustainable Development
- Appendix 7: Presentation on Development Cooperation (The 4th Round of Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation and RTP Guideline)
- Appendix 8: List of Participants (add list of Moderator and panelist)