



# 2<sup>nd</sup> National Conference on Population and Development

*Towards Harnessing the Demographic Dividend:  
Educate, Employ, Empower & Engage*



October 2025



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# INTRODUCTION

The demographic dividend is not automatic—it’s earned through smart, urgent choices that educate, employ, empower, and engage a new generation. Against this backdrop, the 2nd NCPD convened on 1 October 2025 at the Crowne Plaza, Vientiane, to translate demographic ambition into executable policy. Co-organized by the Ministry of Finance and UNFPA and chaired by H.E. Prof. Dr. Kikeo Khaikhamphithoune, Deputy Prime Minister, with welcoming remarks by H.E. Mr. Santiphab Phomvihane, Minister of Finance, the conference gathered government, parliament, provinces, development partners, UN agencies, civil society, the private sector, academia, and youth and women’s groups.

This proceedings report captures the deliberations and decisions under the theme “Towards Harnessing the Demographic Dividend: Educate, Employ, Empower & Engage.” It aligns Investments on human capital development recommendations with the 10th NSEDP (2026–2030) and the vision of the 2025 Population and Housing Census, consolidates progress on the 1st NCPD recommendations, and links next steps to FP2030 commitments, the Midwifery Action Plan, and partnership frameworks such as the Round Table Implementation Meeting (RTIM) and the Vientiane Declaration. The result is a clear pathway to turn population dynamics into shared prosperity—grounded in evidence, powered by multi-sector coordination, and focused on leaving no one behind.



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# BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Lao PDR is at a pivotal demographic moment. The country's "window" to harness the demographic dividend (DD) opened in 1983 and is projected to close by 2044, leaving a limited period to convert today's age structure into sustained economic gains through targeted human-capital investment and policy action.

Building on the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 25 Nairobi commitments and the pursuit of the three transformative results—zero preventable maternal mortality, zero unmet need for family planning, and zero gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices—the Government has taken steps such as the National Population and Development Policy (2019–2030) with nine priority goals aligned to ICPD. The 1st National Conference on Population and Development (NCPD, 2023) produced 14 strategic recommendations that informed Lao PDR's positions at the 7th Asia-Pacific Population Conference (APPC) and the 57th Commission on Population and Development (CPD), setting a national roadmap for action.

Yet, critical challenges persist and are compounded by financing constraints: high adolescent pregnancy and early marriage (nearly 30.4% married before 18), learning losses and a high out-of-school rate at upper secondary (~58%), and youth migration that widens labor-market mismatches. These factors threaten the realization of the demographic dividend without urgent, coordinated responses.

Against a backdrop of economic slowdown and impending Least Developed Country (LDC) graduation, the 2nd NCPD is framed as a critical juncture to refocus policies and sustainable financing on the 4Es—Educate, Employ, Empower & Engage—and to place population and development at the center of the 10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) 2026–2030. It calls for robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E), prioritization of human capital, and strengthened partnerships to ensure fiscal sustainability and impact.

The 2nd NCPD aims to assess progress on the 14 recommendations, generate targeted, evidence-based policy actions for the NSEDP (including financing mechanisms), strengthen South-South cooperation, and secure renewed domestic and international commitments for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender equality, and youth empowerment—so that Lao PDR can translate its time-bound demographic opportunity into shared, sustainable prosperity.

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## KEY OBJECTIVES

### OBJECTIVE 1 — TAKE STOCK AND UNBLOCK PROGRESS

The Conference aimed to critically assess implementation of the 14 strategic recommendations from the first National Conference on Population and Development, identifying what has moved, what has stalled, and why. By pinpointing policy, coordination, capacity, and financing bottlenecks, participants will agree on practical fixes, timelines, and owners to accelerate delivery—especially where outcomes for adolescents, women, and vulnerable groups lag behind.

### OBJECTIVE 2 — CATALYZE PARTNERSHIP AROUND THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND ROADMAP

To convert demographic potential into growth, no single actor can act alone. The Conference was designed to convene government, development partners, civil society, and the private sector to forge a shared results agenda around the Demographic Dividend Roadmap. This includes clarifying roles, aligning incentives, and establishing a light but effective platform for joint problem-solving and course correction.

### OBJECTIVE 3 — GENERATE TARGETED, EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY FOR THE 10TH NSEDP

Deliberations will translate data and lessons into actionable policy recommendations for inclusion in the 10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2026–2030). A special focus will be placed on sustainable financing—budget tagging, efficiency gains, and innovative instruments—to protect and scale human-capital investments as Lao PDR transitions beyond Least Developed Country status.

### OBJECTIVE 4 — DEEPEN SOUTH–SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION

The Conference served as a surface for exchange on practices from neighboring countries on multisector coordination, legal and policy frameworks, and financing mechanisms for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action. Priority areas include adolescent health, comprehensive sexuality education, midwifery strengthening, GBV response, and data use—aiming to adapt and adopt proven solutions at speed and scale.

### OBJECTIVE 5 — RENEW AND EXPAND FINANCING COMMITMENTS FOR POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Participants came together to agree on fresh commitments to sustain Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, gender equality, and youth empowerment, while investing in human capital development. This includes aligning partner pledges with national priorities, defining clear use-of-funds and results, and anchoring follow-up in existing coordination forums to ensure transparency and accountability.

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# OFFICIAL OPENING

## H.E. PROFESSOR DR. KIKEO KHAIKHAMPHITHOUNE

Deputy Prime Minister, Lao PDR

In the opening session, H.E. Kikeo Khaikhamphithoune, Deputy Prime Minister of the Lao PDR, emphasized the urgent need for stakeholders to consult on progress toward ICPD priorities and SDG 2030 goals, ensuring future plans align with the 10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2026–2030).

The Deputy Prime Minister noted that while world population growth is slowing (projected at 8.2 billion by 2025), regional dynamics vary. He cited neighbors Cambodia and Vietnam, whose distinct aging and fertility challenges offer lessons for Laos.

He highlighted that the Lao PDR’s population is projected to grow from 7.9 million in 2025 to 8.3 million by 2030. The working-age population will become a significant national asset, constituting 67% of the total by 2030. Harnessing this demographic dividend requires sustained investment in human resource development, quality education, employment opportunities, and comprehensive youth health, including reproductive health.

The Deputy Prime Minister thanked all partners for their contributions, which led to significant progress:



**Health:** Lao PDR achieved one of the fastest global reductions in the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), reduced infant mortality, and expanded national health insurance.



**Education:** Key successes include expanded access at all levels, increased gender equality, and developing Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to improve learning outcomes.



**Employment:** Expanding vocational education and private sector collaboration created a skilled workforce across 20 professions, helping reduce illegal migration.



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Despite progress, including implementing 14 recommendations from the First National Conference, he acknowledged the nation still faces critical challenges. He emphasized pressing financial constraints hindering health and education investments, stressing the urgent need for domestic funding to develop a skilled, high-quality workforce. Socially, he highlighted concerns like rising early pregnancy rates, school dropouts (especially girls), and increasing labor migration. These trends, he warned, risk undermining the demographic dividend and expanding the dependent population.

To achieve population and development goals, the Deputy Prime Minister urged all stakeholders to focus on six priority areas:

- ☑ **Strengthen Health:** Expand family planning/reproductive health services and strengthen maternal and child health.
- ☑ **Invest in Education:** Improve the quality of education and vocational training, including lifelong learning, to reduce youth unemployment.
- ☑ **Create Decent Employment:** Generate more job opportunities by supporting the private sector, manufacturing, and tourism.
- ☑ **Strengthen Rural Development:** Improve infrastructure to reduce the risk of urban migration and improve living standards.
- ☑ **Strengthen Institutions:** Integrate population policies into national and local development plans, and promote gender equality.
- ☑ **Promote Partnership:** Mobilize all resources through strengthened cooperation with partners to empower young people.

In his concluding remarks, the Deputy Prime Minister urged attendees to exchange ideas constructively. He emphasized conference outcomes would benchmark previous efforts and guide the Population and Development Strategy (2019–2030) and the Demographic Dividend Roadmap (2025–2030). He added that conference findings and recommendations will be integrated into the 10th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2026–2030).

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## MR. PIO SMITH

### UNFPA Regional Director, Asia and Pacific Regional Office

Mr. Pio Smith, UNFPA’s Regional Director, highlighted Lao PDR’s progress in population and development goals, urging continued investment in women, youth, and data-driven policies to realize the demographic dividend. He thanked the Government of Lao PDR for its leadership in advancing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and Sustainable Development Goals, recalling the ICPD’s focus on reproductive rights, gender equality, and individual choice.

#### 2nd National Conference on Population and Towards Harnessing the Demographic Dividend *Educate, Employ, Empower & Engage*

ວັນທີ: 1 ເດືອນ ຕຸລາ 2025  
ທີ່ນະຄອນຫຼວງວຽງຈັນ ລາວ

Date: 1st October 2025  
Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR



Mr. Smith underscored UNFPA’s work to achieve this vision by strengthening data systems, improving sexual and reproductive health, and addressing gender-based violence and child marriage. He noted global maternal mortality declined by 40% (2000-2023) and modern contraception use nearly doubled, preventing millions of unintended pregnancies. However, progress remains uneven, with marginalized women and girls facing systemic barriers.

However, he cautioned that progress remains uneven, with women and girls living in poverty, in conflict zones, or with disabilities facing systemic barriers that deny them access to essential services.

Reflecting on Lao PDR’s journey, Mr. Smith highlighted that 2025 will mark 50 years of UNFPA’s partnership with the country—a collaboration that has yielded transformative results. He commended the Government’s leadership for achieving one of the world’s largest declines in maternal mortality—an 82 percent reduction from 609 to 112 deaths per 100,000 live births—and for significant gains in child survival. “Behind each statistic lies a human story,” he said, “of mothers who survived childbirth and children who now have a brighter future.”

Looking ahead, he stressed Lao PDR’s pivotal demographic moment. Fertility has declined and life expectancy increased, but the demographic window closes by 2055. “The time to act is now,” he said, urging bold policy and investment choices in education, employment, youth empowerment, and reproductive health as the country approaches Least Developed Country (LDC) graduation in 2026.

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He cited research showing every dollar invested in family planning yields US\$33 in benefits, and a US\$54 million investment between 2025 and 2030 could prevent over 267,000 unintended pregnancies, avert nearly half of all child marriages, and generate over half a billion dollars in economic returns.

Mr. Smith commended the Government for increased domestic financing for family planning, FP2030 commitments, and key national strategies, including the Midwifery Action Plan (2025–2035), the National Plans on Gender Equality and on Violence Against Women and Children, and the Adolescent and Youth Development Strategy. He praised the first Demographic Dividend Roadmap and the Population and Development Committee for multisectoral coordination and human capital investment.

He emphasized that harnessing the demographic dividend requires cross-sector collaboration, public and private resource mobilization, and diverse development partner engagement. He urged continued strong partnerships and South-South cooperation within ASEAN, particularly with Cambodia and Viet Nam, and the Mekong Subregion to drive inclusive regional progress.

Mr. Smith thanked donor governments (Australia, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States) for their steadfast support, and called for innovative financing to sustain the UN’s shared agenda.

Concluding his remarks, he recalled a Lao proverb: “Hua chai lai duang sang saeng suang hai nyai”—“Many hearts together create a brighter light.” He encouraged all partners to continue working together to ensure that when every woman and girl is protected, cared for, and empowered to reach her full potential, she becomes a transformative force driving economic growth and social progress.

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## MR. BAKHODIR BURKHANOV

### UN Resident Coordinator, Lao PDR

The UN Resident Coordinator opened his remarks by commending the Government of Lao PDR, the Ministry of Finance, and UNFPA for organizing the conference and for sustaining the national dialogue on population and development following the first NCPD in 2023. He emphasized that population issues are both drivers and outcomes of development choices, including gender equality, sexual and reproductive health, education, and economic opportunity.

Reflecting on Lao PDR's engagement in regional and global platforms—such as the Asia-Pacific Population Conference and the UN Commission on Population and Development—he noted that the country's leadership has helped elevate population and demographic issues in national policymaking.



Marking the 80th anniversary of the United Nations and 70 years of Lao PDR's UN membership, the Resident Coordinator reaffirmed the UN's commitment to reform and stronger country-level impact through coherence, accountability, and collective delivery. He stressed that translating reforms into tangible results requires the UN in Lao PDR to “work as one” to address fiscal, environmental, and human development challenges through the Cooperation Framework and joint high-impact initiatives.

Focusing on the demographic dividend, he underscored that its realization demands a multi-sectoral, whole-of-society approach, spanning education, health, social protection, employment, and migration. He outlined how different UN agencies are collaborating to:

-  Ensure quality education and skills for the jobs of tomorrow
-  Guarantee universal access to healthcare and sexual and reproductive health services
-  Promote decent work and social protection
-  Support safe and orderly migration and regional skills recognition.

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He highlighted the importance of robust data systems—particularly the upcoming Population and Housing Census—to inform policy and ensure that every investment yields measurable impact. He called for the active participation and leadership of women, adolescents, and youth, emphasizing intergenerational dialogue and inclusiveness as essential to achieving sustainable progress.

The Resident Coordinator also welcomed the participation of senior delegations from Cambodia and Viet Nam, stressing that shared demographic and development challenges require strong regional cooperation and south-south collaboration.

Looking ahead, he reaffirmed the UN Country Team’s commitment to support the 10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan, ensuring it is focused, realistic, and impactful. He highlighted that investing in human capital and youth is key to unlocking the “never-to-be-repeated” demographic opportunity and to sustaining progress as Lao PDR approaches graduation from Least Developed Country status.

He concluded by reaffirming the UN’s long-standing partnership with the Government and people of Lao PDR, pledging continued support through innovative partnerships, financing, and collective action to empower youth and achieve inclusive, sustainable development for all.



# OPENING SESSION

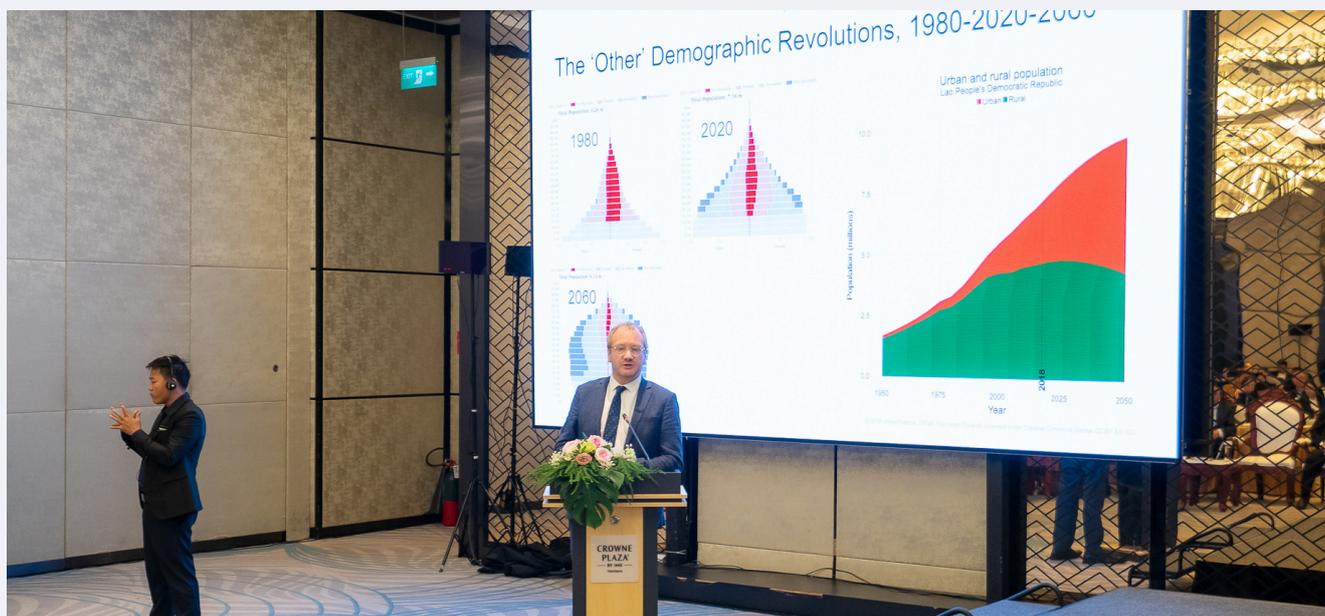
## PRESENTATION ON THE PROGRESS OF 1ST NCPD AND DISCUSSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE FUTURE

This session was chaired by H.E. Mr. Santiphab Phomvihane, Minister of Ministry of Finance, and co-chaired by Mr. Bakhodir Burkhanov, UN Resident Coordinator.

### HOW DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION SHAPES THE FUTURE OF LAOS: MAXIMIZING THE OPPORTUNITIES AND MITIGATING THE CHALLENGES OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

*By Professor Stuart Gietle-Basten, Professor, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology*

Prof. Stuart Gietel-Basten opened his presentation by challenging the perception that demography is a “scary” or purely negative field. He emphasized that while global attention often focuses on population decline or ageing, most of the world continues to grow at a stable pace. Historically, demographic change has driven economic growth and social progress through positive transformations such as lower mortality, improved education, expanded access to health and reproductive services, and greater female empowerment.



He cautioned, however, against common analytical mistakes—believing that the future is certain, assuming that future trends will mirror the past, and failing to learn from current and past experiences. In the Lao PDR context, fertility has fallen from 6.3 in 1980 to 2.5 in 2020, while life expectancy has risen from 48.6 to 69.3 years. As a result, the country now has a larger working-age population and a lower dependency ratio—creating favourable conditions to harness a demographic dividend.



Looking ahead to 2050, he noted that several factors remain uncertain, including migration, the number of children and elderly, and the extent to which the population will be healthy, skilled, and productive. He argued that the country should “embrace uncertainty” and shift from a demographic policy focused merely on numbers to one that maximizes individual potential throughout the life course.

Explaining the concept of the demographic dividend, Prof. Gietel-Basten underlined that a large working-age population can become an engine of rapid growth—but only if complemented by investments in quality education, lifelong learning, decent employment, public health, sexual and reproductive health, gender equality, and inclusive financial and industrial policies. When managed well, these investments can also lead to a second and third demographic dividend, as older populations remain active, healthy, and economically engaged.

In conclusion, he urged policymakers to view Lao PDR’s demographic trajectory as an opportunity rather than a constraint. The country is in a strong position to benefit from its current age structure, but time is limited. Success will depend less on demographic “engineering” and more on enabling people—especially youth—to realize their full potential through education, skills, and inclusive growth.

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## SHARING GOOD PRACTICES ON CAMBODIA'S MULTISECTORAL COORDINATION MECHANISM AND FINANCING TO ACCELERATED IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ICPD POA IN THE CONTEXT OF RAPID DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION.

*By H.E. Dr. Poch Bunnak, Secretary of State, Ministry of Planning, Kingdom of Cambodia*

H.E. Dr. Poch Bunnak expressed appreciation to the Government of Lao PDR and UNFPA for convening the conference and providing a platform to exchange good practices on population and development in the region.

He explained that Cambodia had experienced remarkable economic progress over the past two decades. Following post-conflict recovery in the 2000s, the country achieved an average annual GDP growth of 7–8 percent. Sustained growth and diversification between 2010 and 2019 positioned Cambodia among the world's fastest-growing economies. Despite the economic contraction of -3.1 percent in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, growth resumed in subsequent years, reaching 3–5 percent, driven by garment exports and agriculture.



living in urban areas. The fertility rate declined significantly—from 5.6 in 1990 to 2.5 in 2024—and is projected to reach replacement level by around 2040. Life expectancy increased to 76.6 years, and 63 percent of the population is now of working age, creating a demographic window of opportunity extending until around 2050.

However, challenges were acknowledged, including the need to improve the quality of the labour force through education, skills, and science and technology; to transform a narrow and labour-intensive economy; to strengthen health and social protection systems; and to address gender inequalities, including gender-based violence and unpaid work among women, as well as disparities between urban and rural populations.

Dr. Bunnak recalled that Cambodia's engagement with the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) began in 1994, shortly after the first general election. The first National Population Policy (NPP) was developed in 2003 and later updated as the National Population Policy 2016–2030, reflecting socio-demographic changes. In 2019, at the ICPD25 Summit in Nairobi, Cambodia adopted 12 national commitments to accelerate the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action (PoA) in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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He explained that coordination mechanisms had been established at both national and sub-national levels to ensure progress. The Cambodia Strategic Framework (CSF) 2024–2030 for Implementing the ICPD PoA was developed to operationalize these commitments, focusing on health, education, gender equality, skills development, social protection, and data system management.

It was further highlighted that the Special Committee for Accelerating the ICPD PoA (SC-ICPD PoA) had been created to oversee the process. The General Secretariat for Population and Development (GSPD) of the Ministry of Planning serves as its Secretariat, responsible for coordinating activities among ministries and relevant institutions. At the sub-national level, Capital–Provincial Planning Departments (CPPDs) act as secretariats for local coordination bodies. Close collaboration between the GSPD and CPPDs was described as essential to ensure coherence between national and local implementation.

The need for sustainable financial and operational support for the Secretariat was underlined. While national budget allocations and support from UNFPA have been instrumental, Dr. Bunnak stressed that stronger national ownership and leadership are vital for long-term success. He outlined the three main goals of the Cambodia Strategic Framework 2024–2030:

 To accelerate the implementation of the ICPD PoA and achieve the three transformative outcomes—zero unmet need for family planning, zero preventable maternal deaths, and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices.

 To promote gender equality, women’s empowerment, and universal access to quality sexual and reproductive health services.

 To provide a framework for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of progress on the Nairobi commitments.

He stated that ministries and institutions had developed costed activities and indicators to support these goals, ensuring clear accountability and alignment across sectors.

Dr. Bunnak concluded that the ICPD Programme of Action remains highly relevant to Cambodia's development. Accelerated implementation requires strong multisectoral coordination, sufficient capacity and budget, clear institutional mandates, an integrated monitoring framework, and parliamentary engagement for oversight and budget allocation. He reaffirmed Cambodia's commitment to advancing the ICPD Programme through multisectoral coordination, government ownership, and partnerships with UNFPA and other development partners, aiming for regional progress in realizing individual rights and potential.

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## SHARING GOOD PRACTICE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS TO ADAPT TO RAPID DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFT.

*By H.E. Ms. Vu Thi Hai Yen, Deputy Director General, Department of Sector Finance and Economic Management, Ministry of Finance, Viet Nam*

Viet Nam's Ministry of Finance congratulated Lao PDR on its National Conference on Population and Development, regretting its inability to attend. The statement highlighted how population dynamics are reshaping regional socio-economic development, outlining Viet Nam's rapid demographic transition. Total fertility fell from five children per woman in the 1960s to 1.91 in 2024. With declining mortality and rising life expectancy, Viet Nam entered the ageing stage in 2011 (10.1% aged 60+) and is projected to become an "aged" society by 2036 (20.21% aged 60+). These shifts reflect progress due to better health care, sanitation, and poverty reduction, but demand timely responses as climate-related disasters intensify risks.

The address emphasized strong political leadership for policy reform. Resolution 21-NQ/TW (2017) marked a strategic shift from population control to building a high-quality workforce; preparing for population ageing through care systems, labour market and social protection reforms; and advancing gender equality and women's status.

After seven years, awareness has grown, with many targets met or exceeded. Viet Nam's Human Development Index rose to 0.766 in 2023, and life expectancy continues to increase.

Nonetheless, challenges persist: fertility is below replacement, the sex ratio at birth remains imbalanced, measures to harness the demographic dividend and adapt to ageing are insufficient, and healthy life expectancy lags.

Recent and forthcoming policy actions were set out. The Politburo's 2025 Conclusion 149-KL/TW reinforces Party leadership over the population and development agenda. The amended Population Ordinance secures reproductive rights and choices in line with the ICPD Programme of Action.

A new Party Resolution 72-NQ/TW focuses on strengthening people's physical capacity, intelligence, and healthy ageing as a national goal. In parallel, the Government is preparing a Law on Population and a National Target Programme on Health Care, Population and Development, with provisions for adequate state budgeting, including support for couples to realize fertility intentions.

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To manage ageing and low fertility, Viet Nam is expanding health and social care for older persons; reforming pensions and social security to ensure sustainability and adequacy; and promoting active ageing, lifelong learning, and the participation of older people in economic and community life. Population policies are being integrated into broader socio-economic planning, including childcare, maternal health, and work–life balance measures that make childbearing more affordable and desirable.

The Ministry of Finance Viet Nam is coordinating with line ministries to secure adequate, efficient, and sustainable financing for population and development programmes, while mobilizing private-sector and community resources and deepening cooperation with international partners, including UNFPA, to draw on global experience and best practice.

The statement closed by framing demographic change as both challenge and opportunity—provided countries act early and wisely. Viet Nam affirmed its readiness to strengthen cooperation with Lao PDR and regional neighbours to exchange knowledge and co-design innovative solutions so that no one is left behind on the path to sustainable development. Warm thanks were extended to the Ministry of Finance of Lao PDR for the invitation and hospitality, with best wishes for a successful conference and continued peace, prosperity, and progress for the Lao people.



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## PROGRESS ON THE 14 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 1ST NCPD, INCLUDING COORDINATION, COLLABORATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS AND FRAMEWORK.

*By Mr. Kalouna Nanthavongduangsy, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Finance*

Mr. Kalouna Nanthavongduangsy, Deputy Director General of the Department of Planning at the Ministry of Finance, delivered a presentation on the progress made since the First National Conference on Population and Development (NCPD) held in 2023.

He recalled that the first NCPD brought together more than 200 participants from central and provincial governments, development partners, civil society organizations, academia, the private sector, the media, and youth representatives. He noted that this milestone event reaffirmed the collective commitment of Lao PDR to link population dynamics with the country's development priorities.



He explained that the 2023 conference identified five strategic areas and fourteen concrete recommendations to guide national actions on population and development.

Mr. Kalouna highlighted several major achievements since then. He stated that a study visit to Cambodia was conducted by senior delegates to learn from Cambodia's experience in accelerating the implementation of national commitments under the ICPD Programme of Action. Following this, Lao PDR established the National Population and Development Policy Committee (NPDPC), chaired by the Minister of Finance and composed of 16 members from key ministries and national institutions.

He further announced the completion of the first Demographic Dividend Roadmap (2026–2030), endorsed by the Minister of Finance, which provides strategic direction for translating population trends into economic growth opportunities. He added that the National Midwifery Strategy and Action Plan (2026–2035) has been developed and is expected to be endorsed by the end of this year.

Mr. Kalouna also noted progress in the area of reproductive health and education. He said that a comprehensive Family Planning Strategy with a costed implementation plan is currently being developed to meet Lao PDR's FP2030 commitments.

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He mentioned that Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) has been integrated across primary, secondary, and higher education, and that adolescent and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services are now being scaled up nationwide.

He highlighted the availability of the Lao Social Indicator Survey III (2023) and ongoing preparations for the Fifth Population and Housing Census (2025), which will provide critical data to guide policy planning. He also introduced a new dashboard for monitoring the National Population and Development Policy (2019–2030), which has been developed to enhance data-driven decision-making.

Turning to challenges, Mr. Kalouna emphasized the need for stronger inter-sectoral coordination to implement the population and development agenda effectively. He pointed out that budget allocations for health, education, and youth training remain limited and called for increased government and partner investments. He stressed the importance of developing a clear monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress and results.

He also underlined the need for more integrated and multisectoral approaches to ensure that population and development initiatives are effectively implemented. In addition, he encouraged the strengthening of international and South–South cooperation to support knowledge exchange and resource mobilization in the population development agenda.

In conclusion, Mr. Kalouna reaffirmed the Government’s commitment to advancing the ICPD Programme of Action through coordinated efforts and partnerships, ensuring that population and development policies contribute to sustainable growth and improved well-being for all Lao people.



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# PLENARY SESSION

## FINANCING THE FUTURE: SECURING LAO PDR'S DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND IN A POST-LDC ERA

*Emerging mega population trends, macro-level challenges of sustainable financing and coordinating human capital investments in the context of demographic dividend, LDC graduation and evolving global financial landscapes.*

### OBJECTIVE

Rapporteurs from the parallel sessions presented key recommendations and a way forward for each thematic area.

### MODERATOR

Mme. Phetsamone Sone, Head of Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Finance

### PANEL MEMBERS

- Ms. Latdavanh Songvilay, Director General, Macroeconomic Research Institute, Lao Academy of Social and Economic Sciences.
- Prof. Stuart Gietel Basten, Professor, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
- Ms. Viengkhone Chindavong, Deputy Director General, State Budget Department, Ministry of Finance
- Ms. Hilda Shijaku, Senior Country Economist, the World Bank
- Mr. Soukhtavi Chowdhury, Chairman and Managing Director of the Lao HSMM Group, recipient of the Outstanding ASEAN Entrepreneur Lifetime Award.
- Mr. Murali Viswanathan, Cluster General Manager, Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn and Suites



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## KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

### *Financing Human Capital to Secure Demographic Dividend and Prepare for Laos' Post-LDC Transition*

Ms. Hilda noted that Lao PDR faces a tight fiscal situation due to high debt and competing demands for infrastructure, climate resilience, and social spending.

As concessional financing decreases after graduation, the country must increasingly rely on domestic resource mobilization, efficient spending, and innovative partnerships. She emphasized that financing involves not just increasing resources but also aligning them with priorities, directing every kip toward human capital, resilience, youth, and women's empowerment.



Regarding securing the demographic dividend, Ms. Shijaku stressed that with over 80,000 young people entering the labor market annually, Laos has a narrow window to realize its demographic dividend. She outlined three investment priorities:

- Health and nutrition, to ensure children can learn and thrive.
- Education and skills development, to prepare youth for green and digital economies.
- Decent work and entrepreneurship, to enable young people to apply their skills productively.

Graduation in 2026 will be a historic achievement, reflecting progress in health, education, and poverty reduction. However, it will also bring reduced concessional finance and trade preferences, alongside increasing global and climate challenges. Ms. Shijaku called for stronger institutions, economic diversification, and protection of human capital investments as crucial for sustaining progress and maintaining resilience.

She underscored that the government alone cannot finance the future. Success requires coordinated action across ministries, provinces, the private sector, civil society, and development partners. The 2023 multi-sectoral pledge provides a foundation that now needs to be scaled up.

Ms. Shijaku concluded that the demographic dividend is not automatic, and the post-LDC transition will test Laos' resilience. With sustained financing, sound prioritization, and strong partnerships, the country can transform these challenges into opportunities.

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## *Economic and sectoral focus to leverage the Demographic Dividend in Lao PDR*

Ms. Latdavanh Songvilay, Director General of Macroeconomic Research Institute, Lao Academy of Social and Economic Science addressed the importance of fully leveraging Lao PDR's demographic dividend by ensuring young people are healthy, educated, and economically engaged. She highlighted three priority areas beyond health and education. She urged the development of sectors beyond natural resources, including manufacturing, logistics, tourism, and agricultural product processing, to create more jobs. She emphasized enhancing rural employment through value-added agricultural products and attracting foreign investment to modernize sectors, introduce technology, and generate high-value jobs. Ms. Songvilay also called for stronger support for SMEs to create youth employment, including business development centers and learning hubs.

She stressed that educational attainment alone is insufficient and advocated expanding vocational training aligned with labor market demand, particularly in digital literacy, advanced technologies, and logistics. Collaboration between schools, vocational centers, and companies is critical to ensure workforce readiness.

She highlighted the need for a robust Labor Market Information System to guide career decisions, reduce skill mismatches, and connect graduates with employers.



Ms. Songvilay highlighted that the integration of research into policy is hampered by insufficient coordination, leading to limited research uptake in policymaking. She called for enhanced collaboration among research institutions, policymakers, and development partners, stressing the need for policy-relevant research that aligns with national and sectoral priorities.

She recommended prioritizing labor skills development, expanding vocational training, engaging the private sector, and strengthening labor information systems. MRI can support monitoring, evaluation, and evidence-based research to ensure effective implementation.

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## Strategic Planning for 10th NSEDP and LDC graduation

Ms. Viengkhone Chindavong, Deputy Director General of the State Budget Department at the Ministry of Finance, addressed questions regarding fiscal strategies for health and education investment as the country prepares for the 10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) and approaches LDC graduation. The Ministry of Finance (MoF) acknowledges that while health and education are prioritized, current budget allocations are insufficient due to fiscal limitations. However, the government has increased funding in specific areas:



- Education: To support volunteer and retired teachers, soldiers involved in teaching and border protection, school meals, student incentives, and ethnic and disabled students.
- Health: To cover health insurance and fund the blood bank.
- Labor and Social Welfare: To benefit individuals who have contributed to national protection and development since 1954.

Regarding the obstacle to expanding domestic resource mobilization, Ms. Chindavong explained that the State Budget Department has revised its strategy to include a fiscal budget and budget plan incorporating a medium-term work plan (1-2 years). This new approach aims to facilitate detailed budget planning and allocation to line ministries and government organizations. The objective is to ensure effective and efficient government budget implementation, align with the 10th NSEDP, and prevent lump-sum budget allocations lacking detailed breakdowns.

Mr. Viswanathan, Cluster General Manager of Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn and Suites, presented three key policy recommendations from the private sector to enhance Laos' hospitality and tourism environment, highlighting the importance of public-private collaboration for sustainable growth.

He proposed that the Ministry of Finance revise foreign exchange regulations to permit hotels to conduct regulated currency exchange, aligning with regional practices. He emphasized that hotels offer secure and compliant environments, and such flexibility would boost guest convenience and increase Laos' foreign exchange earnings.

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He urged the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to provide closer oversight of service charge distribution and wage transparency. This, he noted, would ensure fair remuneration for hotel employees, align with international standards to protect workers' rights, and increase national tax revenues.

He called upon the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism to establish a more strategic framework for guiding hotel development, specifically defining the number, class, and location of establishments. This, he suggested, would ensure balanced growth and quality standards, drawing lessons from countries like Bali and Singapore.

Mr. Viswanathan also detailed the hotel's partnership with UNFPA and technical colleges, which aims to promote youth skills development. This joint program has already trained 15 students, with five (including two women and one transgender trainee) securing full-time employment. A new initiative, 'Sharing New Life,' encourages hotel guests to support UNFPA's maternal programs.

He concluded by reaffirming the industry's commitment to continuous learning and improvement, stating: "We may not get everything right, but we learn and improve — that is the spirit we live by."

### *Harnessing Human Potential to Realize Laos' Demographic Dividend*

Prof. Gietel-Basten reflected on the demographic transition in Lao PDR, emphasizing that while global discussions often focus on population decline or "birth-rate crises," the Lao story is one of opportunity rather than alarm.

He noted that fertility rates have fallen from over six children per woman in the 1980s to about 2.5 today, while life expectancy has increased substantially. This shift has created a demographic window—a period when the working-age population outnumbered dependents, offering a chance for accelerated growth.

He cautioned that realizing the demographic dividend in Laos is not automatic, requiring an integrated policy approach focused on empowering individuals throughout their lives to reach their full potential. Instead of a narrow focus on population control or fertility rates, policies should prioritize education and skills development aligned with labor market demands, decent and inclusive employment opportunities, and comprehensive healthcare and reproductive health services.

Prof. Gietel-Basten urged policymakers to ask whether the system allows every young person to finish school, find meaningful work, and build a healthy family by choice. Such a lifecycle approach, he explained, creates a compounding effect that strengthens social resilience and economic productivity over time.

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He highlighted the significance of embracing uncertainty, recognizing that migration patterns, labor demands, and skill prerequisites are subject to change. He emphasized that the goal is not to foresee a predetermined future but to cultivate a flexible and adaptable populace capable of flourishing amidst change.

Prof. Gietel-Basten concluded that Laos is presented with a time-limited demographic opportunity. The nation's trajectory does not need to mimic that of others. Instead, by prioritizing human potential through advancements in education, health, and empowerment, Laos can successfully navigate demographic transition, mitigate future ageing challenges, and build a prosperous, resilient, and inclusive society.

### *Human Capital as the Core Investment of Business Growth*

Mr. Chowdhury emphasized the importance of investing in employees as the true foundation of a company's success. He noted that many Lao employees already possess excellent skills, with some having worked in their companies for more than 15 to 17 years. According to him, it is the responsibility of the employer to recognize, retain, and further develop this talent.

He highlighted that investment should not only be seen in terms of capital or infrastructure but also in protecting and nurturing employees, who are the company's real assets. With increasing numbers of Lao workers seeking better opportunities abroad in Thailand, Korea, and beyond, he stressed the need to strengthen workplace culture, improve employee benefits, and create pathways for career growth to retain skilled talent within the country.

Mr. Chowdhury called for collective action among companies and public-private collaboration to expand vocational and industry-aligned training. While technical schools and vocational centres can provide basic instruction, he emphasized that companies must take the lead in continuous, hands-on learning that develops both technical skills and professional values. This aligns with Laos' broader vision to bridge workforce gaps through strategic PPPs in education, digital skills, and technology.

He also shared his personal experience of having initially recruited employees from abroad, including India, but gradually transitioning to hiring local staff from within Laos. He proudly noted that the local employees have proven to be highly capable—handling development, IT, and accounting systems with remarkable competence, often surpassing the performance of expatriate staff.

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Mr. Chowdhury concluded by encouraging companies to work together to build a sustainable and inclusive business culture that prioritizes Lao employees, ensuring they are motivated to stay and contribute to the country's growth. Drawing on his 25 years of experience, he reaffirmed his belief that strong company culture, fair treatment, and consistent investment in people are the keys to long-term success.

### *Policy Recommendations for Inclusive Growth in Hospitality*

Mr. Murali Viswanathan, Cluster General Manager, Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn and Suites, outlined three specific policy recommendations that the private sector would like to see addressed to strengthen the business environment and enhance the contribution of the hospitality industry to the Lao economy.

He first directed a recommendation to the Ministry of Finance, highlighting the need to reform foreign exchange regulations to facilitate business operations in foreign currency. He explained that hospitality is a major generator of foreign exchange income and cited examples from Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam where hotels are authorized to provide foreign currency exchange services directly to guests. He noted that hotels are among the safest and most regulated establishments, where clients are registered with passport and identity verification, and therefore could safely handle foreign exchange transactions if a proper policy framework were introduced.

His second recommendation was addressed to the Ministry of Labour, where he raised two key concerns. First, he pointed out the lack of uniformity in service charge practices across the hospitality sector. While a standard 10% service charge should be applied and distributed to employees, he observed that not all companies comply with this, depriving workers of fair remuneration. He urged the Ministry to review labour and accounting practices to ensure fair wages and compliance with international standards.

Second, he mentioned discrepancies in tax reporting and income disclosure, calling on the Ministry to increase oversight and scrutiny in order to ensure transparency and generate fair income tax revenue for the government.

He also addressed the Ministry of Tourism, emphasizing the need for a structured and strategic approach to hotel development in Laos. He noted that the current proliferation of hotels and brands lacks coordination and clear classification by category and service level. He suggested that Laos could draw lessons from successful markets like Bali and Singapore, which developed well-defined strategies for sustainable tourism growth.

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He recommended adopting a “Blue Ocean Strategy” to structure hotel development—deciding how many hotels to build, in which regions, and of what standard—to ensure balanced growth and improved competitiveness.

He then expressed appreciation for the partnership with UNFPA, recognizing its role in promoting sustainable employment, youth empowerment, and vocational skills development. He recalled that in previous years, the hotel had hosted a group of women trainees who were granted financial support at the end of the programme; however, he admitted that follow-up and sustainability mechanisms were lacking.

Learning from that experience, he said, the company adjusted its approach in 2025 by formalizing cooperation with UNFPA and vocational universities, through which 15 young students—from diverse educational and socio-economic backgrounds—were trained. Of these, five (including two women and one transgender individual) have since been offered full-time employment, primarily in the kitchen team, which he presented as a model of inclusive and practical youth empowerment.

He also introduced a new initiative titled “Unchained Mind,” through which hotel guests and patrons are encouraged to contribute to social impact efforts. Under this initiative, a portion of the proceeds from guest stays and events is donated directly to UNFPA to support programmes related to youth skills and gender equality.

He concluded by reaffirming his commitment to continuous improvement, admitting that the company does not always get everything right but remains open to learning, evolving, and upholding the spirit of partnership and social responsibility.



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# REMARKS BY DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVES AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

## H.E. MS. BENITA SOMMERVILLE

### Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Australia

H.E. Ms. Benita Sommerville, Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of Australia, expressed appreciation for the invitation to speak at the Second National Conference on Population and Development (NCPD), recalling Australia’s participation in the first NCPD in October 2023.

She emphasized that Lao PDR’s National Population and Development Policy (2019–2030) is a landmark framework that has significantly strengthened the country’s planning and responses to meet people’s needs. She noted its alignment with global progress over the past decade, particularly in improving health outcomes and reducing maternal mortality, key indicators of sustainable human development.

Ms. Sommerville stated that equitable population and development policies are crucial priorities for any government, as they develop a nation’s greatest resource—its people. She underlined that investing in human capital—education, health, and wellbeing—leads to stronger economic participation and resilience.

She stressed that empowering women, gender equality, investing in youth, and realizing universal sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are central to successful population development policies. These principles are also core to the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), to which both Laos and Australia are signatories.

Ms. Sommerville reaffirmed Australia’s deep commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action, domestically and internationally. She described how, in 2019, the Australian Government established the National Population and Planning Framework to improve population planning through transparency and coordination.



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She also mentioned the Centre for Population, which publishes an annual Population Statement providing national data, analysis, and projections for policy decisions.

She further cited key Australian policy instruments supporting population and gender equality, including the National Women’s Health Strategy 2020–2030, ensuring universal SRH access for all women and girls, and the International Gender Equality Strategy, launched this year to guide Australia’s global efforts in advancing gender equality and SRHR.

Ms. Sommerville acknowledged that the journey toward equitable population and development outcomes is ongoing. She recalled that during the 2023 NCPD, Australia encouraged Lao voices on inclusive population and development to be heard more prominently globally. Since then, Australia hosted two side events—in 2024 and 2025—at the UN Commission on Population and Development (CPD) in New York, to showcase Lao PDR’s progress and commitment.

She noted with appreciation Dr. Bounkham from the Ministry of Health’s participation in the 2025 side event, where she presented Lao PDR’s multi-sectoral approach. Ms. Sommerville commended this collaborative model as a best practice ensuring engagement and coordination across government sectors.

She said that Laos’ participation in these events—alongside Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand—demonstrated the regional and global support for the ICPD agenda.

Looking ahead, Ms. Sommerville emphasized that Lao PDR’s Population and Development Policy will remain vital as the country navigates complex national and global changes, including LDC graduation, harnessing the demographic dividend, and adapting to shifts in the international development landscape. She noted Lao PDR’s unique advantage in embracing comprehensive approaches, including:

- ✔ The rollout of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) to build understanding of health, rights, and resilience;
- ✔ Efforts to end adolescent and unintended pregnancies by improving access to contraceptives for all young people;
- ✔ Recognition of the need to eliminate harmful practices, especially child, early and forced marriage; and
- ✔ A strong commitment to evidence-based decision-making, at a time when misinformation poses growing challenges.

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She highlighted Australia’s concrete contributions over the past 18 months supporting Lao PDR’s population and development priorities:

- » Funding through UNICEF and UNFPA to accelerate efforts to end child, early, and forced marriage, and technical assistance that helped integrate child marriage prevention as a cross-sectoral priority in the new National Action Plan on ending violence against children and women;
- » Increased support to the Promotion of Family Health Association to expand access to SRH services;
- » Support for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) through UNFPA, including the funding of two new shelters and establishment of the country’s first One-Stop Service Centre; and
- » Support for the upcoming 2025 Population and Housing Census, providing essential data for planning.

She underlined that these initiatives build upon more than 30 years of Australian cooperation with Lao PDR in education and human resource development.

In closing, Ms. Sommerville reaffirmed Australia’s enduring partnership with the Government of Lao PDR and its commitment to advancing gender equality, SRHR, and inclusive population and development. She called on the Government and partners to accelerate collective efforts in the final four years before 2030 to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.



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## H.E. MS. CAITLIN SIEVERT

### Charge d’Affaires of Canada

Ms. Caitlin Sievert of Canada expressed honor in participating in the Second National Conference on Population and Development (NCPD), commending Lao PDR and UNFPA for the important dialogue platform. Canada fully aligned with other development partners, reaffirming its commitment to the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action.



Under Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy and 10-Year Commitment to Global Health and Rights, SRHR, maternal and child health, adolescent services, and gender-responsive programming are top priorities, foundational to sustainable development and human dignity.

Through contributions to UNFPA, UNICEF, and other multilateral partners, Canada supports strengthening health systems, promoting people-centered policies, and advancing inclusive, evidence-based development. Canada’s flagship initiative, SheSOARS (Strengthening Opportunities in Accessing Reproductive Services), delivers SRHR services in neglected areas, fragile contexts, and underserved communities.

Since the first NCPD, Canada’s commitments have grown bolder, supported by stronger funding, a clearer focus on adolescents, and greater emphasis on accountability and data. Canada’s strong partnership with ASEAN reflects a shared commitment to inclusive and sustainable development, aligning with Lao PDR Deputy Prime Minister’s priority areas, especially gender equality, women’s leadership, and community-level empowerment.

In Lao PDR, she said, Canada’s cooperation includes several targeted initiatives:

- The SEED Scholarship Program, which equips youth across Southeast Asia with the skills needed for sustainable growth and poverty reduction;
- Support to the Mekong River Commission, promoting inclusive economic development, improved water governance, and community adaptation—especially for youth and farmers—to changing river conditions; and
- A newly launched project with the ILO and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, addressing the dignity of labour, employment equity, and the elimination of child labour.

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At the community level, Canada strengthens local partnerships through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI), supporting community-driven, small-scale projects with tangible impact, integrating gender equality and women’s empowerment. In 2025, Canada supports seven local initiatives focusing on health, early childhood and forced marriage prevention, and women’s economic empowerment.

Canada will continue deploying technical and financial resources to promote universal access to SRHR, gender equality, and protection from violence, globally and within Lao PDR. Canada remains committed to multilateral cooperation, particularly through UNFPA, to ensure essential services reach adolescents, ethnic minorities, and remote communities.

Canada intends to strengthen civil society engagement and local actor participation to expand awareness, improve prevention, and shift harmful gender and social norms. Canada will also mainstream gender equality across all sectors – including health, education, governance, skills development, and climate resilience.

Ms. Sievert stressed the importance of flexibility and responsiveness in crisis contexts, ensuring that life-saving reproductive health and protection services remain available to women, adolescents, and youth even in times of instability. . Finally, she reaffirmed Canada’s dedication to enhanced accountability through data, monitoring, and evidence-based interventions, ensuring no one is left behind.

In conclusion, Ms. Caitlin Sievert reaffirmed Canada as a steadfast partner in advancing population and development priorities in Lao PDR and across the region, working together to harness the demographic dividend and build an inclusive, equitable, and resilient future.



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## H.E. MR. MARK GALLAGHER

### Ambassador of the European Union

H.E. Mr. Mark Gallagher, Ambassador of the European Union to the Lao PDR, expressed his privilege to participate in the Second National Conference on Population and Development. He congratulated Lao PDR on preparing to graduate from LDC status in 2026, highlighting this as a reflection of resilience and progress, but also bringing new responsibilities and challenges.

He noted that Lao PDR has one of Southeast Asia's youngest populations, with over half its citizens under 25. This represents a demographic moment of great promise, where youth energy can drive inclusive growth, innovation, and competitiveness. However, he cautioned that if youth potential is not harnessed, risks of irregular migration, underemployment, and inequality will deepen.

Turning to the economic outlook, Ambassador Gallagher highlighted that the post-LDC era introduces a new financial landscape. Concessional aid and preferential trade arrangements will decline, while new opportunities will emerge for accessing international markets, private capital, and innovative financing mechanisms like blended finance, guarantees, and partnerships with banks, development finance institutions, and private investors.

He underscored that mobilizing domestic resources and attracting sustainable investment will be key. However, private investors are drawn to countries with a skilled workforce, stressing that infrastructure and technology require human capital to yield returns.

Ambassador Gallagher emphasized that education, vocational training, and lifelong learning are strategic economic investments, not merely social objectives. He encouraged the Government of Lao PDR to center human capital development in its forthcoming 10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2026–2030), ensuring investments in people go hand in hand with infrastructure development to achieve a demographic dividend.



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He reaffirmed the European Union and its Team Europe partners as strong allies. He outlined how, through Global Gateway and the upcoming cooperation framework for 2028–2034, the EU mobilizes public and private resources, using blended finance and guarantees to maximize development impact. This approach focuses on sustainable, value-driven infrastructure, clean energy, digitalization, and climate-smart development, with investments empowering people.

Ambassador Gallagher said by linking finance with human capital development, the EU aims to create opportunities for Lao youth—enabling them to become innovators, entrepreneurs, and leaders driving a prosperous and sustainable future.

He described the EU’s direct contributions to human capital development in Lao PDR through its Budget Support Programme for the Education Sector (PESIG), amounting to €52 million for 2023–2027. This includes a dedicated component, Skills for Tourism, Agriculture and Forestry (STAF), equipping young people with technical knowledge and professional skills for decent employment in the private sector.

He also noted the EU’s support for the Five-Year Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Development Plan (2026–2030) and the Ten-Year Master Plan for the Lao Labour Market Information System (2025–2034). These frameworks will help align labor supply with market demand, identify skills gaps, and promote evidence-based policymaking. Additionally, he announced €3.7 million allocated to upgrade facilities in 11 public vocational training institutes across Lao PDR, ensuring modern learning environments.

In conclusion, Ambassador Gallagher stressed that harnessing the demographic dividend requires coordinated action—sound policies, smart financing, and strong investment in people. He reiterated that the European Union is a reliable, long-term partner, committed to supporting Lao PDR to ensure its youthful population becomes an engine of prosperity in the post-LDC era.

He concluded by affirming that the future of Lao PDR is youthful, and with the right investments, this future can be smart, green, and sustainable.

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## H.E. MR. THOMAS LAMMAR

### Charge d’Affaires of Luxembourg

Mr. Thomas Lammar, Chargé d’affaires of the Embassy of Luxembourg, expressed pleasure in joining the Second National Conference on Population and Development (NCPD) and thanked the Government of Lao PDR and UNFPA.

He noted Luxembourg aligned with the EU Ambassador’s statement but focused on the health sector, where Luxembourg has long-standing cooperation with Lao PDR.

He reaffirmed Luxembourg’s recognition of SRHR, gender equality, and empowerment of women, children, and adolescents as central to sustainable development. He reiterated Luxembourg’s strong commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action and its review outcomes, pledging continued support to achieve zero preventable maternal deaths, zero unmet need for family planning, and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices by 2030.

Mr. Lammar highlighted Luxembourg as one of UNFPA’s most consistent partners and the largest per capita donor to UNFPA’s mandate, a commitment recently renewed during the United Nations General Assembly in New York.



He recalled Luxembourg’s cooperation with Lao PDR began in 1997, with health and nutrition being a primary engagement area under the 5th Lao–Luxembourg Indicative Cooperation Programme (ICP V), contributing over 65 million euros. Technical and vocational education is another key support area.

He explained that Luxembourg works closely with the Government of Lao PDR, LuxDev, and UNFPA to advance reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (RMNCAH). He welcomed the private sector’s engagement in this shared mission, recognizing it as an essential actor in advancing public health and human capital development.

Mr. Lammar highlighted that since 2011, Luxembourg has supported a UN Joint Programme with the Ministry of Health, UNFPA, UNICEF, and WHO to ensure universal access to quality, affordable reproductive health services, including comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). Luxembourg intends to renew this support aligned with the next RMNCAH Strategy.

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He also underscored Luxembourg’s collaboration with the Lao Statistics Bureau, UNFPA, and STATEC, supporting demographic data collection and analysis through initiatives like the Population and Housing Census and the Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS), vital for evidence-based policymaking, especially in health.

Mr. Lammar noted that these partnerships have already yielded significant results, including reductions in child mortality, improvements in maternal health, and the training and deployment of midwives, particularly from ethnic minority communities, to extend essential services to remote and vulnerable areas. He also cited progress in family planning and reproductive rights, and the expansion of youth-friendly health services across the country.

As Lao PDR approaches LDC graduation and prepares the 10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP), he encouraged continued public investment in human capital, emphasizing health, education, and women and girls' empowerment. He welcomed the Deputy Prime Minister’s remarks reaffirming these as national priorities, stressing that only a healthy and empowered population can fully contribute to socio-economic development.

In conclusion, Mr. Lammar reaffirmed Luxembourg’s unwavering commitment to work with the Government of Lao PDR, UNFPA, LuxDev, and other partners to advance shared priorities and ensure every young Lao person reaches their full potential before the demographic window closes.

He closed his statement by expressing confidence that continued collaboration will strengthen the foundations for a healthier, more equitable, and prosperous Lao PDR.



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## H.E. MR. VLADIMIR KALININ

### Ambassador of Russian Federation

Over the past years Russia has been implementing a number of significant projects in the spheres of human resources, public health, human resources, professional skills development and UXO clearance.

Noteworthy among these charitable programs are the on-going rehabilitation of the "Mittaphab" Hospital of the Lao-Russian Friendship. The implementation of the construction project of the Russian-Lao school in Vientiane, providing of 100 scholarships for Lao students every year to study in the Russian universities, the regular donation in cooperation with the UN of food products to the Lao PDR as a part of our humanitarian aid to contribute to the daily healthy meal for Lao people improving their living standards and countering malnutrition.

It is also worth noting the completion of the T stage of demining of the Lao territories under the guidance of the Russian demining specialists of the Mine Clearance Unit. During this period 18.28 hectares of land in the Houaphanh Province were cleared and 333 explosive objects were found. All in all, over the years of our UXO cooperation, 208.48 hectares of Bolikhamsay, Xienghouang, Houaphanh and Vientiane provinces have been cleared, thus providing the local communities to use these lands for agricultural purposes.

And this practical assistance to the Lao PDR from the Russian Federation will be continued. I hope it will contribute to the joint efforts of the international community to drive economic and social development in the Lao PDR.



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# PARALLEL SESSIONS

## SESSION 1: HEALTHY PEOPLE, PROSPEROUS NATION — ACCELERATING SRHR AND GEWE TO UNLOCK THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND

*Focus: Assessing progress and identifying actions to advance health-related recommendations of the 1st NCPD.*

### OBJECTIVE

This session aimed to move beyond identifying challenges to strategizing concrete, evidence-based solutions. Using findings from the Investment Case, discussions assessed progress on health-related recommendations from the First National Conference on Population and Development (2023), with a focus on addressing financing gaps and generating social and economic returns through improved sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE).

The session sought to formulate actionable recommendations for increased domestic financing and strategic partnerships to build a healthy, empowered, and productive workforce capable of driving sustainable growth and realizing the demographic dividend.

### MODERATOR

Dr. Chansaly Phommavong, Deputy Director General, Department of Planning and Finance, Ministry of Health

### PANEL MEMBERS

- Ms. Bounluea Chanthapomma, Director General, Counselling and Protection Center for Women and Children, Lao Women's Union
- Dr. Ketkesone Prasisombath, Deputy Director General, Department of Hygiene and Health Promotion, Ministry of Health
- Dr. Christopher Fitzpatrick, Deputy Representative, WHO
- Ms. Magali Romedenne, Deputy Representative, UNICEF
- Ms. Siriphone Sally Sakulku, SRH Programme Coordinator, UNFPA

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## KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

### *Family Planning and Implementation Gaps (MOH)*

Dr. Ketkesone Prasisombath reported substantial progress in implementing commitments from the first NCPD, particularly regarding the development of a costed plan for family planning under the FP2030 national commitment.

He explained that the plan remains under development and builds on findings from the FP Landscaping Analysis, conducted with UNFPA support. A Family Planning Transition Plan, integrating total market analysis and costing, will be finalized by the end of this year, with completion expected in 2026.

However, he identified capacity gaps as the key obstacle, noting that evaluation findings from the RMNCAH Strategy showed stagnation in the use of modern contraceptive methods. This was largely attributed to weak counselling skills among providers, as only 7.3% of non-users received counselling on modern methods at clinics. He stressed that quality of service delivery and provider capacity must be strengthened to improve coverage and outcomes.

### *Midwifery Action Plan (UNFPA)*

Ms. Siriphone Sakulku of UNFPA emphasized that one of the 14 recommendations from the first NCPD—developing a new midwifery strategy—has now been achieved. In consultation with the Ministry of Health, UNFPA supported the development of the Lao PDR Midwifery Action Plan 2025–2035, a ten-year roadmap aligned with the RMNCAH Strategy, the WHO Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery, and the UNFPA Global Midwifery Strategy.

The plan focuses on five priority areas: Education, Enabling Environment, Community Engagement, Workforce Development, and Regulation. It provides a comprehensive framework to strengthen maternal and newborn health services, particularly in rural and remote areas, with an M&E framework for monitoring progress.

She added that the Department of Health Personnel (DHP) will lead the implementation and called for strong advocacy and resource mobilization to ensure full funding. She noted that investing in midwives could address over 86% of reproductive health interventions, prevent maternal and child deaths, and yield substantial economic benefits.

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## FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

### *Last-Mile Distribution and Contraceptive Access (MOH)*

In a follow-up question, Dr. Ketkesone explained that while UNFPA currently covers around 90% of contraceptive supplies, ensuring last-mile delivery remains a priority. The Ministry is enhancing supply tracking through the mSupply software and developing individual tracking systems to better identify gaps at community level.

He highlighted the introduction of Sayana Press (DMPA-SC), a self-injectable contraceptive that allows women to administer doses themselves, improving accessibility for those in remote areas and reducing dependency on health facilities.



### *Scaling Up Adolescent and Youth-Friendly Services (UNFPA)*

Ms. Siriphone Sally Sakulku, stressed that scaling up Adolescent and Youth-Friendly Services (AYFS) requires a multi-pronged approach. The first step, she said, is institutionalization—ensuring AYFS is integrated into the 10th Health Sector Plan to secure budget allocation. Second, linking AYFS with large-scale programmes such as HANSA and Nutrition can strengthen outreach and prevent adolescent pregnancies and related complications.

She also recommended leveraging local organizations working in communities to promote awareness and service delivery, and integrating AYFS modules into pre-service curricula for all health professionals to ensure sustainable capacity across the system.

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## KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE DISCUSSION

- Multi-sector collaboration remains essential to achieving SRHR and GEWE outcomes.
- Investing in the health workforce, particularly midwives, provides one of the highest returns for reducing maternal mortality and enabling women's participation in the economy.
- Quality counselling and service delivery are key bottlenecks that require targeted training and continuous supervision.
- Digital tools and data systems such as e-CRVS, HMIS, and mSupply offer untapped potential to guide equitable resource allocation.
- Youth engagement and integration of SRHR services into broader health and education programmes are vital for achieving demographic dividend goals.

## CALLS FOR ACTIONS

### *Universal Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and a Health Workforce that Reaches Everyone*

- Operationalize the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Strategy and Action Plan (2026–2030), securing sustainable financing for FP2030 commitments and contraceptive security.
- Implement the Midwifery Action Plan (2025–2035), ensuring culturally appropriate, respectful, and quality service delivery with equitable deployment of midwives and strengthened community trust, especially in rural and hard-to-reach areas.
- Expand adolescent-friendly counselling to reduce unmet needs for family planning and prevent adolescent pregnancies.

### *Breaking the Cycle of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Empowering Women and Girls*

- Strengthen GBV prevention, protection, and response across health, social, and justice sectors, ensuring survivor-centered, accessible, and high-quality services.
- Expand counselling and protection centers for women and children and integrate them into multi-sectoral referral pathways.
- Conduct the Second National Survey on Violence Against Women to generate updated evidence for stronger policies, services, and accountability.

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## SESSION 2: FROM POTENTIAL TO POWER – INVESTING IN YOUTH EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND ENGAGEMENT TO REALIZE THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDENDS

*Focus: Exploring solutions and strategies to address skills mismatch, scale the 'Noi Framework', and empower youth.*

### OBJECTIVE

To exchange and discuss Lao youth, health, resilience, and especially education, with a view to placing youth at the heart of national development.

### MODERATOR

Mr. Thatsaphone Lertthavone, Director of the International Relations-Cooperation Division, Lao Youth Union

### PANEL MEMBERS

- Mr. Maaly Vorabouth, Deputy Director General of the Planning Department, MoES
- Ms. Manivanh Kittilath, Deputy Director General of the Department of Policies for Devotees, Persons with Disability and Older Persons, MoLSW
- Ms. Vatsaline Bounmixay, Director of Research and Compilation Division, Cabinet Office, Lao Youth Union
- Mr. Bountong Xayyavong, Director of TVET Curriculum and Teaching-Learning Media Development Division, Vocational Education Development Institute (VETDI), MoES
- Mr. Thiphasouda Viengprasith, Programme Coordinator, ILO
- Ms. Yoko Kobayashi, Chief of Child Protection Unit, UNICEF
- Ms. Carol Mortensen, Country Director, Plan International



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## KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

### *Youth as Drivers of the Demographic Dividend*

Ms. Phatsaline Bounmixay of the Lao Youth Union (LYU) expressed support for the concept of a National Youth Advisory Group. She further explained that this group could leverage the existing LYU framework, which includes a five-year development plan, the Youth and Adolescent Development Strategy, and the Youth Federation. This approach would align with the LYU's priority, as outlined in its 2021–2030 National Youth Strategy and new 5-year plan, to enhance youth involvement in policy and decision-making processes.

With 70% of its population of working age, Lao PDR has a significant opportunity to leverage its demographic dividend. To realize this potential, urgent investment in quality education, human capital development, and social protection is crucial. Mr. Maaly Vorabouth of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) emphasized the importance of monitoring Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and committed to integrating CSE indicators into the Education Management Information System (EMIS). This integration is subject to development, consultation, validation, and endorsement by relevant stakeholders.

### *Employment and Skills Mismatch Vulnerable Youth and Social Services*

Challenges include skill mismatches, worker exploitation, and the need for targeted training in high-potential growth sectors like tourism, hospitality, and services, along with stronger worker protections. Mr. Thiphasouda Viengprasith (ILO) identified the most significant skills mismatches in high-potential growth sectors like tourism, hospitality, and services, and stressed the need for targeted training and upskilling in partnership with educational institutions.

With this issues, Mr. Bountong Xayyavong (MoES/VETDI) agreed on the possibility of co-designing new training curricula in collaboration with concerned agencies, especially the private sector, to formalize linkages between the TVET system and the high-growth sectors (hospitality, tourism, and creative industries).

Ms. Manivanh Kittilath of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW) highlighted collaborative efforts with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to support young people with disabilities (PWDs). This tripartite initiative aims to expand equal opportunities, encourage entrepreneurship, develop skills, and promote disability-friendly workplaces and inclusive infrastructure. These efforts are crucial given the significant barriers faced by persons with disabilities and the need for multi-sectoral cooperation to address them.

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## Harmful Practices (Child Marriage)

Ms. Yoko Kobayashi (UNICEF) highlighted that child marriage remains high in Lao PDR (30.5% of the population), with 1 in 10 boys also affected. Effective approaches include peer-to-peer education, youth champions, community dialogues, and evidence-based advocacy, as part of the joint UNICEF-UNFPA programming.

Ms. Carol Mortensen (Plan International) emphasized the 'Noi Framework' (2016) as a critical lifecycle approach to empower girls and boys. She stressed the need to scale up multi-sectoral efforts to prevent child marriage and actively engage men and boys to champion the rights of girls.

### KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE DISCUSSION

- Expand CSE across secondary, TVET, and out-of-school settings, utilizing the Noi Framework.
- Invest in youth skills, entrepreneurship, and civic participation, aligning training with labor market needs for the demographic dividend.
- Establish a National Youth Advisory Group for systematic and meaningful youth engagement in policymaking and governance.
- Accelerate efforts to eliminate child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, and GBV, linking actions with education, SRHR, and youth empowerment.
- Ensure full and equitable participation of all vulnerable youth populations (including those with disabilities, rural, and ethnic groups) in development programmes.
- Reinvigorate national frameworks to guarantee universal access to essential social services for all young people, especially the most vulnerable.
- Reinforce CRVS and administrative data systems for disaggregated, gender-sensitive planning data, and integrate CSE/youth indicators into EMIS.
- Scale up digital literacy, financial inclusion, and life skills programmes to prepare youth for the future of work and a transforming labor market.
- Support the establishment of youth-led innovation hubs to accelerate social impact in health, education, environment, and entrepreneurship.
- Scale up youth-friendly SRH services, ensuring targeted outreach for vulnerable groups (adolescents, ethnic minorities, rural youth, and those with disabilities).

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## CALL FOR ACTIONS

The rapporteur refined the discussions into a set of core commitments for the proceeding report. The key commitments outlined are:

- Enhancing the national data infrastructure by integrating key Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) indicators into the Education Management Information System (EMIS), generating valuable, disaggregated data to monitor educational outcomes and inform ongoing CSE initiatives for in and out of school young people.
- Promoting decent employment opportunities for the youth by forging strategic alliances between TVET institutes, universities, and the private sector, on aligning educational curricula and practical training with the specific labour market demands of high-growth sectors, particularly hospitality, tourism, and the creative industries.
- Reinvigorating and strengthening the national frameworks designed to guarantee universal access to essential social services to young people, including persons with disabilities, by enhancing the coordination, delivery, and quality of critical public services.
- Establishment of a National Youth Advisory Group on Youth Affairs to ensure meaningful, systematic, and inclusive engagement of young people in the policy development process, embedding youth perspectives into the governance structures, and fostering more responsive, effective, and sustainable national policies.



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## SESSION 3: INCLUSION OF GROWTH – THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND CIVIL SOCIETY'S ROLE IN HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

*Focus: Building a roadmap for public-private partnerships to drive job creation and skills development, and defining civil society's role in fostering an enabling environment for human capital development.*

### OBJECTIVE

To identify concrete strategies for joint action between civil society, government, development agencies and the private sector in advancing human capital development.

### MODERATOR

Mr. Vilayphong Sisomvang, Director General of the Planning and International Cooperation Department at the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare

### PANEL MEMBERS

- Dr. Anoungdeth Phethkhaysone, Deputy Director General, Lao China Railway Company
- Ms. Souphaphone Souannavong, Board Member, Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI)
- Mr. Tee Chee Seng, President, Malaysia Chamber of Commerce
- Mr. Anan Bouapha, Founder and President, Proud to be Us, Laos
- Mr. Samnieng Thammavong, Director, Lao Disabled People Association (LDPA)
- Ms. Siriphone Phanthavong, Executive Board, Business Women's Association in Laos



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## KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

Ms. Souphaphone Souannavong of the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI) opened by noting the growing equality in employment across businesses in Lao PDR. She emphasized the need for a deeper understanding, greater awareness, and tangible implementation of inclusive employment strategies. To strengthen outreach, she encouraged Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to collaborate with provincial chambers and local specialists. Turning to the tourism sector, Ms. Souannavong underscored the importance of inclusion and equality in service industries, calling for workplaces that are welcoming to individuals of all genders and abilities.

Building on this theme of workforce inclusion, Mr. Tee Chee Seng of the Malaysia Chamber of Commerce challenged the perception that Lao workers are unskilled, arguing instead that they lack opportunity, not capacity. He cited the example of 56 million pairs of glasses produced annually in Savannakhet—almost entirely by Lao workers—as evidence of their capability. However, he cautioned that weak information systems and a shortage of ICT and cybersecurity expertise remain significant barriers. To address these gaps, Mr. Seng encouraged young people to pursue language studies, follow their genuine interests, and maintain discipline by avoiding harmful habits.

Continuing the discussion on employment and skills development, Dr. Anoungdeth Phethkhaysone of the Lao-China Railway Company highlighted the company's joint venture structure, in which the Lao government holds a 30% stake. The company currently employs 1,700 staff, including 1,300 Lao nationals—30% of whom are women. He explained that the railway serves as a strategic national initiative supporting skill transfer and youth employment, with the long-term goal of enabling Lao professionals to independently manage operations.

Adding a perspective on social inclusion, Mr. Anan Bouapha of Proud to be Us Laos drew attention to the high HIV prevalence of 4.1% among LGBTQ+ people, compared to the national average of 0.4%. He acknowledged progress made through the inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals in the National HIV/AIDS and Youth Development Strategies, and shared his organization's work on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention. Mr. Bouapha urged continued efforts to expand employment opportunities for LGBTQ+ people and normalize public discussions on gender diversity. He also encouraged young people to develop strong communication and adaptability skills as essential tools for success.

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On the issue of workplace accessibility, Mr. Samnieng Thammavong of the Lao Disabled People's Association (LDPA) highlighted the vital role of CSOs in bridging the gap between government and business sectors. He advocated for tax incentives to promote the employment of persons with disabilities and stressed the need to overcome environmental and attitudinal barriers in the workplace. Mr. Thammavong further pointed out the multiple layers of vulnerability faced by persons with disabilities and called for their greater inclusion in the workforce.

Concluding the panel, Ms. Siriphone Phanthavong of the Business Women's Association of Laos identified limited access to finance as the principal challenge faced by women entrepreneurs. She recommended expanding training in financial literacy and business management, citing successful past collaborations with LNCCI and development partners. During the youth Q&A session, she advised young people to pursue technical fields, such as electrical engineering, due to anticipated future demand.

### **KEY INSIGHT FROM THE DISCUSSION**

- Introduce tax benefits for companies employing marginalized groups or implementing strong Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies for incentivisation. Dedicate about 1% of business tax revenue to social response initiatives to enhance shared accountability.
- Address widespread financial literacy gaps, especially in rural areas, where 70% of the population lacks financial knowledge and 80% face limited access to loans. Strengthen financial management support for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and expand training for women entrepreneurs to improve credit access and business resilience.
- Reduce regional disparities in skills and employment by improving labor market information systems, aligning training with industry needs, and investing in structured skills development programs that recognize the proven capability of the Lao workforce.
- Invest in adolescents and youth with essential soft skills—communication, language, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), life skills, and adaptability. Engage rural university students in start-ups and local enterprises to drive community-based growth.
- Foster Local Ownership and Social Responsibility: Promote locally driven funding and participation in social development, ensuring that social contributions and CSR efforts reflect community priorities and sustainability goals.

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## CALL FOR ACTIONS

The rapporteur refined the discussions into a set of core commitments for the proceeding report. The key commitments outlined are:

- Increase domestic financing for population, gender equality, and SRHR programmes, ensuring timely and equitable disbursement through parliamentary oversight and cross-sectoral coordination.
- Engage the private sector and adopt innovative financing mechanisms to expand resources for population, gender equality, and SRHR programmes.
- Establish transparent and effective mechanisms to monitor substantive population, SRHR, and gender equality indicators, as well as allocations, disbursements, and financial flows, to strengthen accountability and evidence-based decision-making.
- Strengthen regional cooperation on demographic resilience through South-South and Triangular Cooperation with ASEAN and Mekong sub-region partners, focusing on knowledge exchange and joint initiatives in labor mobility, digital connectivity, health systems, and social protection.



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# CLOSING SESSION

## MR. PIO SMITH

*UNFPA Regional Director, Asia and Pacific Regional Office*

Mr. Pio Smith, UNFPA's Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, delivered the closing remarks of the Second National Conference on Population and Development, commending the Government of Lao PDR and all partners for their leadership, commitment, and concrete contributions to advancing the country's population and development agenda.

He noted that the conference served as a high-level platform of renewed commitment, bringing together government leaders, development partners, and stakeholders to define the course of Lao PDR's future. He acknowledged the country's significant progress—highlighting progressive policy frameworks, notable reductions in maternal and child mortality, and tangible improvements in poverty reduction—as key pillars of its development trajectory.

Mr. Smith congratulated the Government on the launch of the Demographic Dividend Roadmap and the establishment of the Population and Development Committee, describing them not merely as policy milestones, but as commitments to place people at the center of development and ensure that progress reaches every individual and community. He emphasized that these achievements demonstrate Lao PDR's determination to link population and development to its long-term vision, particularly through creating opportunities for young people, addressing inequalities, and mobilizing investments in education, decent jobs, and gender equality. Together, he said, these priorities form the foundation for harnessing the demographic dividend and ensuring that no one is left behind.



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He highlighted the valuable regional experiences shared during the conference, citing Viet Nam's focus on preparing for population ageing while harnessing youth potential, and Cambodia's establishment of a Special Committee on the ICPD Programme of Action and adoption of an inter-ministerial Strategic Framework and Costed Action Plan (2024–2030). He underlined that these examples demonstrate how countries in the region are taking coordinated steps to align policies, resources, and actions with the ICPD vision, promoting cross-border learning and South-South cooperation.

Mr. Smith further recognized the UN Resident Coordinator's message underscoring that no single sector can deliver the demographic dividend alone. He echoed this point, stressing that an integrated, cross-sectoral approach—spanning health, education, labour, gender, social protection, and statistics—is at the core of the Demographic Dividend Roadmap. He commended the conference for sharpening this vision through practical priorities and concrete actions developed in the breakout sessions, all sending a unified message: investing in people is the path to securing Lao PDR's long-term prosperity.

He reiterated that the conference outcomes prioritize empowering young people through access to health, education, and skills; ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health; advancing gender equality; and addressing gender-based violence and harmful practices. He also highlighted the emphasis on harnessing data and digital transformation to improve service delivery, strengthening resilience to climate change, and mobilizing sustainable financing for lasting results. (P7A20) He encouraged enhanced regional cooperation for mutual learning and support, noting that these priorities collectively reflect Lao PDR's strong resolve for inclusive, people-centered development.

Warning that Lao PDR's demographic window is rapidly closing—with two-thirds already passed and full closure expected by 2055—he urged immediate and decisive action. “The next five to ten years are critical,” he said. “If we act now, investing in young people's health, education, skills, and empowerment, the rewards will last for generations.”

He stressed that the newly established Population and Development Committee must become the driving engine uniting all sectors, and that every ministry, plan, and budget line should contribute to this shared agenda. He also emphasized that the Government cannot do this alone, calling for active engagement from civil society, youth organizations, the private sector, and communities. As Lao PDR prepares for LDC graduation, he underscored the importance of innovative partnerships, sustainable financing, and private sector engagement to ensure lasting impact, reaffirming that “every dollar invested in people yields significant social and economic returns across generations.”



In his closing message, Mr. Smith called on all development partners to continue standing with Lao PDR—not only through financial support but also through knowledge, innovation, and solidarity. Addressing Lao youth directly, he said: “This is your moment. Your voices, your energy, and your leadership must guide the way. The demographic dividend is not just a technical term—it is the country’s future.”

He concluded by reaffirming that the conference has delivered a clear roadmap for action and a unified vision for the country’s next phase of development. “These commitments will only matter if we follow through,” he said. “Together, we can ensure that Lao PDR realizes its demographic dividend and builds a future where every woman, man, and young person lives with dignity, rights, and choices.”

Mr. Smith expressed heartfelt appreciation to the Government of Lao PDR, particularly the Ministry of Finance, for its leadership in convening the conference and guiding the national population and development agenda with vision and determination.

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## H.E. MR. SANTIPHAB PHOMVIHANE

### *Minister of Finance, Lao PDR*

In his concluding remarks at the Second National Conference on Population and Development (NCPD), the Minister of Finance issued a powerful call to action. He reaffirmed that the conference, a follow-up to the first NCPD in 2023, solidifies the critical link between population dynamics and the nation's development agenda. This strategic focus, he noted, is in full alignment with the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) work plan, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, and the 10th Five-Year National Economic and Social Development Plan (2026–2030).

He highlighted the progress establishing a steering committee for Population and Development Strategy No. 3143/MOF, the implementation of Family Planning 2030 (FP2030), the accreditation of midwifery colleges, the integration of Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE) into primary and secondary school curricula, and the ongoing preparations for the 2025 Population and Housing Census.

Looking ahead, the Minister emphasized the need for a collaborative, joint effort to address unfinished business, overcome existing challenges and unlock new development opportunities for Lao PDR. He highlighted the '9-25 Call for Action', a comprehensive plan to strengthen and expand 9 key priorities with 25 specific concrete actions, and concluded by urging all attendees to commit to implementing these priorities, at the national or regional level, to drive the nation's progress.



# THE 9-25 CALL FOR ACTION: INVESTING IN PEOPLE, SECURING LAO PDR'S FUTURE

Nine strategic priority areas, detailed in 25 concrete actions, to guide Lao PDR's path towards inclusive and sustainable development.

Building on the commitments adopted at the First National Conference on Population and Development in 2023 and in line with the ICPD Programme of Action, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the 10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2026–2030), participants reaffirm the centrality of population and development to the nation's future.

Acknowledging the progress achieved, including the establishment of the National Coordination Committee on Population and Development, the launch of FP2030 commitments, the accreditation of midwifery schools, the integration of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) into primary and secondary education, and preparations for the 2025 Population and Housing Census, participants also recognize the urgent need to accelerate implementation, close persistent gaps, and address new challenges and opportunities facing Lao PDR.

The government therefore calls for the following nine strategic priority areas, detailed in 25 practical and concrete actions, a framework referred to as the **'9-25 Call for Action.'**



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## 1. EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE, SHAPING THE NATION'S FUTURE

- 1 Scale up youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, with emphasis on adolescents, ethnic minorities, rural youth, and those with disabilities.
- 2 Expand comprehensive sexuality education to secondary schools, TVET institutions, and out-of-school programmes through the Noi Framework and Ecosystem.
- 3 Invest in youth skills, entrepreneurship, and civic participation, ensuring alignment with labor market needs and the demographic dividend agenda.
- 4 Establish a National Youth Advisory Group to ensure meaningful youth engagement in policymaking and governance.

## 2. UNIVERSAL SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR) AND A HEALTH WORKFORCE THAT REACHES EVERYONE

- 5 Operationalize the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Strategy and Action Plan (RMNCH) for 2026–2030, securing sustainable financing for FP2030 commitments and contraceptive security.
- 6 Implement the Midwifery Action Plan (2025–2035), ensuring culturally appropriate, respectful, and quality service delivery, with equitable deployment of midwives and strengthened community trust, particularly in rural and hard-to-reach areas.
- 7 Expand adolescent-friendly counselling to reduce unmet need for family planning (FP) and adolescent pregnancies.

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### 3. BREAKING THE CYCLE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV), EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS

- 8 Strengthen prevention, protection, and response to GBV across health, social, and justice services, ensuring they are survivor-centered, accessible, and of high quality, and supported by a National Committee for Coordination on GBV to ensure timely and effective multi-sectoral responses at national, provincial, and district levels.
- 9 Expand counselling and protection centers for women and children and integrate them into referral pathways across sectors.
- 10 Conduct the Second National Survey on Violence Against Women to generate updated evidence for stronger policies, services, and accountability.

### 4. TRANSFORMING SOCIAL NORMS, PROMOTING INCLUSION, EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

- 12 Accelerate efforts to end child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, and GBV, linking these with education, SRHR, and youth empowerment initiatives.
- 13 Ensure the participation of vulnerable populations, including adolescents and youth, persons with disabilities, rural women, and ethnic groups, in population and development programmes.
- 14 Reinvigorate national frameworks ensuring universal access to essential social services for all young people, including the most vulnerable.

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## 5. USING DATA AND STRATEGIC FORESIGHT TO SHAPE THE FUTURE

- 15 Ensure the 2025 Population and Housing Census data is fully analyzed, disseminated, and translated into policies and budgets that support the 10th NSEDP and sectoral strategies.
- 16 Reinforce administrative data systems and CRVS to ensure real-time, disaggregated, and gender-sensitive data for planning and Integrate CSE and youth indicators into the Education Management Information System.
- 17 Institutionalize strategic foresight on mega-trends, including demographic transition, disparities, digitalization, and climate change, into national planning and monitoring.

## 6. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR EMPOWERMENT AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

- 17 Invest in digital public infrastructure (digital ID, e-health, e-education, labor market systems) with safeguards for inclusion, privacy, and gender equality.
- 18 Scale up digital literacy, financial inclusion, and life skills programmes to prepare young people for the future of work and a rapidly transforming labor market.
- 19 Support youth-led innovation hubs to accelerate social impact in health, education, environment, and entrepreneurship.

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## 7. BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE THROUGH GENDER EQUALITY AND SRHR

- 20** Generate and apply disaggregated evidence on the gendered impacts of climate change, including on SRHR, maternal health, and GBV, to inform national strategies in health, education, social protection, and disaster risk reduction.
- 21** Ensure the integration of SRHR, maternal health, and GBV services into climate change, disaster risk reduction, and resilience strategies.

## 8. MOBILIZING SUSTAINABLE FINANCING FOR PEOPLE-CENTERED DEVELOPMENT

- 22** Increase domestic financing for population, gender equality, and SRHR programmes, ensuring timely and equitable disbursement through parliamentary oversight and cross-sectoral coordination.
- 23** Engage the private sector and adopt innovative financing mechanisms to expand resources for population, gender equality, and SRHR programmes.
- 24** Establish transparent and effective mechanisms to monitor substantive population, SRHR, and gender equality indicators, as well as allocations, disbursements, and financial flows, to strengthen accountability and evidence-based decision-making.

## 9. STRENGTHENING REGIONAL ACTION FOR DEMOGRAPHIC RESILIENCE

- 25** Strengthen regional cooperation on demographic resilience through South-South and Triangular Cooperation with ASEAN and Mekong sub-region partners, focusing on knowledge exchange and joint initiatives in labor mobility, digital connectivity, health systems, and social protection.

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The Second National Conference on Population and Development reaffirms that investing in people, especially young people, women, and vulnerable groups, remains the foundation of inclusive and sustainable development. Achieving these commitments will require whole-of-government leadership, whole-of-society engagement, and strengthened regional and international cooperation. Together, we pledge to accelerate progress towards a future where population and human development are at the center of Lao PDR's journey to sustainable development and prosperity.

## ANNEXES

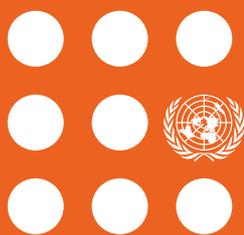
1. Folder with NCPD 2: [Reporting NCPD](#)
2. [Agenda 2NCPD](#)
3. [Proceeding report 1st NCPD](#)
4. [Photos](#)
5. Media coverage
  - Vientiane Time: Daily [Newspaper](#)
  - KPL: <https://kpl.gov.la/En/detail.aspx?id=94876>
  - KPL FB: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16SejRGo5r/>
  - Pathet Lao Daily: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1cm2rK9M2u/>
  - Lao Youth Radio: [Facebook post](#)
  - Lao Phatthana Daily: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1Gfvt4vHDz/>
  - Theva Magazine: <https://www.facebook.com/share/19Vp9JNemD/>
  - Lao National Radio: <https://www.facebook.com/share/1D7A7Uk6aS/>
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