

Generic Guideline RTIM 2024 Panel Discussions

1. Background

The upcoming [RTIM 2024](#) is set to take place on 14 November 2024, at the National Convention Centre. The focus of the meeting is to build on the Prime Minister's directive to implement the [outcomes of RTIM 2023](#), focusing on sustainable financial and economic development, as well as human capital development.

Reflecting the success of the [panel discussion format introduced during the RTIM 2023](#), which enabled greater exchange of views and interaction between the Government and Development Partners, the same format will be adopted for the RTIM 2024. The themes of the RTIM 2023 panel discussions are still considered to be relevant. Continued focus on these themes will allow us to take stock of progress made and key challenges and to propose forward-looking solutions building on the recommendations made at the RTIM 2023. The two critical development issues facing Lao PDR are:

- i. Sustainable Economic and Financing for Development Priorities
- ii. Human Capital Development to Support Development Goals

Leveraging the broad and senior participation in the RTIM, the salient recommendations emerging from the panel discussions will progress rapidly to presentation to senior national policymakers during the subsequent plenary session.

In line with the revised [Roundtable Process Guidelines](#), these recommendations / action points will also be delivered to the Prime Minister in the debrief meeting following the RTIM.

The insights are also expected to contribute to the ongoing formulation of the 10th NSEDP and preparation for LDC graduation.

2. Objectives

The primary goal of the panel discussions is to provide a platform for stakeholders to strategically discuss, refine key recommendations and propose practical steps and forward-looking solutions to pressing development challenges. These recommendations / action points should be both for the immediate term (i.e. be implemented during the final year of the 9th NSEDP), and longer term (i.e. to guide the 10th NSEDP formulation).

The panel discussions will promote inclusive development discussions by incorporating diverse perspectives from various stakeholders, thereby enriching the national formulation process.

The discussions are also intended to support the efforts of Sector Working Groups (SWGs) by addressing critical issues that intersect across sectors, and encouraging strengthened collaboration cross-SWGs after the RTIM 2024.

3. Structure

The two parallel panel discussions will take place simultaneously in separate rooms at the National Convention Centre, and all participants are encouraged to attend.

Stakeholders with two or more delegates should consider splitting their participation between the two discussions, as the topics are interconnected. There are no restrictions on making interventions in either session.

Format of the Discussions:

The total duration of each panel discussion is 90 minutes, therefore effective time management is essential to ensure productive sessions. A timekeeping system will be in place to help manage the discussions effectively.

Opening Remarks: Each panel discussion will begin with short welcoming remarks from the moderator, lasting no more than **3 minutes**.

Panelist Responses: Following the opening remarks, the moderator will pose a series of questions to the panelists. The questions are to be determined by preparation team for each panel discussion. Panelists should prepare to deliver succinct answers:

- **First Round of Answers:** Limited to **3 minutes** each.
- **Subsequent Responses:** Limited to **1 or 2 minutes**.

Please note that there will be **no PowerPoint presentations** allowed during the discussions.

No pre-registration will be required for participants wishing to make interventions during the panel discussions. Interventions should be limited to a maximum of **3 minutes**.

4. Panel Discussion Preparations

Similar to the RTIM 2023, substantive preparations for the panel discussions will be led by the chairs and co-chairs of the relevant SWGs:

- **Panel 1: Short- and long-term recommendations / solutions to address economic and financial challenges and support the achievement of the national vision for an inclusive and sustainable economy.**¹

Macroeconomic Sector Working Group
Chair: Ministry of Planning and Investment
Co-Chairs: World Bank and ADB

¹ The vision for an inclusive and sustainable development must recognize the importance of a connected, resilient and diversified economy. By strengthening regional connections and encouraging a variety of economic sectors, we can enhance resilience, foster innovation, and ensure that all communities benefit from sustainable growth.

- **Panel 2: Short- and long-term recommendations / solutions to support Lao PDR's human capital development and realize the full potential of the young population to drive sustainable national development.**

Education Sector Working Group

Chair: Ministry of Education and Sports

Co-Chairs: EU and Australia

The Roundtable Secretariat is available to support these preparations as required. Initial suggestions for consideration of prospective panellists, moderators, and discussion questions for each session are included in the annexes below.

It is recommended that chairs and co-chairs convene a meeting of prospective panelists and moderators before the event to establish a common understanding and enhance the coherence of the discussions.

Panelists will be chosen based on their expertise and leadership roles in relevant Sector Working Groups (SWGs) or national policy areas.

Immediately following the conclusion of the panel discussions, representatives of the chairs and co-chairs will be requested to support the preparation of a very short presentation of key recommendations / solutions emerging from the exchanges. These will be presented by the respective Vice Ministers during the subsequent plenary session. The Roundtable Secretariat will provide a template and support the process. Presentations from the RTIM 2023 are available for reference [here](#) and [here](#).

Annexes: Reference Materials and Suggestions for each Panel Discussion

Panel Discussion 1: Short- and long-term recommendations / solutions to address economic and financial challenges and support the achievement of the national vision for an inclusive and sustainable economy.

Potential Panellists: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Investment, Bank of Lao PDR, Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, representative from private companies, Development Partners (bilateral and / or multilateral), sub-national level authorities. Suggest a maximum of 6 panellists, with due consideration to gender balance.

Moderator: Lao Academy of Social and Economic Sciences (LASES)

Lao PDR continues to grapple with significant economic and financial challenges, with inflation remaining above 21 percent and very limited fiscal space for priority development investments. Government responses to these challenges have been prioritized under the National Agenda on Addressing Economic and Financial Difficulties, and have received a consistent focus from policymakers.

Particular challenges identified during the RTIM 2023 included:

- Macroeconomic instability (inflation, exchange rates, debt unsustainability, low revenue, monetary management);
- Quality of growth (investment climate, production diversification, job creation, public investment, social benefit redistribution, changes in labour; and
- Climate change impacts (agricultural production, natural conservation and biodiversity loss, energy generation, livelihoods, land degradation, and deforestation).

Building on previous conclusions, it is recommended that panel discussions be focused, addressing these critical issues and seeking actionable solutions, building on existing policy frameworks and decisions.

Potential Discussion Questions:

1. What measures can be taken to enhance fiscal revenue collection in Lao PDR, and increase spending on human development and the social sectors?
2. What steps can be taken to create a more conducive environment for quality domestic and international private sector investments that create decent jobs and drive economic diversification (in particular beyond the natural resources sectors)?
3. What are the most promising practical opportunities that could be explored to address macroeconomic challenges, and what would the roles of different stakeholders be in taking them forward?
4. What strategies can we adopt to proactively integrate environmental, climate change, and disaster resilience considerations into macroeconomic policy as we develop the 10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDPP), ensuring that we not only address current challenges but also anticipate future impacts and opportunities?

Key Reference Documents:

- **The National Agenda on Addressing Economic and Financial Difficulties** issued following the 11th Party Congress, sets out urgent actions to address chronic causes of economic challenges. It identifies 5 core actions: promote production to substitute imports and support exports to build a strong and sustainable revenue base; strengthen tax revenue collection; promote frugality, tackle extravagance, enhance effectiveness of investment expenditure, and address domestic and foreign debt; create / maintain monetary stability; enhance public management governed by the rule of law.
 - o This is complemented by a set of practical recommendations on policy actions to implement the National Agenda proposed by the ADB and the World Bank in a **Macroeconomic Reform Roadmap**. Five policy reform areas are identified as the most urgent: cut costly tax exemptions to raise public revenue and protect social spending; improve the governance of public and private investment; restructure public debt through ongoing negotiations; strengthen financial sector stability through legal and regulatory tools; enhance the business environment via effective regulatory reforms. This Roadmap has guided discussions under the Macroeconomic SWG.
- **The Financing Strategy for the 9th NSEDP** endorsed by the Prime Minister sets out cross-government policy actions to either increase the volume or improve the alignment of resources to achieve the policy priorities of the NSEDP. Actions are structured into 5 chapters: domestic public finance (including revenue mobilization, expenditure management, and debt); international public finance; domestic private finance; international private finance; and priority sector finance (health, education, and green and climate finance).
- **The National Green Growth Strategy** sets policies to integrate green growth into the formulation of sector and local strategies in order to balance economic growth, environmental protection, and social development.
- **The Smooth Transition Strategy for LDC Graduation** endorsed by Cabinet sets out national policy actions necessary for a successful LDC graduation transition. This acknowledges that if Lao PDR faces recurrent or extended macroeconomic instability, then it will not be possible to achieve a smooth, quality, and sustainable graduation. The first chapter of policy actions focuses on steps necessary to address macroeconomic instability. Actions are consistent with the 9th NSEDP Financing Strategy.
- **The Lao PDR Resilience Framework** was developed by MPI in collaboration with other ministries and development partners to identify the steps needed to respond the economic consequences of COVID-19 and more recent inflationary shocks and build resilience to future shocks. Pillar 1 of the Framework is focused on financing for sustainable development and effective development cooperation, actions are consistent with the 9th NSEDP Financing Strategy. Pillar 2 focuses on trade and private sector, value chains, and tourism- identifying actions to promote investment and economic diversification.

Panel Discussion 2: Short- and long-term recommendations / solutions to support Lao PDR's human capital development and realize the full potential of the young population to drive sustainable national development

Potential Panellists: Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Development Partners (bilateral and/or multilateral), youth representative. Suggest a maximum of 6 panellists, with due consideration to gender balance.

Moderator: Development Research Institute, Ministry of Planning and Investment.

This panel will examine the relationship between human capital development, social sectors investments, and economic growth, highlighting the importance of fostering human development to support both current and future economic expansion, including pursuing the objectives of the 9th NSEDP and 10th NSEDP.

Building on the conclusions of the 2023 RTIM discussions, the panel will tackle challenges that impede human development, such as an inefficient labour market, driving changes in labour, lack of skilled workers, poor quality of education, mismatch between education / vocational training and needs, school dropout rates, as well as addressing preparations for LDC graduation anticipated in 2026, all of which are crucial for the effective implementation of development strategies.

Potential Discussion Questions:

1. In a context of limited resources, how can we ensure that social sectors are adequately funded to address human development needs / skills development, to support socio-economic development?
2. How can the education and training systems better prepare young people with the relevant skills for employment, and the future of work in an evolving labour market?
3. What alternative sources of development finance can be explored to reduce dependency on Official Development Assistance (ODA) in the context of donor transitions, and how can these sources be effectively mobilized?
4. How could we efficiently and effectively promote collaboration across sectors and whole of society to ensure a holistic approach to the development of human capital?
5. From a young person's perspective, what are your main hopes and fears for the coming years, and what do you feel you need to tackle them?
6. In what ways can social protection schemes, digitalization of services and systems and addressing governance issues drive greater human capital outcomes for Lao PDR?

Key Reference Documents:

- The **Financing Strategy for the 9th NSEDP** details a set of specific actions intended to increase funding available for the health and education sectors. It also includes a specific action (action 9) on strengthening the alignment of the Medium-Term Budget Framework and Public Investment Plans with the policy priorities of the NSEDP.

- The first **Human Capital Summit** held in 2023 and chaired by the Prime Minister focused on accelerating learning recovery following COVID-19, and reassessing how Lao PDR can accelerate learning and allocate enough resources to bring its schools and learning outcomes up to the standard needed to build a strong economy. The second Human Capital Summit in 2024 focused on nutrition as a critical component of human capital development, calling for a multisectoral approach to tackling the causes and consequences of malnutrition.
- **The Health Sector Development Plan** and **Education and Sports Sector Development Plan** set out policy priorities over 2021-2025 within their respective sectors.
- **The National Social Protection Strategy Mid-Term Review** assesses progress and identifies the key challenges to accelerating the implementation of the strategy to broaden and deepen social protection coverage.
- **The Lao Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy**, endorsed by the Prime Minister, identifies long-term national priorities to invest in its young population to be able to realize the potential of a demographic dividend.
- **The National Policy on Population and Development**, developed by MPI, includes priorities on reducing poverty, ensuring access to education, enhancing opportunities for disadvantaged and vulnerable young people, and reducing disparities in dimensions related to birth and mortality rates.
- **The Macroeconomic Reform Roadmap** places a high priority on the reprioritization of spending towards the social sectors (education, health, and social protection).
- **The Smooth Transition Strategy for LDC Graduation** notes that the structural economic transformation necessary for a successful graduation process will only be possible with sufficient investments in human capital. Specific actions in the Strategy call for efforts to urgently address learning poverty and ensure access to basic social protection services.
- **The Resilience Framework** includes a pillar dedicated to the development of human capital, with actions relating to education, health and nutrition, gender equity, and demography and data.