

# **LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC**

Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity

## **MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY**



**Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project II (P178883)**

# **ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

**Version 5**

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## ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

ACM	Asbestos Containing Materials
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CHS	Community Health and Safety
CLTS	Community-Led Total Sanitation
CM	Community Mobilizer
COC	Code of Conduct
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAFO	District Agriculture and Forestry
DHIS	District Health Information System
DRD	Department of Rural Development and Cooperation
ESCAP	Environmental & Social Code of Practice
ESCP	Environmental and Social Commitment Plan
ESS	Environmental and Social Standards
ESF	Environmental and Social Framework
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
ESMR	Environmental and Social Monitoring Report
E&S	Environmental and Social
FDG	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GOL	Government of Lao PDR
GRC	Grievance Redress Committee
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
GRS	Grievance Redress Service
HANSA	Health and Nutrition Services Accessibility
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDA	International Development Association
IE	Impact Evaluation
IP	Indigenous People
LMP	Labor Management Procedures
LWC	Labor Working Condition
LWU	Lao Women's Union
LFND	Lao Front for National Development

MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIS	Management Information System
MOHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOH	Ministry of Health
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
NHI	National Health Insurance
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
PAFO	Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office
PDO	Project Development Objective
PM	Project Manager
PMT	Proxy Means Test
PRF	Poverty Reduction Fund
RRPM	Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project
RRPM II	Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project II
SBCC	Social Behavior Change Communication
SEA/SH	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse/Sexual Harassment
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
TA	Technical Assistance
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VAC	Violence Against Children
VF	Village Facilitator
WASH	Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WB	World Bank

## DEFINITIONS

### Disadvantaged individuals/ households

Refers to individuals or groups who, due to certain own circumstances such as their age, gender, disabilities, health, economic and ethnic status, and so forth, are more likely affected adversely by the project impacts and/or more limited in their ability to take advantage of project benefits. Disadvantaged individuals/groups are more likely excluded from, or unable to participate fully in the mainstream consultation process and may require specific assistance to promote inclusion. In this project, disadvantaged individuals/ groups are defined as those who have the following characteristics: i) from an ethnic group, (ii) landless/ limited productive land, (iii) female headed household with dependents, (iv) frequent lack of male labor at home (e.g. migrant workers); (v) jobless, or limited economic opportunities; (vi) family member(s) with chronic illness, or disabilities; (vii) elderlies who live on their own; (viii) youth, particularly very young couple with children (early marriage), (ix) live in an especially difficult circumstance, and (x) don't meet above criteria but are concurred by local community as vulnerable to poverty and need project's support to reduce their vulnerability. Disadvantaged individuals are usually from a poor, or a near-poor household.

### Environmental and social risk

Environmental (including climate change and natural disasters) and social risks are determined by a combination of project design and operational characteristics, together with exogenous factors, which: (i) may adversely affect the ability of a project to achieve and sustain its development objective(s); and (ii) define the nature, scale and significance of direct and indirect environmental and social impacts.

### Inclusion

Inclusion means empowering all people to participate in, and benefit from, the development process. Inclusion encompasses policies to promote equality and nondiscrimination by improving the access of all people, including the poor and disadvantaged, to services and benefits such as education, health, social protection, infrastructure, affordable energy, employment, financial services and productive assets. It also embraces action to remove barriers against those who are often excluded from the development process, such as women, children, persons with disabilities, youth and minorities, and to ensure that the voice of all can be heard.

### Information disclosure

The process of disseminating project information to stakeholders to allow them to understand the risks and impacts of the project, and potential opportunities. Information disclosure should be in line with the project's Stakeholder Engagement Plan which is in line with the requirements of ESS10. It is required that the disclosure of project information include: (a) purpose, nature and scale of the project; (b) duration of proposed project activities; (c) environmental and social risks and potential impacts of the project on local communities, particularly the vulnerable/disadvantaged groups and proposed mitigation measures; (d) proposed stakeholder engagement process highlighting approach that will be taken to promote meaningful participation of project affected persons; (e) time and venue of proposed public consultation meetings, and the process by which meetings will be notified, meeting results summarized, and reported back to project stakeholders; and (f) process and means by which grievances can be received and addressed timely.

### Indigenous Peoples

According to the World Bank's Environment and Social Framework, the term "Indigenous Peoples/ Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities" is used in a generic sense to refer exclusively to a distinct social and cultural group possessing all the following characteristics – in varying degrees:

- Self-identification as members of a distinct indigenous social and cultural group and recognition of this identity by others; and
- Collective attachment<sup>1</sup> to geographically distinct habitats, ancestral territories, or areas of seasonal use or occupation, as well as to the natural resources in these areas; and
- Customary cultural, economic, social, or political institutions that are distinct or separate from those of the mainstream society or culture, and
- A distinct language or dialect, often different from the official language or languages of the country or region in which they reside.

### **Meaningful consultation**

Two-way process that (a) begins early in project planning process to gather initial views on project proposal and inform project design; (b) encourages stakeholder feedback, particularly as a way of informing project design and engagement by stakeholders in the identification and mitigation of environmental and social risks and impacts; (c) continues on an ongoing basis, as risks and impacts arise; (d) is based on prior disclosure and dissemination of relevant, transparent, objective, meaningful and easily accessible information in a timeframe that enables meaningful consultation with project stakeholders in a format culturally appropriate, and in relevant local language(s) and is understandable to stakeholders; (e) considers and responds to feedback; (f) supports active and inclusive engagement with project-affected parties; (g) is free of external manipulation, interference, coercion, discrimination, and intimidation; and (h) is documented and disclosed by the Government.

### **Poor individuals/ households**

Households who live below the national poverty line – as established by the Government of Laos; or as referenced to the poverty line established by the World Bank for Laos PDR using at 2019 prices (which is 280,910 LAK per month per person). During project life, if the national poverty line is updated by the Government and/or the World Bank, the latest poverty line should be used. Where poverty line for rural area is available, such poverty line should be used.

### **Vulnerable individuals/ households**

In this project, vulnerable individuals/ households are defined as those who live just above the national poverty line, including 1) the near-poor<sup>2</sup>, and 2) those whose income is marginally above the near-poor line. People who are from Disadvantaged Groups (as defined in this project) are considered as vulnerable group (See definition for Disadvantaged individuals/groups). For Laos PDR, the WB proposes defining the near-poor as those whose daily per capita consumption lies between poverty line and 1.5 times the poverty line.

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<sup>1</sup> Collective attachment means that for generations there has been a physical presence in and economic ties to land and territories traditionally owned, or customarily used or occupied, by the group concerned, including areas that hold special significance for it, such as sacred sites.

<sup>2</sup> In Lao PDR, the WB proposed near-poor are those whose daily per capita consumption lies between poverty line and 1.5 times the poverty line (WB 2022, Cambodia Poverty Assessment – Toward A More Inclusive and Resilient Cambodia).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **E1. Project Background**

The Government of Lao PDR (GOL) has accessed \$25 million of the International Development Association (IDA), or the World Bank (WB), to implement the Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project - Phase 2 (RRPM II – herein referred to as the “Project”). Building on key outputs and lessons from the on-going WB financed project “Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project (RRPM, P162565), the Project Development Objective (PDO) of RRPM II is to expand access to the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Program to improve selected nutrition behaviors and enhance GOL’s capacity to deliver integrated multi-sectoral nutrition interventions in priority target areas. Project will cover seven provinces, including Xiengkhuang, Huaphanh, Oudomxay, Phongsaly, Saravan, Sekong, and Savannakhet provinces and will be implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forest (MAF) – through its Department of Rural Development and Cooperatives (DRD), and by the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) – through its Development Research Institute (DIC). At project area, Project activities will be carried out through the subnational offices responsible for agriculture and forestry (PAFO/DAFO) and those responsible for planning and investment.

The WB’s Environment and Social Framework (ESF) is applied to the Project. Of the ten Environment and Social Standards (ESSs), six ESSs apply to the Project, including ESS1, ESS2, ESS3, ESS4, ESS7, and ESS10 (see Chapter 2). MAF, through its Department of Rural Development and Cooperatives (DRD), has prepared the required environmental and social action plans/measures to address potential issues and risks concerning the people and environment related to the project. These measures include Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), including a Labor Management Procedures (LMP), Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) which take into account the WB’s ESF and national laws and regulations. The ESMF aims to identify environmental and social (E&S) risks and impacts associated with project financed activities and ensure that they are managed effectively during project implementation.

This ESMF sets out principles, guidance, and procedures to screen, identify, avoid, minimize, and mitigate E&S risks and impacts associated with project activities. The ESMF also proposes an estimated budget for implementing mitigation measures. The ESMF proposes procedures for screening for project financing eligibility as well as for the ESS relevance screening to be applied to all project activities. For civil work, ESMF identifies key E&S risks and impacts and mitigation measures, including Environmental and Social Code of Practices (ESCAP) and List of Do and Don’t, alongside other instruments such as LMP to manage risks related to labor and working conditions. On social inclusion, the ESMF also identified key issues and/or actions to be considered during the design of the CCT program and other Project activities.

### **E2. Project Objectives and Activities**

The Project Development Objective (PDO) is: (i) to increase utilization and adaptability of the Social Protection Delivery System, (ii) consolidate the Conditional Cash Transfers to improve nutrition behaviors, (iii) enhance the convergence of multisectoral nutrition interventions in priority target areas, (iv) and in case of an eligible crisis or emergency, respond promptly and effectively to it.

The Project will comprise five components that will continue to support the implementation of the nutrition-sensitive conditional cash transfer (built on Phase 1) to contribute to reducing poverty and



malnutrition, improving and enhancing social protection systems, promoting the planning, coordination, and monitoring multisector nutritional convergence approach. Five project components are:

- Component 1: Strengthening Social Protection Building Blocks.
- Component 2: Support to the Helping Hand Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program.
- Component 3: Implementation Management Support and Institutional Strengthening.
- Component 4: Enhancing the Nutrition Convergence Oversight and Coordination.
- Component 5: Contingency Emergency Response.

### **E3. Potential E&S Risks and Impacts**

Whilst the Project aims to deliver a range of benefits, some minor E&S risks and impacts are anticipated. Most of the risks and impacts are predictable and can be mitigated through effective implementation of E&S mitigation measures proposed in the ESMF.

#### ***Positive Impacts***

Building on achievement from Phase 1, the Project is expected to bring about an overall positive impact – through delivery of the CCT program which has been proven effective in changing behaviors of target mothers with infants under two, and pregnant women. The 2021 beneficiary survey indicated there is a high level of satisfaction with CCT program and services in Project's target areas, including a) increased consumption of nutritious food (thanks to CCT), b) improved access to healthcare services such as ante-and post-natal care, growth monitoring, vaccination for beneficiaries<sup>3</sup>, and c) social behavior change communication<sup>4</sup>, and so forth. Close to 98 percent of the beneficiaries have complied with the main CCT conditionalities. The mid-line impact evaluation has been completed providing further evidence supporting the CCT program's intended impacts.

The overall E&S risks and impacts of the Project is classified as “low” (resulting from “low” environmental risks and impacts), and “moderate” for social risks and impacts.

#### ***Environmental risks and impacts***

The project will finance small-scale office renovation in two new project provinces (Saravan, Sekong and Savanakheth). As a result, some minor, local environmental risks and impacts are anticipated. These impacts are mostly local, temporary, and manageable. Key environmental risks identified include risks related to occupational health and safety (OHS) for project workers, particularly project staff based in project districts, and community workers (known as Village Facilitator) who are local people. OHS risks are also identified associated with contractor's workers during office renovation, e.g., risk of exposure to Asbestos Contaminated Materials, risk of fire and electric shocks, and so forth. Unexploded Ordinance (UXO) risk is anticipated in case where additional office space is built which involves excavation for foundation construction.

#### ***Social risks and impacts***

- Social issues identified include traffic safety such as risk of road accident for project workers, particular those who travel frequently such as project staff (e.g. community mobilizers) based in project districts and community workers (e.g. village facilitators) who travel monthly to support conditional cash transfer activities, and social behavior change communication for nutrition improvement.

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<sup>3</sup> Immunization rates increased to from 34% in 2017 to 78% in 2020.

<sup>4</sup> With more than 80 percent of infants being exclusively breastfed.

- Risk of contracting diseases is also identified given increased level of interaction between community members and project workers, particularly between beneficiary households and village facilitators and community mobilizers during face-to-face meetings that are given for the purpose of consultation, orientation, training purposes.
- Some minor risk of Sexual Exploitation & Abuse, Sexual Harassment during project implementation. However, this risk is assessed low because most project workers (90%) are local and female (local villagers).
- Risk of exclusion of certain vulnerable group (based on eligibility cut-off) is anticipated due to the capacity of project staff and inherent risk of exclusion associated with Proxy Means Tests methods.
- Lack of cultural awareness on the part of project workers is anticipated as a risk because most project's activities are designed and facilitated by the majority of project implementing members who are from Lao group. Cultural difference may take the form of language difference, gender stereotype, lack of communication skill, lack of understanding of local nutrition practices and social norms of beneficiary groups, etc. may be constraints to those who are involved in the role of facilitating consultation, meeting, and behavior change communication.

#### **E4. Environmental and Social Management Procedures**

The ESMF describes procedure for E&S Screening for civil works related to office renovation. Only renovation that takes place inside an existing governmental building will be considered for financing. Any office building that requires acquisition of land of local people is not financed under the project. The ESMF provide an ESCOP and List of Do and Don't Do (Annex 4) for office renovation. Risks related to labor and working condition is covered under LMP.

#### **E5. Implementation Arrangements**

A Project Management Unit (PMU), to be established for day-to-day project planning, management, supervision, and M&E, will also be responsible for identification of the E&S risks and impacts of project activities including monitoring and reporting on ESF implementation. It is expected that PMU will mobilize Communication and Safeguards Focal Points at national and subnational levels.

In each of the six Project provinces, the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO), or concerned provincial agency, will appoint a Project Provincial Coordinator (PPC) who will coordinate Project implementation in respective project provinces. PPC is based in the capital of each Project province (within existing RRPM provincial office), and is responsible for facilitating the operation of district teams. The PPC reports to the Provincial Vice-Governor and keeps PAFO and relevant agencies informed of status of Project implementation. The PPC will attend annual meetings, including the meetings held by the PMU or MAF and may be invited to attend some district meetings to discuss and provide strategic advice to resolve operational issues that may emerge.

#### **E6. Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement**

During preparation of E&S instruments, consultation were carried out in November, December 2022, and May 2023.

- Consultation with local people was conducted in Huaphan and Xiengkhuang during 28-29 November 2022, and Oudomxay during 5-7 December 2022.

- National consultation was conducted to validate feedback from project beneficiaries and project staff on 9 December 2022.
- National consultation will be conducted on 11 May 2023 to introduce draft ESF instruments and to solicit feedback for project stakeholders at national level, provincial and district levels.

The draft ESF documents in English (ESMF, SEP, LMP and ESCP) were disclosed on the website<sup>5</sup> of RRPM II on 6 May 2023 prior to public consultation. The Executive Summary of the ESMF, SEP, LMP were also disclosed in Lao language on the same webpage.

#### **E7. Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM):**

The public, project beneficiaries and all the stakeholders of the project can reach out and lodge nay grievances related to the project. The grievance mechanism established under the project seeks to resolve concerns promptly, using an understandable process that is culturally appropriate and readily accessible at no cost. Grievances can be submitted if there are concerns about any adverse impacts by the Project on the community, the environment, or on their quality of life. Stakeholders may also submit comments and suggestions. The GRM is described in detail in project's SEP.

#### **E8. Monitoring and Reporting**

Monitoring is the method of ensuring mitigation measures are being implemented in accordance with ESMF, SEP, and ESCP prepared in line with the ESF requirements and national regulations. Semi-annual monitoring reports will need to be undertaken in order to:

- Improve E&S management practices;
- Ensure the efficiency and quality of the E&S assessment processes;
- Establish evidence- and results-based E&S impact assessment; and

Provide an opportunity to report the results of the implementation of mitigation measures in future ESMPs and other project related documents.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.maf.gov.la/disclosure-of-draft-esf-documents-for-consultation-the-government-of-lao-pdr-gol-has-accessed-25-million-of-the-international-development-association-ida-or-the-world-bank-wb-to-implement-t/>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

1. The Government of Lao PDR (GOL) has accessed \$25 million of the International Development Association (IDA) to implement the Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project phase 2 (RRPM II or the Project). Building on key outputs and lessons-learned from the on-going WB financed project “Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project (RRPM, P162565)<sup>6</sup>, the Project development objective (PDO) is to expand access to the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Program, to improve selected nutrition behaviors, and to enhance GOL capacity to deliver integrated multi-sectoral nutrition interventions in priority target areas. Activities and locations of the Project will be identified during the advance stage of the Project preparation and implementation. It is also expected that a WB project related to nutrition convergence will be prepared and implemented in similar areas.
2. The Project will be implemented through the Department of Rural Development and Cooperatives (DRD) of Ministry of Agriculture and Forest (MAF) and the Department of International Cooperation (DIC) and the Development Research Institute (DIC) of the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI). The Project activities will be carried out in Xiengkhuang, Huaphanh, Oudomxay, Phongsaly, Saravan, Sekong, and Savannakhet provinces through the subnational offices responsible for agriculture and forestry (PAFO/DAFO) and those responsible for planning and investment.
3. Based on proposed Project’s activities, the Environmental and Social (E&S) risk is classified by the World Bank (WB) as “Moderate”. Initial E&S assessment suggested that preparation of the following ESF instruments will be required: (1) Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP); (2) Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), including a Stakeholder Analysis and a Grievance Redress Mechanism; (3) Environment and Social Management Framework (ESMF) including a screening form for an eligible activity, Labor Management Procedures (LMP), Environmental and Social Code of Practice (ESCP) and Do’s and Don’ts for small construction/renovation works. These documents have been prepared in consultation with key stakeholders including local communities, and they will be reviewed and cleared by the WB, and disclosed at the Government and WB websites. Although the ESCP, SEP, and ESMF are prepared as standalone documents, they are closely linked and will be applied to all subproject and/or activities to be financed by the Project.

## 1.2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE ESMF

4. The Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) is one out of four documents constituting the Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) and ESSs’ requirements to be developed, cleared and disclosed prior to the appraisal of the project. The ESMF is administered through the Environmental Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) and connected with the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), which complement each other. The ESMF and the SEP guide the implementation of material measures and action outlined in the ESCP, by providing all required procedural and technical details. The ESMF is developed to support the management of environmental and social risk and impact possibly generated from the Project activities financed under the Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition II Project (RRPM II –P178883).
5. The WB’s Environment and Social Framework (ESF) is applied to the Project. Of the ten Environment and Social Standards (ESSs), six ESSs apply to the Project, including ESS1, ESS2, ESS3, ESS4, ESS7, and ESS10 (see Chapter 2). As committed to in the ESCP prepared as part of the

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<sup>6</sup> The project development objective (PDO) of the on-going RRPM is to support the design and implementation of a nutrition-sensitive social assistance program to improve nutrition behaviors and enhance the convergence of nutrition-focused interventions.

Project legal documents, MAF, through its Department of Rural Development and Cooperatives (DRD), prepared an ESMF as well as Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and other ESF's instruments to manage environmental and social risks and impacts associated with project financed activities. This ESMF is thus prepared in compliance with applied ESSs and relevant national regulations to set forth principle and guidance for identification of environmental and social risks and impacts against which mitigation measures are proposed.

6. The ESMF approach is used for RRPMII as the exact project activities and locations will only be identified during project implementation. Main objectives of the ESMF are to guide the MAF identify possible environmental and social (E&S) risks and develop and implement mitigation measures during project implementation, including the relevant subproject-specific plans that would be developed in compliance with the WB's ESS once project activities and locations are known. Specifically, the ESMF aims to: (a) assess the potential E&S risks and impacts from proposed Project activities (both positive or negative), and propose mitigation measures which will effectively address these risks/impacts; (b) establish clear procedures for the E&S planning, review, approval, implementation, and monitoring and reporting of activities/subprojects, technical assistance, and other activities to be financed under the Project; (c) describe specific mechanisms for public consultation and disclosure of E&S documents as well as redress of possible grievances; and (d) specify roles and responsibilities of agencies responsible for implementation of the proposed E&S measures including identification of priority training, capacity building, technical assistance, and the ESMF budget.
7. Scope of the ESMF thus includes an E&S screening to determine eligibility for activities/subprojects, identify E&S risks and impacts, propose mitigation measures, grievance redress procedures. The ESMF also provides ESCOP and Do's and Don'ts focusing on mitigating the risks due to the application of the project activities and if any related small civil work as well as infection prevention in line with the recent guidelines provided by the WBG in response to COVID-19. Risks due to unexploded ordinance (UXO) is expected to be low since the rehabilitation of office would involve minor repair, repaint which will take place inside existing office structure, and provision of office equipment and supplies after repair. Construction of new room that involves ground digging to build room foundation is expected but is still planned as a possibility. If ground digging to build room is required, screening of UXO will be required in the UXO risk areas .PMU, through a) consulting with responsible local authorities and National Regulatory Authority (NRA), will assess if the area for the new room extension is of UXO risk, b) obtain a written confirmation from consulted agencies to confirm if the proposed area is at UXO risk or not, and c) contact a certified agencies to conduct UXO survey and clearance if needed, and (d) obtain UXO clearance certificate from NRA before commencement of the proposed activity. Office upgrading/building will take place within the premise of the existing premises of local government. Office building that involves land acquisition outside existing government office is not financed by the project. Due consideration has also been given to ensuring that individuals or groups who, because of their particular circumstances, may be disadvantaged or vulnerable, have access to the development benefits resulting from the Project. This ESMF and other specific plans to be prepared during implementation of the Project are linked to the SEP and ESCP. This ESMF will be applied to all activities (works, goods, and services including technical assistance (TA) and research activities) to be financed by the Project and/or its subprojects. It is noted that all TA will be screened for potential E&S risks and if relevant, E&S risks and potential impacts will be screened through Terms of References for respective TA.
8. The ESMF includes Project descriptions (Chapter 1 and Annex 1), the legal and regulatory framework (Chapter 2), potential environmental and social risks and impacts (Chapter 3), as well as the proposed mitigation measures (Chapters 4), procedures for ES management (Chapter 5), implementation arrangement (Chapter 6), stakeholder engagement and information disclosure

(Chapter 7), grievance redress mechanism (GRM) (Chapter 8), ESF implementation, monitoring, and reporting (Chapter 9), as well cost and budget (Chapter 10). Moreover, it includes more details, template tools, formats, and others in various Annexes, including:

- Annex 1: Project Description
  - Annex 2: Environmental and Social Screening form
  - Annex 3: Labor Management Procedures
  - Annex 4: ESCOP and Do's & Don'ts
  - Annex 5: Summary of Public Consultation during the project preparation
  - Annex 6: COVID-19 Response
  - Annex 7: Social and Environmental Monitoring Form
  - Annex 8: Rapid Environmental and Social Assessment
9. The ESMF is subject to be reviewed and updated after consultations with stakeholders and during the implementation of the RRP II based on experiences gained during the application of the ESF instruments and/or after the project design and implementation arrangement has changed or restructured. The updated ESMF and related changes require review and approval from the GOL and WB.

### 1.3 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

10. The Project Development Objective (PDO) is: (i) to increase utilization and adaptability of the Social Protection Delivery System, (ii) consolidate the Conditional Cash Transfers to improve nutrition behaviors, (iii) enhance the convergence of multisectoral nutrition interventions in priority target areas, (iv) and in case of an eligible crisis or emergency, respond promptly and effectively to it:
- Number of programs and/or projects using information from social registry
  - Number of CCT beneficiaries (gender disaggregated)
  - Percentage of children 6 – 23 months from cash transfer beneficiary households consuming foods from at least 5 out of 8 food groups recommended food groups.
  - Percentage of first 1,000-day households access to a package of priority nutrition interventions
11. The project will comprise five components that will continue to support the implementation of the nutrition-sensitive conditional cash transfer (built on phase 1) to contribute to reducing poverty and malnutrition, improve and enhance social protection systems, and promote the planning, coordination, and monitoring of the multisector nutritional convergence approach. Five components include:
- Component 1. Strengthening Social Protection Building Blocks.
  - Component 2: Support to the Helping Hand Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program.
  - Component 3: Implementation Management Support and Institutional Strengthening.
  - Component 4: Enhancing the Nutrition Convergence Oversight and Coordination.
  - Component 5: Contingency Emergency Response.

Components are described in further details in Annex 1 (Project Description).

### 1.4 PROJECT BENEFICIARIES AND POTENTIAL ADVERSELY AFFECTED PEOPLE

12. The Project will be implemented with the same households in 12 districts of for Northern provinces of Phase I (Xiang Khouang, Houaphan, Phongsaly, and Oudomxay) with the highest share (> 40 percent) and absolute numbers of stunted children.<sup>7</sup> RRPM II will cover three new project provinces – Saravan, Sekong and Savanakheth, where the number of poor families and stunted children is still high.

## 2. LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

### 2.1 NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK RELATED TO ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

13. Key national laws, degrees and regulations provided in the ESMF have been considered during the preparation of ESF instruments and they will also be applied during implementation of the projects. Application and compliance with other national regulations related to Environmental and Social Health and Safety (ESHS), especially those related to labor and working condition, sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), sexual harassment (SH), violence against children (VAC), ethnic peoples, occupational health and safety (OHS), and other health and safety aspects during COVID-19 pandemic will be observed during the implementation of the Project. The key legislations can be summarized as below.

Title of the Laws and Legislation	Date of Issue	Relevance to WB's ESF
<b>Laws</b>		
Law on Disaster Management, No. 15/ NA	24/06/2019	ESS 1
Law on Grievance Redress, No. 53/ NA	09/11/2014	ESS 10
Law on Preventing and Combating VAWC, No. 56/ NA	23/12/2014	ESS 2, ESS 4
Law on Labour Protection, No. 43/ NA	24/12/2013	ESS 2
Law on Lao Women's Union, No. 31/ NA	23/07/2013	ESS 2
Law on Environment Protection, No. 29/ NA	18/12/2012	ESS 1, ESS 10
Amended Law on Hygiene, Prevention and Health Promotion, NA	2011	ESS 2, ESS 4
Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children No. 05/ NA	27/12/2006	ESS 2
<b>Decrees, Orders and Notices</b>		
Decree on Ethnic Groups, No. 207/ GoL	20/03/2020	ESS 7
Decree on Code of Conduct for Civil Servants/Officials, No. 184/ GoL	26/06/2019	ESS 7
Decree on Occupational Health and Safety, No. 22/ GoL	05/02/2019	ESS 2, ESS 4

<sup>7</sup> These provinces also show disparities in stunting levels, linked to socio-economic levels, and ethnicity.

Title of the Laws and Legislation	Date of Issue	Relevance to WB's ESF
Decree on Environmental Impact Assessment, No. 389/GOL,	20/10/2022	ESS 1, ESS 10
Order on Measures to Combat, Prevent, Control and Prepare to Combat COVID-19, No. 06/ PMO	29/03/2020	ESS 1, ESS 2, ESS 4
Notice to Further Implement Measures to Prevent, Control, Combat and Cope with COVID-19, No. 524/ PMO	01/05/20	ESS 1, ESS 2, ESS 4
<b>Decisions, Directives, Instructions, and others</b>		
Ministerial Instruction on Hazardous Waste Management, No: 0744/ MoNRE	11/02/2015	ESS 2, ESS3, ESS 4
Decision on Occupational Health and Safety at Construction Sites, No. 3006/ MLSW	21/08/2013	ESS 2, ESS 4
Public Involvement Guidelines in ESIA Process, No. 707/ MoNRE	05/02/2013	ESS10

14. In the following paragraphs, important stipulations of the most relevant legislations are briefly described.
15. The **Environmental Protection Law (EPL)**, which was established in 1999 and revised in 2012, describes principles, regulations, and measures for managing, monitoring, restoring, and protecting the environment in order to ensure environmental quality, reduction of impacts, and pollution created by human activities. Key activities under the environmental activities are specified in detail in Articles 19, 21, and 22 of this law, including the requirements for Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA), an IEE, and an EIA. The following stipulations/ Articles should be highlighted:
- Article 12 promotes green and clean environment free of pollution as a cornerstone in environmental management. Article 82 assigns village authorities with the duty to keep the village green and clean, and to protect streams and community forest.
  - Article 23, 24, 25, 26 stipulate general requirements to develop and implement environmental management and monitoring plans and to comply with the environmental standards, prevent and control pollution, clean-up and rehabilitate the environment in case of accidental release of hazardous chemicals.
  - Articles 33, 34, 35 contain general requirements to strictly comply with the National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS) and the National Pollution Control Standards (NPCS).
  - Articles 38, 39, and 40 define general requirements to handle, treat, and dispose of general waste and hazardous waste in accordance with specific regulations; and to control and monitor potential pollution.
  - Article 79 establishes MoNRE as the lead environmental authority and regulator with the responsibility to implement the ESIA system and to inspect and ensure that the environmental and social impacts from investment projects are mitigated.



16. **Decree on National Environmental Standards** (2017) that specifies environmental quality standards and emission limit values for air, noise, and wastewater emission from different types of activities, as well as the **Ministerial Instruction on Hazardous Waste Management** (2015) that identifies and classifies hazardous waste, includes provisions on import, export, transfer, storage, use, recycling and disposal of hazardous waste. The objective is to prevent and reduce the generation of hazardous waste. The Instruction on the Conduct of IEE issued by MoNRE in 2013, includes a list of investments and activities that are required to prepare an IEE or an EIA. For the agriculture and forestry related activities, the examples of investments that require an IEE include industrial tree plantation 20-200 ha, cash crops 20-400 ha, big livestock such as cattle and pigs >500 heads, aquaculture, and ponds >10 ha.
17. **Decree on Ethnic Groups**, which includes provisions to enforce comprehensive support to ethnic groups in rural/ remote areas, such as access to infrastructure, education, health, information, justice, and gender. The GoL also promotes the development, protection, and advancement of women, and supports their participation, decision-making, and equitable benefit-sharing in all development activities according to Article 4 of the **Lao Women's Union Law** (2013). The **Law on the Development and Protection of Women and Children** (2004) guarantees and promotes the roles of women, to define fundamental measures for developing and protecting the legitimate rights and interests of women, and to define the responsibilities of the State, society, and family toward women. It includes various aspects, such as gender equality; eliminating all forms of discrimination against women; and preventing and combating trafficking in women and children, and domestic VAWC. It encompasses domestic and public violence, including in educational institutions, workplaces, and alternative care settings.
18. The **Law on Preventing and Combating VAWC** (2014) defines the principles, rules, and measures for preventing and combating VAWC by prevention, protection, provision of assistance to victims of violence, and handling of such violence to protect the rights and legitimate interests of women and children; aims to eliminate all forms of VAWC, uphold the roles and dignity of women and children, achieve gender equality. It specifically addresses VAWC that results in or is likely to result in danger, harm, or physical, psychological, sexual, property, or economic suffering by women and children.
19. The **Lao Labour Law** (2013) defines the principles, regulations, and measures on administration and monitoring of labour skills development, recruitment, and labour protection. Article 5 requires that working conditions are safe. Article 59 stipulates prohibits unauthorized forced labour in any form. Article 119 requires employers to maintain a safe workplace and ensure good work conditions for the health of the employees. The employer shall supply information, training, and protection for employees so that they may undertake their work safely; and supply individual safety gear to employees according to international standards. Article 122 requires that the employer must inspect and assess risks to safety and health of the workplace regularly and report the results to the Labour Inspection Agency. Article 125 specifies how to deal with workplace accident or occupational disease that causes major injury or death. This law is detailed by the **Decree on Occupational Health and Safety** (2019) that requires employers to provide annual health check-ups for its employees and re-enforces that work accidents and occupational diseases need to be recorded and reported to the Labour Management Authorities. An employer or the social security organization is responsible for covering the cost of treatment, allowances, and compensation to victims of work accidents or occupational diseases.
20. The legal conflict resolution mechanism is described in the **Law on Grievance Redress** (2014) combining traditional/ customary system with judicial system including the courts, as well as including mass organizations. Any urgent issues, complaints, or inquiries can be publicly voiced

to the National Assembly members, or through the National Assembly Hotline. Grievance redress can also be pursued through administrative channels or Party channels, via the Lao National Front for Construction concerning ethnic issues, and the Lao Women's Union, concerning women's issues.

21. The **Public Involvement Guidelines** (2013) introduces Environmental and Social Impact Assessment and defines related public involvement processes, which are information gathering, information dissemination, consultation, and participation, to ensure project activities are designed with consideration to minimize social and environmental negative impacts.

## 2.2 WORLD BANK'S ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL STANDARDS (ESS)

22. The World Bank (WB)'s new Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), which was officially endorsed and launched in October 2018, is applied to the proposed Project. The ESF objective goes beyond the traditional 'do no harm' approach to maximize development gains. The ESF is implemented through WB's Environmental and Social Standards (ESSs) set out the requirements for its clients relating to the identification and assessment of environmental and social risks and impacts associated with projects supported by the WB through Investment Project Financing. The ESSs are designed to assist WB clients to fulfil the WB's ESS requirements on the identification and management of environmental and social risks. The ESSs are also designed to support WB clients in their goal to reduce poverty and increase prosperity in a sustainable manner for the benefit of the environment and their citizens, especially in (i) achieving good international practice relating to environmental and social sustainability; (ii) fulfilling their national and international environmental and social obligations; (c) enhancing non-discrimination, transparency, participation, accountability and governance; and (d) enhancing the sustainable development outcomes of projects through ongoing stakeholder engagement.
23. Data collection and rapid environment and social assessment conducted in December 2022 confirmed that of the 10 ESSs (see Box below), six ESSs (marked in bold) are relevant to the Project.
  - **ESS1:** Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts
  - **ESS2:** Labor and Working Conditions
  - **ESS3:** Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management
  - **ESS4:** Community Health and Safety
  - ESS5: Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use, and Involuntary Resettlement
  - ESS6: Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources
  - **ESS7:** Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities
  - ESS8: Cultural Heritage
  - ESS9: Financial Intermediaries
  - **ESS10:** Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure
24. The WB classifies E&S risk by four categories: High risk, substantial risk, moderate risk, or low risk. In determining the appropriate risk classification, the WB will take into account relevant issues such as the type, location, sensitivity, and scale of the project; the nature and magnitude of the potential adverse environmental and social risks and impacts, and the capacity and commitment of the implementing agencies to manage the environmental and social risks and impacts in a manner consistent with the ESSs.

25. WB's ESSs Relevant to this Project. Based on the proposed Project activities, the E&S risk is classified as 'Moderate' for the Project. The six ESSs that have been screened as relevant to the Project are ESS1, ESS2, ESS3, ESS4, ESS7, and ESS10. The screening of social risks and impacts is based on discussion with the task team and consultations with MAF. The ESMF has also taken into account the national requirements as well as the application of an international protocols for infectious disease control and medical waste management.
26. ESS 1 - Assessment and Management of ES Risks and Impacts: It sets out the Borrower's responsibilities for assessing, managing, and monitoring environmental and social risks and impacts associated with a project supported by the Bank. It has the following objectives: (1) to identify, evaluate and manage the ES risks and impacts of the project in a manner consistent with the ESSs; (2) to adopt a mitigation hierarchy approach to (a) anticipate and avoid risks, (b) minimize or reduce risks and impacts to acceptable levels where avoidance is not possible, (c) once risks and impacts have been minimized or reduced, mitigated, as well as (d) where significant residual impacts remain, compensate or offset them where technically and financially feasible; (3) to adopt differentiated measures so that adverse impacts do not fall disproportionately on the disadvantaged or vulnerable, and they are not disadvantaged in sharing development benefits and opportunities from the project; (4) utilize national institutions, systems, laws, regulations, and procedures in the assessment and implementation of projects whenever appropriate; and (5) promote improved ES performance in ways in which recognize and enhance the Borrower's capacities. Since the Project will involve the activities that may create some ES risks and impacts, especially those related to civil works, this ESS1 is considered relevant. Preparation, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of this ESMF is part of the ESS1 measures.
27. ESS 2 - Labor and Working Conditions: It recognizes the importance of employment creation and income generation in the pursuit of poverty reduction and inclusive economic growth. Borrowers can promote sound work management relationships and enhance the development benefits of a project by treating workers in the project fairly and providing safe and healthy working conditions. It has the following objectives: (1) to promote safety and health at work; (2) to promote the fair treatment, nondiscrimination, and equal opportunity of project workers; (3) to protect project workers, including vulnerable workers such as women, persons with disabilities, children and migrant workers, contracted workers, community workers, and primary supply workers as appropriate; (4) to prevent the use of all forms of forced labour and child labor; (5) to support the principles of freedom of association and collective bargaining consistent with national law; and (6) provide project workers with accessible means to raise workplace concerns. Since the Project will involve project staff and workers, this ESS2 is considered relevant. Preparation and implementation of the labor management procedures (as part of this ESMF) is the ESS2 measures.
28. ESS 3 – Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management: It recognizes that economic activity and urbanization often generate pollution to air, water, and land, and consumes finite resources that may threaten people, ecosystem services, and the environment at the local, regional and global levels, such as increasing concentration of GHG resulting in climate change. It has the following objectives: (1) to promote the sustainable use of resources, including energy, water, and raw materials; (2) to avoid or minimize adverse impacts on human health and the environment by avoiding or minimizing pollution from project activities; (3) to avoid or minimize project-related emissions of short and long-lived climate pollutants; (4) to avoid and minimize generation of hazardous and non-hazardous waste; and (5) to minimize and

manage the risks and impacts associated with pesticide use. Since the Project will involve small civil works and activities that may affect resource uses and create pollution (such as waste, air/noise, vibration, etc.) this ESS3 is considered relevant. Preparation, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of this ESMF is part of the ESS3 measures.

29. ESS 4 – Community Health and Safety: It recognizes that project activities, equipment, and infrastructure can increase community exposure to risks and impacts. In addition, communities that are already subjected to impacts from climate change may also experience acceleration or intensification of impacts due to project activities. It has the following objectives: (1) to anticipate and avoid adverse impacts on the health and safety of project-affected communities during the project life cycle; (2) to promote quality and safety and consider actions relating to climate change in the design and construction of infrastructure; (3) to avoid or minimize exposure to project-related traffic and road safety risks, diseases and hazardous materials; (4) to have in place effective measures to address emergency events and (5) to ensure that the safeguarding of personnel and property is carried out in a manner that avoids or minimizes risks to the project affected communities. Since the Project will involve small civil works and activities that may affect safety of local community this ESS4 is considered relevant. Preparation, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of this ESMF is part of the ESS4 measures.
30. ESS 7 - Indigenous Peoples/ Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities: It applies to a distinct social and cultural group identified in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of this ESS. The terminology used for such groups varies from country to country and often reflects national considerations (e.g. 'indigenous', ethnic minorities', 'aboriginals', 'hill tribes', tribal groups'). It has the following objectives: (1) to ensure that the development process fosters full respect for human rights, dignity, aspirations, identity, culture and natural resources-based livelihoods of indigenous peoples, (2) to avoid adverse impacts of projects on indigenous peoples, or when avoidance is not possible, to minimize, mitigate and/ or compensate for such impacts, (3) to promote sustainable development benefits and opportunities for indigenous people in a manner that is accessible, culturally appropriate and inclusive, (4) to improve project design and promote local support by establishing and maintaining an ongoing relationship based on meaningful consultation with indigenous peoples affected by a project throughout the project life cycle, (5) to obtain Free, Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) of affected indigenous people, and (6) to recognize, respect and preserve the culture, knowledge and practices of indigenous peoples and to provide them with an opportunity to adapt to changing conditions in a manner and in a timeframe acceptable to them. Since the Project will involve activities located in area that ethnic group minority is likely to be present, this ESS7 is considered relevant. Preparation, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of this ESMF and SEP is part of the ESS7 measures.
31. ESS 10 - Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure: It recognizes the importance of open and transparent engagement between the Borrower and project stakeholders as an essential element of good international practice. Effective stakeholder engagement can improve ES sustainability of projects, enhance project acceptance, and make a significant contribution to successful project design and implementation. It has the following objectives: (1) to establish a systematic approach to stakeholder engagement that will help the Borrowers identify stakeholders and build and maintain a constructive relationship with them, (2) to assess the level of stakeholder interest and support for the project, and to enable stakeholders views to be taken into account in project design and ES performance, (3) to promote and provide means for effective and inclusive engagement with project-affected parties throughout the project life cycle on issues that could potentially affect them, and (4) to ensure that appropriate project information on ES risks and impacts is disclosed to stakeholders in a timely, understandable, accessible and appropriate manner and format. Similar to ESS1, this ESS10 is considered relevant to the Project.

## 2.3 GAP ANALYSIS – WB’S ESF AND NATIONAL LEGISLATION

32. This section builds upon the information on relevant legislations of the GoL (Section 2.1), and requirements of WBs ESF (Section 2.3). It summarizes major gaps that have been identified by comparing requirements of WB’s ESF and relevant national legislations. Mostly, the GoL has established a comprehensive regulatory framework (including various laws, decrees and instruction/regulations) to govern the environmental issues as well as to utilize and conserve natural resources and protection of citizens. For all ESSs that are relevant to the RRPM II, project national legislations exist and no major gaps have been identified. However, there are minor deviations that are addressed by the ESMF and its instruments. These gaps and measures to address them are outlined below.

### ▪ **ESS-1: Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts**

33. **National legislation:** Based on the Environmental Protection Law (2012), the EIA Decree issued by PMO in 2019 is highly consistent with ESS1 and complemented by other legislations such as the Decision on SEA by MoNRE (2017), and sub-ordinate legislation such as ministerial Instructions (e.g. on ESIA/ 2013) and technical guidelines (e.g. on ESIA/ 2016). They provide a due process and guidance to assess ES risks and impacts, identify mitigation and compensation measures, and monitor compliance. Their goal being the avoidance of impacts associated with development projects on people and their environment, and also reflects principles of sustainable development, preventing that local people are negatively affected.

34. **Gaps and measures to address them:** No main gaps exist related to ESS 1, and the overall requirements are met. In line with the national regulations (where relevant) and ESS1 requirements, the RRPM II project applies a structured approach to ES management that follows the mitigation hierarchy of avoidance, minimizing, and mitigating potential negative risks and impacts, as well as enhancing positive impacts where possible, and therefore maximizes sustainable development gains. Particular attention is paid to the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable persons or groups in participating villages, as well as to enhance capacity of staff within the PMU and other relevant agencies that working for the project.

### ▪ **ESS-2: Labor and Working Conditions**

35. **National legislation:** Labor and working conditions are governed by national legislation comprehensively, some of them recently amended or issued. Of particular importance are the amended Labor Law (2013), the amended Law on Hygiene, Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2011) and the Law on Anti-trafficking (2015), the Law for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children (2014), the Law on Protection of Rights/ Interest of Children (2006) and Decree on OHS (2019), but also by sub-ordinate legislations. They cover comprehensively working conditions and regulating OHS, establish limits for hours of work and overtime, leave entitlements (with special provisions for pregnant women), compulsory social security for employees (according to Social Security Law/ 2013), protecting vulnerable groups of workers, addressing violence against women and children/ protect their rights.

36. **Gaps and measures to address them:** National regulatory legislation is comprehensive and is significantly consistent with ESS-2. The following weaknesses/ gaps exists: (1) 14 is the minimum working age, but the Labor Law establishes that children of 12 and 13 may be employed for "light work"; (2) national law restricts workers' organizations aside from the Lao Trade Union; and (3) there are no legal provisions in place to avoid forced labor since the country has not ratified the related international conventions. They are addressed by the LMP that requires additional measures to comply with ESS-2 including OHS measure, terms and conditions of employment of

project workers, Environmental, Social, Health and Safety Specification (ESHSS) for contracts; Community Labor Management Procedure; and GM for project workers integrated into the GRM of the project.

▪ **ESS-3: Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management**

37. **National legislation:** Legislation that relate to ESS-3 include Laws such as on Environmental Protection (2012) and on Water/ Water Resources (2017), but also sub-ordinate legislation including the National Pollution Control Standards (NPCS) and the National Environmental Quality Standard (NEQS) and related Decrees, as well as the Decree on Pesticide Management (2017) and ministerial regulation on Control of Pesticides (2010). They include rules and measures to address ES concerns related to pollution prevention (pollution of land, air and water), especially due to intensive use of agro-chemicals (including pesticides), hazardous and nonhazardous waste, as well as efficient use of resource. Investors and projects related to all sectors (e.g. industry, agriculture, forestry, energy, mining, and handicraft) are obliged to comply with the NEQS and NPCS.
38. **Gaps and measures to address them:** ESS-3 will be implemented to apply a precautionary approach complementing the national regulation that ensures sustainable resource uses, avoids/ minimizes pollution manage and prevent pollution including emissions of climate pollutants, as well as the generation of hazardous/ non-hazardous waste. Minor existing gaps are addressed by Standard Waste Management Procedures (SWMP), Pest Management Plans (PMP) and ECOP (for renovation work). All banned agro-chemicals are excluded from being procured/ funded by the project. A list of dos and don'ts helps to minimize littering by project staff within the landscapes.

▪ **ESS-4: Community Health and Safety**

39. **National legislation:** Legislation that relate to ESS-4 include Laws such as on Hygiene, Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2011), Road Traffic (2016), Civil Servants and Officials (2015), but also the Labor Law, the Environmental Protection Law and Chemical Law include relevant provisions. Beside this, sub-ordinate legislation such as Decision on OHS at Construction Sites (2013) exist. They cover and address main concerns related to community health and safety.
40. **Gaps and measures to address them:** Minor gaps are addressed via CHSP to be developed and implemented to ensure health and safety issue of communities involve in project activity are well taking care of. Codes of Conduct (CoC) will be included in the letter of government staff and team appointment and contracts (for contracted workers). CHS training will also provided for these project personel to raise wareness of the ESS4 requirements and measures to prevent and address CHS risks and impacts. Community Health and Safety Plan and the Gender Based Violence (GBV) Plan provides guidelines on how to address the identification and mitigation measures associated with these issues. Specific guidelines have been provided in terms of Labor Management Procedures and Staff Code of Conduct

▪ **ESS-7: Indigenous People/ Sub-Saharan African, Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities.**

41. **National legislation:** The Constitution recognizes the multiethnic nature of the Lao people and guarantees that “all ethnic groups have the right to preserve their own traditions and culture, and those of the Nation; discrimination between ethnic groups is forbidden”. Other legislation that relates to ESS-7 include most prominently the recent Decree on Ethnic Groups (2020), and Guidelines on Consultation with Ethnic Groups affected by Public and Private Development Projects (2013). Other relevant legislation includes the Decree on Code of Conduct for Civil Servants (2019), the amended Land Law (2019) and ministerial instruction on Customary Rights (2007) The definition of ethnic groups in the legal framework is close to the ESF principle of self-

identification as members of a cultural group with an identity distinct from the mainstream cultural group.

42. **Gaps and measures to address them:** Decree on Ethnicity (2020) confirms that the GOL has special policies for ethnic, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. However, guidance on how vulnerable/disadvantaged groups should be consulted to ensure the consultation process and its outcomes is meaningful is not provided. To manage and E&S risks and minimize adverse impacts on the ethnic minorities in the project villages, ethnic minorities will be engaged for meaningful consultation throughout project cycle to ensure project activities that aim to provide socioeconomic benefits to EM peoples are carried out in a manner that is culturally appropriate to the EM peoples.

▪ **ESS-10: Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure**

43. **National legislation:** Requirements as of ESS-10 are covered by various legislations, especially those on consultation and grievance including the Constitution, the Law on Government (amended 2016), the Law on Handling Petitions (amended 2016), as well a sub-ordinate decree such as the EIA Decree (2019) and the Public Involvement Guideline (2012) and the Ethnic Group Consultation Guideline (2013)
44. **Gaps and measures to address them:** A Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), which includes Grievance Redress Procedures for potential issues, will be applied during project implementation. The SEP, among other things, will also address minor gaps related to the lack of guidance on meaningful consultation on the part of GOL. The LMP in this ESMF also describes a specific GRM for contractor's workers. The GRM must be accessible to all stakeholders, in particular vulnerable and women. The project will involve a range of direct and indirect stakeholders at national and sub-national levels including local communities, DOF, MAF and concerned government agencies, academies, development partners, NGOs and private sector. Information disclosure is required under this standard to ensure that all relevant information such as on risks and impacts are accessible timely and appropriately to affected communities and stakeholders.
45. Any gaps and inconsistencies that are identified between the relevant national legislations and ESSs, the latter will be prevailing under the RRPM II project.

### 3. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL BASELINE CONDITIONS

#### 3.1 OVERVIEW OF PROJECT PROVINCES

46. The Project will cover six provinces, including Xiengkhuang, Huaphanh, Oudomxay, Xiengkhuang, Phongsaly, Sekong, and Savannakhet provinces.

- **Xiengkhuang**

47. Xieng Khouang province is located on the mountainous Tran-ninh plateau. It is set at an altitude of more than 1,000 metres above sea level and enjoys mild temperatures for most of the year, although winters can be surprisingly cold. Kham District is a low-lying basin set at around 600 meters above sea level.

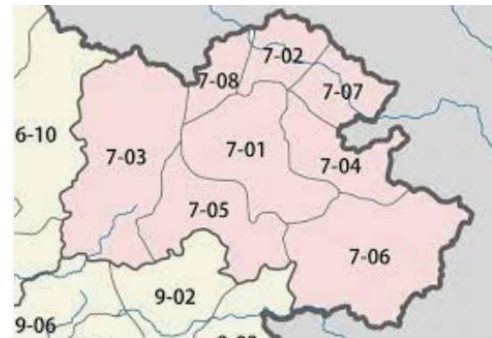




48. Xiangkhouang province covers an area of 15,880 square kilometres (6,130 sq mi) and has a largely mountainous topography. The province borders Luang Prabang province to the northwest, Houaphanh province to the northeast, Vietnam to the east, Bolikhamsai province to the southeast, and Vientiane province to the southwest. The capital is Phonsavan. Xiangkhouang and Vientiane provinces are part of the Nam Ngum River watershed.
49. Apart from floodplains along the Mekong River, Xieng Khouang has the largest grassland in the country. This area is characterized by rolling hills and grassland whose elevation averages 1,300 metres (4,300 ft). The country's highest peak, Phou Bia (2,820 metres (9,250 ft)), rises at the southern side of the plateau. The province is 400 km northeast of Vientiane capital. Phou Bia, at 2700 m elevation, is the highest peak in the province, and the highest in Laos.
50. Xiangkhouang is home to five different ethnic groups. The Tai Dam, Tai Daeng, Phuan, Khmu, and Hmong have settled in the province. Their traditional houses, dresses, beliefs and rituals are part of the cultural heritage of Laos. There are also minorities of Laotian Chinese and Vietnamese as well as some international workers from Korea, Japan, Europe, and North America.

- **Huaphanh Provinces**

51. Houaphanh province covers an area of 16,500 square kilometres (6,400 sq mi). The province is bordered by Vietnam to the north, east, and southeast, Xiangkhouang province to the south and southwest, and Luang Prabang province to the west. The terrain is rugged, with dense, forested mountains forming much of the province, particularly on the western side. The main road running through the province is Route 6. The principal rivers are the Nam Ma, which flows from and into Vietnam, passing the village of Ban Muang-Et, and the Nam Sam, on which the towns of Sam Neua and Sam Tai lie.



52. The province is the home to the Viengxay caves, an extensive network of caves used by the Pathet Lao, and the Hintang Archaeological Park, one of the most important pre-historic sites in northern Laos, dotted with standing megaliths.
53. Houaphanh is one of the poorest areas of Laos but has dramatic scenery and fine textile traditions. The population of the province, as of 2015, was 289,393. The capital is Xam Neua. Minority groups such as the Khmu, Hmong and Phong inhabit this province.

- **Oudomxay province**

54. Oudomxay is located in the heart of northern Laos and is one of the most accessible of the far northern provinces. It is also known as “The Northern city – sea of clouds with different hill tribes”.
55. The rugged mountainous landscape has peaks up to 1,850 meters covered in varying forest types and wider fields. The province’s three main rivers are Mekong, Nam Park, Nam Beng and Nam Kor.



56. It covers an area of 15,370 square kilometres (5,930 sq mi). It borders China to the north, Phongsali province to the northeast, Luang Prabang province to the east and southeast, Xaignabouli province to the south and southwest, Bokeo province to the west, and



Luang Namtha province to the northwest. Its topography is mountainous, between 300–1,800 metres (980–5,910 ft) above sea level.

57. The topography of Oudomxay is very mountainous. Approximately 60 rivers flow through Oudomxay province, for example Nam Phak, Nam Sae, Nam Beng, Nam Kor and Nam Nga. The Nam Kor flows through the province capital Muang Xay. Oudomxay province has a moderate monsoon climate. The yearly amount of rain is about 1,900–2,600 millimetres (75–102 in). Temperatures in February and March average between 18 and 19 °C, from April to May temperatures climb over 31 °C. Due to high altitudes there are more variations in temperature during the year and a colder dry season in northern Laos as in the rest of the country.
58. The population of the province according to the 2015 census is 307,622. Oudomxay is mainly populated by the Khmu, Hmong and lowland Lao, with a total of 12 ethnic minorities, each with their own languages, cultural heritage and lifestyles.

- **Phongsaly province**

59. Phongsaly province is a province of Laos in the extreme north of the country. The capital of the province is the city of Phongsaly. Phongsaly is between Yunnan (China), and Điện Biên province in Vietnam. Its culture has thus been historically heavily influenced by China.



60. Phongsaly province covers an area of 16,270 square kilometres (6,280 sq mi), out of which 77% has forest cover. The province borders China to the north and west, Vietnam to the east, Luang Prabang province to the south, and Oudomxay province to the southwest. The highest mountain in the province is Phou Doychy with an elevation of 1,842 metres (6,043 ft). Protected areas in the province include the Phou Dene Din National Biodiversity Conservation Area and Nam Lan Conservation Area. Agriculture is the mainstay of the people of the province. Phongsaly is the primary trade gateway between Laos and China, exporting lumber and importing several types of finished goods.
61. Phongsaly is characterized by a relatively cool climate. Weather in the province is described as "four seasons in a single day" with cold mornings and evenings, humidity during the day, and rains in the afternoon, which has created lush green forests.
62. The population of the province is 177,989 as of the 2015 census. There are 13 minority ethnic groups with independent language and culture identity: Khammu, Thai Dam, Thai Daeng, Yao, Leu, Ho (Han-Chinese), Hmong, Akha, Yang, Bid, Lolo and others. Each group has its own practices in respect to marriage customs as well as specific handicrafts, silverware and jewelry.

- **Saravan Province**

63. Salavan Province is one of the southernmost provinces of Lao PDR, about 550 km from the capital city, Vientiane. It covers a total area of 16,389 square kilometers (6,328 sq. mi) and has a total population of 300,000 as of 2005. It is composed of 8 Districts namely: Saravane, Ta Oy, Toomlam, Lakhonepheng, Vapy, Khongsedone, Lao Ngarm, and Samoui. It is bounded in the north by Savannakhét Province, in the west by Thailand, in the south by Champasak Province and in the east by Vietnam.
64. Transportation, Communication, Power and Water. The project corridor serves as the main land route connecting the various Districts of this part of southern Lao PDR with the surrounding rural areas for the transport of agricultural produce. The major transport modes are small pickups and

medium-sized, 2-axle trucks. Other transportation modes include tuk tuks, trishaws (lot-sam-lor) and jumbos (small tuk-tuks).

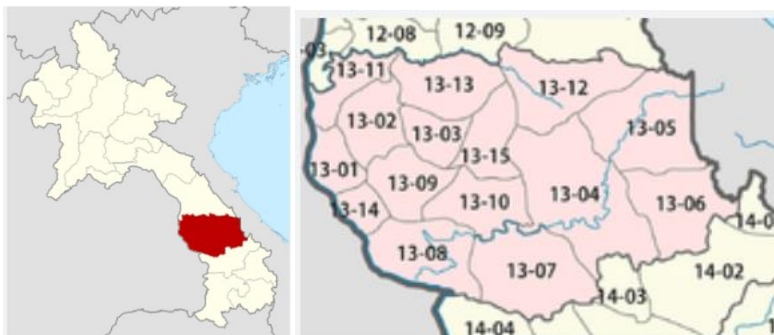
65. Salavan Province has fairly developed communications infrastructure with domestic and international telephone services provided by companies such as Laotel, Enterprise of Communications Lao (ETL), and Unitel. Mobile telephone network services are present throughout most of the province as well as a 100-watt radio network situated in Khongsedone, Ta Oy and Samoui.
66. Socio-cultural Resources: Population and Communities. The population of the province is 300,000, based on 2005 census, distributed over eight districts. The ethnic groups in the province comprise the Tahoy, Pako, Katang, Kado, Suay and Laven. The majority of the people still practice traditional livelihoods, including some shifting cultivation.
67. There are several cultural, historical and natural tourist areas near the project area. Tourists can visit the ethnic villages of Suay and Taoy or Katou weavers in Ban Houay Houn, the Ho Chi Minh trail, the Tad Lo Waterfall, the Ho Chi Minh trail or take boat rides on the Xe Lanong River. World-class Arabica coffee beans and handwoven fabrics can also be bought from villagers.
68. Economy. The economy of the province is recognized as being one of the poorest in the country. The region was heavily bombed during the last Indo-china war and remains of the bombs are still found along the former Ho Chi Minh trail. There are only small and medium scale industrial activities which comprise small scale furniture factories, sawmills, drinking water factories [including Saksith], rice mills, ice making and meat processing plants as well as print shops, TV/radio repair shops, watch repair shops and garages.
69. Rural households raise pigs, goats, cows, and poultry such as chicken, ducks and turkeys and develop fish ponds. Buffalos are used to plough the agricultural land. Households maintain 1-2 buffaloes on average that are used as draft animals in the rice paddy lands. Livestock is sold in the villages and at district markets to provide additional income for the local population.
70. Public Health. The healthcare system in Saravan Province is relatively well developed and covers the rural areas as well. There are more women now giving birth in hospitals or receiving assistance from trained volunteers or nurses than before. Women's clinics have been built in villages and community health stations have increased. Health indicators have improved with a decrease in death rates from tuberculosis and malaria and an increase in access to clean water has been achieved.

## **Sekong province**

71. The province of Sekong is located in the southern part of Laos and encompasses a total land area of 8,285 km<sup>2</sup>. The majority of Sekong is comprised of rough terrain that ranges in elevation from 300 to 600 meters above sea level. It shares an eastern border with Vietnam. The province of Saravan and Attapue surround it to the north, west and south respectively. The province has been classified into three major regions: upland, plateau and lowland.
72. The province has total population of 137,147 people (69,413 male or 50.6% and 67,734 female or 49.4%), 197 villages, 21,781 households and 27,647 families in 2019. There are 4,290 poor households (20.9%) in the province. Sekong is ethnically diverse. Only about 3% of the population is ethnic Lao. The vast majority (97%) come from one of at least 14 distinct ethnic groups. The Alak (21% of the provincial population), Katu (20%), Tarieng (19%) and Nge/Krieng (11%) are the main ethnic groups. Similar to other province, men are considered as the head of the family. Generally, the decision in the family is jointly shared and discussed between male and female. The agriculture is more focused on swidden cultivation and forest products are important for local livelihoods of people in the province. Commercial timber extraction has been expanding rapidly over the past decade in the province by Vietnamese investors. The province has suitable production land for agricultural cultivation, especially for coffee, almonds, clean vegetables, fruit trees, and so on.

- **Savannaket province**

73. The province is in the southern part of the country and is the largest province in Laos. It borders Khammouane province to the north, Quảng Trị and Thừa Thiên–Huế provinces of Vietnam to the east, Salavan province to the south, and Nakhon Phanom and Mukdahan provinces of Thailand to the west.



74. Savannakhet is the largest province, covering an area of 21,774 square kilometres (8,407 sq mi).[7][8][9] The province borders Khammouan province to the north, Quảng Trị and Thừa Thiên–Huế provinces of Vietnam to the east, Salavan province to the south, and Nakhon Phanom and Mukdahan provinces of Thailand to the west. Notable settlements in the province include Savannakhet, Muong Song Khone, Ban Nhiang, Seno, Dong-Hen, Muang Phalan, Ban Sanoun, Muang Phin, Ban Dong, Ban Nammi, Ban Nao Tai. The population of this province is 969,697 (2015 census) which spread over 15 districts. The ethnic minority groups residing in the province include Lao Loum, Phu Tai, Tai Dam, Katang, Mongkong, Vali, Lavi, Souei, Kapo, Kaleung and Ta Oi.

### 3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE CONDITIONS

75. The Lao PDR is a mountainous and land-locked country (236,800 km<sup>2</sup>). In the north and central region, especially along the eastern border between Lao and Vietnam, the environmental features can be characterized as mountainous with large areas of forest cover mixed with degraded forests, and sandy soil in general. There are few state forest land areas in these regions, namely, Nam Et Phou Louey and Nakai Nam-Theun Nation Parks bordered by Vietnam are home to unique and globally significant biodiversity. There is limited flat land along the Mekong River part of which is bordered by Thailand. Encroachment into state forest land areas for agricultural and livestock activity remains the main reason for forest degradation. Slash and burn activity also caused seasonal forest fires in many rural areas across the country. The application of large amounts of chemicals and pesticides for plantations (banana and rubber plants) in the past also caused fish kills and water pollution and expansion of concession licenses for plantations have been prohibited during the past 5 years. Climate change and natural disaster risk has been increasing while flash floods can cause damage to the affected population. UXO risk in the regions, especially in the mountainous area along the Lao-Vietnam border remains high.



#### ***Xiengkhuang Province***

76. The province experiences two seasons, a dry (winter) and a rainy season. The dry season lasts from October to March and the rainy season is from April to September with the heaviest rain from June to August. The average temperature is 20.5o C, the rainfall is 1,500 mm/year, the humidity

- averages around 40 percent and the province receive in average 2,150 hours/year of sunlight.
77. The main river in Xiengkhuang is Nam Ngum River with a length of 1,403 km and draining as area of 17,000 km<sup>2</sup>. It is the largest river of Xiengkhouang and Vientiane provinces and one of the major tributaries of Mekong in Laos. The river source is located in the Plain of Jars about 1,000-1,100 m above mean sea level. After joining with Nam Lik, the Nam Ngum flows down into the Vientiane Plain for about 80 km in southerly direction to ThaNgone, and then for another 80 km in an easterly direction to join the Mekong River at Pak Ngum District. The annual discharge is 23,021,280,000 m<sup>3</sup> (MRC, 2017)<sup>8</sup>.
  78. Nong Tang Lake, 52 km east of Phonsavan at Rte 7, is a picturesque natural lake surrounded by limestone cliffs. Three km north of Phonsavan town the small Lake SadetJao Supanouvong will be found. It is a nice place for a quick retreat or to view the sunset. The locals enjoy the place at Pi Mai celebrations in April, when boat races take place among other activities.
  79. Approximately 55% of the total areas are steep mountainous with scattered forest cover of some 900,000 ha or 58 percent of the provincial land area. Arable land covers some 7%. Xiengkhouang province is known for its grassland area (295,000 ha), used for extensive livestock raising of mainly cattle.
  80. The province is rich in natural resources and has a climate that is suitable for diversified agriculture. Protection of forests, including pine and hing forests, as well as rivers and watershed systems have a high priority, although widespread slashes and burn agriculture has some negative effects to the forests and biodiversity. The forest cover of the province is estimated to be 43 percent of the total land area and important catchment areas for the Ngum, Khao, Mat, Ngiep, Xan, and Moo Rivers containing more than 102 tributaries. In addition, there are a total of 80 fish conservation zones, 46 fishponds and 38 reservoirs.
  81. The province has two national level Conservation Forests (National Protected Areas [NPAs]): Phou Sa Bot - Phung Chong NPA covering two districts: Kham and Nong Het with a total area of 149,000 ha (18.7 percent total land area) and a small proportion of Nam Et - Phou Leoi NPA (8,000 ha) bordering Huaphan and Luang Prabang provinces. Furthermore, there are three District Conservation Forests: Phou PhaXay, Phou Nang Non and Phou Pha Tung and twelve Provincial Forest Conservation Areas totalling 47,800 ha. The Protection Forest category serves mainly as watersheds/ catchments with a total area of approximately 761,200 ha. Production Forests cover three main areas: Nam Ngiep - Nam Jong, Long Khan – Long Khao and Nam Mo totalling 310,600 ha.
  82. The main livelihood activities: Based on implementation of the fiveyear socio-development plan of Xiengkhouang province (2016-2020), geographical special conditions, actual conditions of the area, and natural resources within the province, Provincial Environment and Natural Resource Department (PONRE, 2021)<sup>9</sup> reported the agriculture employs 76.76% of the population, services 5.47%, industry 5.18%, and other occupations account for the remainder. When compared to 5 years ago, the economy (GDP) is expected to grow by an average of 7.5% per year, or 98.5% of the plan. Within five years, the total product reached 16,731.07 billion kip, with the agriculture-forestry sector growing by an average of 3.51%, accounting for 36.88%, the industrial sector growing by an average of 8.79%, accounting for 35.26%, and the service sector growing by an average of 10.78%, accounting for 27.86%. In 2019, the average income reached 1,622 dollars per person per year, an increase of 444 dollars per person per year, compared to 2015, and a decrease of 378 dollars per person per year compared to the 5-year plan
  83. Poverty: LSB (2020) reported the poverty headcount rate in Xiengkhuang province dropped from 43.3% in 2012/2013 to 26% in 2018/2019, with the poverty gap decreasing from 8.6% to 6.2%, and distribution of population decrease from 3.1% to 2.2% of the poor. There are 8,996 poor households (19.4%) in the province, of which the urban poor ratio is 10.2% (1,496 poor households)

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<sup>8</sup> Mekong Reiver Commission (2017). Annua report on water quality data assessment for Laos 2016 - <http://monre.mynapcloud.com/nreri/images/2018/MRC-2016.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> PONRE (2021). Xiengkhouang Province Sate of Pollution Report 2020, Lao PDR

and the rural poor at 23.6% (7,500 poor households). The ratio of food-poverty is high at 39.5%, with the rural rate of 43.2% and the urban rate at 30.9%. The multi-dimensional poverty headcount rate of the province has reduced from 42.1% in 2012/2013 to 27.5% in 2018/2019.

83. Natural hazards/Disaster: Lao PDR is exposed to many climate hazards, such as flooding, drought, landslides, storms, and typhoons. From 1970 to 2010, 33 natural hazard events were recorded, mostly floods and droughts, affecting almost 9 million people and causing economic damages of over USD 400 million<sup>10</sup>. Xiengkhuang has been experiencing disasters at an increasing rate in the last decade. Communities are exposed to recurrent hazards such as flood and drought impacting on lives and livelihoods year after year by reducing crop yields, yearly incomes, and ultimately increasing the potential of food insecurity<sup>11</sup>. In 2018 Lao PDR faced heavy rains and flooding in several provinces affected livelihood and poverty socio-economic development Tropical Storm Son-Tinh caused heavy rains and flooding in 55 districts of several provinces across Lao PDR. Lao Economic Daily (28 July 2018) reported that bombarded with heavy rains for many days so far this July, numerous areas in Xiengkhuang province have been affected by floods. Areas in seven districts of Xiengkhuang have unavoidably seen the negative impacts. Particularly, the condition in Pek district found 37 flood-affected villages with 41 houses damaged, and impacted 475.4 hectares of rice fields, 0.5 hectares of farming areas, 24 barns, 4 bridges, 4 roads, 2 roads blocked, 13 electric pylons, 1 gas station, and 2 chicken farms, forages and irrigation lines<sup>12</sup>.
84. According to the analysis of the national climate change vulnerability assessment (UNHABITAT, 2021), Xiengkhuang province is moderately impacted by climate change-related hazards, with droughts effecting nearly one-fifth of the population in the province's center, primarily in Khoune district. While few villages in the north of the Kham and Khoune districts are affected by multiple hazards, such as floods, storms, and landslides, other villages in the district face various combinations of hazards, such as droughts and landslides or landslides and floods. Eastern Pek, Pakhay, Phoukoud, and Morkmay districts are substantially less vulnerable than the rest of the areas. Since primary DRR resources are in place, levels of adaptability are high. Figures A1-8 and A1-9 illustrate the multi-hazard map of Xiengkhuang province and its impacted area.

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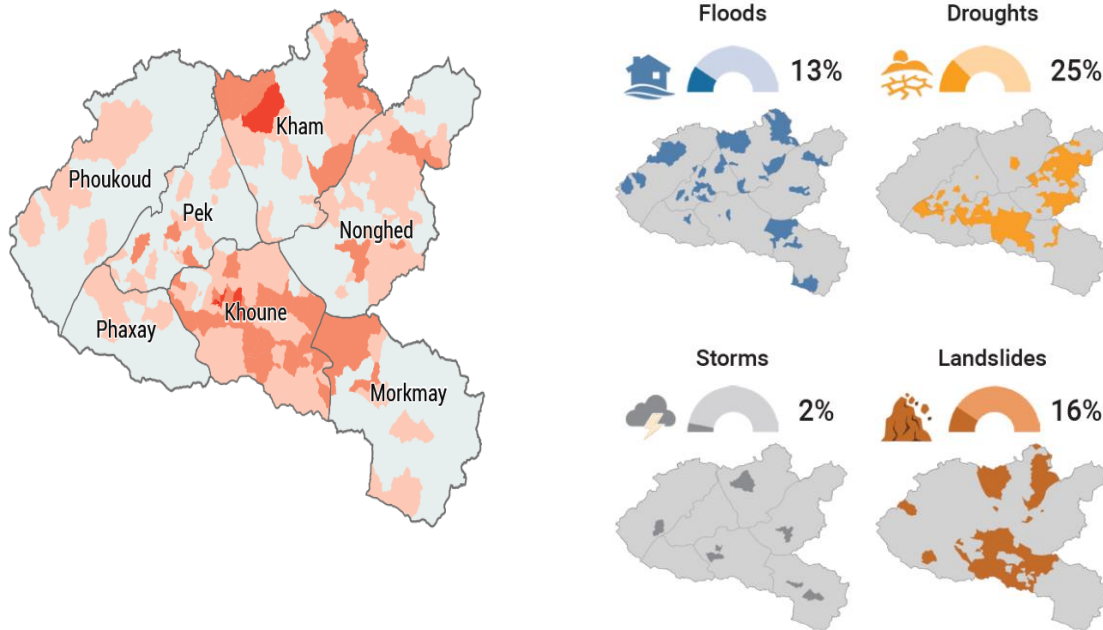
<sup>10</sup>The Asia Foundation (2018), accessible <https://reliefweb.int/report/lao-peoples-democratic-republic/disaster-risk-management-laos>

<sup>11</sup> UNDP Lao PDR (2015). Accessible [http://www.la.undp.org/content/lao\\_pdr/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2015/03/09/managing-disaster-risk-in-xiengkhouang.html](http://www.la.undp.org/content/lao_pdr/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2015/03/09/managing-disaster-risk-in-xiengkhouang.html)

<sup>12</sup> Lao Economic Daily (2018). Accessible <https://laos.opendevlopmmentmekong.net/news/floods-hit-xiengkhouang-with-two-dead-and-14-damaged-bridges-this-month/>



**Figure A1-8: Multi-hazard map of Xiengkhuang**      **Figure A1-9: Impacted area in Xiengkhuang**



Source: UNHABITAT (2021)

85. UXO: Xiengkhuang province was the site of extensive land battles in the 1960s and 1970s. As one of the two main theatres in the war the other being the so-called Ho Chi Minh trail in the south of Laos – Xieng Khuang’s strategically important Plain of Jars was subjected to hundreds of thousands of bombing raids, leaving the area not only destroyed, but also littered with large numbers of unexploded bombs, including hundreds of thousands of cluster sub-munitions. More than 14,000 hectares of land in Xieng Khuang province have been freed up for use by UXO clearance teams over the past 27 years, with almost 7,000 people in the area falling victim to unexploded ordnance. 6,997 people had been injured or killed in UXO-related accidents in past decades and that 62,191 hectares of land had been contaminated by UXO. Some 14,148 hectares of land have now been restored to normal use, of which 12,315 hectares are agricultural land and 1,833 hectares are being used for various forms of development. An estimated 20,000 people survived out of more than 50,000 who were killed or injured between 1964 and 2008, according to authorities. Based on data recorded in the NRA Dashboard, Xieng Khuang has recorded the highest rate of UXO accidents in Laos, with 206 accidents occurring between 2008 and 2018, resulting in 292 casualties. This has inflicted immense psychological strain on families and communities, while also creating urgent medical needs for those who survive accidents.<sup>13</sup>

### **Huaphanh Province**

86. The dominant land-use pattern in Huaphanh Province is shifting cultivation. The forests are cut and burned at intervals ranging from 5 to 20 years. This is based on the traditional cycle of rotational shifting cultivation<sup>14</sup>. The main threats to forest areas in Huaphanh Province are encroachment by upland farming, shifting cultivation, unsustainable methods of non-timber forest product extraction, and unplanned logging. However, awareness raising about these issues is not sufficient when local communities are in poverty and have no other viable options for their livelihoods.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> [https://vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent\\_Int65.php](https://vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent_Int65.php)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/af336e/af336e03.htm>

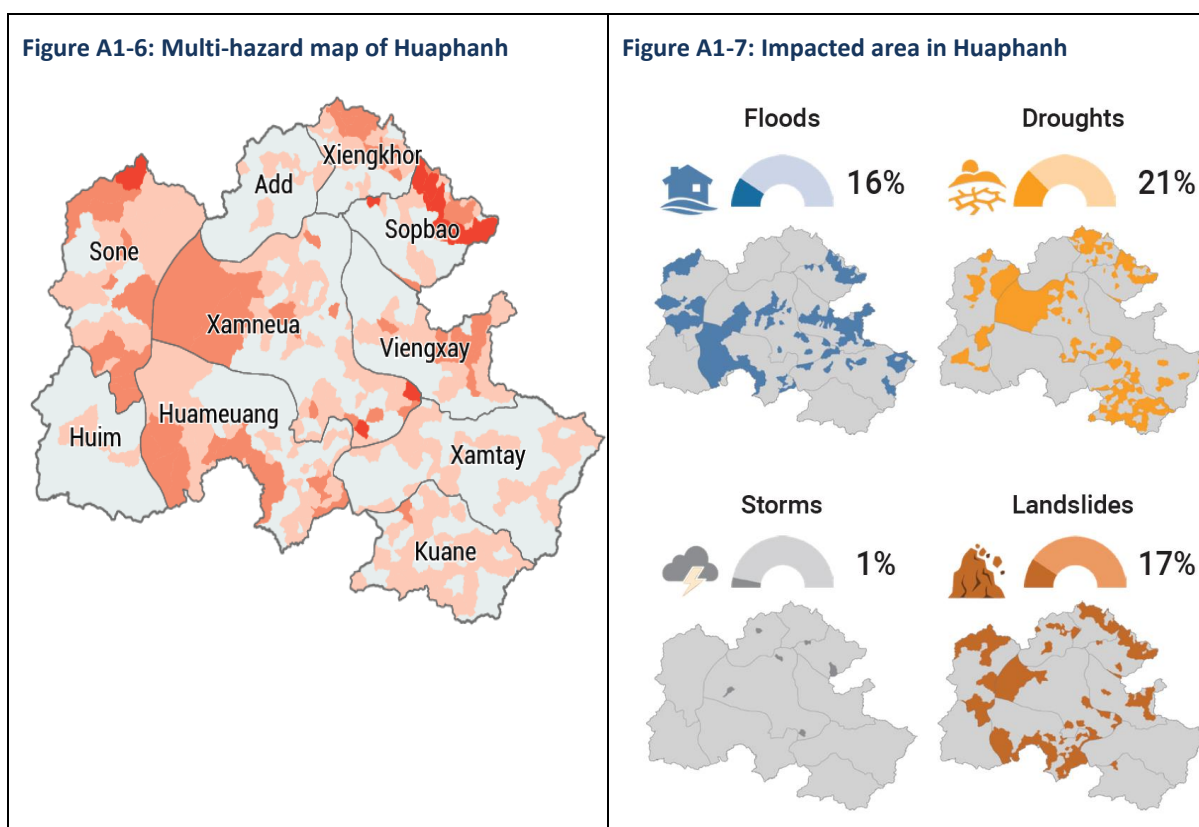
<sup>15</sup> [http://www.snv.org/public/cms/sites/default/files/explore/download/leaf\\_laos\\_-\\_succes\\_stories.pdf](http://www.snv.org/public/cms/sites/default/files/explore/download/leaf_laos_-_succes_stories.pdf)

87. In the southeast of Huaphanh is the Nam Xam National Protected Area (NPA), which is thought to provide habitat for wild elephants, various gibbons, gaur, banteng, tiger, clouded leopard, Asiatic black bear and Malayan sun bear. South of XamNeua located Tat Saloei, a beautiful waterfall best viewed after the rainy season. Nam Et-Phou Loei is the largest National Protected Area in Laos situated in the northwest of Houaphan. It is best known for harbouring one of the most important tiger populations remaining in Indochina. Its outstanding biodiversity includes over 30 species of large mammals and 300 species of birds. There are some important bird areas (IBA) as well.<sup>16</sup>
88. The main livelihood activities: According to the Ministry of Planning and Investment, main exports of Huaphanh province are minerals, corn, wood products, non-timber forest products, and livestock; while major imports include construction material, fuel, production materials, vehicles and consumption goods. Many of its mineral resource deposits have not been explored. Large investments are in mining (by China and Vietnam), industry and the handicraft, agricultural and service sectors.<sup>17</sup>
89. Poverty: According to the most recent Village and Household Listing Survey in 2019, total number of villages in Huaphanh province is 728 villages. The majority of household are located in the rural area with access road (65%), where rural villages without access road is lower (13%) and the rest (21.7%) of house are located in the urban area. Out of total villages, 412 of them (56%) are located in the risk to natural disaster area.
90. According to the main results of the Laos Expenditure and Consumption Survey 2018/2019, the poverty headcount rate in Huaphanh province dropped from 45.4% in 2013 to 26.6% in 2019, with the poverty gap decrease from 8.5% to 6%, and distribution of population decrease from 4.6% to 4.1% of the poor. There are 9,891 poor households (19.7%) in the province, of which the urban poor ratio is 1.5% (116 poor households) and the rural poor at 23.1% (9,775 poor households). The ratio of food-poverty is 27.4%, with the rural rate at 31.1% and the urban rate at 3.9%. The multi-dimensional poverty headcount rate of the province has reduced from 54% in 2012/2013 to 28% in 2018/2019. (LSB, 2020)
91. Natural Disasters/Hazards: The analysis of the national climate change vulnerability assessment (UNHABITAT, 2021) indicates that the Huaphanh province is moderately vulnerable to climate change-related risks. In the districts of Sone, Sopbao, and Xamneua, droughts, landslides, and floods pose a significant threat to a substantial number of villages. The southern and eastern districts of Huameuang and Viengxay, respectively, are severely impacted by floods and landslides, whereas the northern district of Xiengkhor is severely impacted by droughts and landslides. Southern Kuane district villages are primarily affected by droughts. Since most primary DRR resources are in place, adaptive capacity levels are high. The multi-hazard map of Huaphanh province and its impacted area are presented in Figures A1-6 and A1-7, respectively.

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<sup>16</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Houaphanh\\_Province](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Houaphanh_Province)

<sup>17</sup><http://www.investlaos.gov.la/index.php/provinces/huaphan>



Source: UNHABITAT (2021)

92. UXO: Houaphanh is the eighth most UXO-contaminated province in Laos, with the districts of Viengxay, Xamneua and Houa Meuang being the most affected. Most of the UXO contamination in Huaphan follows the main route east to west through the districts Viengxay, Xamneua, Houa Meuang and Viengthong with very little contamination outside of this, apart from areas around old military camps and mined defensive positions. Bombing occurred throughout all four districts and was particularly intense in Viengxay. Intense land battles occurred in the Xarnneua and Houameuang districts. UXO LAO commenced working in November 1996. Since then, UXO LAO teams have cleared 624 hectares of land and have disposed of more than 37,117 Items of UXO. Community Awareness Teams have visited 433 villages, reaching more than 117,000 people.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Oudomxay Province***

93. In Oudomxay, Annual rainfall ranges from 1,900 to 2,600 millimetres (75-102 in.). Approximately 60 rivers flow through Oudomxay Province, for example Nam Phak, Nam Sae, Nam Beng, Nam Kor and Nam Nga. The Nam Kor flows through the province capital Muang Xay. Main River in Oudomxay is Mekong, Nam Park, Nam Beng and Nam Kor. Approximately 60 rivers flow through its territory, offering great potential for hydropower development. About 12% of Oudomxay's forests are primary forests, while 48% are secondary forests.

94. According to estimations of the IUCN, approximately 12% of Oudomxay forests are primary forests, 48% secondary forests<sup>19</sup>. Vegetation in Oudomxay is rich by virtue of the monsoon climate. Several kinds of bamboo and a broad range of plants (for example orchids) are found in the region. Also, hardwoods like teak and mahogany trees grow in Oudomxay and are important sources of income for the population.

95. **The main livelihood activities:** Agriculture remains the main livelihood of rural poor in the

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.uxolao.org/houaphan/>

<sup>19</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oudomxay\\_Province](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oudomxay_Province)



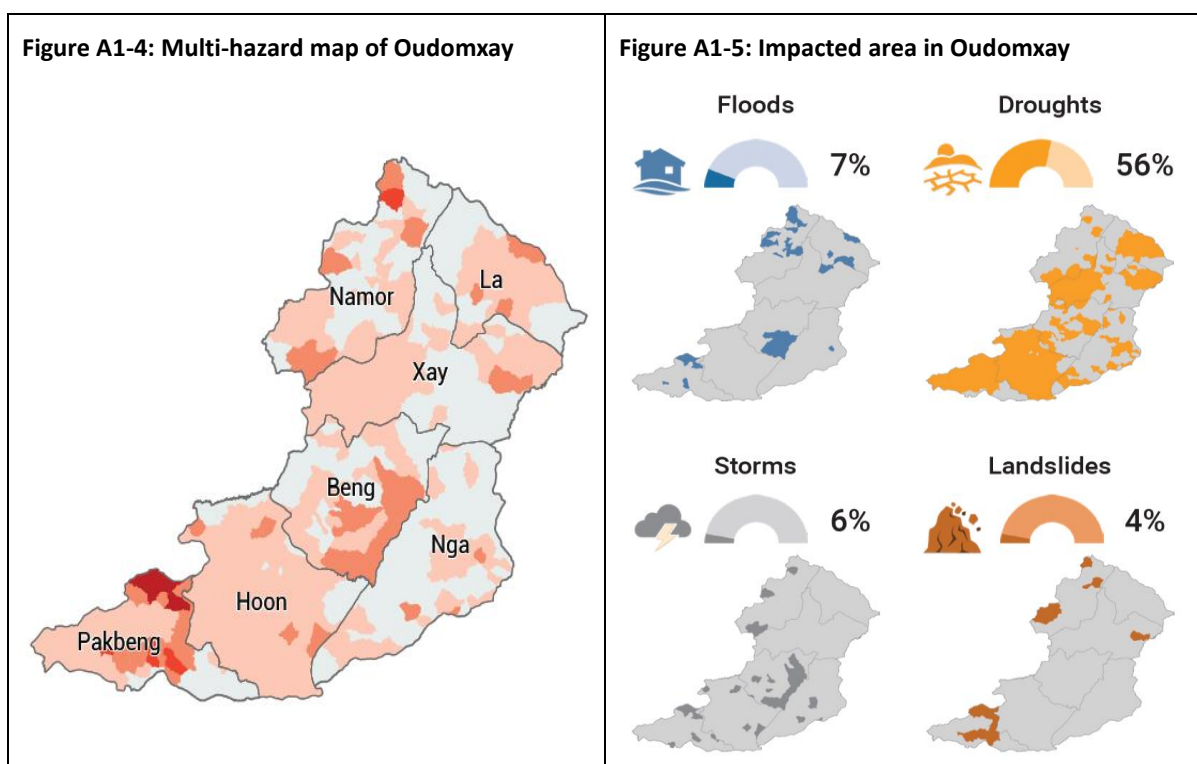
province. Subsistence agriculture is still practiced by the majority of the population in Oudomxay province. Rice cultivation using the wet-field paddy system is only possible in plain lowlands, which are scarce in Oudomxay. Natural rainfalls irrigate both mountain rice grown on mountainsides and most of the small cultivable areas in the lowlands. Aside from agricultural land, approximately 40,000 hectares of land are forested or used as meadows. Livestock breeding, particularly of water buffalos, pigs, cattle, and chickens, is an important component of the rural population's livelihood. For the population, forests provide not only wood, but also fruits, herbs, and meat, which contribute to family income.

96. Poverty: According to the most recent Village and Household Listing Survey in 2019, the majority of villages are located in the rural area with access road accounted for 299 villages, where rural villages without access road are 117 villages and 56 villages are located in the urban area. More than 59% (279 villages) of the total villages are located in the area that risk to the natural disaster. It is noticed that number of populations living in the rural area with access road (39,067 households or 64.4%), are higher than people living in the urban area (15,809 people or 26.1%). The rural area without access road accounted for 5,786 people or 9.5% of total household numbers.
97. According to the main results of the Laos Expenditure and Consumption Survey, the poverty headcount rate in Oudomxay province dropped from 36.6% in 2013 to 29.2% in 2019, with the poverty gap shrinking from 8.9% to 6.4% over the same time period. The poverty gap as a squared percentage fall from 2.9% to 2%. The distribution of the poor increases from 6.5% in 2013 to 8.7% in 2019, with the distribution of population also increased from 4.4% to 5.5% for the same period. There are 15,191 poor households (25.2%) in the province, of which the urban poor ratio is 1,571 households (9.4%) and the rural poor at 13,620 households (31.3%). The ratio of food-insecure households is 31.5%, with the rural rate at 34.6% and the urban rate at 23%. The multi-dimension of the poor rate in the province has reduced from 50% in 2012/2013 to 53.4% in 2018/2019. (LSB, 2020)<sup>20</sup>
98. Natural Disasters/Hazards: In 2013, there was worst landslide and flash floods occurred in the province which affected schools and people property. The province was hit again by the natural disaster in 2018 which caused livelihood and poverty socio-economic development. Tropical Storm Son-Tinh caused heavy rains and flooding in 55 districts of several provinces across Laos, including Attapue, Savannakhet, Khammouane, Xayabouli, Bolikhamxay, Luangprabang, Bokeo, Sekong, Xiengkhouang and Oudomxay provinces<sup>21</sup>. The finding of the national climate change vulnerability assessment (UNHABITAT, 2021) shows that over half of the population of Oudomxay has reportedly been affected by droughts in 2019, making the region highly vulnerable to climate change-related risks. While all districts are prone to this hazard, Hoon district has the maximum concentration of affected villages. The villages in the northern Namor and southern Pakbeng districts are more vulnerable to floods, cyclones, and landslides. The mountainous southeast of the Beng district in the province's center is also highly susceptible to flooding and cyclones. The province lacks a master plan and evacuation centres, so its adaptive capacity is only moderate. The multi-hazard map of Oudomxay province and its impacted area are presented in Figures A1-4 and A1-5, respectively.

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<sup>20</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau (2020) Poverty in Lao PDR: key findings from the Laos Expenditure and Consumption Survey 2018/2019, Lao PDR

<sup>21</sup> OCHA's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (2018). Year in Review. Accessible <https://ocha.oap.exposure.co/2018-year-in-review?locale=en&categories%3Fembed%3Dtrue%3Fmore%3Dtrue%3Fembed%3Dtrue%3Fmore%3Dtrue%2Fsign-in>



Source: UNHABITAT (2021)

99. UXO: The National Regulatory Authority (NRA) presented the UXO National Strategic Plan for the period 2011-2020. The plan has documented a total of 8 districts, 101 villages with UXO in Oudomxay province. The UXO Sector Annual Report 2020 reported that from 1997 – 2020, total area of UXO land clearance in Oudomxay province was 8,660,108 m<sup>2</sup>, of which 720,954 m<sup>2</sup> (8%) has been utilized for agricultural farming and the rest of 7,939,144 m<sup>2</sup> (92%) of area cleared have been used for other development activities in the province, with 4,963 beneficiaries in the province. The NRA will continue to coordinate with key stakeholders to implement the UXO clearance in the province.

### Phongsaly Province

100. Phongsaly Province has a tropical monsoon climate with two distinct seasons, namely a rainy season (May-October) and a dry season (November-April). The annual temperature ranges from 20.4 °C to 32.1 °C, and the average annual precipitation is around 1747 mm (Xiao, Chiwei and Li, etc, 2019)<sup>22</sup>. The climate is pleasant and refreshing covering the endless mountains down to the canyon of the Nam Ou River, biggest tributary of the Mekong. Phongsaly is characterized by a relatively cool climate. Weather in the province is described as “four seasons in a single day” with cold mornings and evenings, humidity during the day, and rains in the afternoon, which has created lush green forests.

101. The Swidden agriculture, fallow land, market gardens, and cash crops are traditional in Phongsaly province such as teak and cardamom (Xiao, Chiwei and Li, et al., 2019).

102. The main livelihood activities in the province are in rice cultivation, crop production, raising animals and collecting non-timber-forest products (NTFPs). The province is famous for tea plantation. The main commercial production includes tea, sugarcane, rubber, coffee, cardamom,

<sup>22</sup> Xiao, Chiwei & Li, Peng & Feng, Zhiming & You, Zhen & Jiang, Luguang & Boudmyxay, Khampheng. (2019). Is the phenology-based algorithm for mapping deciduous rubber plantations applicable in an emerging region of northern Laos?. *Advances in Space Research*. 65. 10.1016/j.asr.2019.09.022. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335956956\\_Is\\_the\\_phenology-based\\_algorithm\\_for\\_mapping\\_deciduous\\_rubber\\_plantations\\_applicable\\_in\\_an\\_emerging\\_region\\_of\\_northern\\_Laos](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335956956_Is_the_phenology-based_algorithm_for_mapping_deciduous_rubber_plantations_applicable_in_an_emerging_region_of_northern_Laos)

dry season crops and non-timber-forest products. The major farming practice is slash-and-burn agriculture. Rice is by far the most important agricultural product of the province, followed by maize, starchy roots, vegetables, beans and nuts<sup>23</sup>

103. Poverty: According to the most recent Lao Statistic Bureau (LSB, 2022)<sup>24</sup> report, Phongsaly province has the lowest poverty headcount rate and the lowest poverty gap rate. The key findings from the Laos Expenditure and Consumption Survey reported poverty headcount rate of Phongsaly province is reducing from 19.9% in 2013 to 8.1% in 2018/2019 and the distribution of the poor also reduces from 2.4% in 2013 to 1.2% in 2018/2019, with the change of population distribution from 2.9% to 2.8% for the same period. There are 1,917 poor households (5.3%) in the province, of which the urban poor ratio is 123 households (1.8%) and the rural poor at 1,793 households (6.1%). The ratio of food-insecure households is 16.3%, with the rural rate at 18.6% and the urban rate at 5%. However, the multi-dimension of the poor rate in the province has increased from 2.5% in 2012/2013 to 5.2% in 2018/2019 (Lao Statistic Bureau, LSB, 2020)<sup>25</sup>

104. Natural Disasters/Hazards: Phongsaly is another 2018 natural disaster-hit province. It impacted residents, crops, the environment, and social development<sup>26</sup>. The national climate change vulnerability assessment conducted by UNHABITAT examined the occurrence of floods, droughts, landslides, and storms during 2019 in all 18 provinces of Laos and the initial finding found that Phongsaly province was impacted by climate change-related hazards, particularly droughts, which affect 34 percent of the villages. Nhot-ou is the most vulnerable district because it is exposed to a greater number of threats (especially Karng village in the district's northwest, which is heavily impacted by all types of hazards), whereas Sampanh's villages are significantly impacted by droughts. Some areas of the Phongsaly district were also affected by storms and droughts, while communities in the Boon-neua district were impacted by floods and landslides. The majority of primary DRR resources, excluding evacuation centers, are in place, resulting in a high level of adaptive capacity. The figure A1-2 shows the multi-hazard map of Phongsaly and Figure A1-3 shows impacted areas.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.research.kobe-u.ac.jp/gsics-publication/gwps/2013-27.pdf>

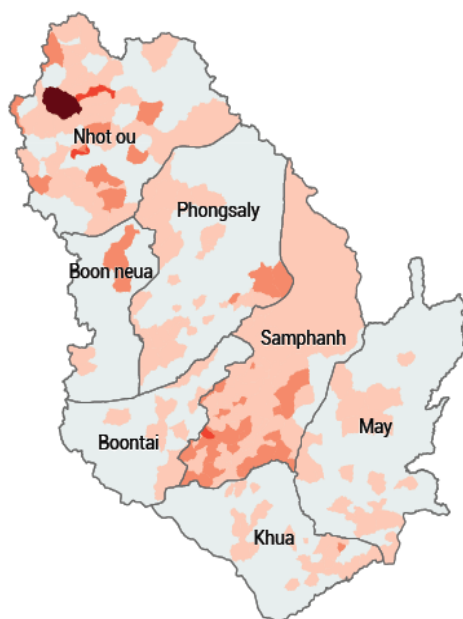
<sup>24</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau (2022). Where are the Poor in Lao PDR? Small Area Estimation: province and District Level Results, Lao PDR [https://laosis.lsb.gov.la/board/BoardList.do?bbs\\_bbsid=B404](https://laosis.lsb.gov.la/board/BoardList.do?bbs_bbsid=B404)

<sup>25</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau (2020) Poverty in Lao PDR: key findings from the Laos Expenditure and Consumption Survey 2018/2019, Lao PDR

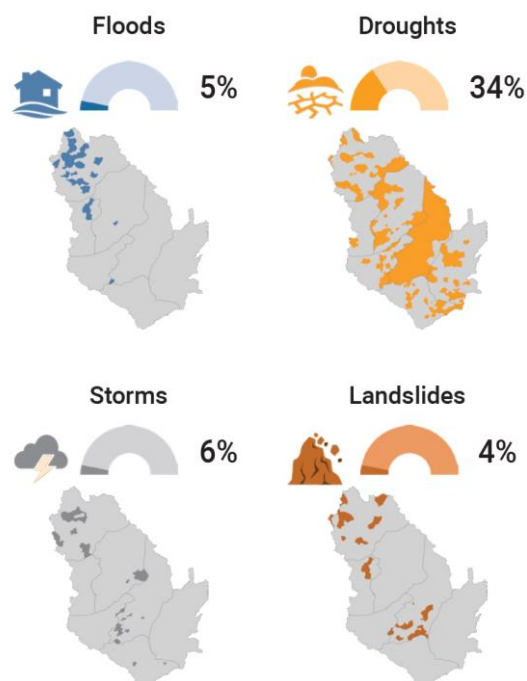
<sup>26</sup> [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/04/c\\_137155698.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/04/c_137155698.htm)

<sup>27</sup> UNHABITAT (2021). Preliminary Results of Lao PDR National Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment. [https://fukuoka.unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/3\\_Lao\\_PDR\\_National\\_Climate\\_Change\\_Vulnerability\\_Assessment.pdf](https://fukuoka.unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/3_Lao_PDR_National_Climate_Change_Vulnerability_Assessment.pdf)

**Figure A1-2: Multi-hazard map of Phongsaly Province**



**Figure A1-3: Impacted area in Phongsaly Province**



Source: UNHABITAT (2021)

105. Unexploded ordinance or UXOs: According to Sweet (2017), the Government's allocation of UXO operators to Phongsaly, Luangmantha, and Vientiane Capital is minimal. Humanity and Inclusion commence its first mine action project in Phongsaly in 2022 and will run through 2024 to complete a Technical Explosive Ordinance Disposal Survey and Area Clearance in 21 target villages<sup>28</sup>. There is limited information available about the seismic activities in Lao PDR. According to Sweet (2017)<sup>29</sup> studied, the GOL appears to lack a policy concerning the allocation of UXO operators to the remaining contaminated provinces of Luang Namtha and Phongsaly, and Vientiane Capital. The earthquake hazard maps were developed using MMI scale. The hazard assessment was based on earthquake intensity maps developed by UNOCHA (OCHA, 2011). The results show that one fourth of the area of Lao PDR is located in a high earthquake hazard zone. These areas include Xayabury, Bokeo, Oudomxay, Luangnamtha and Phongsaly provinces.<sup>30</sup>

## Saravan

106. Topography. The origin of Salavan Province is volcanic with mountains and wide valleys. The central part is located in the Bolaven Plateau, with the Mekong River bordering the west and the Lao-Vietnamese border to the east. 44% of the total land area is flat rising 140-300 metres above sea level and covers the Districts of Saravan, Khongsedone, Laknopheng, Vapy and Toomlam districts. 19% of the land area is located on a plateau rising 300-700 metres above sea level and is occupied by Lao Ngam and parts of Saravan, Khongsedone and Vapy Districts. 37% of the Province is mountainous, rising to between 700-1,200 metres above sea level.

<sup>28</sup> [https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent2022\\_Humanity195.php](https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent2022_Humanity195.php)

<sup>29</sup> Sweet.K (2017). Prioritization Policy, Procedures and Practices Relating to UXO Clearance. Mine Action Capacity Development Project Implemented by NPA and the GICHD [https://www.gichd.org/fileadmin/GICHD-resources/rec-documents/Lao\\_-\\_Prioritisation\\_report\\_-\\_2017-07-17\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.gichd.org/fileadmin/GICHD-resources/rec-documents/Lao_-_Prioritisation_report_-_2017-07-17_ENG.pdf)

<sup>30</sup>MLSW (2012). Lao PDR National Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2012, Vientiane, Lao PDR, Accessible [https://www.adpc.net/igo/category/ID416/doc/2013-ptk8Nb-ADPC-Publication\\_LNARReportWEB\\_\(2\).pdf](https://www.adpc.net/igo/category/ID416/doc/2013-ptk8Nb-ADPC-Publication_LNARReportWEB_(2).pdf)

107. Climate, Rainfall and Temperature. Salavan has a relatively temperate climate compared to other parts of the country. It often is affected by monsoons and has pronounced wet and dry seasons. Most rain falls during the period from May to September when the prevailing winds blow from the south-west. Annual rainfall ranges from 1,000 mm in the extreme south to 3,000 mm in the north. The dry season from October to April, is characterized by winds that blow from the north-east. Average temperatures range from about 100C in January to 380C in July, cooler in the north, warmer in the south. Lowland areas are tropical, while the high elevations and the mountains of the extreme north are sub-tropical
108. Soils. The soils in the southern part of Laos are generally good and are acid hydromorphic and contain low organic matter and nutrients which are moderately-well suited to rice production. More fertile soils with high organic matter and good physical properties are also to be found in parts of the southern areas of the Lao PDR. The agricultural land of Salavan Province is fertile and contributes to food 'security' in neighboring Xekong and Attapu Provinces.
109. Water Resources. Saravan Province is rich in water resources. there are more than 30 rivers which flow through the province and serve as sources of water for domestic and irrigation uses. the most important river is the Xedon River which crosses the region and joins the Mekong River at Pakse. Saravan, the provincial capital, is located at a bend in this river which originates from Nang Bua Lake located 15 kilometres (9.3 mi) from the city. The Xedon River flows for about 192 km through the province and supports many people living along its banks. Other key rivers include the Mekong, Se Banguan, Sepone and Saset. The abundant water resources in Saravan Province are also used for hydropower generation, reservoirs, fishing, transportation and tourism.
110. Water Quality. Several streams and a number of drainage channels flow into the Xedon within the study area. Grey water from households, markets, restaurants and other establishments in the urban area is mostly discharged directly to these water courses. Sewage is also finding its way into the drainage system and is often discharged untreated into the Xedon. All outfalls are upstream of the intake for the Salavan water supply, giving rise to much local concern over the quality of raw water being delivered. However, it is understood that the intake, which is currently close to the riverbank, will be moved to the center of the river utilizing a provision incorporated into the design of the Xedon Bridge.
111. Air Quality. Air quality monitoring is still not a routine practice in Lao PDR and there is therefore no information on the concentration of air pollutants although generally, air quality appears to be good. Due to a lack of equipment and technical expertise there has been no historic collection of data on air quality and reports on pollution levels remain anecdotal. At the present time air quality is considered to be 'good' in the Province.
112. Biodiversity is also high in the Important Bird Areas (IBAs) of Xe Sap Important Bird Area (IBA), "Mekong Channel from Phou Xiang Thong to Siphandon" IBA, in the Phou Xiang Thong IBA, and also the Xe Bang Nouan (XBN) Protected Area.
113. Protected Areas. The project road is not located within or in the vicinity of protected areas. The system of National Protected Areas (NPAs) is relatively new, having been decreed only in 1993. The NPA system covers about 14% of the land area of Lao PDR, which together with protected areas established at provincial and local level, covers more than 20% of the country

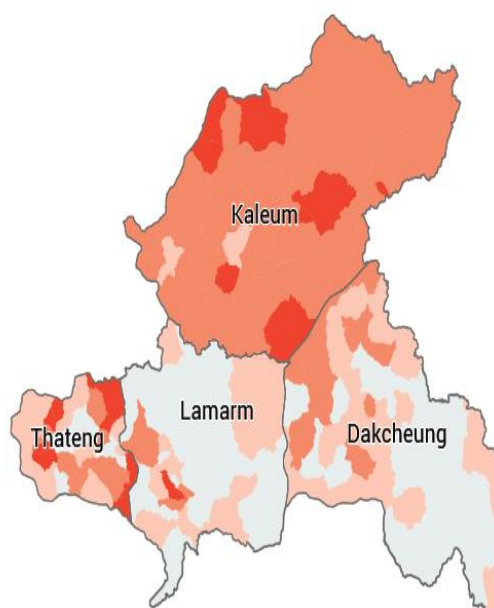
### ***Sekong***

114. The province of Sekong is located in the southern part of Laos and encompasses a total land area of 8,285 km<sup>2</sup>. The majority of Sekong is comprised of rough terrain that ranges in elevation from 300 to 600 meters above sea level. It shares an eastern border with Vietnam. The province of Saravan and Attapue surround it to the north, west and south respectively. The province has been classified into three major regions: upland, plateau and lowland.
115. The Sekong province has complicated geographical conditions that create colorful eco-tourism resources. The climatic condition of Sekong provinces is influenced primarily by the seasonal southwest and northeast monsoons.

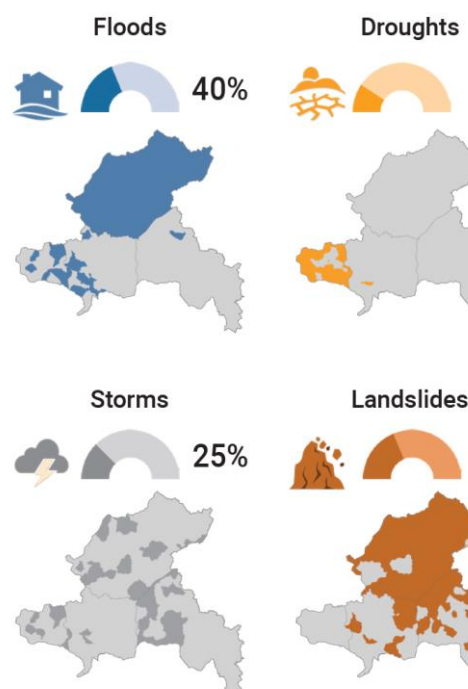
116. Sekong province is rich water resources. The key river and stream in the province include: Sekong river, Se Kaman, Se Namnoi, Huay Rampan and other . The Sekong River (approximately 76km in length) originates in Vietnam and flows through the province. The Sekong river valley is also characterized by a landscape of a fertile plain patterned with a patchwork of rice paddies and fruits orchard. The province is dotted with many cascading waterfalls. Tad Hia, Tad Faek and Tad Se Noi (or Tad Hua Khon) waterfalls are the most convenient to visit from town and offer opportunities for swimming, trekking and village visits. Another waterfall not to be missed is the Nam Tok Katamtok, which originates from the Huay Katam River deep in the jungles of the Bolaven Plateau. In 2011, there were 235 irrigation projects covered a total area of 3956.63 ha for wet season rice, 1429.88 ha for dry season rice and for other crops covering the remaining area of 457.70ha.
117. The recent forest land cover of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, published in 2019 reported that Sekong province has a total forest area of 606,513 ha (accounts for 71.85% of total land area in the province), the potential area that can be converted to forest area is about 167,780 ha (19.78%) and other type of land for 70,998 ha (8.37%). The province has total area of protection forest of 279,181 ha, protected forest of 107,373 ha and production forest of 188,505 ha.
118. Natural hazards/Disaster: Sekong is one of the most vulnerable provinces nationally with more than 75% of villages with an index of between 0.5 and 1.0 . The province is highly impacted by climate change related hazards, with floods and landslides being the main threat registered within the province. While droughts mostly affect villages in Thateng district, this area is also vulnerable to floods and storms. Villages in Kaleum district, in the north, and Dakcheung, in the southeast, are highly affected by floods, storms and landslides. Lamarm district only registers floods on its western area. Adaptive capacity levels are low, since primary DRR resources, such as DRR plan, evacuation centres and provincial Master Plan are not in place.
119. The province is particularly vulnerable to climate change-related hazards, such as floods and landslides, as indicated by the results of the national climate change vulnerability assessment (UNHABITAT, 2021). The villages in Thateng district are particularly vulnerable to drought, but the district as a whole is also at risk from flooding and storms. Northern villages in the Kaleum district and southern villages in the Dakcheung district were hit hard by flooding, storms, and landslides in 2019. The western part of the Lamarm district is the only part to experience flooding. There is a lack of adaptive ability because essential DRR resources such as a DRR strategy, evacuation centers, and a provincial Master strategy do not exist. Because of the availability of these key DRR resources, adaptive capability is quite high. Figures A1-12 and A1-13 present the multi-hazard map of Sekong province and its impacted area.



**Figure A1-12: multi-hazard map of Sekong**



**Figure A1-13: Impacted area in Sekong**



120. UXOs: UXO is still a major issue in Sekong, delaying any road and other infrastructure projects that could contribute to the province's growth. Along with Attapeu, Sekong is thus relatively difficult to access, further contributing to low economic development and high poverty incidence in the area. (IUCN, 2003). The UXO Sector Annual Report 2020 reported that from 1997 – 2020, total area of UXO land clearance in Sekong province was 44,67,553 m<sup>2</sup>, of which 32,003,673 m<sup>2</sup> (72%) has been utilized for agricultural farming and the rest of 12,666,880 m<sup>2</sup> (28%) of area cleared have been used for other development activities in the province, with 176,207 beneficiaries in the province.

### **Savannakhet Province**

121. The population of Savannakhet is 125,760 (2018) of which 49.6% is male while 50.4% is female. Savannakhet is home to different ethnic groups including, Lao Loum, Phouthai, Tai Dam, Katang, Mongkong, Vali, Lavi, Souei, Kapo, Kaleung and Ta Oi. However, only three ethnic groups were listed, including Lao Loum (Lowland Lao), Phu Tai, and Bru (2000 census). The Phouthai live in lowland river valleys and there are small groups of Bru, Tri, Laha, and Katang in the mountainous east in remote Nong District. The Bru, however, are a diverse people with various dialects and cultures<sup>31</sup>.

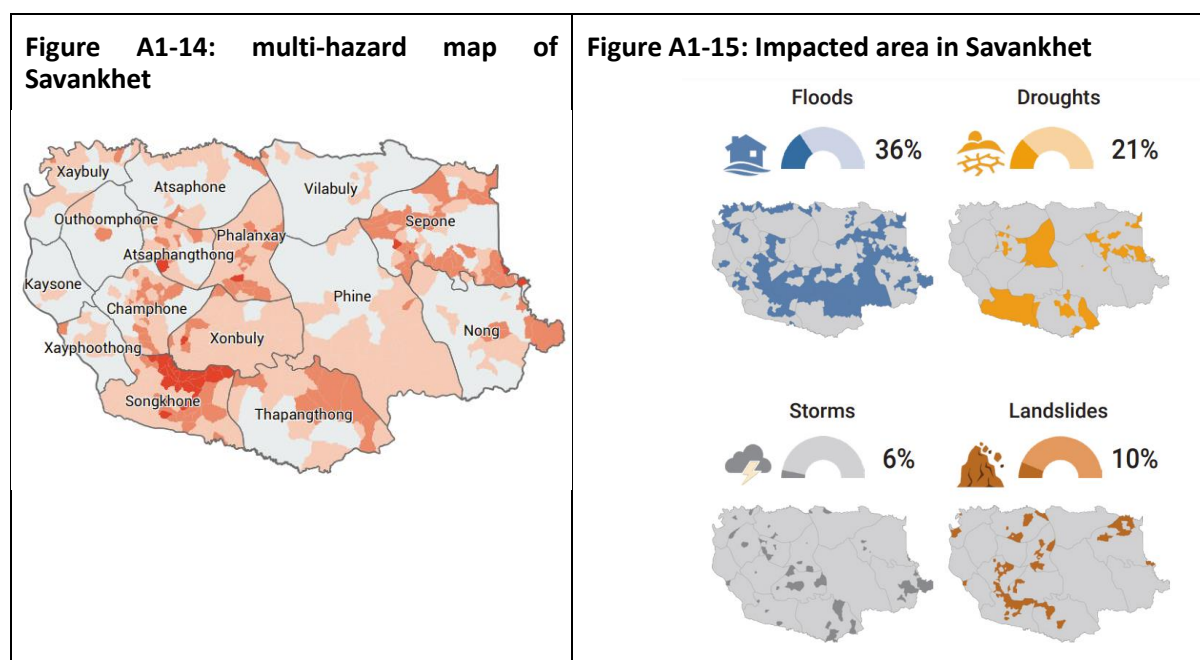
122. The Phouthai often mix with the similar Tai people, and many consider them as a separate group. Though several practice Buddhism, they cling to their traditional animist beliefs. Each Phouthai village has one or more female shamans, called moi yau, who mediate between the people and spiritual worlds by going into a trance. Their most sacred festival is Pi Tian (Spirit of Heaven) in which the community offers sacrifices and prayers to the spirit that they believe resides in paradise above.

123. The Bru live the province's far eastern mountainous area, and are descendants of the Khmer Empire. In fact, "Bru" means "Mountain". Villages are situated in valleys along rivers and streams, and their houses are built in a circle around a communal centre. Most are rice farmers, and apply both terraced and slash-and-burn techniques. They also hunt, fish, and weave. The Bru practice

<sup>31</sup> Source: <https://wearelao.com/savannakhet-ethnic-diversity> (accessed on April 27, 2023).

their own traditional religion, based mostly on ancestor worship.

124. The Tri continue to be "slash and burn" communities and move to establish new settlements once the soil is no longer viable. They remain animists, but Buddhism is growing in prominence because of influence from the Lao and Phouthai. Fewer Tri women wear traditional clothing such as colourful scarves and distinctive dresses, though they continue weaving intricate patterns.
125. The Katang are best known for their extended families that dwell in longhouses up to 100-metres-long. Whenever a family member marries, the house is lengthened to accommodate the new family. The Katang are Laos' sixth largest ethnic group, and live in isolated areas of Savannakhet. Both men and women once stretched their earlobes with large bamboo tubes for decoration, but this practice is now rare.
126. The Laha population have trickled over from Vietnam. Many remain in the mountains though some have reached as far as the Mekong. They live in houses on stilts with two entrances and ladders at both ends. Many villages cultivate rice and grow cotton. They believe there are many supernatural forces including spirits of the forest, water, mist, and the house. Tradition requires that a dead person be buried with their money. In each family, only the soul of the father, which will turn into the spirit of the house after his death, is worshipped.
127. Natural hazards/Disaster: In terms of water-related disasters, Savannakhet province has the highest percentage of high (0.96 %) and very high hazard areas (0.3 %). Savannakhet Province is also highly influenced by climate change<sup>32</sup>. According to UNHABITAT (2021), over third of its population in Savanakheth is affected by floods. Villages in Sepone district, at the east, and Songkhone, and Thapangthong districts, at the south, are the most vulnerable as they register floods, droughts, storms and landslides. While Sepone, Xonbully and Phine districts are largely hit by floods, All the villages in Songkhone and Phalanxay have been affected by droughts<sup>33</sup>.



Source: UNHABITAT (2021)

<sup>32</sup> Sengphrachanh Phakonkham, So Kazama, and Daisuke Komori (2021). Integrated mapping of water-related disasters using the analytical hierarchy process under land use change and climate change issues in Laos, Nat. Hazards Earth Syst. Sci., 21, 1551–1567 (<https://doi.org/10.5194/nhess-21-1551-2021>)

<sup>33</sup> UNHABITA (2021). Preliminary results of the Lao PDR National Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment - [https://fukuoka.unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/3\\_Lao\\_PDR\\_National\\_Climate\\_Change\\_Vulnerability\\_Assessment.pdf](https://fukuoka.unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/3_Lao_PDR_National_Climate_Change_Vulnerability_Assessment.pdf)



128. UXOs: According to 2020 UXO Sector Annual Report, during 1997 to 2020, 92,677,055m<sup>2</sup> of agricultural land (83%), and 19,179,557m<sup>2</sup> of development plan (17%) in Savanakheth has been cleared for UXO. In 2020 alone, the number of victims of UXO in Savanakheth is highest in the country (12 cases). In 2021, HALO Trust have continued its survey, clearance, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) and – Risk Education (RE) activities across Savanakheth<sup>34</sup>.

### 3.3 SOCIAL BASELINE CONDITIONS

#### 3.3.1 Overview of poverty in country and project provinces

129. A social assessment carried out in 2018 for phase 1 of the project (RRPM) shows some significant issues related to poverty and malnutrition in the country. Childhood stunting is the most prominent nutritional problem in Laos with 43% of children under 5 years old and 30% of children under 2 years old reporting stunting. From the study sample and on average, ethnic minority groups had higher rates of stunting among children under five years old compared with ethnic-Lao children. The rate of childhood stunting amongst Khmu children was 36.62%, amongst Hmong, 47.21%, Akha, 47.30, Phong, 59.27, other ethnic minority groups, 31.48% whereas amongst ethnic Lao children, the prevalence of stunting was 28.65%. Overall, there is a high prevalence of underweight and stunting among children under 5 years. The poorest households, populations from the rural areas, and ethnic minorities consistently have worse economic and human development indicators compared to wealthier, urban and ethnic-Lao populations. It was also found that current knowledge on nutrition and health is relatively low, suggesting that mothers and their children could benefit from greater information and education about health and nutrition issues.
130. In project provinces, poverty remained among the highest compared to other provinces. Project provinces are marked in yellow shade below).

	Poverty Headcount Rate			Poverty Gap			Squared Poverty Gap		
	2013	2019	Change	2013	2019	Change	2013	2019	Change
Lao PDR	24.6	18.3	-6.3	5.9	3.9	-2.0	2.1	1.3	-0.8
Vientiane Capital	2.5	5.0	2.5	0.3	1.0	0.7	0.1	0.3	0.3
<b>North</b>									
Phongsaly	19.9	8.1	-11.8	3.4	1.2	-2.2	0.9	0.3	-0.6
Luangnamtha	25.0	10.5	-14.4	4.5	1.9	-2.6	1.2	0.6	-0.6
Oudomxay	36.6	29.2	-7.5	8.9	6.4	-2.5	2.9	2.0	-1.0
Bokeo	51.8	19.4	-32.4	15.0	4.2	-10.8	5.9	1.3	-4.5
Luangprabang	30.0	20.4	-9.6	6.8	3.1	-3.7	2.1	0.7	-1.4
Huaphanh	45.4	26.6	-18.8	13.3	5.8	-7.5	5.3	1.8	-3.5
Xayabury	15.7	21.1	5.4	2.7	4.5	1.8	0.7	1.5	0.8
<b>Central</b>									
Xiengkhuang	34.3	26.0	-8.2	8.6	6.2	-2.3	3.1	2.2	-0.9
Vientiane	10.9	5.3	-5.6	1.6	1.0	-0.6	0.3	0.3	-0.1
Borikhamxay	14.7	20.6	5.9	2.9	5.1	2.2	0.9	1.8	0.9
Khammuane	25.2	25.5	0.3	6.6	5.1	-1.5	2.3	1.5	-0.8
Savanakheth	29.1	27.5	-1.5	6.2	6.5	0.3	2.0	2.3	0.3
Xaysomboun		8.2			1.3			0.3	

<sup>34</sup> [https://www.nra.gov.la/resources/AnnualReports/English/UXO%20Sector%20Annual%20Report%202020\\_English.pdf](https://www.nra.gov.la/resources/AnnualReports/English/UXO%20Sector%20Annual%20Report%202020_English.pdf)

	Poverty Headcount Rate			Poverty Gap			Squared Poverty Gap		
South									
Saravane	52.1	24.9	-27.2	16.8	5.6	-11.2	6.8	1.9	-4.9
Sekong	44.4	30.6	-13.8	13.3	6.2	-7.1	5.7	1.9	-3.8
Champasack	19.6	8.7	-10.9	4.0	1.8	-2.3	1.2	0.5	-0.7
Attapeu	9.1	27.8	18.8	1.4	5.7	4.4	0.3	2.0	1.7

Source: WB - 2020 - Lao PDR Poverty Profile

### 3.3.2 Overview of ethnic groups in the country

131. Lao PDR is mainly a rural society with a culturally diverse 50 ethnic groups. Cities in Lao PDR are small in population, with only the capital city Vientiane having a population of more than 100,000 people and few high-rise buildings. Poverty remains high among ethnolinguistic minority households and households headed by people with lower levels of education. Nearly 35 percent of those living in households headed by someone with no formal education are poor, compared to just 3 percent in households headed by those with at least a completed upper secondary education. While poverty tends to be higher among minority ethnolinguistic groups, in recent years, the Hmong-lumien group fell further behind due to lagging farm productivity. The incidence of poverty has become highest among Hmong-lumien ethnic groups at 38.4 percent, followed by the Mon-Khmer (32.7 percent) and the Sino-Tibetan (18.1 percent). Hmong-lumien ethnic groups constitute 19 percent of the poor, despite making up less than 10 percent of the population.

### 3.3.3 Overview of ethnic groups in project provinces

132. There are various ethnic groups present in the project provinces (as in table below). However, key ethnic groups that are included as current beneficiaries include two groups: Lao, Tai, Phong, Thai, Lue, Yuan, Yang, Aesk, Thai Nue, Khmu, and Pair.

No.	Province	No. of ethnic groups	Some of the identified main ethnic groups
1	Phongsaly	28	Khmu, Hmong, Yao, Akha, Phounoy Tai Lue, Hor, Syl, Hayi, Lolo
2	Oudomxay	20	Khmu, Hmong, Yao, Akha, Lahu, Lanten, Tai Daeng,
3	Huaphan	22	Khmu, Hmong, Yao, Tai Dam, Tai Daeng, Tai Phuan
4	Xiengkhouang	5	Khmu, Hmong, Yao, Tai (Tai Phuan, Tai Dam, Tai Daeng)
5	Saravan	6	Tahoy, Pako, Katang, Kado, Suay and Laven
6	Sekong	N/A	Triang, Yae, Katu and Ha Luk, Brou, Broa
7	Savannakhet	42	Lao, Phou Thai, Katang, Makong, Tri, Lave

133. Of the ten ethnic groups who are currently beneficiaries, Hmong, Khmu, Akha, Phong, Phounoi, Lao are the major beneficiary groups. General characteristics of these groups are described below:

#### **Hmong**

134. There are 376 HHs living in the project area, primarily in Xayabouly (257 households in Phieng and Xienghone districts, 106 hhs in Bolikhamxay). Hmong Khao ("White" Hmong) is one of five

Hmong sub-groups present in Lao PDR. After Khmu, Hmong has the largest population of all ethnic groups in the country. The Hmong trace their origins in Lao PDR to waves of migration from China in the early years of the 19th century. Causes for this migration attributed by both Hmong respondents and research sources include historical conflict between Hmong and Han Chinese, population growth, unacceptable burden of taxation and refusal to integrate with Han Chinese. Migrated Hmong are now found throughout the northern provinces of Lao PDR, southern Yunnan, northern Viet Nam and northern Thailand.

135. Typically, Hmong have settled in the highest areas of the upland, even preferring to be buried on mountain tops. They have a reputation of being both hard working and more recently, assertive in Oudomxay Province over acquiring land and property. Hmong Khao are also structured by clans, or seng (e.g., Toe, Veu, Tsiong, Moa, Lee, Va, Ya, Ha, Ja, and Keu). The seng determines the boundaries of land and property rights and protects the role of men as transmitters of those rights by constraining women's choices, particularly as to who and when a woman may marry.
136. The Hmong are an Asian ethnic group from the mountainous regions of China, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. Hmong are also one of the sub-groups of the Miao ethnicity in Southern China. Historically, Hmong society is patriarchal. The Hmong culture usually consists of a dominant hierarchy within the family. Males hold dominance over females and thus, a father is considered the head in each household. Hmong are generally group oriented, so the interests of the group come before the interests of individuals. They belong to the Hmong-luMien ethno-linguistic group and either speak the "Hmong Der" (White Hmong) or "Mong Leng" (Green Hmong) dialect. Hmong are skilled at hunting, mixing herbal medicines and raising animals, particularly horses. Hmong believe in a variety of natural, ancestral and supernatural spirits and their religious practices incorporate elements of ancestor worship. Intricate embroidery and heavy silver jewelry adorn their clothes. The Hmong constitute about 8% of the Lao PDR population. In the past, the Hmong used to be called the Miao or Lao Soung. Lao Soung means "Lao of the mountaintops." The expression refers to where the Hmong traditionally liked to live. These names are no longer considered appropriate, and the Hmong prefer to be called by their ethnic group name. The Hmong are a proud ethnic group, maintaining their distinctive culture and traditions. They cannot marry within their clan, or even a person of their own family name. This means that men and women often have to find a spouse from outside of their village. Traditionally after marriage, a woman will then follow her husband and sever ties with her parents. The Hmong practiced shifting cultivation of unirrigated upland crops; buckwheat, barley, and millet were grown at the highest altitudes, and rice and corn (maize) at lower elevations. Virgin forest was cleared and burnt off for the planting of new fields; when soil fertility declined (usually after several decades), the entire village would relocate. New villages could be a considerable distance away from a group's previous locale. In the late 19th century the opium poppy was introduced into the highlands by outside traders, and the Hmong began to cultivate it in an integrated cycle together with corn and dry rice. They sold opium to itinerant traders, usually Chinese, in return for silver. By the late 20th century, shifting cultivation had become impracticable except in a few remote areas. In response to government programs in Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam, the Hmong have now largely abandoned shifting cultivation and opium production. They have instead turned to the permanent-field cultivation of crops such as rice and corn or the gardening of flowers, fruits, and vegetables, which they sell in lowland markets.

#### **Khmu**

137. The Khmu people are the oldest inhabitants of northern Lao PDR and are now settled throughout all Northern provinces and as far as Bolikhamxay Province. Next to the Lao Loum, they are numerically the largest ethnic group in the country. They have eight sub-groups which co-reside, for example Khmu-Rok, Khmu-Lue, Khmu-Ou, and Khmu-Khlong. Khmu are strongly governed by spirits, both benevolent and dangerous, which influence foundations of

customary law. The world of the spirits consistently influences gender relations, land use and property rights, and change disturbs the relationship between the Khmu and the external world. Different levels of spirits govern different choices made by men and women – some spirits are territorial, associated with particular places or locations, others are associated with the village and under the authority of the territorial spirit. The belief in spirits can influence the choices made by men and women in their daily routine, seasonal activities, property rights and relationships between the sexes. Other spirits govern the structure of the household and are normally ancestral who continue to protect the well-being of families. Lastly, there are individual spirits, linked to the household.

138. Each sub-group may be composed of several patrilineal clans called “ta”. Ta names are totemic, meaning they are taken from a natural object, or animal, or bird, to which the clan considers itself closely related and usually has prohibitions associated with the totem. Among Khmu Lue in Oudomxay, ta may include Teu Mong (a kind of civet cat), Teu va (a kind of fern), Teu Kok (a species of bird), etc. The totem is the household spirit, and membership of a “ta” depends in which house a child is born. Ta membership determines marriage choices and by association, property rights.
139. The Khmu are an ethnic group of Southeast Asia. The majority (88%) live in northern Laos where they constitute one of the largest ethnic groups, comprising eleven percent of the total population. The Khmu were the indigenous inhabitants of northern Laos. It is generally believed that the Khmu once inhabited a much larger area but after the influx of Thai/Lao peoples into the lowlands of Southeast Asia, the Khmu were forced to higher ground (Lao Theung), above the rice-growing lowland Lao but below the Hmong/Mien groups (Lao Sung) that inhabit the highest regions, where they practiced swidden agriculture. The Khmu of Laos resides mainly in the North, ranging across 10 provinces including Luang Prabang, Phongsaly, Oudomxay, Bokeo and Lung Namtha Provinces. The Khmu language belongs to the Austro-Asiatic language family, in which several closely related languages are grouped together forming the Khmuic branch. The Khmu are an agricultural society, although gathering, hunting, trapping and fishing are parts of the Khmu lifestyle. Khmu crops include rice (especially white and black sticky rice), corn, bananas, sugar cane, cucumbers, beans, sesame and a variety of vegetables. Most of the agricultural work in Khmu villages is done communally, so as to combine the strength and finish the work quickly. Harvesting of wild rice is generally performed by the village women. Rice is stored outside the village in elevated structures to protect from mice and rats. Khmu elders are traditionally the most important people of the village and are responsible for resolving all village disputes. Village leaders included the shaman (knowledgeable in spiritual medicine), the medicine man (knowledgeable in herbal medicine), the priest (based on family lineage of priesthood), and the village headman (in modern times chosen by the Laotian government). Laotian Khmu communities generally have localized justice systems administered by the village elders. Although the Khmu is the second largest ethnic group in Laos, they are also the poorest. Throughout the history of Laos, the Khmu have lacked political power, education and a role in administration. The results of a study on Khmu women show that they experience barriers to participation in project activities. The barriers include language; education; cultural norms; health issues; workload; resettlement; poverty; low self-esteem; staff and project approach; the village administrative structure; fewer opportunities with development projects; and limited formal access and control over assets. To overcome these barriers and to participate in development projects Khmu women would benefit from greater support from project staff such as teacher/trainer; learner; follower; advisor; demonstrator/role model and advocate. To empower women to overcome barriers themselves and participate more fully in community development requires both men and community to provide support and acceptance.

### **Akha**

140. The Akha consists of about 14-15 subgroups that share similar livelihoods, but then wear different clothing and have a distinct social structure. Akha women are easily recognizable by their traditional hat, covered with coins representing the wealth of the household. Their villages are situated in remote/isolated areas and up until very recently one would not have found two ethnic groups, including the Akha's subgroups, inhabiting the same village due to their remote location and limited access to government services. This factor is one of the main reasons why most of the Akha ethnic group often have very high illiteracy rates and are unable to understand the Lao language. The Akha subgroup called the Muchi in Phongsaly said in an interview that they don't understand the Language of the Akha subgroups called the Kor in Oudomxay and Luang Namtha. Akha language is part of the Tibeto-Burmese linguistic family.

### **Phong**

141. The Phong only presence in Houaphan, Vientiane and Xiengkhouang provinces and made up only about 0.5% of Lao population, but it's one of the main targeted ethnic groups covered by the project in Houaphan province. There are four subgroups: Phong-Phane, Phong-Lan, Phong-Pieng and Phong-Poung. They live in isolation and have its own language. Due to living in isolation for many years, and despite a small group, each subgroup has slightly differently dialects. Same as the Khmu and other Mon-Khmer groups, the Phong in still preserve their traditional social structure and distinct ethnic characteristics. It is interesting to note that while their livelihoods and the use of land and forest resources are similar to that of the ethnic groups belong to the Mon-Khmer, they share many characteristics with the Tai and the Lao instead of the Mon-Khmer groups. These include their housing designs, waving styles, religion (Buddhism), ritual ceremony and follow matrilineal clan/custom instead of the patrilineal clan.

### **Yao**

142. The Yao ethnic group has two distinct subgroups within the Yao ethnic group in Lao PDR, which are known as Yao and Lanten respectively. The subgroups speak different languages, although some of the words are the same, but they may be slightly different meanings. The lowland living Yao speak Kim Mun (also known as Lanten) and the highland Yao speak Lumien. Lumien is very distantly related to the Hmong language. Together they form the Hmong-Mien language family. The Yao men and women cover their head with a black or red scarf. Instead of a scarf, some women wear a turban that may have different forms. The traditional suit of women is long and of bright colors. On their shirts they also wear decorations made of metal, copper and/or silver. Although some Yao have converted to Buddhism philosophy and Christian religion, many still remain practicing their traditional beliefs in seven principal spirits representing humans, animals, fields, forests, sky, water, and earth.

## **4. ENVIRONMENTAL & SOCIAL RISKS, IMPACTS AND MITIGATION**

### **4.1 SUMMARY OF RAPID ENVIRONMENTAL & SOCIAL ASSESSMENT**

143. Though phase 1 of the project delivered good progress and achievement, a number of key challenges could be further improved under RRMP II. Key challenges, which were validated with representatives of PMU, MPI, and other relevant ministries at national-level workshop, are summarized below:

#### **Organization & Coordination**

- Local people are sometimes confused, and/or unable to participate because of various nutrition activities are conducted in different days in the same village (e.g. nutrition activities under RRPM, PRF, HANSA, AFN, etc.);

### **CCT payment and eligibility**

- Verification of information should be accurate and clearer (during the PMT processing, more appropriate interviewees or informants must be selected...
- Late CCT payment is common among project villages. Payment should be released on time or should not exceed four months;
- CCT amount should be increased from LAK200,000 to LAK300,000 to compensate inflation;
- CCT should be considered for children from 2-5 years of age;
- If mother of children under 2 years got pregnant, project should cover both;

### **Grievance Redress Mechanism**

- A good online system has been established. However, resolution of grievance needs to be improved. Particular focus should be one a) reduced the risk of exclusion and time for resolving exclusion error and complaints related to exclusion, b) grievances classified as “other reason” should be further classified into a specific category to facilitate follow up and resolution.

### **Village Facilitators**

- Current allowance is low compared to actual expense to meet works requirement (LAK90,000 share among 4 people per month. Phone card: 20,000/month, and LAK90,000 for meeting on nutrition (1-2 times a month, petty cash to purchase water, snacks, pen, books).
- The project should provide training to VF on cooking demonstration.

### **Participation of local mass organization**

- District partners from other projects still lack understanding about RRPM project;
- Lao WU and YU should join hands with Village Facilitator and Community Mobilizers.

## **4.2 POSITIVE SOCIAL IMPACTS**

144. Building on achievement from phase 1, the Project will continue to support the implementation of the nutrition-sensitive conditional cash transfer to address poverty and malnutrition, improve and enhance social protection systems, and promote the planning, coordination, and monitoring of the multisector nutritional convergence approach. The project is expected to bring about an overall positive impact – through delivery of the CCT program which has been proven effective in changing behaviors of target mothers with infants under two, and pregnant women. The 2021 beneficiary survey indicated there is a high level of satisfaction with CCT program and services in project's target areas, including a) increased consumption of nutritious food (thanks to CCT), b) improved access to healthcare services such as ante-and post-natal care<sup>35</sup>, growth monitoring, vaccination for beneficiaries<sup>36</sup>, and c) social behavior change communication<sup>37</sup>, and so forth. Close to 98 percent of the beneficiaries have complied with the main CCT conditionalities. mid-line impact evaluation has been completed which provides further evidence supporting the CCT program's intended impacts.

## **4.3 ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS AND IMPACTS**

145. Overall, environmental risk is low. The Project may finance minor renovation civil work to improve existing office space for district and provincial staff in the new project provinces. These works will take place within the existing building and land managed by the government, or community. No additional land acquisition from local individuals or households will be

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<sup>35</sup> Close to 80 percent of pregnant women in the project areas have attended the requisite four Ante-Natal Care (ANC) sessions whereas Post-Natal Care (PNC) at 48 hours after birth improved from 27 percent to 58 percent in project areas.

<sup>36</sup> Immunization rates increased to from 34% in 2017 to 78% in 2020.

<sup>37</sup> With more than 80 percent of infants being exclusively breastfed.

required. The project will recruit few staff and local communities to support project activities implementation.

146. During the construction of the above works, some environmental impacts and risks are anticipated. Key risks and impacts are mainly due to noise, vibration, dust generated which are generated during upgrading/construction; construction wastes; and minor domestic wastes (from workers engaged by contractors). These impacts are of small scale, local, and temporary. These impacts could be managed through practicing of good environmental management practices during construction process. Scope and nature of the site specific risks/impacts may include:

- **Risks related to occupational health and safety (OHS)** for workers to be engaged by construction contractors, and project staff who work/visit the construction site. Key risks include accident during construction process, such as being injured from falling subject, electric shock, traffic accident, infection with communicable diseases such as COVID-19, etc. These OHS risks are anticipated during construction phase. Such OHS risks may arise because of working conditions, types of works, and/or workers' behaviors which are discussed below (see ...).
- With regards to working conditions, workers may be exposed to pollutants. While the Project would not generate toxic substances, the main pollutants that the workers may be exposed to is dust generated at construction site. In additions, workers may also be in contact with materials containing hazardous substances such as oil, solvents, paints, concrete etc. If in direct contact, the short-term health effects could be irritation to the skins or respiratory system while some substances may penetrate through skin. Use of asbestos containing material (ACM) for ceiling and building walls, particularly those from old building, are likely to be the case for an old building as it was not restricted in the past.
- *Asbestos Contaminated Materials (ACM)*. Due to the nature of minor renovation of existing office space for district and provincial staff in the project provinces.. If asbestos contamination materials (ACM) are found during demolition and renovation works, the contractor will be required to follow the World Bank Group (WBG)'s Environment, Health, and Safety Guidelines (EHSG) for asbestos management protocols (2009)<sup>38</sup>. To mitigate these risks and impacts, the contractor will be required to take necessary measures during construction to avoid/minimize the identified risks and impacts.
- *Unexploded Ordinance (UXO)*: When the Project implementation starts, one or a few office rooms will be arranged in the project target provinces to support project implementation. If an existing government office is upgraded for project purpose, rehabilitation of the office would involve minor repair, repaint of existing office room(s) which is located inside an existing government's office building structure. Construction of new room that involves ground digging to build room foundation is not expected. However, if this is the case, the land space for building the new room must be located inside existing land considered part of government's land area for office purpose. When this is the case, , screening of UXO will be required and the PMU through a) consulting with responsible local authorities and National Regulatory Authority (NRA) to assess if the area for the new room extension is of UXO risk, b) obtain a written confirmation from consulted agencies to confirm if the proposed area is at UXO risk or not, c) contact a certified agencies to conduct UXO survey and clearance if needed, and (e) obtain UXO clearance certificate from NRA before commencement of the proposed activity. Under this project, office upgrading/building will take place within the existing land owned by

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.mtpinnacle.com/pdfs/AsbestosGuidanceNoteFinal.pdf>

the local government for office purpose. Office building that involves land acquisition outside an existing government office is not financed by the project.

- **Fire risks** due to sparks from welding, smoking by workers near places where flammable and combustible materials are stored, cooking, or improper installation of electrical service lighting.
147. During office use, some environmental risks are anticipated, particularly such as fire, electricity shock. Staff who use the office will be trained on these risks and measures that could be taken to prevent such risks from happening during project implementation. Efforts will be made to promote conservation of water and electricity and ensure proper management of solid wastes. The office owner is responsible for ensuring that practical/effective measures are implemented.

#### 4.4 SOCIAL RISKS

148. Some Project activities are likely to generate some key social risks and impacts that may be associated with implementation of the project. While the social impact of the project is overall positive, some social risks are anticipated, as follows:

##### ***Traffic Safety***

149. During Project implementation, there is a risk of traffic accident that is associated with project workers who travel to support project works. These people include a) direct workers who are based in at central, district, commune levels (e.g. community mobilizers, consultant), b) contracted workers (e.g. staff of CCT payment service provider who travel to villages by motorcycle to pay CCT money to project beneficiaries), and c) Community Workers (e.g. Village Facilitators) who frequently travel locally to meetings with mothers and healthcare workers. The risk of road accident may be also present in area which is prone to natural disaster (e.g. flash flood that cause road damages).

##### ***Contracting/Spreading of Communicable Disease(s)***

150. During Project implementation, the level of interaction between community members and other project workers will increase, particularly between beneficiary households and Village Facilitators and Community Mobilizers. This is due to the increased numbers of face-to-face meetings – between these peoples – for consultation, orientation, training purposes, and between project beneficiaries with staff of commune health stations, particularly during healthcare sessions such as vaccination, ante- and post-natal care, growth monitoring, nutrition demonstration sessions, and SBCC sessions.

##### ***Sexual Exploitation & Abuse, Sexual Harassment, and Violence Against Children***

151. According to a study by the World Bank on gender-based violence in Lao PDR, in 2013 alone, 11,000 women, of whom 47.4% were young girls, were involved in sex trade (most in bars). About 60% of children that were trafficked were girls aged 12 to 18 years. Under the Project, the risks of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Sexual Harassment, and Violence Against Children are identified because of the occasional presence of male project workers in the project area (where most project's beneficiaries are ethnic women and have no, or very limited knowledge about SEA/SH/VAC risks). However, since the number of male contracted workers<sup>39</sup> is small, and other direct male workers<sup>40</sup> will be trained on SEA/SH/VAC and will be required to sign Worker's Code of Conduct, this risk of SEA/SH/VAC is anticipated to be marginally "low". It is noted that all project beneficiaries (village level) will be trained to be aware of these risks. Such trainings will enable at-risk groups to know how to prevent such risks, and/or know how to handle the risk/incidence appropriately.

<sup>39</sup> e.g. consulting services, CCT payment service, construction contractor for office repair in Savannakhet province

<sup>40</sup> who will be engaged by PMU as direct workers and as governmental staff



### ***Child labor***

152. According to the World Bank's ESS2, the minimum working age required is 14 or higher as the national law specifies. In accordance with Laos PDR's Labor Law 2013 (amended), employers may accept employees from 14 years of age to under 18 years, but overtime work is prohibited (Article 101). Labor between 12 and under 18 years of age are prohibited from a) working in activities, duties and locations that are unsafe, dangerous to the health of the body, psychology or mind; b) performing hazardous works (as per list of hazardous works). Since the project construction activities will take place in rural area where child labor is common, there is a possibility that local labor under 18 years of age will be engaged by construction contractors. However, the risk of child labor is considered "low" since the scope of office upgrade/construction is very minor, short time, and take place in new project province only. PMU could manage this risk through provisions in the work contract with contractor, and through field check.

### ***Risk of exclusion/inclusion (due to error during PMT exercise)***

153. Errors of exclusion and inclusion could be found in any CCT programs. Possible error may include a) proxy means tests contain an element of statistical error in making their predictions of household welfare, b) outreach to potential beneficiaries to inform them of the benefits of the program and its application procedures is lacking and they never apply<sup>41</sup>. Based on record of RRPM, the errors of exclusion is the most commonly found in project's grievance recording system. The risk of exclusion is considered "moderate".

### ***Risk of exclusion of part of vulnerable group (based on eligibility cut-off)***

154. Under RRPM, Proxy Means Test (PMT) was carried out based on the latest LECS6 survey<sup>42</sup>. PMT model has been developed based on the six indicators stipulated in Decree 348 (GoL) with a set of variables based on the LECS6 data set. The PMT has established a cut-off point (60th percentile) by which eligible families will be identified. According to Grosh *et al* (2022), PMT models are designed to identify chronic poverty and low incomes based on proxies that are fixed or change only slowly over time, such as housing quality and demographics. Although PMT has been widely used in several countries because of its potential benefits, it has some shortcomings that are inherent methodologically, such as:

- PMT models are not designed to identify households after they suffer a shock (but more effectively in selecting persistently poor households)
- PMT models are usually not good at predicting vulnerability to poverty from shocks whereas chronic poor people are often more vulnerable to falling back to poverty if they experience shocks (as they typically live in more hazardous places, such as places in remote, mountainous area that make them more vulnerable to climate change, and work in more jobs with significantly varied income level. They also have less ability to cope with shocks when they happen.

Therefore, used of fixed eligibility cut-off for identifying vulnerable group may exclude true vulnerable households who are not considered "vulnerable" based on cut-off for vulnerable households.

### ***Risk of misuse of CCT payment***

155. From the feedback of beneficiary mothers from Oudomxay, it is noted that:

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<sup>41</sup> Based on Fiszbein, Ariel; Schady, Norbert; Ferreira, Francisco H.G.; Grosh, Margaret; Keleher, Niall; Olinto, Pedro; Skoufias, Emmanuel. 2009. Conditional Cash Transfers : Reducing Present and Future Poverty. World Bank Policy Research Report. Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank.

<sup>42</sup> The sixth Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey that was implemented between June 2018 and May 2019 with full funding from the Government of Laos.

- When their children are sick, parents are likely to use part of CCT money to buy medicine for their children;
- When CCT payment is a few months late (2-3 months late under RRPM I), parents may borrow money (from whatever sources) to afford medical costs for their children, particularly for family who cash are dependent on crop cultivation and are available only when crop is harvested;
- If late payment is made, beneficiary households could not afford foods for their children and may revert back to previous nutrition practices which affect their child health and increase family expenditure on medical costs which cause the family to fall back to the vicious cycle of malnutrition which affect the intended impact of CCT, and increase vulnerability to poverty of the households in the long run;

#### ***Meaningful consultation***

156. When consultation led by village facilitators and community mobilizers, for instance, are not done appropriately, e.g. not adopting prior, free, informed manner, feedback from consulted people may not be fully and meaningfully solicited. Although most village facilitators are local (same village), community mobilizers and other project consultants may not be from same village and/or same ethnic group. This may make consultation with target beneficiaries (most are ethnic minority) challenging because of barriers in language, local social norms, belief, taboo, etc.

#### ***Cultural awareness of EM which result in miscommunication***

157. While it is anticipated that 80-90% of project's beneficiary are ethnic minority people, most of the project's activities are designed and facilitated by the majority of project implementing members who are from Lao group. Given this, cultural difference, such as language, communication skill, understanding of cultural practices and social norms of each ethnic minority groups, etc. may be a constraint to those who are involved in the role of facilitating consultation, meeting, and behavior change communication.

#### ***Gender stereotype***

158. Gender stereotype still exists due to social norms in intra-household labor division and decision making whereby female typically spend most of daily time for unpaid domestic works whereas male spend most of their time for paid work and social activities outside their home. Albeit most decisions rest with female member, particularly for domestic works, daily diet, decision making in agricultural production is mainly made by male who is more directly involved in and thus knowledgeable about cultivation practices, innovation, labor arrangement, and market – thanks to their widely accepted social mobility. As a result, female appears less confident in income generation activities, such as identifying new income generation opportunities and making it happen. They are also less likely to be able to visit friends, relatives in nearby area (villages, neighbouring province) as they must ask for permission of their husband. As gender stereotype is part of the social norms that is nested within the cultural practices of each ethnic group, there is a risk of reaction from male counterparts if the project promotes the role of their female counterpart – to a level that deviates from the traditional role of women, labor division, and decision making within their own family.

## **4.5 MITIGATION MEASURES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL RISKS AND IMPACTS**

159. Environmental and social risks and impacts associated with certain types of Project activities and people (including project workers) are summarized in Table 4.1 below. Each type of risk is rated on one of the following scales (low, moderate, or substantial) based on the type of

activities, location, scope, scale, sensitivity, nature and magnitude of the potential environmental and social risks that are associated with them. The risk rating (as in table below) also takes into account the capacity of PMU and those directly involved project implementation (e.g. contractors, service providers, community mobilizers and village facilitators) in managing identified environmental and social risks and impacts vis-a-vis ESMF requirements. Under RRPM II, the term risk refers to the interaction between the probability of the risk materializing and the severity of its impact on the achievement of the intended results at project level, including project objective and project's result sustainability.

**Table 4-0-1 ES Risks and Impacts with Mitigation Measures and ESF Instrument to be applied.**

Project Component s	ES Risks and Impacts	Receptors	Risk Rating <sup>43</sup>	Mitigation Measures	WB ESS	Responsibility	ESF Instrument to be applied
Comp 1,2,3	▪ <b>Traffic Safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Village Facilitators</li> <li>▪ Community Mobilizers</li> <li>▪ Contracted workers</li> <li>▪ Direct workers</li> </ul>	L-M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Insurance coverage for road accident for project workers, particularly those traveling frequently and based in project site</li> <li>▪ In addition, where possible, local road authority is to improve line of sight, e.g. improve visibility, traffic calming measures, good signage, drivers' training, etc. to make the road a safer place.</li> <li>▪ Training of VF and CM</li> <li>▪ Minutes of community meetings</li> </ul>	ESS4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ District &amp; Provincial Offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ LMP</li> </ul>
Comp 1,2,3	▪ <b>UXO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Contracted workers</li> <li>▪ People in the surrounding area</li> </ul>	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The contract for undertaking a technical survey for UXO screening at the proposed construction site which is included as part of the construction</li> </ul>	ESS4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PMU</li> <li>▪ District &amp; Provincial Offices</li> <li>▪ Contractor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ESCOP</li> </ul>
Comp 1,2,3	▪ <b>ACM<sup>44</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Contracted workers</li> </ul>	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The contractor will be required to follow the World Bank Group (WBG)'s Environment, Health, and Safety Guidelines (EHSG)<sup>45</sup> for asbestos management protocols (2009)<sup>46</sup></li> </ul>	ESS4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PMU</li> <li>▪ District &amp; Provincial Offices</li> <li>▪ Contractor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ESCOP</li> </ul>
Comp 1,2,3	▪ <b>Contracting/spreading of</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Villagers (including project beneficiaries)</li> </ul>	L-M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public Awareness Raising for villagers (at village meetings, leaflet,</li> </ul>	ESS4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ District &amp; Provincial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ LMP</li> </ul>

<sup>43</sup> L (Low), M (Moderate), S (Significant) means there is a Low/ Moderate/ Significant **likelihood** that identified E or S factors could adversely affect the achievement of the project's objectives or sustainability of project results, and meanwhile there is a Low/ Moderate/ Significant social, or environmental **impacts**. **For Environment, S means there are potential adverse environmental or social impacts, but these are less severe. M means there are some adverse environmental or social impacts. L means there are few or no environmental or social adverse impacts.**

<sup>44</sup> ACM, which is present in old zinc roof, is the only hazardous material during demolition process.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.mtpinnacle.com/pdfs/AsbestosGuidanceNoteFinal.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.mtpinnacle.com/pdfs/AsbestosGuidanceNoteFinal.pdf>

	<b>communicable disease(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>and non-beneficiaries)</li> <li>▪ Village Facilitators (VFs)</li> <li>▪ Community Mobilizers (CMs)</li> <li>▪ Village health staff</li> <li>▪ Visitors, PMU staff (village, district, and central levels)</li> </ul>		SBCC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Awareness raising for beneficiaries through regular meetings with VF and CM</li> <li>▪ Training of VF and CM on risks of CHS</li> </ul>		Offices	
Comp 1,2,3	▪ <b>Sexual Exploitation &amp; Abuse, Sexual Harassment, and Violence Against Children</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Villagers (including project beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries)</li> <li>▪ Project workers</li> </ul>	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public Awareness Raising for villagers (at village meetings, leaflet, SBCC)</li> <li>▪ Awareness raising for beneficiaries through regular meetings with VF and CM</li> <li>▪ Training of VF and CM on risks of CHS</li> <li>▪ Workers' Code of Conduct</li> <li>▪ Grievance Redress Procedures</li> </ul>	ESS4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ District &amp; Provincial Offices</li> <li>▪ Lao WU</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ESMF and SEP</li> </ul>
Comp 1,2,3	▪ <b>Meaningful consultation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Village Facilitators</li> <li>▪ Community Mobilizers</li> <li>▪ PMU Consultants</li> </ul>	L-M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Guidance on Meaningful Consultation is incorporated into SEP</li> <li>▪ Mainstreamed into Project Operation Manual</li> <li>▪ Training of all Community Mobilizers and Village Facilitators on Meaningful Consultation</li> </ul>	ESS1 ESS7 ESS10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ District &amp; Provincial Offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ESMF and SEP</li> <li>▪ POM</li> </ul>
Comp 1,2,3	▪ <b>Cultural awareness of EM which result in misunderstanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Beneficiary households</li> <li>▪ Project workers</li> <li>▪ Village Facilitators</li> <li>▪ Community Mobilizers</li> <li>▪ PMU Consultants</li> </ul>	L-M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Guidance on Meaningful Consultation is incorporated into SEP</li> <li>▪ Mainstreamed into Project Operation Manual</li> <li>▪ Training of all Community Mobilizers and Village Facilitators on Meaningful Consultation</li> </ul>	ESS1 ESS7 ESS10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ District &amp; Provincial Offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ESMF and SEP</li> <li>▪ POM</li> </ul>
Comp 1,2,3	▪ <b>Gender stereotype</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Beneficiary households</li> <li>▪ Project workers</li> <li>▪ Village Facilitators</li> <li>▪ Community Mobilizers</li> </ul>	L-M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Guidance on Meaningful Consultation is incorporated into SEP</li> <li>▪ Mainstreamed into Project Operation Manual</li> <li>▪ Training of all Community Mobilizers</li> </ul>	ESS1 ESS7 ESS10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ District &amp; Provincial Offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ESMF and SEP</li> <li>▪ POM</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PMU Consultants</li> </ul>		and Village Facilitators on Meaningful Consultation			
Comp 1,2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Risk of exclusion/inclusion</b> (due to error during PMT exercise)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Villagers</li> <li>Project Beneficiaries</li> </ul>	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide repeated training to Village Facilitators to reduce human errors that may happen during interview and data entry.</li> <li>Conduct training and repeated training for village facilitator in new project province, and for staff running PMT analysis.</li> <li>Provide upfront awareness raising in regular communication activities (facilitated by Village Facilitators and Community Mobilizers). Topics of communication may include a) Eligibility Criteria, b) Selection Process, c) Grievance Redress Procedure.</li> </ul>	ESS1 ESS7 ESS10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District &amp; Provincial Offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ESMF and SEP</li> <li>POM</li> </ul>
Comp 1,2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Risk of exclusion of part of vulnerable group based on eligibility cut-off</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Villagers</li> <li>Project Beneficiaries</li> </ul>	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider enlarging the program to reduce the exclusion errors;</li> <li>Consider fine-tuning of relevant technical aspects of PMT model to reduce exclusion errors.</li> <li>Consider increasing the number of beneficiaries to cover both near-poor and those marginally above the near-poor group</li> <li>Where possible, consider using additional qualitative variables that represent key sources of vulnerability (based of factors that are poverty induced and risk induced) (See Annex 7 for more details).</li> <li>Improve communication strategy to promote transparency of the PMT methods and minimize the grievances from those who are not</li> </ul>	ESS1 ESS7 ESS10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PMU</li> <li>District &amp; Provincial Offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ESMF and SEP</li> <li>POM</li> </ul>

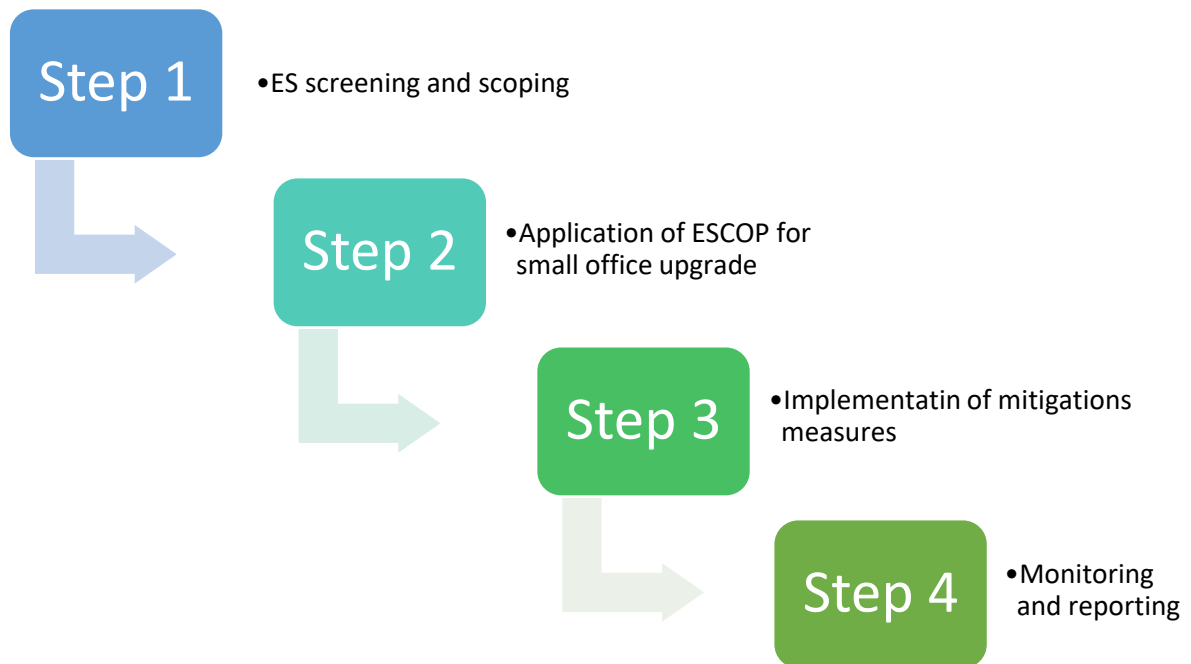
				<p>qualified as CCT beneficiaries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consideration should be made to divert relevant benefits from other convergence projects to the “near-vulnerable” households to leverage the shortage of resources for CCT under RRMP2 for vulnerable group who are above threshold for vulnerability. The risk of exclusion of “near-vulnerable” group could be minimized by maximizing the inclusion of potential vulnerable group under RRPM2 into other projects of the convergence program (See Annex 7 for more details).</li> <li>▪ Ensure GRM functions effectively, including prompt acknowledgement of complaint receipt and resolution. GRM implementation should be carried en par with communication to the general public to promote understanding.</li> </ul>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Risk of misuse of CCT payment</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mothers receiving CCT</li> </ul>	L-M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Training of all Community Mobilizers and Village Facilitators on Meaningful Consultation</li> <li>▪ Train beneficiaries on financial management skills</li> </ul>	ESS1 ESS10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PMU</li> <li>▪ District &amp; Provincial Offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ESMF and POM</li> </ul>



## 5. PROCEDURES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL & SOCIAL MANAGEMENT

### 5.1 PROCESS FOR MINOR CIVIL WORK (OFFICE UPGRADE)

160. The 4-step process below applies to office upgrade in new project provinces.



### 5.2 SCREENING AND SCOPING

161. Environmental and social screening will be conducted for: 1) all civil work (which is mainly office upgrading in new project province), 2) Technical Assistance which will be identified during project implementation. Activities that potentially fall under substantial or high-risk category in terms of environmental impact will not be financed by the project (See Annex 1 for E&S Screening Checklist). For other key project activities for which associated E&S risks and impacts are already identified such as enhanced application of social registry under Component 1, transfer of CCT payment to beneficiaries under Component 2, promotion of nutrition practices under Component 3, and project management and Social Behavior Change Community under Component 4, these key projects activities are not subject to E&S screening process.

### 5.3 ESCOP

162. An Environment and Social Code of Practices (ESCOP) was prepared (See Annex 3) for use in cases where office upgrade is required. The ESCOP aims to ensure contractor is aware of E&S risks and impacts and take action to minimize negative impacts that may arise during office upgrading. ESCOP will be included in the bidding document and work contract (BD/WC). Cost for ESCOP implementation will be part of the work contract's cost. PMU, the Provincial/District Agriculture and Forestry Offices (PAFO and DAFO) where office is upgraded will oversee contractor performance. ESCOP will also include a List of Do's and Don'ts which will be applied by

Contractors engaged for office upgrade to avoid or minimize E&S risks and impacts during office upgrading.

#### 5.4. CHANCE FIND PROCEDURES

163. If the Contractor discovers archeological sites, historical sites, and objects of cultural significance during excavation or construction, the Contractor will follow “Chance Find Procedures” (See Section 1.6 of Annex 4 – ESCOP and Do and Don’t Do). Local authorities and provincial Culture Department would be engaged to protect and preserve the site before deciding on subsequent appropriate procedures. Relevant local authorities will conduct preliminary assessment according to various criteria relevant to cultural heritage, historic, cultural sites/objects.

#### 5.5 COVID-19 RESPONSE

164. The measures for COVID-19 response are provided to ensure that project personnel and local communities as well as other concerned stakeholders are prevented from COVID-19. A general COVID-19 response guideline which provide suggested hygienic measures and visualizations is provided in Annex 6 and could be used for raising awareness of stakeholders concerned. Project workers are required to follow most updated recommendations from the government in response to COVID-19 situation, as well as guided through updated WHO’s guidance on COVID-19 prevention. More updated reference could be found on WHO’s website (<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance>), such as Risk Communication and Community Engagement, Preparedness and Response Plan; COVID-19 risk communication package for healthcare facilities; guide to preventing and addressing social stigma associated with COVID-19. All measures to be implemented to address COVID-19 related risks need to be in accordance with the local applicable laws and policies.

### 6. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

#### 6.1 MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

165. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will be responsible for overall implementation of the project. Day-to-day project implementation will be managed by the DRD whose mandate is aligned with the project objectives. The Department of Planning and Finance (DoPF) of MAF will be responsible for overseeing fiduciary aspects of the project and overall coordination within MAF. Because the DRD is a relatively new department with limited experience in managing World Bank-financed projects, DRD will be trained as part of Project Component 3, and through by TA from the World Bank on the development of social protection systems.
166. In addition to project management function (as mentioned above), DRD is responsible for overseeing and coordinating rural poverty reduction programs at the national level, including monitoring progress toward achievement of poverty reduction goals. DRD is also tasked to conduct annual identification of poor households. The Poverty Reduction Fund (PRF) program is housed at DRD. The PRF (under the MAF) is one of Lao PDR’s core poverty reduction programs that cover 10 out of 14 provinces. PRF’s objectives are to foster poverty reduction through the promotion and support for self-help groups (SHGs) and through investments in small-scale infrastructure at village level. In addition to PRF, MAF also work in coordination with other ministries to improve nutrition, including efforts in improvement of healthcare services,

education, water and sanitation, and agriculture. The MAF is responsible for 4 out of 22 agreed actions under the National Nutrition Strategy (NNS) and is a key partner in countrywide Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) and Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS).

## 6.2 MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND INVESTMENT

167. Ministry of Planning and Investment is responsible for implementation of activities related to and coordination of the Nutrition Convergence approach (Component 4). Therefore, under RRPM II, MPI will be the second implementation agency operating with a separate designated account, taking on fiduciary role for Component 4. To enhance the project capacity to support, coordinate and track the implementation of the nutrition convergence approach, MPI will be involved in the planning and budgeting effort of nutrition convergence program which guides the proposed operation as well as other projects supported by the Bank and other development partners.

## 6.3 PROVINCIAL AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY OFFICE (PAFO)

168. PAFO will be responsible for providing guidance for the overall implementation of the project activities and nutrition convergence approach, convening multisectoral steering committees which through their regular meeting and activities. Project Coordination Office under PAFO will prepare provincial progress report, incorporating summary on ESS compliance/issues, and submit quarterly to PMU.

## 6.4 DISTRICT AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY OFFICE (DAFO)

169. DAFO will be responsible for monitoring and providing technical support for project activities implementation, Project Coordination Office under DAFO will prepare district progress report, incorporate summary on ESF compliance/issues, submit quarterly to Provincial project coordination office/PAFO.

## 6.5 COMMUNITY MOBILIZERS AND VILLAGE FACILITATROS

### **Community Mobilizer (CM)**

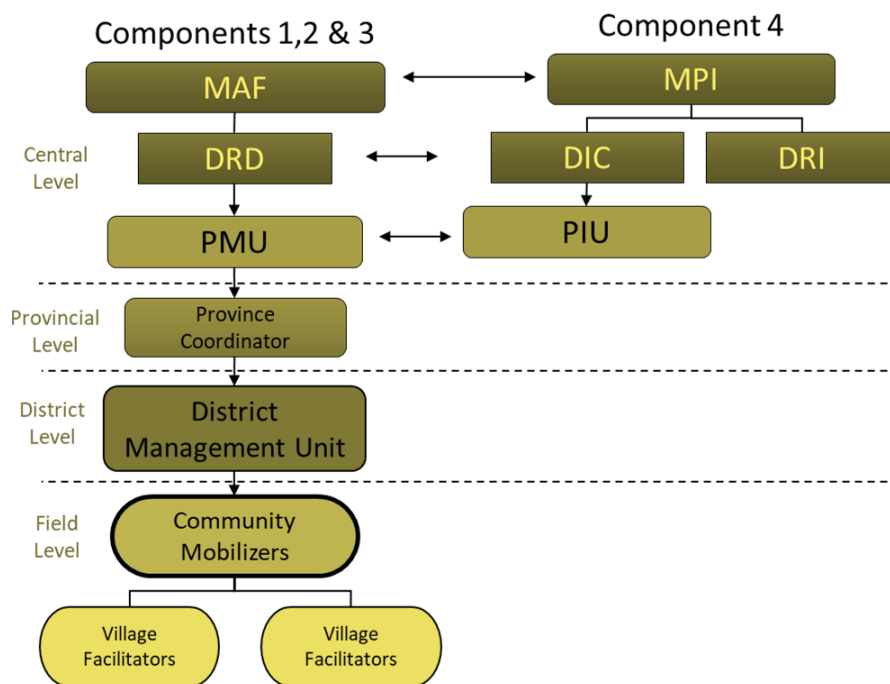
170. CMs are project workers who get monthly salary through work contract signed with Project Management Board. CM hold an important role in conducting social mobilization activities at village level, and are responsible for implementing all processes related to Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) cycles. In addition to support in CCT, CMs also support the implementation of the social behavior change communication (SBCC) program to raise the awareness of local people as to the CCT program. They also reinforce (SBCC) sessions by enhancing parenting knowledge, encouraging families to invest in their children's health and nutrition, and promoting healthy behavior and demand for use of health services by CCT beneficiaries.

### **Village Facilitator (VF)**

171. VFs are local people who are engaged under the project to as volunteer to provide their labor as a contribution to the project. VFs may be supported with financial allowance to support their travel (e.g., petrol) and communication but they are not paid monthly salary (like Community Mobilizers). Under RRPF II, Village Facilitator is categorized as Community Workers – as per definition in ESS2. VFs support communicating CCT information and its conditionalities to communities participating in the CCT program. They convene regular consultation meetings with the community to provide updates on program status, discuss about community plans, monitor the use of cash by beneficiaries, and support implementation of SBCC activities. VFs also collect regularly feedback and complaints from households and communities to report to the district level.

172. Implementation of the projects is organized as follows:

**Figure 1 – Implementation Arrangements for RRPM II Project**



## 6.6 CAPACITY ASSESSMENT, CAPACITY BUILDING, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

173. Adequate capacities of PMU and the implementing agencies are an essential precondition to successfully and timely implementing the RRPM II project, including fulfilling commitments related to implementation of ESMF (including LMP), SEP, and ESCP. During the rapid environment and social assessment conducted in December 2022, a rapid capacity assessment (CA) was also conducted with an aim to provide a clear picture on what need to be done on capacity building and training to ensure effective and timely implementation of the ESF instrument during Project implementation. Given that the ESF is new to MAF and MPI, DRD of MAF and DIC and DRI of MPI, in particular, need training to be familiar with the requirement of the ESS – as reflected in ESMF, SEP and ESCP.
174. It is expected that through the implementation of the on-going RRPM, the communication/ safeguard consultant will be trained on the application of the ESF instruments to the project activities and ensure that the ESF activities are incorporated in the annual work plan. During implementation of the Project (RRPM II), this consultant will play a leading role in the implementation of the ESF of the Project. At district level, one E&S focal point who is existing staff under RRPM will be appointed. ESF trainings will be conducted at the beginning of the Project implementation to ensure the national communication/ safeguard consultant and E&S focal points (district level), and E&S focal point (national level, to be appointed by PMU) will be trained on ESF to ensure project implementation is in line with applied ESSs.

175. The ESF training will include a combination of theoretical and practical trainings aiming to ensure that the PMU and focal points clearly understand the needs for early planning and integration of ESF activities and WB clearance before the activities can be implemented on the ground (per ESCP). It is important for PMU to (a) ensure that the ESF activities are integrated into the annual work plan and budget (AWPB), (b) ensure that all Project activities/subprojects are eligible for Project financing by undertaking the ES screening for eligibility as well as application of the right instruments appropriate to the Project activities. Additional training and/or technical support on specific topic can be identified by the communication/ESF specialist and/or WB ESF specialists.
176. During Project implementation, ESF training and TA will be provided to the implementing agencies both at the **central** and local levels. Key staff of PMU, the implementing agencies, and the PAFO and DAFO offices will be trained on an overview ESF with a particular focus of ESSs and instruments that apply to the Project, including SEP, LMP, and ESCOP, Do & Don't Do. At present, the project has assigned two ESF consultants (ESFC), one is national, and another is international to support the preparation of ESF documents for the project. The ESFC will also provide ESF support and training related to application of the ESMF into project activities. The first ESF training workshop will be conducted as soon as implementation of RRPM II becomes effective.
177. Capacity **building** and training for key agencies on specific issues will be planned and conducted as needed and the following, but not limited to, priorities will be considered:
- The ESMF process and guidelines for preparation, implementation, and supervision of ESF instruments focusing on mitigating ESS risks (ESCOP) when works is involved) and social risks (SEP, LMP, and GRM that could be effective in responding to local complaints);
  - Training on the management of waste management while conducting the project activities
  - Specific training on supervision and monitoring of contractor performance, including forms and reporting process and basic knowledge on health, safety, and good construction practices for reducing potential impacts on local environment and local peoples, SCOC and communication and GRM procedures and other social issues related to HIV/AIDs and other communication diseases, etc.
178. Table below identifies specific target groups for training on the ESMF implementation for PMU and ESF focal points at provincial and district levels while Table 6.2 identifies potential technical follow-up training to be conducted for community mobilizers, village facilitators, and other appropriate technical/management staff.

**Table 6.1 ESF training for the Project**

No	Contents	Target Groups for Training
1	ESMF process, implementation, monitoring, and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PMU, the implementing partners, and the provincial and district agriculture and Forestry (PAFO/DAFO)</li> </ul>
2	SEP, LMP preparation and monitoring including contract management and capacity improvement including on finalize ECOP and signing of SCOC requirements). Before bidding, PMU and relevant implementing agencies will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PMU, the implementing partners, and the provincial and district agriculture and Forestry (PAFO/DAFO)</li> </ul>

No	Contents	Target Groups for Training
	be trained on ESCOP and knowledge on how to supervise contractor performance to understand the ESHS requirement in bidding and contract documents (BD/CD).	
4	UXO and ACM removal and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construction workers, contractor, PMU, staff of Provincial and District Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO/DAFO),</li> </ul>
5	Environmental and society monitoring skills improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PMU, the implementing partners, and the provincial and district agriculture and forestry (PAFO/DAFO), PONRE, DONRE and other local authorities</li> </ul>
6	Training on waste management, ESHS, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PMU, the implementing partners, and the provincial and district agriculture and forestry (PAFO/DAFO), PONRE, DONRE and other local authorities</li> <li>Contractors' personnel should be included in Training on Waste Management, ESHS, etc.</li> </ul>
7	Training on ESCOP and Do's and Don'ts and training and signing of SCOC compliance and environmental health and occupational safety measures, prevention of communicable diseases and COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PMU, the implementing partners, and the provincial and district agriculture and forestry (PAFO/DAFO), PONRE, DONRE and other local authorities, Construction Contractor, and local communities.</li> </ul>
6	Training on SBCC materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PMU, the implementing partners, and the provincial and district agriculture and forestry (PAFO/DAFO)</li> </ul>

**Table 6.2 ESF training for Project stakeholders**

Main topics	Secondary topics (combined with main topic & based on roles)	Target groups	Delivery method	When	Frequency	Notes
<b>E&amp;S risks and impacts,</b> focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community health and safety (e.g., traffic safety)</li> <li>SEA/SH</li> <li>GRM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting implementing communication strategy</li> <li>CCT (enrolment, verification of conditions, beneficiary updates, payments, grievance redress)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Mobilizers</li> <li>Village Facilitators</li> </ul>	Face-to-face training	Within 6 months of Year 1 of project implementation	Once	Repeated within six months after first training (if needed, based on post-training evaluation results)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicating information on the CCT program</li> <li>Convene regular consultation meetings</li> <li>Support SBCC implementation</li> <li>Collect regularly feedbacks and complaints from the households</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Village Facilitators</li> <li>Village Facilitators</li> </ul>	Face-to-face training	First time project is unfolded in target villages	Once	Repeated within six months after first training (if needed, based on post-training evaluation results)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conditionalities of CCT</li> <li>Knowledge on Nutrition and Behavior Change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project beneficiaries</li> <li>Community members</li> </ul>	Face-to-face consultation			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awarded Contractors</li> </ul>		before the construction / contract implementation begins		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ESCOP</li> <li>SEA/SH risks</li> <li>Health and Road Safety</li> <li>SEA/SH</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risks related to Contractor's workers.</li> <li>GRM related to SEA/SH and labor &amp; working conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construction Contractors</li> <li>PMU's consultants</li> </ul>	Bidding document/ Contract		Once	



<b>E&amp;S risks and impacts</b> (all issues identified for the project and project grievance redress mechanism)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PMU staff (all levels)</li> <li>▪ Staff from relevant ministries &amp; central-level government agencies</li> </ul>	Face-to-face training	Within 6 months of Year 1 of project implementation	Once	Repeated and strengthened as hands-on experience during Bank's implementation support mission (bi-annual)
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## 7. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & INFORMATION DISCLOSURE

### 7.1 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

#### 7.1.1 Requirements of Stakeholder Consultations

179. Under WB financed project, it is important that open and transparent engagement process be established and maintained between the Borrower and project stakeholders. When effective stakeholder engagement can be ensured, this process helps improve the environmental and social sustainability of project, enhance public support for project implementation and contribute to successful project design and implementation.
180. A Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) has been prepared for the RRPM II. The SEP defines a program for stakeholder engagement, including public information disclosure and consultation, throughout the entire project cycle. It also outlines a communication strategy with the project stakeholders, and offers mechanisms for them to raise concerns, provide feedback, or complaints about the project. Stakeholder Engagement deals with all project components as it seeks to ensure stakeholders are consulted and well-informed about the project and have avenues to provide their feedback.

#### 7.1.2 Summary of Consultation during Project Preparation

181. The national consultation was organized at MAF office for a half day in Vientiane capital on 9<sup>th</sup> Dec 2022 through the face to face meeting for the participants who stay in Vientiane capital, while the virtual channel was also utilized and participated by the project coordination office from four target provinces include Xiengkhuang, Houaphanh, Oudomxay and Phongsaly provinces through Zoom platform. The representatives from MAF, MOH, MOES, MOF, MPI, MLSW, FAFO and DAFO was invited to the meeting with total 25 participants and 4 of them were female (see Annex 4: Public Consultation Report for more detail).
182. The Power Point Presentation (PPT) was used to display the finding of FGD consultation gathering from the field works. The consultation was mainly conducted in Lao language while interpretation was also available for experts from the WB. The consultation aims to: (i) presenting about the finding of the FGD with the project beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders at provincial level, (i) collecting feedback and opinion regarding the implementation of RRPM project and recommendation for proposed RRPM II project.
183. The key finding of FGD can be summarized as below:  
***Positive impact of the Project and the challenges***
184. The subsidy from the CCT program brings lots of benefits to local communities, especially pregnant women and mothers of the children under two years old, because they use this cash to buy food such as meat, vegetables, and fruits to cook for their children to increase the nutrition for their family. In addition, they also can buy some supplement milk for their kids which this makes their family's health condition was improved and be healthier, Moreover, CCT helps to reduce the expense of their family for health treatment when they get sick and fill up the motorbike's tank with fuel to take them to the hospital. However, the CCT program is facing challenges and difficulty as summarized below
- Other community members who do not receive the CCT try to obstruct other community members not to join the project's activity because they do not well understand the condition of receiving CCT;
  - District partners from other projects still lack understanding of the RRPM project;

- Long distance from the community to the healthcare center is still challenged pregnant women and mothers to access and receive healthcare services regularly;
- No market in some communities which make the villagers have to travel long distance and take a long time to get to the district market to purchase nutritional food for their Children;
- CCT payment for some villages is still delayed;
- Some village facilitators have a lack of motivation and turning over, due to low payment/per diem
- Organize too many activities in one village each month from a different project, cause time consumption for the community;
- Some issues still occur between the RRPM project and the HANSA project, due to both having different beneficiary selection criteria;
- PMT tool is new and not yet consistent;
- The HANSA project has difficulty gathering participants in the community due to the community always compares with the CCT;
- NPC of MPI developed the M&E system such as village score card, spot check;
- The actual payment by UNITEL has no GoL officials participating with.

185. After listening to the presentation on the finding, the participants suggested the project to consider resolving problems and suggestions related to the issues below.

- Demonstrate the cash spending on nutrition on-site to the target beneficiaries which will help them understand more about how to spend CCT money on nutritional improvement;
- Provide training on nutritional practice as well to other women who do not belong to the target beneficiary;
- To set up the village revolving fund for supporting nutritional works in the communities to sustain the project's activities;
- To consider increasing subsidy of the CCT from 180,000 LAK up to 300,000 LAK for the project beneficiaries because they are facing a high inflation rate;
- To continue supporting children up till 05 years old because during this age, the children still need to continue proper nutrition;
- The health sector should pay attention to villages (i.e. Akha ethnic community, ODX province) located in the project area which have low number of latrines available (Only 9 HHs out of 77 HHs have latrines) ;
- Support the village which has an insufficient loudspeaker to cover the whole community area for SBCC works;
- The project team needs to communicate a clear and accessible message to all community members on CCT's condition, criteria/eligibility assessment. This is ensuring that everyone appreciates and those who do not receive CCT are not misunderstood;
- To consider somehow providing special assistance to villages (i.e. Hoayla village, XKH province) that was impacted by the natural disaster;
- A quick and effective mitigation procedure needs to provide to those who raise the grievance;
- SBCC convergence should coordinate with relevant stakeholders who work on nutrition, this is to reduce the confusion of target communities;
- SBCC should involve all community members, not focusing only on the target beneficiaries;

- Any possibility If the mother of children under 2 years old becomes pregnant? The project should provide support for both children.
- CM and VF should also be involved by the Lao Women's Union.

## 7.2 INFORMATION DISCLOSURE

186. Information Disclosure refers to making information accessible, and in a manner that is appropriate and understandable to interested and affected parties. Information Disclosure will be an ongoing process under RRPM2. During project preparation stage, project information will be disclosed in a way that is appropriate to the different range of stakeholders and in both Lao and English languages, as appropriate. For EM groups and communities, information disclosure will also be in a language and manner accessible to them, as deemed necessary.
187. The following guiding principles will be used:
- Project information, including project/subproject purpose, activities, environmental and social risks and potential impacts, proposed mitigation measures, complaint handling procedures, etc., will be disclosed at the earlier stage of project preparation and during project implementation (village level);
  - Information will be disclosed to the target group well ahead of consultations to promote understanding about the project and allow meaningful feedback of stakeholders;
  - Project information will be disclosed in local languages of the target audience;
  - In case the target IPs do not have written language, national language (Lao) will be used in Project Information Booklet to be distributed to them. However, consultation will be conducted in their native language using verbal translation to promote communication and feedback of the IP during consultation;
  - Project information will be disclosed in the written form, and in various formats for convenient use of various project stakeholders, including Project Information Booklet, Executive Summary, and full documents;
  - Project information will be disclosed through different channels for convenient access of various project stakeholders. Project's dedicated channels for information disclosure include webpage and Facebook fan page of MAF. Public billboard located at village hals in project area;
  - A dedicated hotline is available at MAF PMU to provide guidance and project information to affected and interested stakeholders.

### 7.2.1 Before Project Appraisal

188. To prepare for consultation, the draft ESMF (including LMP), SEP and ESCP were disclosed on MAF's website, including full English version and Lao executive summary, on 6 May. The final ESF package will be disclosed on MAF's website in English and Executive Summary in Lao once receiving the clearance from the WB. The final ESF documents will also be disclosed on the World Bank's website.

### 7.2.2 During Project Implementation

189. Project booklet will be prepared and disclosed in local language at village level for information and consultation with local beneficiaries and interested people.

## 8. GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM

### 8.1 WB's REQUIREMENTS ON GRM

190. Under the WB's ESS10, it is required that the grievance mechanism prepared for the Project need to be proportionate to the risks and impacts of the project. It is easily accessible and inclusive. The Project will use the existing grievance mechanism that are being used by GOL (see Section 8.2 below). Specifically, the Project's grievance redress procedures are expected to:
- Address concerns promptly and effectively, in a transparent manner that is culturally appropriate and readily accessible to all project-affected parties, at no cost and without retribution. The mechanism, process or procedure will not prevent access to judicial or administrative remedies. PMU will inform the project-affected parties about the grievance process in the course of its community engagement activities, and will make publicly available a record documenting the responses to all grievances received;
  - Handle grievances in a manner that is culturally appropriate and is discreet, objective, sensitive and responsive to the needs and concerns of the affected people. The mechanism will also allow for anonymous complaints to be made and addressed.
191. The Project's grievance mechanism may include:
- Different ways in which users can submit their grievances, which may include submissions in person, by phone, text message, mail, email or via a web site;
  - A log where grievances are registered in writing and maintained as a database;
  - Procedures is publicly announced, setting out length of time complainants can expect to wait for acknowledgement, response and resolution of their grievances;
  - Transparency about the grievance procedure, governing structure and decision makers; and
  - An appeals process (including the national judiciary) to which unsatisfied grievances may be referred when resolution of grievance has not been achieved.
  - An option where complainants who are not satisfied with the proposed resolution could seek resolution through mediation.

### 8.2 NATIONAL REQUIREMENTS ON GRM

192. By national law of Lao PDR, Grievance Redress Mechanism is required to be established means for displaced/affected persons to bring complaints to the attention of relevant project authorities. GRM can be built on the existing national system with Village Mediation Unit/Committee in place in all villages and fiduciary structure from the district to national levels. Grievance procedures should include reasonable performance standard e.g., time required to respond to complaints, and should be provided without charge to displaced/affected persons. ESMF should also state other avenues available to aggrieved persons if the project-related procedures fail to resolve complaints. Article 23, 24, 25 of the Decree 84/PM requires the Project to establish an effective mechanism for grievance resolution. The Decree requires that the subproject proponent (i.e., PMU/DRD) is responsible for setting up GRM and take actions to solve the issues.
193. The Project provides a comprehensive mechanism for grievance redressal through a form for written filing of grievance, in accordance with the procedures and guidelines by the World Bank. The stakeholder risks require a robust, evolving Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) within the organizational structure of the project. The GRM has been available to all Project stakeholders,

especially local community members. The GRM will deter fraud and corruption, mitigate risks and provide Project staff with practical guidance on accountability, transparency and responsiveness to beneficiary requests.

- Law on Complaint (amended version), No. 05/NA dated: 9/11/2016.

### 8.3 GRM PRINCIPLE UNDER THE PROJECT

194. Under this project, the following principles are applied:

- **Channels.** Different channels are established to enable affected person to submit their grievances such as submission through village committee, PMU, as well as district and provincial levels.
- **Forms.** Grievances can be submitted in written and verbally, and either directly by the complaint, or by person delegated by the complainant. Anonymous complaint is accepted.
- **Complainant can delegate a representative to act on their behalf.** Person lodging a grievance can ask assistance from their family or other individual that they trust to transcribe their complaint, and act as their representative to submit their complaint.
- **Disclosure.** GRM procedures are disclosed in public domain (**e.g. websites of PMU**, at public notice board located at **village hall**). GRM procedure will be explained to people attending consultation meetings.
- **Documentation.** A grievance logbook will be maintained at village hall, and at PMU level (through PMU GRM focal point) for regular update.
- **Transparency.** The GRM provides information on steps, expected timeframe for steps, how affected person is notified, decision made, and so forth.
- **Acknowledgement.** Submitted complaint will be acknowledged. The unit in charge of complaint resolution will notify complainant upon complaint receipt and will initiate the complaint resolution process.
- **Appeal.** If the agency in charge does not resolve a grievance in a manner that is satisfactory to the affected person, a multistakeholder committee will be established (ad-hoc) to resolve the dismissed grievance – as an alternative for affected person going to court. If the grievance could not be resolved satisfactorily by the multistakeholder committee, the affected person may resort to the court of law.
- **Monitoring.** All grievances received are recorded by PMU and relevant Village Committee, and are processed/resolved in a given timeframe, and are monitored by PMU GRM focal point.
- **Time-limit.** Time-limit for grievance resolution is specified for each step. However, any grievance that are related to urgent health and safety issues shall be resolved immediately.
- **Complainants bear no costs associated with the entire complaint resolution process.** Costs incurred as a result of grievance resolution will be borne by the project. However, if complaints bring their case to court as they wish, they will bear the costs associated with their lawsuit.

### 8.4 PROJECT'S REDRESS PROCEDURES

195. Based on the above GRM principles, the Project will establish four complaint handling procedures for four types of potential grievances: grievances related to 1) Conditional Cash Transfer, 2) labor and working conditions, 3) sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (SEA/SH), and 4) works of Village Facilitators. All four grievance redress procedures come under the overall

management of PMU's Grievance Focal Point who oversee the receipt of, and resolution of all grievances submitted under the Project at village, district and provincial levels (See also SEP – Section 5.2 Management Functions and Responsibilities).

196. It is noted that the GRM for complaints related to labor and working condition will follow the procedure described in the project's Labor Management Procedures whereas the GRM related to SEA/SH established under this project will be in accordance with the pertinent national laws and the World Bank's guidance on SEA/SH and is described in project's SEP, including LMP (see Chapter 6 of SEP for details of each grievance redress procedure).

## 9. MONITORING AND REPORTING

### 9.1 MONITORING AND REPORTING

197. The purpose of E&S monitoring is to determine if E&S implementation under the project is in full compliance with the principles and requirements set forth in respective project's E&S documents. PMU will be responsible for monitoring compliance with environmental and social requirements. This will apply to all project activities in four components. Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined based on the nature and scale of E&S risks and impacts identified at project level.
198. Every six months, the Environmental and Social Monitoring Report (ESMR) will be required to report on compliance with any ESSs that apply to the sub-project/project activities and for all type of risks, the ESMR will be prepared and submitted as a stand-alone document addition to regular quarterly and semi-annual reports that submitted by PMU. Each ESMR should contain a description of measures taken by the project, contractor/beneficiary to comply with applicable ESSs over the previous six months, including a summary of stakeholder engagement activities and a grievance log in compliance with ESS10.
199. In addition to monitoring project activities for compliance with the ESSs remotely, through review of instruments, reports and grievance, the national PMU will carry out site visits to all Project site with an overall risk rating of moderate. The national PMU and local focal points will jointly develop a site visit plan each year, identifying which projects area will be visited, when and by whom. Site visits will involve interview with project beneficiaries, contractor and relevant stakeholders and review of record on compliance with ESSs. As well as consultations with selected stakeholders, giving priority to project-affected parties. These consultations may take the form of interview, focus group discussion etc. and will adopt appropriate protocols to prevent transmission of COVID-19. Attention will be given to creating a safe space, in which stakeholders can raise their concerns without fear of reprisal. Particular attention will be given to ensuring that voices of women and other vulnerable groups can be heard.
200. The national PMU will report on compliance with ESSs under the Project as part of its periodic reporting to the World Bank. It will keep detailed records of compliance by contractor, beneficiaries, PMU and the project implementors. These records will be available for review by the WB task team, as well as by any internal or external consultants involved in evaluating the project. The national PMU will also disclose information relating to all E&S instruments, summary information from the application, and the final completion report. Disclosure will be done online, through the project's pages of the project website under MAF.



201. Monitoring also contributes to compiling important information that helps to evaluate procedures and technical interventions/ approaches ‘lessons learned’, to finally refine them. The ESF documents, including ESMF and SEP will be reviewed and refined based on experiences made during initial implementation efforts by the project. It contributes to enhance procedures and instruments, and to make overall performance, ESSs compliance, and mitigation efforts more efficient.
202. Table 9.1 below sets out the monitoring measures that will be put in place for the Project. In each circumstance. The measure is described, the Project implementors responsible is identified, and a timeline is given.

**Table 9-1 – Environmental and Social Monitoring Arrangements**

Monitoring measure	Description	Responsible party	Timelines
<b>Project level</b>			
Environmental and social reporting	A report will be prepared that summarized all ES mitigation is applied, the measures implemented by contractor to comply with the requirements, and any grievance received. PMU will be endorsed to require contractor to describe safety precautions to be put in place to control risks identified in the risk assessment.	PMU at national level	Every six months during Project implementation
Grievance reporting	PMU at all level will maintain a log of grievances received, to be included in the annual report to the WB on compliance with ESSs.	PMU at national and local level	Every six months during Project implementation
Accidents and incidents	The national PMU will inform the WB about any serious incidents (e.g., accidents, sexual harassment, mortalities and etc.)	PMU at national and local level	Within 48 hours of the incident
<b>Activities of the PMU</b>			
Progress reporting	PMU at national level will report on compliance with established measures and identify any new risk/impacts that have arisen to the WB.	PMU at national and local level	Every six months during Project implementation
Grievance reporting	PMU at national will inform the WB about any grievance received by PMU/CM at the local level and from a contractor made by a Project worker; a consolidated report of grievance received should be included in the nation PMU’s semi-annual reporting to the WB	PMU at national level	Every six months during Project implementation

Monitoring measure	Description	Responsible party	Timelines
Supervision	The PMU at national level will supervise, monitor and ensure contractors' and Project staff comply with ESS requirement.	PMU at national level	Bi-annually during project implementation
Site visits	Site visits will be conducted to a Project target area, and involve interview with project stakeholders and review of records on compliance with ESSs, as well as consultations with selected stakeholders	PMU at national level	At least once during project implementation
Final completion reporting	PMU will report on compliance with agreed environmental and social risk mitigation measures as part of their final completion reports	PUM at national level	Within 60 days of end of project
Evaluation	Each project component will be evaluated, including with respect to compliance with ESSs,	PMU at national level	Within 90 days of end of project
<b>Activities of contractors/beneficiaries</b>			
Environmental and social reporting	Contractors/CM/PMU at district level will report on compliance with established measures and identify any new risk/impacts that have arisen. This will include a description of safety precautions put in place to control risks.	Contractors/CM/PMU at local level	Within 15 days of receiving the grievance
Grievance reporting	Contractors and/or CM will inform the national PMU about any grievance received, together with a proposed plan to respond to it; a consolidated report of grievance received should be included in the semi-annual reporting to the PMU	Contractors/CM	Within 15 days of receiving the grievance

### 9.3 BUDGET FOR ESMF IMPLEMENTATION

203. To ensure effective implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, the Project will provide adequate budget for integration and implementation of the activities. For ESMF, the budget will cover the following costs (a) consultation with local authorities and communities; (b) training workshops on E&S issues; (c) monitoring and evaluation, including supervision of implementation of ESCOP; and (d) cost for hiring of qualified national consultant to assist PMU in coordination and training for Project staff and relevant staff at provincial, district and village levels. This budget will be provided under Project Component 3. TORs for the ESF consultants will be discussed technically with WB specialists before submitting to WB procurement system (STEP).

204. Indicative costs for the ESMF implementation (USD 161,000) will be allocated for the Project and PMU will be responsible for management of this budget.

**Table 9-1 Cost for the ESMF Implementation**

<b>E&amp;S Activities</b>	<b>Estimated Costs (USD)</b>
a) Consultation with local authorities and communities	50,000
b) Training workshops on E&S issues	25,000
c) Supervision of implementation of ESCOP	1,000
d) Hiring of qualified national consultant to assist PMU in coordinating orientation training	35,000
e) Conduct mitigation measures – through engaging services of consultants where needed – as mentioned at Section 4.4 – Mitigation Measures.	20,000
f) Insurance cost for the local staff (e.g., community mobilizers, staff based at district office)	30,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>161,000</b>

## ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1 – PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**Component 1. Strengthening Social Protection Building Blocks (USD 2.0M [plus 0.5M rollover from RRPM1] in case of USD25M envelope; USD2.5M in case of USD34M envelope)**

**The aim of this component is to strengthen the key building blocks of the social protection system in Lao PDR.** Specifically, it supports: i) the enhancement of the social registry, ii) the enhancement of beneficiary management and payment; and iii) establishing the building blocks of an adaptive social protection (ASP) system.

#### **Sub-component 1-1. Expanding utilization of Social Registry**

This sub-component will support improvements of the social registry in the following dimensions: i) household data updating, ii) establishment of data exchange capacity, iii) updating the PMT formula, and iv) use of the social registry beyond the CCT program. In terms of updating this project will help sustain data collection efforts for the social registry including on-demand methods (e.g., dynamic data update) and a nationwide mass registration/updating survey, planned for 2025 as to be aligned with the schedule of the Decree 348 survey. Dynamic updating methodology will include field level on-demand changes (including reassessment) triggered by the citizens, and backend procedures to carry out updates through data interoperability with other government databases, triggered by the program. For backend data updating, the component will support legal issues as data sharing agreement, protocols, and data protection, as well as operational and technical aspects as Application Programming Interface (API) for secure data sharing. This sub-component will also support the enhancement of the targeting mechanisms through a revision of the PMT formula and questionnaire (following the Lao Expenditure Consumption Survey 7, scheduled in 2023-24), as well as quality assurance procedures. Finally, the component will promote the utilization of the social registry for a variety of programs beyond CCT, such as programs within the nutritional convergence approach, emergency response to climate and other shocks, and other government and humanitarian agency programs among others. For this purpose, the project will support dissemination of information regarding the social registry through various means, as well as the development of the procedures to assess the interested agencies needs and systems capacity.

#### **Sub-component 1-2. Enhancing Beneficiary Management and Payments**

This subcomponent will finance the improvements and transition of four essential elements of the social protection delivery process: i) beneficiary monitoring and updating; ii) payment delivery, iii) implementation of grievance redress mechanism and iv) improvements to the MIS.

- a) The project will support the establishment of interoperable mechanisms that will enable the exchange of information between the RRPM MIS and other relevant administrative databases to gradually transition from field intensive monitoring of conditionalities and child scorecard, to a more efficient systems-based monitoring. Specially, the project will focus on linking the MIS with the Ministry of Health' District Health Information System 2 (DHIS2) and the Ministry of Home Affairs' Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system (e-CRVS).<sup>47</sup> The linkage to the e-CRVS system, will allow program administrators to verify existence of the beneficiaries to avoid ghost beneficiaries, verify and update

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<sup>47</sup> DHIS2 and e-CRVS financed by IPF World Bank projects.

personal data to assure payments are processed with the right information, and more importantly, pull the unique identity number of each individual to facilitate interoperability between administrative systems. This is an initial building block to the development of an integrated beneficiary registry across programs in Lao in the future.

- b) The project will support the improvement of the business process of the Helping Hand CCT as well as explore transitioning more beneficiaries to electronic payments. As of April 2023, the project had conducted nine rounds of payments through a private payment service provider, which visits each of the 879 program villages based on an agreed calendar and conducts payments camps bimonthly. Payments are regularly delayed due to several bottlenecks, most of these related to payment list approval and reconciliation processes. Furthermore, less than 5 percent of CCT beneficiaries are being paid through electronics transfers. This activity will support addressing design issues and implementing the changes to allow for more efficient and predictable payment planning and expansion of number of beneficiaries receiving transfers through an electronic modality.
- c) The project will support strengthening the Grievance mechanism. RRPM established a functional grievance redress mechanism where citizens can complain and provide feedback through different windows. The grievance is captured in a form and entered in a designated module in the MIS at the district level. These are later triaged, assigned to the respective area, and followed up until its resolution. The project will support improving categorization of grievances as well as the development of protocols and standards to maintain an expected response time.
- d) This subcomponent will also finance other MIS Improvements, including increasing server's capacity, updating hardware, enhancing the users' interface and experience, and building a module to monitor child scorecard monitoring.

### **Sub-component 1-3. Adaptive Social Protection**

**This component will support Government to advance the principle of Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) advanced to leverage SP systems for disaster risk management (DRM) and climate change adaptation.** Specifically, the project will promote the ASP in two domains: 1) augmenting the CCT business process and policy; and 2) strengthening the social protection delivery system (e.g., social registry, beneficiary registry, institutional capacity, and payment mechanisms). The former includes assistance in enhancing the CCT Operations Manual and/or devising pertinent policies to ensure business continuity of the CCT program in the event of shocks (such as ensuring continuous payment delivery), while supporting the scale-up of the CCT program through expanding the coverage and/or increasing the grant amounts in case of an emergency. In light of the modifications to CCT business process, the project will support the strengthening of the social protection delivery system, including ensuring scalability and flexibility of the payment system in the event of shocks.

**Component 2: Support to the Helping Hand Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program (USD 14.0M [plus 1.0M rollover from RRPM1] in case of USD 25M envelope; USD18M in case of USD 34M envelope)**

**The objective of this component is to support the continuous delivery of the Helping Hand CCT program to poor and vulnerable pregnant women and children under two years of age in convergence villages.** This component will finance the cash transfers to program beneficiaries. The program targets poor pregnant women and children under two years living in districts under the program's geographical coverage. Currently, the program targets the bottom 60 percent of households covering in some villages as many as 90 percent of all households. To align the poverty line in decree 348, the Government has decided to set it at the 50th percentile for the implementation of the RRPM II. Pregnant women and mothers are designated as primary recipient of benefits or grantees. Eligible beneficiaries of the program

will continue to be selected using the National Social Registry, which adopts a proxy means testing mechanism to estimate household welfare.

**This component will finance the geographic expansion of the CCT program and continue the support to existing convergence districts under RRPM.** The project will continue financing the implementation of the CCT program in convergence areas supported under RRPM, while expanding its geographic coverage to three southern districts: Taoy and Samouay in Saravan, Sepone and Nong in Savannakhet province, and Kaleumm and Dakcheung in Sekong province in case of the total envelope of USD 37M. The selection of new target areas has been defined in coordination with other convergence projects, considering the following criteria: poverty incidence; density of potential beneficiaries (based on the 2022 social registry data), districts designated as Development Focal Points,<sup>48</sup> health and nutrition indicators such as stunting and under-coverage of immunization and skilled birth attendance, other vulnerabilities (such as risks of climate change), and operational efficiency considerations for implementation. It is estimated that about a total of 72,000 beneficiaries (60,000 beneficiaries in case of USD25M envelope) will be supported from the second phase of the program (between March 2024 and the end of the project in 2029); this includes about 56,000 beneficiaries enrolled in existing convergence villages and 16,000 new beneficiaries (about 3,900 beneficiaries USD25M envelope) to be enrolled in new target villages.

**Cash grants are delivered to individual beneficiaries subject to compliance with health and nutrition co-responsibilities.** The program requires that beneficiaries fulfill the following co-responsibilities: (i) pregnant women attending antenatal care at health centers or integrated outreach sessions, according to MOH protocol; (ii) children 0-2 years old receiving growth monitoring by visiting health centers or integrated outreach sessions; (iii) children receiving immunization according to their age, as established by MOH; and (iv) the grantee (i.e. recipient of the transfer) and/or proxy attending social behavior change communication sessions at least once a month. Complying CCT beneficiaries receive fixed benefit amounts every two months, currently set at KIP 200,000 (equivalent to US\$12) per month. These four services are provided by the Ministry of Health and are financed by the current Health Access and Nutrition Services (HANSA) project and will continue to be provided under the HANSA 2 Project currently in preparation.

**The program will maintain the real value of the benefit during the implementation period.** The program rolled out in February 2021 with a benefit level set at KIP 180,000 (~US\$19 in 2021) monthly. The benefit amount was fixed in nominal terms and was increased to KIP 200,000 (in November 2022) to mitigate its real loss of value. Due to the continuous surges in inflation, the cash benefit has lost 47 percent in real terms since program inception. This drop may affect adversely the incentives of beneficiaries to participate in the program and reduce the program's impact on consumption and service utilization, and ultimately have less impact on immediate poverty (incidence and gap) reduction among beneficiary households. For this reason, the Government has decided to increase the monthly benefit to KIP 220,000, which is equivalent to 14 percent of poor rural households' consumption. The benefit adjustment will improve benefit adequacy while keeping relevant coverage in target villages and rollout the program in new target areas. The government has also decided to introduce an instrument to assess the benefit value

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<sup>48</sup> Development Focal Points are a cluster of villages located significantly distant from urban centers, and have limited access to health, education, finance, and market infrastructure and are considered as priority investment for MAF.

and adjust it regularly to keep its purchasing power; such instrument is based on an evaluation of real loss of benefit value, benefit adequacy, and funding viability.

**Component 3: Implementation Management Support and Institutional Strengthening (USD 7.0M [plus 1.0M rollover from RRP1] in case of USD25M envelope; USD9.5M in case of USD34M envelope)**

**This component will support project management costs related to operations, capacity building and training, including financial audits, service fees for financial service providers, and implementation of ESF activities.** This includes the financing of a dedicated PMU to execute the project and manage Components 1, 2 and 3. The key activities that will be financed under this component include:

- a) *Project management*: this includes project staffing at central, province and district levels; field level staffing with community mobilizers office materials and equipment, auditing services, payment service provider fees, etc.
- b) *Monitoring of the Helping Hand CCT*: implementation of the child scorecard, spot checks and CCT business process review. In coordination with MPI, the child scorecard, which will track convergence of services at the individual level, will be implemented in the field through the established MAF implementation arrangements. That is, it will use the district management unit, community mobilizers and village facilitators to update the information in the field. The monitoring tools aim to assess beneficiary satisfaction, delivery of cash to beneficiaries, delivery of complementary SBCC sessions, community awareness of grievance redress mechanisms, among other elements of the cash transfer program.
- c) *Establishing capacity for expansion*: this includes capacity building of provincial and district level government officers, hiring and training personnel in new districts, providing materials and equipment, minor renovation of existing office spaces, among others.
- d) *Complementary Social and Behavioral Change Communication delivery*: These are additional SBCC modules provided by the project to CCT beneficiaries and do not form part of the conditionalities. These are comprised of four modules developed under phase 1 pertaining to the following topics: i) optimal use of cash, ii) basic financial literacy, iii) Women's empowerment and iv) disaster preparedness. This activity will finance the consultancy services for refinement and improvement and training of SBCC modules as well as the allowances provided to the village facilitator network to deliver the SBCC sessions.

**Component 4: Enhancing the Nutrition Convergence Oversight and Coordination (USD 2.0M [plus 0.5M rollover from RRP1] in case of USD25M envelope; USD4.0M in case of USD34M envelope)**

**The objective of this component is to support the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) for the overall oversight and coordination of nutrition convergence program.** The component will finance the operational costs to coordinate the program at central, district and village levels, undertake a series of monitoring data collection and impact evaluation surveys, project-related financial management (FM), procurement, support and coordinate the nutrition convergence approach, and carry out monitoring and evaluation (M&E). More specifically, the project will finance the following areas of support:

- a) *Leadership and coordination*. Multisectoral program requires strong leadership and management capacity for planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of the convergence program. The component will support MPI participation in high level evidence-based communication and advocacy events such as National Nutrition Forum as well as build the management capacity of sub-

national coordination platform (i.e., District Nutrition Committee) to ensure sound oversight. The component will finance coordination workshops, quarterly and annual review meetings with relevant technical line ministries and departments of MPI to continue and expand the co-location at the districts and villages levels, based on agreed targeting criteria. The component will also support regular supportive supervision to districts and village.

- b) *Promote convergence of services at individual level.* The convergence approach requires targeted beneficiaries to have simultaneous access to priority nutrition services. The component will support MPI to strengthen the synergy across village services delivery platforms through the scaling up of monthly Nutrition Convergence Day and improve community engagement to manage multisectoral program. The project will support the implementation of innovative Child Scorecard (CSC) to track convergence of priority nutrition services at the individual level. The CSC will be administered quarterly in all project areas and will be used in community meetings to identify coverage gaps and trigger actions by relevant service providers to resolve the service gaps. The component will finance operational costs to administer CSC, including data reporting, analysis, and visualization. To ensure the optimal use of CSC data in village planning and monitoring, the project will leverage relevant projects (i.e., PRF/CLEAR) that support village institutions strengthening.
- c) *Harmonized nutrition related SBCC interventions.* Effective SBCC interventions require that messages are well-coordinated and reinforced across sessions. In coordination with MoH's National Nutrition Center, the activities will finance MPI to: (i) conduct mapping of SBCC interventions by reviewing all SBCC IEC materials, training modules and guidelines, and job aides to identify ways to harmonize the messages and delivery channels across projects; (ii) provide technical assistance to develop communication strategies and village activities targeting key influencers (i.e. community and ethnic leaders, Village Development plan) to facilitate adoption of key behaviors of mothers and caregivers; and (iii) facilitate communication and coordination across PMUs of different projects and relevant line ministries.
- d) *Convergence monitoring and evaluation:* the component will finance training and operational costs for developing and implementing a comprehensive nutrition convergence M&E system to track progress and results. Key monitoring tools include: (i) administrative data (sector and convergence projects' MIS); (ii) citizen feedback survey (iterative beneficiary monitoring/key informant interview/spot checks); and (iii) Child Scorecard (see above). This component will also finance the impact evaluation surveys (two rounds) and Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) survey to report on nutrition outputs, outcome and impact indicators. The KAP will be conducted every 2 years to collect key indicators including PDO level indicator on diet diversity and feeding practices. A robust data use plan will be implemented to ensure that monitoring data is optimally used to improve implementation through continuous course correction and enhance feedback loops to the community for strengthening accountability. The project will finance capacity building for MPI to enhance the analytics and the use of data for evidence-based decision making by making better use of the vast amount of monitoring data. The component will also finance dissemination of the results at various national and sub-national nutrition events.
- e) *Local Level Integrated planning and budgeting.* Building on lessons learned from phase 1, the project will aim at strengthening the local level (province, district) capacity to plan, manage funds and coordinate the convergence program. The activity will finance: (i) refinement of the district and village convergence planning guidelines; (ii) technical assistance for MPI to address cross-cutting public financial management, including the timeliness and predictability of funding and multisectoral nutrition budget tagging and tracking; and (iii) work with MPI Planning department on drafting instruction of sectoral annual planning and budgeting to ensure the prioritization of nutrition services.



**Component 5: Contingency Emergency Response Component (USD 0.0M)**

The objective of the contingent emergency response component (CERC), with a provisional zero allocation, is to allow for the reallocation of financing to provide an immediate response to an eligible crisis or emergency, as needed. The Government can request the WB to urgently activate CERC and reallocate the undisbursed balance to support the implementation of the government's emergency plan. Additional financing can also be mobilized to fully or partially replenish the funds reallocated to the CERC in accordance with the WB's requirements. Detailed procedures and rules on activation and implementation of CERC will be summarized in the CERC Emergency Response Manual (ERM) which will be prepared by the government and to be approved by the WB as an appendix of the Project Operations Manual.

## ANNEX 2 – ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SCREENING FORM

1. This form (Section 2.1) is to be used by the Project Management Unit (PIU) to screen for the potential environmental and social (E&S) risks and impacts of a proposed project office upgrading. It will help the PMU in identifying the relevant Environmental and Social Standards (ESS), establishing an appropriate E&S risk rating for the proposed project activities and specifying the type of environmental and social assessment required, including specific instruments/plans. Use of this form will allow the PMU to form an initial view of the potential risks and impacts of a subproject and identify proportioned mitigation measure. ***It is not a substitute for project-specific E&S assessments or specific mitigation plans.*** The completed ESS screening form (Table A2.1) with signing of the responsible persons, will be kept in the Project file for possible review by WB.
2. This Annex also provide a note on *Considerations and Tools for E&S Screening and Risk Rating* (Section 2.2) as well as a list of non-eligible activities for Project financing (Section 2.2). **No land acquisition of any type can take place under the project.**

### Section 2.1 ESS screening form (Table A2.1)

Project Name	
Project Activity	
Project Location	
Estimated Investment	
Start/Completion Date	

No.	Questions	Answer		ESS relevance	Actions/ instruments to be applied
		Yes	No		
1.	Does the subproject involve civil works including new construction, expansion, upgrading or rehabilitation of office and facilities?			ESS1	WMP, SEP, ESCOP New construction is not eligible (see Section 1.3)
2.	Does the subproject involve land acquisition and/or restrictions on land use?			ESS5	If yes, not eligible (see Section 1.3)
3.	Does the subproject involve recruitment of workers including direct, contracted, primary supply, and/or community workers?			ESS2	LMP, SEP
4.	Does the subproject involve use of security or military personnel during construction and/or related activities?			ESS4	SEP, LMP

5.	Is the subproject located within or in the vicinity of any ecologically sensitive areas?			ESS6	If yes, not eligible (see Section 1.3)
6.	Are there any indigenous groups (meeting specified ESS7 criteria) present in the subproject area and are they likely to be affected by the proposed subproject negatively or positively?			ESS7	Measures addressing issue on vulnerable groups, including IPs, will be part of WMP/ ECOP
7.	Is the subproject located within or in the vicinity of any known cultural heritage sites?			ESS8	If yes, the project should follow the Chance Find Procedures
8.	Does the project area present considerable Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) risk?			ESS1	LMP, SEP
9.	Is the sub-project located within or in the vicinity (within 50 m) of any natural habitat?			ESS6	List of Do's and Don'ts
10.	Does the sub-project is located in UXO contaminated areas, and poses considerable risks towards community health and safety?			ESS4	UXO survey and clearance is required in case: 1) building of new room (in existing government office) requires digging to build foundation and 2) written confirmation from relevant government could be obtained to confirm the land for room building is free from UXO.

#### Conclusions:

##### 1. Proposed E&S Risk Ratings (High, Substantial, Moderate or Low). Provide Justifications.

- .....
- .....

**Proposed E&S Instruments:** .....

Remarks. ....

.....

**Eligibility:** I confirm that the Project activities/subproject is eligible for Project financing (i.e. not fall in the list identified in Table A2.2).

**Signed by Subproject/activities owner:** .....

Position: .....Date .....

Signed by E&S focal point in charge: .....

Position: .....Date .....

Signed by PMU: .....

Position: .....Date:.....

## Section 2.2 E&S Screening and Risk Rating

3. In screening for E&S risks associated with civil works, the following may be considered:

- 
- Construction and decommissioning related risks
- Land or asset acquisition
- 
- Availability of minimum requirements of food, fuel, water, hygiene
- Whether infection prevention and control, and monitoring of quarantined persons can be carried out effectively
- Whether adequate systems are in place for waste and wastewater management
- Life and Fire Safety (L&FS) risk and management
- Wastewater issue and management
- [WHO COVID-19 Technical Guidance: Infection prevention and control / WASH](#)

### Screening E&S Risks Relating to Labor and Working Conditions

4. The RRPM II may include different types of project officers and workers. In addition to regular project officer and construction workers who would normally be classified as direct workers, the Project may include contracted workers to carry out construction and community workers (such as community facilitators) to provide support, facilitation, and data collection, etc. The size of the workforce engaged could be considerable. Risks for such a workforce will range from occupational health and safety to types of contracts and terms and conditions of employment. However, for the proposed type and size of the civil works, it is expected that workers for the renovation of existing office will be around 10 workers.

### Section 2.3 List of the Non-Eligible Activities

5. Table A2.2 provides a list of ineligible activities. PMU will ensure that the activities to be financed by the Project will not fall under any of the activities identified in this list. If in doubt, consultation with WB's ESF specialists is highly recommended. PMU will also ensure that WB clearance of all ESF documents will be obtained before the activities begin on the ground as described in the ESCP. In close consultation with WB, other arrangement can be made depending on the potential risks of the proposed activity/ subproject.

• Table A2.2: Prohibited Activities for the Project (Ineligible Activities)
• Activities that involve land acquisition or resettlement.
• Activities of any type potentially classified "High" risk in terms of environmental impact as per World Bank's Environment and Social Standard 1 (ESS1)
• Activities that are considered by the World Bank (a) to have potential to cause significant loss or degradation of critical natural habitats whether directly or indirectly or those that could

adversely affect forest and forest health; (b) that could affect sites with archaeological, paleontological, historical, religious, or unique natural values; and (c) that will result in adverse impacts on involuntary taking of land, relocation of households, loss of assets or access to assets that leads to loss of income sources or other means of livelihoods, and interference with households' use of land and livelihoods.

- Use of goods and equipment as considered by the World Bank on meet the following conditions: (a) lands abandoned due to social tension/conflict, or the ownership of the land is disputed or cannot be ascertained; (b) to demolish or remove assets, unless the ownership of the assets can be ascertained, and the owners are consulted; (c) involving forced labour, child labour, or other harmful or exploitative forms of labour; (d) activities that would affect indigenous peoples, unless due consultation and broad support has been documented and confirmed prior to the commencement of the activities; and/or (e) other paramilitary purposes.

## **ANNEX 3 – LABOR MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES**

(Final version to be copied here)

## ANNEX 4 – ESCOP AND DO’S & DON’TS

1. This Annex presents a generic Environment and Social Code of Practices (ESCOP) comprising an Environment Code of Practice (ECOP) (Part A3.1) and the Social Code of Conduct (SCOC) (Part A3.2). The ESCOP will be included in civil works contract for small and medium size construction and/or rehabilitation of works related to offices and related facilities to be implemented under the Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project II (RRPM II). The ECOP describes a general and key specific requirement for environmental management and monitoring for physical construction and renovation civil works while scope of SCOC describing obligations of contractor and workers to prevent social impacts during work contract.
2. Both the ECOP and SCOC will be included in the bidding and contract documents (BD/CD) before procurement for contractors and/or before works contract can be signed as agreed with World Bank (WB). The implementation cost for ECOP and SCOC will be part of the works contract cost. The Project Management Unit (PMU) will assign an ESF focal point at the provincial level to supervise and monitor contractor’s compliance with the ECOP and SCOC on a day-to-day basis and results will be included in the progress report. The PMU, the Provincial/District Offices of Agriculture and Forestry (PAFO/DAFO), the related local authorities such as, Provincial/District Department/ Division of Natural Resources and Environment (PONRE/DONRE), and/or local communities may also conduct periodic monitoring of contractor performance, as needed. Department of Rural Development and Cooperation (DRD) of the MAF, the subproject/activity owner, will ensure that the contractors are compliance with the BD/CD during construction, rehabilitation and/or renovation of civil works.
3. This generic ECOP and SCOC can be modified to suit specific issues/conditions observed/agreed during the preparation of the detailed works design and bidding and contract document.
4. The ECOP and SCOC aims to mitigate the possible negative impacts induced by project financed activities. Provision in the ECOP is to address relevant negative impact induced from construction/renovation works such as air pollution, noise, vibration, waste, safety risks, local traffic, etc. which could be mitigated through good housekeeping and construction practices while the SCOC aims to ensure that the contractor pay full attention to the behavior of its staff and workers related to environment, social, health, and safety (ESHS), especially, the occupational health and safety (OHS) as well as other social issues such as gender-based violence (GBV), violence against children (VAC) and other social aspects. The SCOC should also be available for MAF, PAFO staff and subcontractors working in the project. If needed, results from consultation with local authorities and/or local communities should be incorporated into these documents. Key actions during the application of ECOP and SCOC are highlighted below.
5. Incorporate specific actions and/or results from consultation with local authorities and community into the final ECOP and SCOC. After an approval, the PMU of DRD, MAF and WB team ensure that the final ECOP and SCOC actions are incorporated into the bidding and contract documents and ensure that the bidders/contractors are committed to these obligations and are aware that the implementation cost is part of the construction cost.
6. Before works begins, the activity owner will assign a qualified field staff to responsible for day-to-day supervision and monitoring of contractor performance, include the results of field supervision and



complaints from local authorities, communities, and/or other stakeholders into the construction progress report. The activity owner will also assign staff to work with PONRE/DONRE to conduct periodic monitoring of contractor performance of ECOP and SCOC.

### **A3.1 Scope of ECOP**

7. ECOP requirements are divided into three parts: (1) General Provision and Planning, (2) Specific Consideration, and (3) Works Management and Monitoring. Part (1) describes roles and responsibility of the activity owner, contractor, and supervisor including the basic principles and/or requirements of the WB groups for Contractor to consider during the planning or development of a contractor's standard operation procedures (C-SOP). Part (2) describes some specific requirements to address concerns of local authorities and communities, issues observed during supervision and/or site-specific issues. Part (3) describes standard requirements during execution works to reduce potential impacts on air, noise, vibration, water, etc. including key monitoring indicators that could facilitate effective supervision and monitoring including a simple application for small physical renovation civil works (such as renovation of office and other facility).

8. The following guidelines will be implemented by Contractor as part of the works contract.

#### **Part (1): General Provision and Planning**

##### **Section (1.1) Contractor responsibility**

9. The Contractor is responsible for making best effort to reduce and mitigate the potential negative impacts on local environment and local resident including making payment for all damages that may occur. Contractor performance will be closely supervised and monitored by a qualified field engineer as well as periodic monitored by a qualified related organisation, or local communities to be assigned by the Project Coordination Office of PAFO. Compliance with ECOP is required throughout the work period.

10. For clarity, the term "works" and/or "construction" in this document includes all site preparation, demolition, spoil disposal, materials and waste removal and all related engineering and construction activities.

##### **Section (1.2) Non-compliance reporting procedures**

11. The Contractor (and its subcontractors if any) must comply with the final ECOP. To ensure that necessary action has been undertaken and that steps to avoid adverse impacts and/or reoccurrence have been implemented, the Contractors must advise the PMU within 24 hours of any serious incidents of non-compliance with the ECOP that may have serious consequence. In the event of working practices being deemed dangerous either by the activity's owner, the local authorities, or the other concerned agencies, immediate remedial action must be taken by the Contractor. The Contractor must keep records of any incidents and any ameliorative action taken. The records on non-compliance that could be practically addressed (not cause serious impacts) will be reported to the PMU monthly.

12. The Contractor will be responsible for dealing with any reports/grievance forwarded by the activity owner, Police, or other agencies (by following instruction from the PMU's representative as appropriate) as soon as practicable, preferably within one hour but always within 24 hours of receipt by

the Contractor. The PMU/ESF consultant will monitor and ensure that the Contractor has taken appropriate action. Where appropriate, approval remedial actions may require an agreement from the local authorities and/or other Government agencies. Procedures should be put in place to ensure, as far as is practical, that necessary actions can be undertaken to avoid recurrence and/or serious damage.

### Section (1.3) Liaising with local authorities and the public

13. Prior to the commencement of project investment activities and throughout the construction duration, the Contractor will work closely with the local authorities and other agencies to ensure full compliance with Government regulations including those related to life and fire safety (L&FS) risk assessment and management and will also provide adequate information on the Project to the general public, especially those that may cause public safety, nuisance, and sensitive areas and the locations of storage and special handling areas. The Contractor will provide information and reporting telephone “Hot Line” always staffed during working hours.

### Section (1.4) Community relations

14. The Contractor will assign one community-relation personnel, who will be focused on engaging with the community to provide appropriate information and to be the first line of response to resolve issues of concern. Contractor will take reasonable steps to engage with residents of ethnic minority backgrounds and residents with disabilities (or other priority groups as appropriate), who may be differentially affected by construction impacts.

15. The Contractor will ensure that residents nearby the construction sites will be informed in advance of works taking place, including the estimated duration. In the case of work required in response to an emergency, residents shall be advised as soon as reasonably practicable that emergency work is taking place. Potentially affected residents will also be notified of the ‘Hotline’ number, which will operate during working hours. The “Hotline” will be maintained to handle enquiries regarding construction activities from the public as well as to act as a first point of contact and information in the case of any emergency. All calls will be logged, together with the responses given and the callers' concerns action and a response provided promptly. The Hotline will be widely advertised and displayed on site signboards.

16. The Contractor responds quickly to emergencies, complaints or other contacts made via the ‘Hotline’ or any other recognized means and liaise closely with the emergency services, local authority officers and other agencies (based on established contacts) who may be involved in incidents or emergency situations.

17. The Contractor will manage the work sites, work camps, and workers in a way that is acceptable to local residents and will not create any social impacts due to workers. Any construction workers, office staff, Contractor’s employees, or any other person related to the Project found violating the “prohibitions” activities listed in Section (1.7) below may be subject to disciplinary actions that can range from a simple reprimand to termination of his/her employment depending on the seriousness of the violation.

### Section (1.5) Implementation of the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) guideline

18. In line with WB safeguard policy, the Contractor is required to comply with the Environment, Social, Health, and Safety (ESHS) established for the project investment with financial support from the

WB group (WBG). The ESHS provides general guidance on the pollution prevention and abatement measures and workplace and community health and safety guidelines that are normally acceptable in Bank-supported projects, particularly in cases where the borrowing country does not have standards, or when its standards fall significantly short of international or industry-wide norms. The ESHS are divided in two parts: general guidelines on health and safety and pollution prevention and abatement, including general standards for air and water quality, and a set of sector-specific guidelines for various types of development projects. At a minimum the following ESHS rules will be strictly followed by the contractors implementing office upgrading:

***Site ESHS Rules:***

- ESHS orientation sessions before starting work.
- Wearing of personal protective equipment (gloves, helmets, safety shoes, dungarees, goggles etc).
- Follow the messages and instructions displayed on EHS notice boards installed on site.
- Promptly reporting all accidents to the concerned authority.
- Maintain appropriate barricades as required.
- Vehicles must be driven at a safe speed, observing speed limits of 30 Km/h and designated routes as mentioned in Contractor's Mobility Map.
- Drivers must have a valid driving license for the class of vehicle they are operating.
- Vehicles shall only be parked in designated parking areas; and
- Mine clearance of the project investment area.

***Health and Hygiene:*** The measures should include:

- Provision of adequate medical facilities to the staff.
- Provision of hygienic food to the employees.
- Provision of cooling and heating facilities to the staff.
- Provision of drainage, sewerage and septic tanks in camp area.
- Provision of handwashing or hand sanitizing facilities.
- Compliance with COVID-19 measures in-country.

***Security:*** Security measures should include:

- Regular attendance and a controlled time keeping of all employees.
- Restriction of un-authorized persons to the residential and work areas.
- Restriction of carrying weapons and control hunting by employees; and
- Provision of boundary walls/ fences with proper exits to the camp.

### Section (1.6) Implementation of Chance Find” Procedures

20. If the Contractor discovers archeological sites, historical sites, remains and objects, including graveyards and/or individual graves during excavation or construction, the Contractor will carry out the following steps:

- Stop the construction activities in the area of the chance find.
- Delineate the discovered site or area.
- Secure the site to prevent any damage or loss of removable objects. In cases of removable antiquities or sensitive remains, a night guard shall be arranged until the responsible local authorities, or the National Culture Administration take over.
- Notify the project engineer, supervisor, and/or the project owner (PCO/DPC and/or PHO) who in turn will notify the responsible local authorities and the provincial Culture Department immediately (within 24 hours or less).
- Responsible local authorities and the provincial Culture Department would oversee protecting and preserving the site before deciding on subsequent appropriate procedures. This would require a preliminary evaluation of the findings to be performed by the archaeologists of National Culture Administration. The significance and importance of the findings should be assessed according to the various criteria relevant to cultural heritage; those include the aesthetic, historic, scientific or research, social and economic values.
- Decisions on how to handle the finding shall be taken by the responsible authorities and the provincial Culture Department. This could include changes in the layout (such as when finding an irremovable remain of cultural or archaeological importance) conservation, preservation, restoration and salvage.
- Implementation for the authority decision concerning the management of the finding shall be communicated in writing by relevant local authorities; and
- Construction work could resume only after permission is given from the responsible local authorities or the provincial Culture Department concerning safeguard of the heritage.

### Section (1.7) Prohibitions

21. The following activities are prohibited on or near the subproject sites:

- Cutting of trees for any reason outside the approved construction area; Hunting, fishing, wildlife capture, or plant collection; Buying of wild animals for food; Having caged wild animals (especially birds) in camps; Poaching of any description; Explosive and chemical fishing; Disturbance to anything with architectural or historical value.
- Building of fires; Use of unapproved toxic materials, including lead-based paints, asbestos, etc.; Use of firearms (except authorized security guards); Use of alcohol by workers in office hours; Driving in an unsafe manner in local roads; and

22. Washing cars or machinery in streams or creeks; Maintenance (change of oils and filters) of cars and equipment outside authorized areas; Creating nuisances and disturbances in or near communities; Disposing garbage in unauthorized places; Indiscriminate disposal of rubbish or construction wastes;

Littering the site; Spillage of potential pollutants, such as petroleum products; Collection of firewood; Urinating or defecating outside the designated facilities; and Burning of wastes and/or cleared vegetation.

## Part (2) Specific Requirements

23. To be responsive to concerns observed and/or expressed by local authorities and communities, the Contractor will be responsible to comply with, but not limited to, the followings:

- The Contractor will install the Work Camp on areas far enough from water points, houses and sensitive areas in consultation with the community and the activity owner. Good quality sanitary equipment should be selected and installed in the Work Camp.
- The Contractor will manage all activities in compliance with GOL laws, rules and other permits related to site construction regulations (what is allowed and not allowed on work sites) and will protect public properties. Degradation and demolition of private properties will be avoided. Paying compensation to damage to the public facilities and/or private property will be required. The Contractor will inform the relevant authorities on issue and/or damages that may unexpectedly occur.
- The Contractor is responsible for protection of local environment against dust, air, noise, vibration, exhaust fuels and oils, and other solid residues generated from the work sites. The Contractor will manage waste properly and do not burn them on site and will also provide proper storage for construction materials, organize parking and displacements of machines in the site. Used oil and construction waste materials must be appropriately disposed-off and adequate waste disposal and sanitation services will be provided at the construction site next to the generated areas. In order to protect soil, surface and ground water the Contractor will avoid any wastewater discharge, oil spillage and discharge of any type of pollutants on soils, in surface or ground waters, in sewers and drainage ditches. Compensation measures may be required.
- The Contractor will be responsible for maintaining good hygiene, safety, and security of the work sites, including protection of and health and safety of staff and workers. The Contractor will prevent standing water in open construction pits, quarries or fill areas to avoid potential contamination of the water table and the development of a habitat for disease-carrying vectors and insects. Safe and sustainable construction materials and construction method should be used.
- The Contractor will comply with COVID-19 measures as determined by authorities.
- The Contractor will use a quarry of materials according to the regulations and compensate by planting of trees in case of deforestation or tree felling. When possible, the Contractor should develop maintenance and reclamation plans, protect soil surfaces during construction and re-vegetate or physically stabilize eligible surfaces, preserve existing fauna and flora and preserve natural habitats along streams, steep slopes, and ecologically sensitive areas.

- During construction, the Contractor will take serious actions to control dust by using water or through other means and the construction site will be cleaned daily.
- The Contractor will work with local authority and management local traffic effectively and ensure traffic access of road safety of residents and road users during the works. Speed limit at work sites and community area will be applied to all vehicles and cars. All vehicles and their drivers must be identified and registered and the drivers are properly trained.
- The Contractor will install signs and signals of works, ensure no blockage of access to households during construction and/or provide alternative access, provide footbridges and access of neighbours and endure construction of proper drainage on the site.
- The Contractor will respect the cultural sites, ensure security and privacy of women and households in close proximity to the camps and safely dispose asbestos.

24. To protect COVID-19 impacts on workforce, the measures of the Government procedures and regulations will be applied as appropriate.

### Part (3) Works Management and Monitoring

25. This section provides an example for typical measures for physical works. However, given that the impacts and mitigation measures are varied according to nature and size of works, two guidance is provided. For the Project rehabilitation works expected to create moderate or substantial risks, the procedure in (3a) will be applied and monitored. However, for very small works such as renovation of small office, the procedures in (3b) can be followed. Contractor's performance during implementation of works will be supervised and monitored by the ESF focal point/activity's owner. The contract final requirements should be consistent with the final detailed design.

#### ***(3a) Management and Monitoring of Project Works***

No.	Activities causing impacts	Mitigation measures	Monitoring indicators
1	Disposal of waste generated from the construction/rehabilitation works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recycle metallic, glass waste; bury organic waste in impervious pit covered with soil.</li> <li>• Ensure that waste material is properly disposed off in a manner that does not affect the natural drainage.</li> </ul>	No presence of waste storage
2	Access route	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that access tracks, which are prone to dust emission and may disturb local resident are managed by daily water spraying. Areas sensitive to noise and vibration are managed through speed limit.</li> <li>• After completion of construction work, all damaged tracks will be restored by the Contractor –as part of Contractor's obligations.</li> <li>• Ensure surface run-off controls are installed and maintained to minimize erosion.</li> </ul>	No complaints from residents regarding dust, noise, vibration, road safety, and the usage of access routes.

No.	Activities causing impacts	Mitigation measures	Monitoring indicators
3	Hiring skilled workers from outside of the locality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local workers are hired</li> </ul>	Number of local workers working on site.
4	Occupational health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide personal protective equipment (gloves, helmets, adequate footwear...) to workers who handle hazardous materials, or equipment that need special PPE (e.g., glasses for welders). Provide medical mask and sanitizers to workers for prevention of COVID-19.</li> </ul>	Number of incidences
5	Water for staff and workers consumption and construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide adequate and safe water for workers' use at sites.</li> </ul>	Source of drinking water used
6	Storage of hazardous material (including infectious and toxic wastes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide hard compacted, impervious and bounded flooring to hazardous material storage areas; Label each container indicating what is stored within; Train staff in safe handling techniques.</li> </ul>	No health hazard and water contamination occurred.
7	Dust emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All truckloads of loose materials are covered during transportation. Water spraying or any other methods are used by the Contractor to maintain the works areas, adjacent areas, and roads, in a dustless condition, as well the vehicle speed not to be exceeded from 30Km/h. Vehicles will be tuned regularly to minimize the smoke emissions.</li> </ul>	Dust and smoke controlled
8	Noise pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vehicles and equipment used to be fitted, as applicable, and with properly maintained silencers. Restriction on loudly playing radio/tape recorders etc.</li> </ul>	Excessive noise generation controlled

### ***(3b) Management of Small Renovation of Offices***

Do	Do not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the toilet facilities provided – report dirty or full facilities</li> <li>Clear your work areas of litter and building rubbish at the end of each day – use the waste bins provided and ensure that litter will not blow away.</li> <li>Report all fuel or oil spills immediately &amp; stop the spilling.</li> <li>Smoke in designated areas only and dispose of cigarettes and matches carefully (littering is prohibited.)</li> <li>Confine work and storage of equipment to within the immediate work area.</li> <li>Use all safety equipment and comply with all safety procedures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove or damage vegetation without direct instruction.</li> <li>Make any fires.</li> <li>Poach, injure, trap, feed or harm any animals – this includes birds, frogs, snakes, etc.</li> <li>Enter any fenced off or marked area.</li> <li>Drive recklessly or above speed limit;</li> <li>Allow waste, litter, oils or foreign materials into the stream;</li> <li>Litter or leave food lying around;</li> <li>Cut trees for any reason outside the approved construction area;</li> <li>Buy any wild animals for food;</li> <li>Use unapproved toxic materials, including lead-based paints, asbestos, etc.;</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevent contamination or pollution of streams and water channels.</li> <li>• Ensure a working fire extinguisher is immediately at hand if any “hot work” is undertaken e.g. welding, grinding, gas cutting etc.</li> <li>• Report any injury of workers or animals.</li> <li>• Drive on designated routes only, observe speed limit, and prohibit drunken driving.</li> <li>• Prevent excessive dust and noise.</li> <li>• Prevent bad behaviors of works especially those related to sexual harassment, violence against children (VAC), and other abuses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disturb anything with architectural or historical value;</li> <li>• Use of firearms (except authorized security guards);</li> <li>• Use of alcohol by workers during work hours;</li> <li>• Wash cars or machinery in streams or creek;</li> <li>• Do any maintenance (change of oils and filters) of cars and equipment outside authorized areas;</li> <li>• Dispose trash in unauthorized places;</li> <li>• Have caged wild animals (especially birds) in camps;</li> <li>• Work without safety equipment (including boots and helmets);</li> <li>• Create nuisances and disturbances in or near communities;</li> <li>• Use rivers and streams for washing clothes;</li> <li>• Dispose indiscriminately rubbish or construction wastes or rubble;</li> <li>• Spill potential pollutants, such as petroleum products;</li> <li>• Collect firewood;</li> <li>• Do explosive and chemical fishing;</li> <li>• Use latrines outside the designated facilities; and</li> <li>• Burn wastes and/or cleared vegetation.</li> </ul>
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## Section A4.2 Scope of SCOC

### 26. **Instructions:**

1. This Social Code of Conduct (SCOC) should be included in bidding documents for the civil works contractor(s) and in their contracts once hired.
2. The issues to be addressed include:
  - Compliance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations.
  - Compliance with applicable health and safety requirements to protect the local community (including vulnerable and disadvantaged groups), the Employer’s personnel, Project Manager’s personnel and the Contractor’s personnel, including sub-contractors and day workers (including wearing prescribed personal protective equipment, preventing avoidable accidents and a duty to report conditions or practices that pose a safety hazard or threaten the environment).
  - The use of illegal substances.
  - Non-Discrimination in dealing with the local community (including vulnerable and disadvantaged groups), the Employer’s personnel, Project Manager’s personnel, and the Contractor’s personnel including sub-contractors and day workers (for example based on family status, ethnicity, race, gender, religion, language, marital status, age, disability (physical and mental), sexual orientation, gender identity, political conviction or social, civic, or health status).



- Interactions with the local communities), members of the local communities, and any affected person(s) (for example to convey an attitude of respect, including to their culture and traditions).
  - Sexual harassment (for example to prohibit use of language or behavior, towards women and/or children, which is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate).
  - Violence, including sexual and/or gender-based violence and violence against children (for example acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and deprivation of liberty).
  - Exploitation including sexual exploitation and abuse (for example the prohibition of the exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading behavior, exploitative behavior or abuse of power).
  - Protection of children (including prohibitions against sexual activity or abuse, or otherwise unacceptable behavior towards children, limiting interactions with children, and ensuring their safety in project areas).
  - Sanitation requirements (for example, to ensure workers use specified sanitary facilities provided by their employer and not open areas)
  - Avoidance of conflicts of interest such as benefits, contracts, or employment, or any sort of preferential treatment or favors are not provided to any person with whom there is a financial, family, or personal connection.
  - Respecting reasonable work instructions (including regarding environmental and social norms).
  - Protection and proper use of property (for example, to prohibit theft, carelessness or waste).
  - Duty to report violations of this SCOC.
  - Non-retaliation against workers who report violations of the SCOC, if that report is made in good faith.
3. SCOC should be written in plain language and signed by each worker to indicate that they have:
- received a copy of the SCOC.
  - had the SCOC explained to them.
  - acknowledged that adherence to this SCOC is a condition of employment; and
  - understood that violations of the SCOC can result in serious consequences, up to and including dismissal, or referral to legal authorities.
4. A copy of the SCOC shall be displayed in a location easily accessible to the community and project affected people. It shall be provided in languages comprehensible to the local community,

Contractor's personnel (including sub-contractors and day workers), the Employer's personnel, and Project Manager's Personnel.

### **Worker's Code of Conduct**

5. The contractor is committed to ensuring that the project is implemented in such a way which minimizes any negative impacts on the local environment, communities, and its workers. This will be done by respecting the environmental, social, health and safety (ESHS) standards, and ensuring appropriate occupational health and safety (OHS) standards are met. The contractor is also committed to creating and maintaining an environment where children under the age of eighteen will be protected, and where sexual abuse and sexual harassment have no place. Improper actions towards children, Violence Against Children (VAC), sexual abuse/harassment, and/or acts of Gender Based Violence (GBV) will not be tolerated by any employee, contractors, supplier, or representative of the company.
6. Staff at all levels have a responsibility to uphold the contractor's commitment. Contractors need to support and promote the implementation of the SCOC. To that end, staff must adhere to this SCOC and to sign the Individual Code of Conduct (ICOC).

### **Implementation**

7. As follows:
  - a. To ensure maximum effectiveness of the SCOC:
    - (i) Prominently displaying the SCOC in clear view at workers' camps, offices, and in public areas of the workspace. Examples of areas include waiting, rest and lobby areas of sites, canteen areas and health clinics.
    - (ii) Ensuring all posted and distributed copies of the SCOC are translated into the appropriate language of use in the work site areas as well as for any international staff in their native language.
  - b. Verbally and in writing explain the SCOC to all staff, including in an initial training session.
  - c. Ensure that:
    - (i) All staff sign the 'Individual Code of Conduct', including acknowledgment that they have read and agree with the SCOC.
    - (ii) Staff listed and signed copies of the Individual Code of Conduct are provided to the OHS Manager and the MAF Focal Point.
    - (iii) Participate in training and ensure that staff also participate as outlined below.
    - (iv) Put in place a mechanism for staff to:
      - report concerns on ESHS or OHS compliance; and,
      - confidentially report GBV incidents through the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM)
    - (v) Staff are encouraged to report suspected or actual ESHS, OHS, GBV, VAC issues, emphasizing the staff's responsibility in compliance with applicable laws and to the best of your abilities, prevent perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse from being hired, re-hired, or deployed. Use background and criminal reference checks for all employees or ordinarily resident in the country where the works are taking place.

- d. Ensure that when engaging in partnership, sub-contractor, supplier or similar agreements, these agreements:
  - (i) Incorporate the ESHS, OHS, GBV, VAC Codes of Conduct as an attachment.
  - (ii) Include the appropriate language requiring such contracting entities and individuals, and their employees and volunteers, to comply with the Individual Codes of Conduct.
  - (iii) Expressly state that the failure of those entities or individuals, as appropriate, to ensure compliance with the ESHS and OHS standards, take preventive measures against GBV and VAC, to investigate allegations thereof, or to take corrective actions when GBV or VAC has occurred, shall not only constitute grounds for sanctions and penalties in accordance with the Individual Codes of Conduct but also termination of agreements to work on or supply the project.
- e. Provide support and resources to create and disseminate staff training and awareness-raising strategy on GBV, VAC and other issues highlighted in the ESMF.
- f. Ensure that any GBV or VAC complaint warranting Police action is reported to the Police, PMU/PAFO/MAF and the World Bank immediately.
- g. Report and act in accordance with the agreed response protocol any suspected or actual acts of GBV or VAC.
- h. Ensure that any major ESHS or OHS incidents are reported to PMU/MAF, and the supervision engineer immediately, non-major issues in accordance with the agreed reporting protocol.
- i. Ensure that children under the age of 18 are not present at the construction site, engaged in any hazardous activities or otherwise employed.

### **Training**

- j. The managers are responsible to:
  - (i) Ensure that staff have a suitable understanding of the ESMF, in particular OHS aspects and COVID-19 prevention, as well as GBV and VAC and are trained as appropriate.

### **Response**

- k. Managers will be required to take appropriate actions to address any ESHS or OHS incidents.
- l. Regarding GBV:
  - (i) Maintain the confidentiality of all employees who report or (allegedly) perpetrate incidents of GBV (unless a breach of confidentiality is required to protect persons or property from serious harm or where required by law).
  - (ii) If a manager develops concerns or suspicions regarding any form of GBV by one of his/her direct reports, or by an employee working for another contractor on the same work site, s/he is required to report the case using the GRM.
  - (iii) Once a sanction has been determined by the GRM, the relevant manager(s) is/are expected to be personally responsible for ensuring that the measure is effectively enforced, within a maximum timeframe of 14 days from the date on which the decision to sanction was made by the GRM.

- (iv) If a manager has a conflict of interest due to personal or familial relationships with the survivor and/or perpetrator, he/she must notify the Company and the GRM. The Company will be required to appoint another manager without a conflict of interest to respond to complaints.
  - (v) Ensure that any GBV issue warranting Police action is reported to the Police, PMU/MAF and the World Bank immediately.
- m. Managers failing to address ESHS or OHS incidents or failing to report or comply with the GBV provisions may be subject to disciplinary measures, to be determined and enacted by the Company. Those measures may include:
  - (i) Informal warning;
  - (ii) Formal warning;
  - (iii) Additional Training;
  - (iv) Loss of up to one week's salary;
  - (v) Suspension of employment (without payment of salary), for a minimum period of 1 month up to a maximum of 6 months;
  - (vi) Termination of employment.
- n. Ultimately, failure to effectively respond to ESHS, OHS, VAC and GBV cases on the work site by the company's managers may provide grounds for legal actions by authorities.

*I do hereby acknowledge that I have read the Code of Conduct, do agree to comply with the standards contained therein and understand my roles and responsibilities in preventing and respond to ESHS, OHS, VAC and GBV requirements. I understand that any action inconsistent with this Code of Conduct or failure to act mandated by this Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Individual Code of Conduct (ICOC)**

#### **8. As follows:**

**Instructions:** This Individual Code of Conduct should be included in bidding documents for the civil works contractor(s) and in their contracts once hired.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that adhering to environmental, social, health and safety (ESHS) standards, following the project's occupational health and safety (OHS) requirements, and preventing Violence Against Children (VAC) and Gender Based Violence (GBV) is important.

The Contractor considers that failure to follow ESHS and OHS standards, or to partake in activities constituting VAC or GBV—be it on the work site, the work site surroundings, at workers' camps, or the surrounding communities—constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for sanctions, penalties, or potential termination of employment. Prosecution by the Police of those who commit GBV or VAC may be pursued if appropriate.

I agree that while working on the project I will:

- a. Consent to a background check in any place I have worked for more than six months.
- b. Attend and actively partake in training courses related to ESHS, OHS, COVID-19 prevention, VAC and GBV as requested by my employer.
- c. Will wear my personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times when at the work site or engaged in project related activities, in particular if related to exposure to COVID-19.
- d. Will follow all prevention measures relating to COVID-19, including (i) washing hands with water and soap before and after eating, when entering my work area, after sneezing/coughing, etc.; (ii) sneeze or cough on elbow and/or wash hands after sneezing/coughing; (iii) if feeling unwell or have symptoms of a cold, flu or any respiratory illness, inform manager immediately, stay at home and do not come to work.
- e. Take all practical steps to implement the environmental and social management framework (ESMF).
- f. Implement OHS measures.
- g. Adhere to a zero-alcohol policy during work activities, and refrain from the use of narcotics or other substances which can impair faculties at all times.
- h. Treat women, children (persons under the age of 18), and men with respect regardless of race, color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic, or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
- i. Not use language or behavior towards women, children or men that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- j. Not sexually exploit or abuse project beneficiaries and members of the surrounding communities.
- k. Not engage in sexual harassment of work personnel and staff—for instance, making unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature is prohibited: i.e. looking somebody up and down; kissing, howling or smacking sounds; hanging around somebody; whistling and catcalls; in some instances, giving personal gifts.
- l. Not engage in sexual favors—for instance, making promises of favorable treatment (i.e. promotion), threats of unfavorable treatment (i.e. loss of job) or payments in kind or in cash, dependent on sexual acts—or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior.

- m. Not use prostitution in any form at any time.
- n. Not participate in sexual contact or activity with children under the age of 18—including grooming or contact through digital media. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defense. Consent from the child is also not a defense or excuse.
- o. Unless there is the full consent<sup>49</sup> by all parties involved, I will not have sexual interactions with members of the surrounding communities. This includes relationships involving the withholding or promise of actual provision of benefit (monetary or non-monetary) to community members in exchange for sex (including prostitution). Such sexual activity is considered “non-consensual” within the scope of this Code.
- p. Consider reporting through the GRM or to my manager any suspected or actual GBV by a fellow worker, whether employed by my company or not, or any breaches of this Code of Conduct.

With respect to children under the age of 18:

- q. Bring to the attention of my manager the presence of any children on the construction site or engaged in hazardous activities.
- r. Wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in proximity of children.
- s. Not invite unaccompanied children unrelated to my family into my home unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.
- t. Not use any computers, mobile phones, video, and digital cameras or any other medium to exploit or harass children or to access child pornography.
- u. Refrain from physical punishment or discipline of children.
- v. No hiring of children for any project activity (no persons under the age of 18).

### Sanctions

I understand that if I breach this Individual Code of Conduct, my employer will take disciplinary action which could include:

- w. Informal warning;
- x. Formal warning;
- y. Additional Training;
- z. Loss of up to one week’s salary;
- aa. Suspension of employment (without payment of salary), for a minimum period of 1 month up to a maximum of 6 months;
- bb. Termination of employment;
- cc. Report to the Police if warranted.

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<sup>49</sup> **Consent** is defined as the informed choice underlying an individual’s free and voluntary intention, acceptance or agreement to do something. No consent can be found when such acceptance or agreement is obtained using threats, force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, or misrepresentation. In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Bank considers that consent cannot be given by children under the age of 18, even if national legislation of the country into which the Code of Conduct is introduced has a lower age. Mistaken belief regarding the age of the child and consent from the child is not a defense.

*I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the environmental, social, health and safety standards are met. That I will adhere to the occupational health and safety management plan. That I will avoid actions or behaviors that could be construed as VAC or GBV. Any such actions will be a breach of this Individual Code of Conduct. I do hereby acknowledge that I have read the foregoing Individual Code of Conduct, do agree to comply with the standards contained therein and understand my roles and responsibilities to prevent and respond to ESHS, OHS, VAC and GBV issues. I understand that any action inconsistent with this Individual Code of Conduct or failure to act mandated by this Individual Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action and may affect my ongoing employment.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **ANNEX 5 – SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION (PROJECT PREPARATION)**

This annex comprises 2 sections. Part A summarizes results from consultation at community level and national level conducted in November 2022. Part B summarizes results from public consultation of ESF documents conducted on 11 May 2023.

### **Part A.**

#### **A1. Consultation at community level**

From 27th November to 7th December 2022, the ESF consultants conducted the consultation and focus group discussions in Hoaphanh, Xiengkhouang, and Oudomxay provinces to draw lessons from RRPM. Consultation was made with project beneficiaries, Village Facilitators, Community Mobilizer and project staff at provincial and district levels. The consultation collected feedback from project stakeholder on RRPM outcomes with an aim to draw lessons learned and make recommendations for the new RRPM II. The results from the consultation are summarized below.

The consultation were conducted with project beneficiaries of ethnic groups such as Hmong, Akha, Khmu, Phong, and Lao lum. During meetings, project beneficiaries expressed their positive view and strong support for project activities. Beneficiaries interviewed believe the project plays an important role in assisting pregnant woman and mother with children under two in improving nutrition of children under two, pregnant woman, children in community. Nevertheless, project beneficiaries found the frequent delayed payment of CCT remain a challenge for them to practice and maintain good nutritional practice that are recommended under the project. Stakeholders in different provinces have different views, as follows:

##### **For the Hmong ethnic (Houykhiling village, Xiengkhuang province)**

- CCT payment should be made on time or should not exceed four months;
- The project should train VF on cooking demonstration and home gardening so that they could retrain project beneficiaries;
- A nutrition fund should be set for each village to facilitate practicing and maintenance of new nutritional practices, and make project activities sustainable;
- Nutritional knowledge should be shared also with those who are CCT beneficiaries such as families who have children over two years old since nutrition knowledge are useful to mothers of children above two years of age also.

##### **For Akha ethnic (Lao vang village, Oudomxay province)**

- Pregnant woman wish to have a health center located near the village because the existing health center is far away from their residence and road condition is very difficult. Thus, when their husband are away from home, it is difficult for pregnant women to go to the health center because women on their own. They have to seek assistance from other community member in case of urgent need.
- Project beneficiaries should be trained on how to use CCT money, buy food, and cook health meals for their children



- Children above 2 to 5 should also be supported.

**For Khmu ethnic (Houayla village, Oudomxay province)**

- It would be good if CCT could be increased from LAK200,000 to LAK300,000 given high inflation;
- It would be good if project could provide dry food and clothing to people affected by recent flash flood.

**For Phong ethnic (Lanxieng village, Huaphanh province)**

- It would be good if the project could help improve road condition of the village to facilitate travel from their home to the health center which is 28km away;
- Village health center don't have equipment such as oxygen tank, and other medical equipment, etc;
- More loudspeakers are needed to support SBCC works;
- Project should be continued for several years to continue providing support to project beneficiaries.

**For Lao lum (Viengkham village, Oudomxay province)**

- Children above 2 to 5 should be supported by the project
- CCT should be increased from LAK200,000 to LAK300,000;
- Verification of beneficiary information should be clearer and accurate during PMT process.
- More beneficiaries should be selected

**For Village Facilitators (VF)**

Consultation with Village Facilitators were conducted in Khouykhiling village, Nonghaed district, Xiengkhouang province on 29th November 2022. During the consultation. Below are key feedback from VF:

- The payment process is delayed and take a long time;
- If information is incorrect or incomplete, it takes time for the district update the information before updated data can be submitted to province for verification;
- When the VF and CM receive certificate from the village, they will coordinate with the district to re-check and submit it to the province to update the information. But, If the information is correct, it needs a reasonable explanation to the person who made the complaint;
- Some people who do not come to receive the CCT payment have to come to receive money in the next installment. Some of them need to be made aware of this
- SBCC tool is helpful because people can understand the Lao language. Videos are also available in ethnic languages;
- Awareness campaigns currently conducted monthly is considered appropriate;
- The elderlies in the village and the village head support nutrition practice.

**# Could you name three key challenges that you often face when you convince/ encourage families to invest in their children's health and nutrition? How do you overcome these challenges?**

Some people who go to the farm cannot gather for the meeting, or the notice may be too short. Therefore, there is a notification in advance for the people in the village to be aware, and it is announced through the village loudspeakers.

**# Do you think there are any constraints/inconsistence between the communication messages developed under the Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project and those developed under other Convergence Projects (Poverty Reduction Fund III, Water Supply, Sanitation, Hygiene, Early Childhood Education, Health & Nutrition Services Access).**

There are still plans that do not agree with many projects by the planning office (Agriculture for Nutrition (AFN), RRPM, PRF, HANSA, etc.) which may sometimes make people confused or unable to participate in activities (too many activities) because the activities are conducted in different days.

**# How do you find the other convergence projects compliment the Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project**

Technical assistance, advertising information on nutrition (food flag), health, women, education, agriculture, and public works (water and sanitation) and AFN

**# Do you need any capacity building support from the project?**

Accounts-Finance Management, PRF

**# From your years' experience as VF, please share your feedback/suggestion to the RRPM and RRPM II**

The project should consider supporting children up to 3 years old.

Please increase the allowance for VFs because there is a lot of work compared to the incentive received. Currently, we receive LAK90,000/4 people/month (Telephone card: 20,000/month), LAK90,000 for meeting on nutrition (1-2 times a month, the money to purchase water, snacks, pen, books....), which is relatively low, and insufficient compared to actual expense (Huaykhiling village, Xienkhuang province)

If a young mother is pregnant with a second child, would she want both children to receive the CCT because both children need nutrition?

Is it possible to increase the CCT from 200,000 to 300,000 because people face inflation harm?

Request the project to establish a nutrition fund in the community, which will help sustain the project's activities even after the end of the project.

**The consultation with District and Provincial relevant stakeholders**, was conducted virtually with District Health , Education and Planning and Cooperation offices and Lao Women's Union in Hoamuang district , Huaphanh province, this consultation is aimed to understand the role of district partners, their challenges supporting the project activities and the capacity building required based on their experienced as well as to collect the information about the RRPM impact and seek for their recommendation for RRPM II which is briefly summarized as below:

- The payment of CCT to the beneficiaries should be improved faster.
- Disseminate the role of the project to other district sectors to understand the project and involve relevant district sectors to support the project activities, such as Lao women union, Education and Sports offices.

- The other relevant district office identified should participate in project activities implementation since the beginning of the project. This is to ensure that the project is running efficiently and effectively.
- Request the project to consider allocating the budget to government officials who work for the project
- Build strength for government officials in terms of administration and project management;
- Consider increasing the age of children from 2 years to 5 years to receive the CCT;
- If the target beneficiaries of the project have not yet reached 42,000 people, is it possible to increase the number of pregnant women who have a two-years-old baby to have the right to receive the same CCT?

## **A2. Consultation at national level**

The consultation at the national level was mainly organized through face-to-face approach, which was participated by the representatives from MAF, MOH, MPI and WB at national level, 17 people participated. Nevertheless, the virtual option was also available for local GOL stakeholders which was joined by Project Coordination Office of PAFO from Xiengkhuang, Hoaphanh, Oudomxay and Phongsaly provinces which there were 8 people joined. The meeting was held for a haft day to present about the finding of FGD consultations with the project beneficiaries and stakeholders at provincial level, following by feedback and recommendation of participants to improve the implementation of the project. The detail of the result of the consultation can be described as below:

- **Location:** Meeting room of Department of Rural Development, MAF.
- **Date:** 09 Dec 2022.
- **Taken note by:** Mr. Outhikone, Communication, and Inclusion Specialist, PMU/MAF
- **Purpose:**
  - WB present the key findings of Focus Group Discussion.
  - Stakeholder Engagement Discussion.
- **Participant:**
  - National level: 17 participants.
  - Provincial level: 4 participants.
- **Methodology:**
  - Step1: Meeting was organized two options; one is face-to-face meeting from the national stakeholders and second is online attending from provincial partners and PMU Invited local stakeholders from central and provinces.
  - Step2: Participant's registration.
  - Step3: Chairman (Mr. Inson) had opened speech to welcome all participants and informed the purposes of the meeting.
  - Step4: Mr. Phommachak (E&S consultant, World Bank), together with Mr. Thuan presented the key findings of FGDs from four Provinces.
  - Step5: All participants contributed comments and feedbacks after finished the presentation from the World Bank consultant.
  - Step6: Take note and recap
  - Step7: Chairman closed the meeting.

- **Output of meeting:**

- 17 Participants had joined the meeting from the national level at face-to-face meeting;
- N/A Participants had joined the meeting from the provincial level through online call;
- The keys findings of FGDs were shared to the different stakeholders, please see the [PPT](#) of WB consultant;
- All participants contributed some comments as below:
  1. Other community members who do not get the CCT try to block other community members not to join the project activity;
  2. District partners from other projects still lack understanding RRPM project;
  3. Long distancing from community to the health care center;
  4. No market in some communities;
  5. CCT payment is delayed;
  6. Village facilitators lack of motivation and turn over, due to lack of motivation scheme;
  7. Organize too many activities in one village in each month from different project, cause time consumption from the community;
  8. Having target beneficiaries' issue between RRPM project and HANSA project, due to both having different beneficiary's selection criteria;
  9. PMT method is new and not consistence yet;
  10. HANSA project has difficulty to gathering participants in the community due to community always compare with the CCT;
  11. NPC, MPI developed the M&E system such as village score card, spot check;

- **Recommendation from the FGDs:**

- Demonstrate the cash payment to the target beneficiaries;
- Training the nutrition topic to other women who do not belong to the target beneficially group;
- Create the microfinance or village bank or village fund for the nutrition;
- Increase the CCT from 180,000 LAK up to 300,000 LAK;
- Continue supporting children until 05 years old;
- Want to have a health care center located near the villages;
- Major visited communities lacked latrines, particularly the sample sites of the focus group discussion;
- Support the village loudspeaker to the community to receive enough information;
- Make clear process and condition or criteria of beneficially group Assessment and verification;
- To support the villages impacted by the disaster;
- Support quickly or solve the problem from the Grievance Redress Mechanism, Especially the group that stop supporting CCT from the project;
- SBCC convergence should link together;
- SBCC should involve all community members not only the target beneficially;
- Coordinate with households should be clear and effective;
- If mother of children under 2 years old but got new pregnant, project should cover both;
- Should have Lao women union joined the CM and VF;

## **Part B. Public Consultation on ESF documents**

The national workshops for consultation on draft ESF documents was organized in Vientiane Capital on 11 May 2023.

➤ **Objectives of the meeting:**

- To present about the ESF instruments that will be applied for RRPM II with stakeholders at national and local level.
- To discuss and seek for recommendation on proposed ESF instruments for RRPM II project from national/local stakeholders.

➤ **Participants (40 people, of which 29 people attended online from project provinces)**

Representative of National and Sub-national Project Stakeholders include:

- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
- Ministry of Health
- National Nutrition Center
- Ministry of Public Works and Transportation
- Ministry of Education and Sport
- Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare
- Representative from Provincial District Government (PAFO, DAFO, Women's Union, Dept of Labor & Social Affairs, Youth's Union)
- WB ESF team

➤ **Results of the meeting:**

After the national environmental and social consultant from the World Bank made a presentation about the purpose and application of ESF instruments which include 3 main documents (ESCP, ESMP and SEP) to be applied for the Reducing of Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project in phase II (RRPM II). The participants have the following comments:

**Mr. Insone, the Head of project coordination office, DRD, MAF**

- The estimated budget for ESF implementation in amount of 161,000 indicated in the ESMF, is this budget be able to adjusted? And it is separated from project activities budget?

**Response from ESF consultant:**

- With regards to the ESF implementation budget is be able to adjust according to the appropriateness of the project implementation and nature of each activities, the budget will cover the costs of (a) consultation with local authorities and communities; (b) training workshops on E&S issues; (c) monitoring and evaluation, including supervision of implementation of ESCOP; and (d) cost for hiring of qualified national consultant to assist PMU in coordination and training for Project staff and relevant staff at provincial, district and village levels. And it will be allocated separately from the project activities budget, this is to ensure effective implementation of the proposed mitigation measures. This budget will be provided under Project Component 3 and managed by PMU.

**Mr. Houmphet, Focal point of the project from Phongsaly province**

- ESF work is considered a very important work, the truth is that this work should include in the project from the beginning so that the project staff can understand the appropriate environmental management.
- Many of the target villages in the project still face challenges in terms of sanitation and waste management, resulting in children getting sick. Therefore, in the RRPM II should consider to improve this issue as well;
- Companies that make CCT payments to target villages, especially in remote areas, are at risk of being robbed by thief. Should there be a group of police/security guard to go with them while doing CCT payment to protect the safety of such employees?

**Response from Mr. Insone, the Head of project coordination office, DRD, MAF**

- Regarding to the payment of CCT, the project uses the service of Unitel company to handle this task. And in the contract is clearly define that they have fully responsible to deliver CCT money to the villagers in target villages with their sole accountability.

**Mr. Phahom, project focal point from Namor district, Oudomxay province**

- Although the data about those who received and did not receive CCT subsidy was confirmed by the head of villages, but some people who did not receive the money did not understand and demanded to receive money.
- In the RRPM II project should also include the topic of waste management and provide the training on this issue to the project officers and villagers.

**Response DRD and ESF consultant**

- The project must follow the GRM procedures to resolve grievances and must explain to those who do not understand about the project policy and the right of receiving CCT subsidies in the project

**National Nutrition Center**

- For the new provinces that have been selected to implement the RRPM II activities. how were these provinces evaluated or selected? And Have nutritional deficiencies been assessed as a baseline?
- The activities related to nutrition of HANSA project, MOH may be affected because they do not receive funds like RRPM project, how can we take this into account?

**Response from DRD**

- The selection of the new target provinces of the project was taken the data from the document No. 348 as the main reference and following to the poor household selection guideline, and then the information about the malnutrition in the target areas where mothers and children under the age of 2 years was identified. In addition, The RRMP has used and evaluated information from Indo-China on the level of malnutrition in order to measure the results of the project. Before the project, the level of malnutrition was 35.9% and now it is dropped to 31.86%. added by Mr. Soulided, M&E
- Both the HANSA and RRMP project will improve the communication to their own target villagers to be clearer and not to cause any confusion. On the other hand, the skills of project officers on the communication is also need to be improved.

**Mr. Sengphet, Poverty Reduction Fund, MAF**

- Can HANSA, WASH, RRMP and CLEAR projects have the same GRM mechanism?

**Response from ESF consultant:**

- At the village level, the GRM committees can be the same person who works on various projects, but the mechanism of resolving grievance (GRM) for each project may be different. And these mediators will be trained and follow the mediation process of each projects. However, after the actual implementation of the project during phase II, GRM can be improved according to the actual suitability.

**Mr. Kouveu, Focal point from Oudomxay**

- Request the project to improve the CCT payment in line with the actual situation because it will cause the beneficiaries of the project missing the nutritional practice;
- Propose the project to have training on litter and waste management for the villagers and project staff.
- Can the convergence work be done simultaneously with various projects?

**Response from DRD and ESF consultant:**

- In the second phase of the RRPM project, there will be a review and further discussion on how to improve the payment schedule that is still delayed in order to meet the payment installments which should not exceed 2 months.
- In RRPM II, the waste management and sanitation will be disseminated to the project staff and people in the target villages as well.
- The convergence activities, sometimes it can be done together, but sometimes not, because the budget of each project is not released at the same time, which makes the plan of activities is not consistent, however, the project used to discuss with other projects that at least the overall plan of each project should be made together. Mr. Phim Daothakoun said that in some villages the activities of the Convergence project can be carried out simultaneously.

**Conclusion:**

After commenting, question-answer and recommendation on ESF instruments for the RRPM project in phase 2 from the participants. Mr. Insone, the Head of project coordination office, DRD, MAF provided a summary and suggested the consultant take the various comments that the participants have shared to consolidate into the revised ESMF for the project expansion in 2nd phase. As well as being able to formulate mitigation measures and Improvement of various issues for the project in phase 2 to be most effective. In addition, the highlights obtained from this meeting will be taken into consideration in the design of the project's activities to be ready before project appraisal and negotiation for the extension of the RRPM project in phase 2. The meeting was held for a half day and finished at 12:00 on the same day.

## ANNEX 6 – COVID-19 PREVENTION GUIDELINE

This annex offers guidance to MAF and cooperating partners to avoid/ minimize risks due to COVID–19 (e.g. in context of consultations, events, meetings, engagement with communities). Careful regard needs to be given to COVID-19 developments in Lao PDR and requirements by the GoL, as well as updated guidance issued by WHO. All measures implemented to address COVID-19 related risks need to be in accordance with the local applicable laws and policies, especially those related to media and communication. The following **general response measures** will be applied:

- Periodically review COVID-19 spread situation in the project area, and the restrictions put in place by the GoL to contain virus spread;
- Review planned activities under the project, assess COVID-19 related risks such as transmission/ spreading of the virus (e.g. number of people in meetings, engagement/ consultation events etc.);
- Identify project activities for which meetings/ consultation/ engagement is critical and cannot be postponed without having significant impact on project timelines.
- Assess the level of ICT penetration within the MAF/PMU at all levels, and among key stakeholder groups, to identify requirements to procure necessary ICT for PMU and the type of communication that can be effectively used in the project context with stakeholders.
- Consider and implement viable means to ensure that project related results can be achieved, at the same time minimizing risks by applying appropriate hygienic measures and/ or communicating via ICT.
- Ensure that all PMU/Stakeholders are aware of, as well as articulate and express their understandings on social behavior (social distancing) and respiratory hygiene practices, and that any events be preceded with the procedure of articulating such hygienic practices.
- Ensure the adequate availability of protective equipment/ gear and consumables, such as masks, hand sanitizer, soap;
- Raise awareness at all levels, including communities on COVID-19 health risks, as well as appropriate measures to limit transmission/ infections and enforce them in the project context. Use awareness materials developed by WHO or other organizations to be distributed during events and during visits in communities (examples provided below);
- Avoid larger public gatherings including public hearings, workshops, and community meetings as much as possible in case of risks of COVID-19 transmission/ infections (depending on COVID-19 situation and measures imposed by GoL);
- If smaller meetings are permitted, conduct consultations in small-group sessions, such as focus group meetings. If not permitted, make all reasonable efforts to conduct meetings through online channels, including Webex, Zoom and Google Meet;
- Diversify means of communication and rely more on social media and online channels. Where possible and appropriate, create dedicated online platforms and chatgroups appropriate for the purpose, based on the type and category of stakeholders;



The following **hygienic/ precautionary COVID-19 response measures** will be applied to avoid/ minimize virus transmission and getting infected to be applied/ enforced by the project:

- Keep distance of at least 1 m between persons (social distancing);
- Cough, sneeze in crook of elbow, or sneeze, cough in tissue and immediately through tissue away, avoid spitting;
- Regularly wash hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand rub – many times per day;
- Self-isolate if somebody think that she/ he may have come in contact with the virus;
- Self-isolate if somebody display any symptoms, seek medical advice and support (e.g. testing);
- Clean keyboards, door handles and other used items regularly with a supply of clean water, liquid soap, and paper towels (for hand drying);
- Clean/ disinfect toilets regularly, and wash towels frequently;
- Dispose of used materials for cleaning in waste bins (for used paper towels) that is regularly emptied.



Cover nose and mouth when coughing, sneezing with tissue or mask.

If no tissues are available, cough or sneeze into the inner elbow rather than hand.

Do not “spit” in environment (use

Dispose used tissue and/or masks in the nearest bin after use.



Avoid shaking hands when sick. Use «traditional greeting» instead.

Perform hand hygiene after contact with respiratory secretions.



**Figure 5-1: COVID-19 Hygienic Measures**

## 1a – Hand Washing with Soap and Water



## 1b - Hand Hygiene with Alcohol-based Hand Rub (AHR)



Figure 5-3: Hand Hygiene with Alcohol-based Hand Rub





Figure 5-4: Examples of CORONA-19 Awareness Materials

## ANNEX 7 – ENVIRONMENTAL & SOCIAL MONITORING TEMPLATE

### I. Brief progress of the project

.....Construction company was signed contract on.....which the construction started on ..... and will be completed on ..... To date, the progress of the construction work has been completed .....%, including the following important works:

1. ....
2. ....

Some pictures (when taking pictures, pay attention to the trash must be orderly, workers must wear personal protective equipment)

### II. Implementation of environmental and social measures

#### 2.1. Well-implemented environmental and social measures

At the time of this report, the environmental and social measures that the Company has implemented are summarized in the table below. The image is in appendix 1.

**Table 1 Summarize measures that are well implemented**

Topic	Description
	1. Install safety warning signs at all risk points, Figure 1-5 in Appendix 1
	2.

#### 2.2. Environmental and social measures to be taken into account

At the time of this report, the environmental and social measures that the Company has not yet well implemented are summarized in the table below. The image is in appendix.

**Table 2 Summarize the measures that have not yet been implemented well**

Measure are not yet well implemented	Solution	Completion date
1. Do not install safety warning signs at all risk points 2. XXXX 3. XXXXX	1. Resolved/ unresolved 2. XXXX 3. XXXXX	1.
1.	1.	2.

### III. Reporting on accident

1. During the period of this report, no accidents / accidents occurred ..... times. Explain the accident and attach an accident report. Appendix 3.

#### IV. Complaint Monitoring

At the time of this report, there have been a few complaints ..... cases. Of these, ..... cases have been resolved and ..... cases have not been resolved. Details are summarized in the table below. Details are attached in Attachment 6:

**Table 3 Redress Complaint**

No.	Complaint Description	Be resolved	Still unresolved	Remarks

#### V. Labor management and local employment

The total number of staff, technicians and workers of the company who work for this project is ..... people (..... are women). The number of workers from the local area is..... (..... are women). The list of staff, technicians and workers is in Attachment 7

The number of workers staying in the camps is ..... people, the company has provided the following facilities:

**Table 4 Camp Facilities**

Camp Facility	Amount	Remarks
Dormitory for 30 people		8x8 m Roofing with zinc or grass, paving by wood and zinc wall, with mosquito net
Where to cook and where to eat		Shared kitchen
Toilet and bathroom		2 toilets, 2 bathrooms
Electricity		From public electricity
Drinking water		From the drinking water factory
Water used		Water supply
Food		Market
Waste bin		In the kitchen and in front of the camp
First aid kit		Medicine for fever, cold, medicine for stomach pain, headache and so on
PPE		Fire extinguisher, hat, reflective jacket, shoes
Information board		Write a work plan and rules
Basic salary		
Other		

Take a photo of everything listed in the table above

**VI. Difficulty/challenge and proposed suggestions**

**Table 5 Difficulty/Challenge with proposed solution**

<b>Difficulty/Challenge</b>	<b>Proposed solution</b>

## ANNEX 8 – RAPID ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL ASSESSMENT

### 1. Introduction

This Rapid Environmental and Social Assessment (RESA) was conducted based on a combination of review of relevant literature and consultation with stakeholders project. During stakeholder consultation, meetings were held with beneficiaries who are mothers with children under two who receive CCT, village facilitators, community mobilizers and project staff at district and national level. Consultation were also held with stakeholders from ministry of planning and investment and ministry of health to share feedback from the meeting with beneficiaries and project staff in Oudomxay – a province selected for the RESA.

### 2. Methods

This Rapid Environmental and Social Assessment (RESA) was conducted based on a combination of review of relevant literature (secondary data) and consultation with stakeholders of the project (primary data). During stakeholder consultation for the purpose of RESA, meetings were held with beneficiaries who are mothers with children under two, village facilitators, community mobilizers. Meetings were also conducted with project staff at district level and subsequently with national level to share preliminary feedback of both beneficiaries and project staff based in the project sites. Consultation were also held with stakeholders from ministry of planning and investment and ministry of health to share feedback from the field and project staff based in Oudomxay – a province selected for the RESA, for validation, and for double check if the feedback/observation from Oudomxay have similarities with beneficiaries and project staff in other three project provinces.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. Poverty Profile in Laos PDR

This section (3.1) is drawn from the WB report published in 2020, namely, Lao PDR Poverty Profile – Poverty Report for the Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey 2018-2019. The information in Section 3.1 provide a snapshot of the poverty of Laos (six project provinces are marked with yellow bar).

##### 3.1.1. Overview of Poverty in Laos and in Project Provinces

According the WB 2020 (WB - 2020 - Lao PDR Poverty Profile), the national poverty headcount rate in 2018/19, estimated using the revised poverty methodology, was 18.3 percent. This indicates that almost a fifth of the Lao PDR population were living on less than LAK 9,364 a day (approximately USD 1.10, or 2.40 per person per day in 2011 PPP USD). Although Poverty in Lao PDR continues to decline, the impact of growth on poverty reduction was low. Between 2012/13 and 2018/19, the annual GDP growth rate averaged about 7 percent, and GDP per capita grew at an annual rate of 5.6 percent. But a one-percent increase in GDP per capita during this period was associated with a mere 0.67 percent decline in the poverty rate. Average consumption grew by only 3.3 percent, falling behind the rate of economic growth.

Poverty has fallen more rapidly in rural areas than in urban areas. The depth and severity of poverty followed a similar trend, declining markedly in rural areas while remaining largely unchanged in urban areas. Poverty depth, as measured by the poverty gap, is the extent to which individuals fall below the poverty line. The larger the poverty gap, the poorer on average people below the poverty line are, and the more resources are needed to lift them out of poverty.



According to the Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey (LECS) that was implemented between June 2018 and May 2019, the following key findings are important:

- Poverty declined from 24.6 percent in 2012/13 to 18.3 percent in 2018/19. The rate of poverty reduction has been rapid in rural areas, while urban poverty reduction has stagnated.
- The incidence of poverty is typically higher among agricultural households, Hmong-Lumien households and households headed by a person who has not completed lower secondary education or an unemployed person, and such gaps have widened.
- Multidimensional poverty declined between 2012/13 and 2018/19, especially in rural areas, the northern region, and the southern region, mirroring a decline in monetary poverty.
- Notwithstanding improvements in monetary indicators of poverty and non-monetary aspects of household welfare, food insecurity remains a pressing problem among low-income households in rural areas.

In project provinces, poverty remained among the highest compared to other provinces. Project provinces are marked in yellow shade below).

**Table 0-1 - Poverty and Distribution of The Poor by Province (2012/13–2018/19)**

	Poverty Headcount Rate			Poverty Gap			Squared Poverty Gap		
	2013	2019	Change	2013	2019	Change	2013	2019	Change
<b>Lao PDR</b>	24.6	18.3	-6.3	5.9	3.9	-2.0	2.1	1.3	-0.8
<b>Vientiane Capital</b>	2.5	5.0	2.5	0.3	1.0	0.7	0.1	0.3	0.3
<b>North</b>									
<b>Phongsaly</b>	19.9	8.1	-11.8	3.4	1.2	-2.2	0.9	0.3	-0.6
<b>Luangnamtha</b>	25.0	10.5	-14.4	4.5	1.9	-2.6	1.2	0.6	-0.6
<b>Oudomxay</b>	36.6	29.2	-7.5	8.9	6.4	-2.5	2.9	2.0	-1.0
<b>Bokeo</b>	51.8	19.4	-32.4	15.0	4.2	-10.8	5.9	1.3	-4.5
<b>Luangprabang</b>	30.0	20.4	-9.6	6.8	3.1	-3.7	2.1	0.7	-1.4
<b>Huaphanh</b>	45.4	26.6	-18.8	13.3	5.8	-7.5	5.3	1.8	-3.5
<b>Xayabury</b>	15.7	21.1	5.4	2.7	4.5	1.8	0.7	1.5	0.8
<b>Central</b>									
<b>Xiengkhuang</b>	34.3	26.0	-8.2	8.6	6.2	-2.3	3.1	2.2	-0.9
<b>Vientiane</b>	10.9	5.3	-5.6	1.6	1.0	-0.6	0.3	0.3	-0.1
<b>Borikhamxay</b>	14.7	20.6	5.9	2.9	5.1	2.2	0.9	1.8	0.9
<b>Khammuane</b>	25.2	25.5	0.3	6.6	5.1	-1.5	2.3	1.5	-0.8
<b>Savannakhet</b>	29.1	27.5	-1.5	6.2	6.5	0.3	2.0	2.3	0.3
<b>Xaysomboun</b>		8.2			1.3			0.3	
<b>South</b>									

Saravane	52.1	24.9	-27.2	16.8	5.6	-11.2	6.8	1.9	-4.9
Sekong	44.4	30.6	-13.8	13.3	6.2	-7.1	5.7	1.9	-3.8
Champasack	19.6	8.7	-10.9	4.0	1.8	-2.3	1.2	0.5	-0.7
Attapeu	9.1	27.8	18.8	1.4	5.7	4.4	0.3	2.0	1.7

*Source* WB - 2020 - Lao PDR Poverty Profile

### **3.1.2. Vulnerable and poor groups**

Households headed by an agricultural self-employed person and an unemployed or economically inactive person have the highest poverty rates. It was noted, in particular, that **poverty rate among people living in households headed by an unemployed or economically inactive person is 21.3 percent**. About 90 percent of unemployed household heads were previously engaged in agricultural activities but have **become unemployed due to seasonality**, while economically inactive persons are mostly the elderly. Poverty remains high and persistent among households headed by an agricultural self-employed person (24.6 percent in 2018/19) albeit falling by 7.3 percentage points over the previous six years. These households together with households headed by a seasonally unemployed person constitute 75 percent of the poor. Conversely, the poverty rate of households headed by wage workers and nonfarm self-employed workers is low, with each estimated to be around 5 percent in 2018/19, a marked decline from 9 percent in 2012/13.

**Remittances from migrants have become an important source of income.** In 2018/19, **14 percent of the population lived in households that received remittances**, up from 11 percent in 2012/13. The poverty rate among remittance-receiving households has fallen from 13.8 percent in 2012/13 to 10.2 percent in 2018/19: almost half the poverty rate than those without remittances.

It is noted that the **incidence of poverty is higher among households headed by the non-secondary educated, the unemployed, the Hmong-lumien persons and individuals self-employed in farming**. The Hmong-lumien group has also experienced the slowest pace of poverty reduction, with gaps between them and other ethnic groups widening as a result.

### **3.1.3. Food consumption and food security**

The composition of food expenditure changed slightly between 2012/13 and 2018/19. Overall, households spent a slightly smaller share of their food costs on rice and fish and a greater share on milk, cheese and eggs, vegetables, and tubers. Urban households devote a larger share of total food expenditure on beverages, restaurants meals and takeaways (12 percent) than rural households (2.5 percent). **Conversely, shares of rice and fish in total expenditure are higher among rural households than urban households.**

Almost 20 percent of the population experienced moderate-to-severe food insecurity in 2018/19. In 2018/19, **10 percent of the population experienced moderate food insecurity**, meaning they reduced the quality or quantity of their food, and were uncertain about their ability to obtain food due to lack of resources. **This increased their likelihood of malnutrition, including the risk of stunting in children.** In addition, **9 percent of the population faced severe food insecurity, meaning they ran out of food altogether and/or went for a day or more without eating.**

Poor households also spend more on vegetables and tubers while non-poor households spend a greater share on meat, beverages, and restaurants/ takeaway meals. Food poverty and food insecurity are regular occurrences. **Almost 20 percent of the population experienced moderate to severe food insecurity in 2018/19, particularly in rural areas and the central region.**

### 3.1.4. Household assets and living conditions

Poverty reduction across Lao PDR over the past six years has involved significant improvements to household living conditions. Ownership of consumer durables increased significantly between 2012/13 and 2018/19. Among the poor households, possession of a motorbike, a refrigerator, a steam rice cooker, a television, and a mobile phone significant increases – as observed between 2012/13 and 2018/19.

Lao households, including the poor, typically invested in more expensive and better-quality housing materials since the last survey. **Between 2012/13 and 2018/19, poor households typically swapped their roofing material from grass, leaves, or wood to metal sheets, while non-poor households upgraded from metal sheets to roofing tiles.**

### 3.1.5. Access to services

There was a remarkable improvement in access to basic services between 2012/13 and 2018/19. In 2018/19, 92.9 percent of households had access to safe water throughout the year, increasing from 83.8 percent in 2012/13, and approximately 82 percent of households had access to improved sanitation facilities. However, access to all services is significantly lower among the poor when compared to the non-poor. **Access to improved sanitation facilities was 74.3 percent among poor households, well beneath 97 percent access among the non-poor.** The gap is narrower for access to safe water and electricity, however.

**Table 0-2 – Household Access to Improved Water, Sanitation Facilities and Electricity by Province (2018/19)**

	Poor				Non-poor			
	Gas and electricity for cooking	Improved sanitation facilities	Safe water	Electricity for lighting	Gas and electricity for cooking	Improved sanitation facilities	Safe water	Electricity for lighting
Borikhamxay	0	100	100	100	6.2	99.4	98.6	99.7
Vientiane Capital	8.3	94.6	100	100	34.9	99.7	100	99.7
Xayabury	0	92.9	100	96.8	2.1	98.8	97.8	99.6
Xaysomboun	0	81.8	93.9	100	6.8	95.9	98.4	99.7
Bokeo	0	75.5	78.7	92.2	11.6	97.6	91.9	100
Xiengkhuang	2.1	74.8	98.1	77	12.8	93.3	96.8	96.9
Luangnamtha	4.5	71.6	98.5	70.4	13.6	90.2	96.9	90.9
Champasack	0	65.1	92.4	97.3	2.9	85.9	96	99.4
Huaphanh	14.7	62.1	100	63.8	10.2	93.8	99.7	91
Oudomxay	4.1	51.9	86	63.9	12.1	81.5	90.4	79.5
Luangprabang	3.4	44.3	91	67.1	10.2	80.8	95.9	87.8
Vientiane	3.8	44.2	95.3	96.7	8.9	98.8	99.6	99
Khammuane	10.7	42	79	91.9	15.1	80.1	95	98.1
Sekong	0.9	37.7	81.7	58.6	1.2	73.9	95.8	75.2
Attapeu	7.5	35.5	87	85.4	13.7	70.2	87.2	93.8
Phongsaly	0	29.7	100	42.3	6	67.7	97.7	77.9
Savannakhet	4.5	28.1	51.4	67.3	12.5	69.3	81.7	93.2
Saravane	6.1	22.3	82.8	80	5.5	64.7	83.9	96

### 3.2. Social capital

“Social capital refers to the internal social and cultural coherence of society, the norms and values that govern interactions among people and the institutions in which they are embedded. Social capital is the glue that holds societies together and without which there can be no economic growth or human well-being. Without social capital, society at large will collapse, and today’s world presents some very sad examples of this” (Grootaert 1998, p.iii). Social capital is a concept that “describes circumstances in which individuals can use membership in groups and networks to secure benefits” (Sobel 2002, p.139). It is used to explain how problems of selfish incentives could be overcome to achieve a mutually beneficial cooperative way of getting things done (Ostrom & Ahn 2003, p. xiv). Social capital implies voluntary cooperation, which is self-enforcing based on informal, unwritten institutions. Voluntary organizations among farmers can help lower the costs thanks to informal transactions, which are not formally sanctioned, and it is not necessary to monitor and enforce all the transitions (Svendsen & Svendsen 2004, p.27).

“Social Capital refers to the norms and networks that enable collective action. It encompasses institutions, relationships, and customs that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions” (World Bank 2008). “Social capital represents the degree of social cohesion which exists in communities” and that “it refers to the processes between people which establish networks, norms, and social trust, and facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit. Social capital is created from the myriad of everyday interactions between people and is embodied in such structures as civic and religious groups, family membership, informal community networks, and in norms of voluntarism, altruism, and trust. The stronger these networks and bonds, the more likely it is that members of a community will co-operate for mutual benefit. In this way social capital creates health and may enhance the benefits of investments for health” (WHO 1998).

Assessing the stock of social capital in Laos, Sounthone Phommasone and Phosy Chanhming (2014) noted that social capital in Lao is still strong, indicative of network mechanism, ritual activities, social trust, norm, value, and livelihood being interwoven into a strong social texture. Social system functions as a pre-requisite for the formal administrative authority. Both informal and formal organizations play very significant roles of strengthening, developing, and passing social capital from generation to generation. In particular, they noted that:

- Mutual support among rural people is still strong. This is Supporting mechanism for social ties
- Mutual help system has been created and passed on from generation to generation (e.g. house building, and other activities that need mental and physical support
- Communal agriculture work (mutual support albeit) is till practice despite increasing hired of labor among ethnic minorities to rotate the plantation or harvesting from one family to another, particularly in relatives and close acquaintances.
- Seniority support: conflict resolution, mental and physical support.
- Informal social support on birth, death, marriage, illnesses. Strong support from the
- villagers, relatives, friends, and the whole community has been practiced.

### 3.3. Gender

Laos ranks 36 out of 156 countries in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum, yet significant and costly gender gaps remain in agriculture.

### **3.3.1. Agricultural Resources**

According to the report prepared in 2005 by the Gender Resource Information and Development (GRID) Center of the Lao Women's Union and the World Bank, about 80 percent of the total workforce in Laos PDR (2.4 million people) are involved in agriculture, of which women accounts for 54 percent of the total workforce. Women in Laos play a critical role in agriculture. They are responsible for maintaining their family's food security. However, the role of women is still undervalued. Despite men and women spend similar amounts of time on agricultural work, men spend more time on income generating activities (including agricultural work). They are considered household head, thus, representing their families at all official village meetings. Because of limited literacy (compared to men), women, especially those from ethnic minority groups, are unable to equally participate in village development activities.

### **3.3.2. Economic Participation**

Despite of important contribution to family's livelihoods, women faces challenges that affect their personal development. For example, it is customary that women are not allowed to work far from the village or participate in community activities. As such, they have limited opportunity to learn and update farm skills as well as health care knowledge. As a result, they are involved in low-skilled jobs and thus less opportunities to earn income. They are therefore responsible for more housework, childcare and child education.

### **3.3.3. Education**

Although Lao PDR has made quantitative and qualitative progress in education over the past several decades, education indicators remain among the lowest in East Asia. There are stark disparities between urban and rural areas, boys, and girls, rich and poor. Within urban areas, the gender gap in education has practically closed. However, rural areas record some of the lowest educational indicators in the country. The most disadvantaged and cut off from services are those living in remote villages, many of whom are ethnic groups. Indeed, a significant proportion of children – especially girls and ethnic groups in remote areas – are out of school. The rate of illiteracy among women is higher than men. Reasons for illiteracy among women vary across provinces, and across ethnic groups. However, poverty, geographic distance, costs, and traditional beliefs appears to be the main reasons. About 35 percent of students enroll in secondary education but only about 5 percent complete the full six years. Vocational training opportunities are limited. Less than 5 percent of Lao children go to university. Many poor families do not see formal education as chance for them to improve their livelihoods. Inadequate attention of parents did not encourage children to attend school. Linguistic barriers and cultural attitudes towards education also perpetuate low human development and the vicious cycle of poverty that many ethnic minorities groups face.

### **3.3.4. Health**

Women is expected to take care of their family, including their children. Culture and tradition play an important role in choice of health practices, such as location of childbirth, use of birth attendants and sterilization practices. While maternal mortality rate has decreased, this remain among the highest in the region. Delivery at home is still common, particularly among the poor people. This is also due to distance between home and community health center which is significantly different between rural and urban areas. Ethnic groups are among those who have limited access to health care because of their remote geographical area. Women often walk long distances to seek medical help and supplies. Limited roads

access and difficulties in transport also contributed to worsen situation. Limited access to health care center is also the main reason why many women do not seek medical treatment.

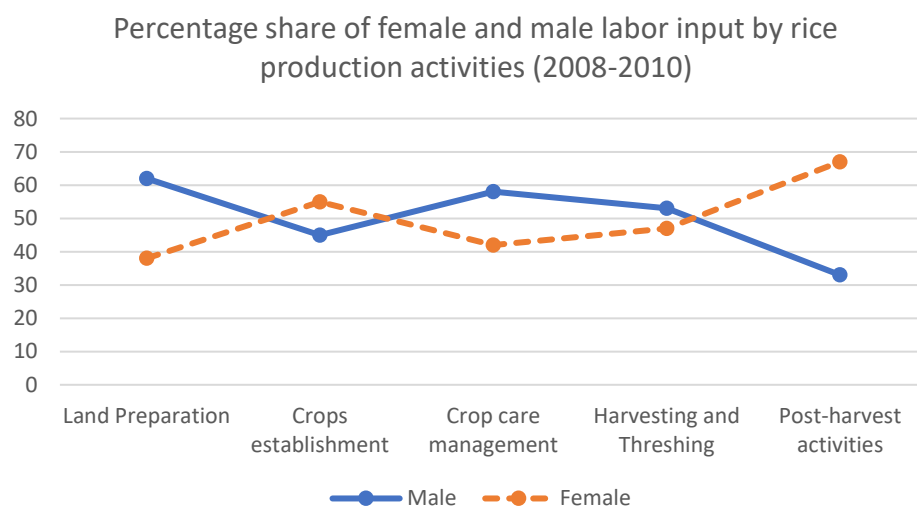
### 3.3.5. Vulnerabilities

Along with the rapid changes, Lao PDR also face a number of vulnerabilities which have increasingly affected women. Greater economic integration and development have resulted in increasing migration to neighboring countries, particularly Thailand. Associated with migration are a number of risks including sexual exploitation, HIV/AIDS, violence, and human trafficking. The issue of violence against women is also one that is increasingly emerging. New research has shown that many women suffer from abuse particularly within the household, but few have legal or psychological recourse. Opium abuse is also affecting women, particularly those from poor ethnic groups who have to deal with their family members who are opium-addicts.

### 3.3.6. Labor Division

Rice is the main crop cultivated by the majority of farmers in Laos. Generally, there is a clear division of labor that exists between male and female. This is particularly true in irrigated lowland area where irrigation is more reliable. However labor division is not clear among farming households in rain-fed area. This is probably because of unpredictable weather condition. Women are typically tasked with housework, which is considered 'light' such as doing house chores, feeding animals, pulling seedlings, and managing rice production income. These works, however, time-consuming. Men generally undertake heavy works, such as land preparation, land inspection for cultivation of rice, hand or machine threshing and hauling harvested rice, including other tasks that are shared by both women and men (See Figure 1 below).

In some areas, traditional labor division is changed due to lack of men labor who migrate in search for jobs in the urban areas, leaving women with more burden at home.



**Figure 2 - Data of IRRI. Graph drawn by author.**

Labor division is changed as a result of changes in agricultural practices, such as increasing mechanization, and the fundamental shift from subsistence to commercial agriculture, have transformed the gender division of labor, and gender relations. In these instances, men typically assume greater control of land, farming equipment, and marketing ventures. Increased mechanization, irrigation are expected to shift the

decision making power to men as men are expected to decide these aspects, including use of agricultural input such as pesticide and fertilizers, and in some instance, seeds. Irrigation is also managed differently depending on upland, lowland (rainfed and irrigated).

### **3.3.7. Women's Role in Decision-making.**

Lao PDR is the second highest proportions of women in lower houses of parliaments (the National Assembly) in the region. However, women remain under-represented in provincial and district authorities. Village-level committees are dominated by male. Within ministries and agencies, few women are appointed in senior level positions. Prevailing custom and habits tend to prevent women from participating in economic activities and decision-making processes – both within their family and outside.

In terms of decision-making in expenditure, it is apparent to see from the FAO 2010 data that female headed house are likely to spend more on food, house, and medical care – compared to male headed households (See figure below).

## **3.4. Key Findings from Mid-term Review of RRPM I**

### **3.4.1. Nutrition Knowledge & Behavior**

- Although more than 50% of mother know that it is recommended that exclusive breast feeding from birth should be 6 months, **fewer mothers know why it is important** (the proportion of mothers who know this remain unchanged vis-à-vis baseline findings).
- More Lao-Tai mothers than other mothers say that they have heard of anemia than those from other ethnic groups, but the proportion of **mothers who know this remains low** and very few (less than 10%) are aware of how it occurs.
- There is **still a strong belief across all ethnic groups that additional food during pregnancy can result in a difficult birth**, only about half of mothers, regardless of ethnic group reject this statement.
- Only 32% of mothers (down from 35% at baseline) reject the idea that some animal products are not good during lactation (highest proportion (38%) in among Mon-Khmer mothers)
- There is **very low awareness that commercial formulas and infant cereals are inferior to breast milk**. However, more than half of mothers believe home-made food is better than commercial cereals for their babies. Chinese-Tibetans are more likely than other mothers to think that these cereals are better than food prepared at home.
- **Mothers generally believe that they can't afford to feed their children** a more nutritious diet.
- Most mothers said they would listen to health center staff (compared to their mother-in-law). Chinese-Tibetan mothers were **less likely to take advice from health center**.
- There is **low awareness of iodized salt**, especially among Hmong, Lu-Mien and Chinese-Tibetan mothers. However, those who are aware generally use it in their homes.
- There is high awareness that handwashing removes germs, and that open defecation is problematic. There is less awareness of the risk of indoor air pollution from cooking smoke.

### **3.4.2. Land ownership**

- Most households (68.9%) own 3 plots of land or less with little difference between provinces. The average size of the land owned was 3.5 hectares. In Xiengkhouang, 26.7% of households had more than 4 hectares, with farms as large as 50 hectares reported in Phongsaly, Huaphanh and Oudomxay. On average, each household cultivated 2.2 hectares in the past 12 months.



### 3.5. Key Findings from Consultation under RRPM I

A number of key findings were drawn from the RESA. It is noted that the purpose of RESA is to draw lessons learned from Phase I of RRPM project to improve the design of RRPM II project. It aims to avoid/minimize environmental and social risks and impacts for RRPM II while attempting to explore measures to enhance project development effectiveness for RRPM II by leveraging the benefit of the ongoing convergence program of the WB. Below are the key risks that have been identified as part of RESA.

#### 3.5.1. *Levels, trends and determinants of undernutrition*

In terms of childhood undernutrition, although there have been marked improvements in stunting over time, Lao PDR still performs poorly compared to other countries with similar levels of income and to other ASEAN countries (Figure 1). About 33 percent of children under five are still remain stunted, 21 percent are underweight, and 9 percent are wasted.

Moreover, the national aggregates of childhood undernutrition mask wide inequalities, with far worse outcomes in some provinces than in others. For example, stunting rates are higher in provinces like Huaphanh (40.7 %) and Phongsaly (54 %) and Xiengkhuang (48.3 %) and Sekong (49.9%)-(Figure 2). There is also significant variation across income levels; both stunting and underweight among children in the poorest wealth quintile (48% stunted) are close to three times the rates for children in the richest quintile (14% stunted), and ethnic groups (i.e. among Hmong-Mien reaching 50 percent).

The multi-dimensional causes of childhood stunting in Lao-PDR underscore the diversity of actions that are needed across different sectors to address stunting and sub-optimal childhood development. Childhood undernutrition is an outcome of immediate, underlying, and basic causes<sup>2</sup> : at the immediate level, nutritional status is determined by nutrient intake to the body to meet its requirements, and the status of health (illness); underlying causes are related to food security (access, availability and utilization of food), maternal and childcare practices, access to health services as well as clean water, appropriate sanitation and hygiene. Underlying these factors are basic causes: poverty is a basic cause of undernutrition, as are other economic constraints, women's status, etc.

Diet affordability and diversity and limited access to essential health and nutrition services are considerable issues in Lao PDR and are correlated with stunting prevalence. Only 55 percent of households in Lao PDR can afford a nutritious diet (WFP 2017) and affordability of a nutritious diet varies by province (83 percent in Vientiane versus 5 percent in Sekong, for example). These estimates can vary, where up to 61 percent of households reported unaffordability as a major constraint to diet diversity in the Laos Social Indicator Survey (LSIS) 2017. Household access to diverse diets is low. As the 2012-2013 Laos Expenditure and Consumption Survey (LECS V) demonstrated, this is especially acute in rural areas where most households consume only three of the nine recommended food groups. There is also a significant gender gap in terms of access to health and nutrition services. The LSIS 2017 found that only 52 percent of pregnant women from the poorest wealth quintile received ante-natal care (ANC) from a trained health professional and over 36 percent of pregnant women living in rural areas without roads received no ante-natal services. For the rural poor, many of whom live in remote areas, distance to health facilities is a major barrier to access.

Social and cultural norms are also closely correlated with stunting. Early marriage, for example, which is the primary cause of teenage pregnancy in Laos, is one (World Bank 2016). Early marriage remains widely



accepted, particularly in rural areas, leading to high numbers of teenage pregnancies as evidenced by the fact that Laos has the highest adolescent birth-rates in the region. About 94 out of 1,000 births correspond to girls aged 15 to 19 (UNFPA 2016) compared to the regional East Asian average of 47 out of 1,000 births. Children born to mothers 18 years old and younger are ten percentage points more likely to be stunted compared to children born to mothers over 18 years old. The low nutrition-related knowledge of caregivers is compounded by supply-side challenges, namely limited capacity of general health facilities and staff to provide health and nutrition-related services. Even without financial constraints, beliefs are usually promoted and at times enforced by influential family members, including grandmothers and husbands. Mothers have reported that they are encouraged to restrict food intake during pregnancy, so they can have smaller babies and easier deliveries, and that food restrictions often continue through the delivery and breastfeeding period.

Women's agency and empowerment have also been found to be determinants of stunting<sup>50</sup>.<sup>3</sup> Three dimensions of women's autonomy— confidence in the ability to exert control over their own health care, self-esteem, and control over own spending or money, are associated with stunting in Laos. In other words, the likelihood of stunting is lower with women's increased access to health care, both in terms of distance and costs, and with their ability to use money as they wish. Two separate studies found that women's higher self-esteem, defined as their intolerance for domestic violence, is also associated with lower levels of stunting.

### **3.5.2. Key Positive Feedback**

- CCT brings lots of benefits to beneficiaries because the CCT payment can be used to buy food such as meat, green bean, other vegetables, and fruits. In addition, beneficiaries can also buy some formula milk for our kids. These makes the beneficiary households happy;
- CCT helps reduce family's expenses. In addition, CCT money could be used for medical treatment for their child and/or use as petrol for motorbike to go to hospital;
- CCT also can help improve family's health condition as the food is shared with other family members.
- Beneficiaries know how to cook nutritional meals for kids through cook demonstration that are carried out by Village Facilitators.

### **3.5.3. Areas for Improvement**

Local Feedback from consultation in Hoaphan, Xienkhouang and Oudomxay provinces:

- Some beneficiaries face difficulty in buying nutritional food for their child because of market is far (district level) and not available at village;
- People still stick to their traditional concept/understanding about traditional nutritional practice
- People in the community compare between those who receive CCT and those who do not receive CCT;
- At village level, monitoring of project activities, particularly of proper use of CCT for the intended purpose, has not been yet well implemented because of limited budget;
- Mobilizing the people to come and use public health services (as part of conditionality) at the hospital or health center is still challenging, e.g. Akha ethnic group;

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<sup>50</sup> Kamiya et al. 2018, Mothers' autonomy and childhood stunting: evidence from semi-urban communities in Lao PDR. BMC Women's Health (18:70).

- Unaccepted household made their complaint to the village chief;
- People should be informed in advance that at the time of actual payment if they are not present then they will receive the money in the next installment;
- Gathering people is challenging. Some people stay over nights at the farm;
- There may be waste from the village meetings, so the project team should bring back the waste so it would not burden the village;
- Project information (e.g. CCT eligibility) and project policies should be explained clearer to the public;
- Government officials who work for the project should have increased salary because government officials do additional tasks to focus on effectiveness of the project's activities and in order to get the maximum benefit to the project beneficiaries;
- Some Staff of UNITEL did not show respect to CCT recipients;
- CCT payment should be carried out by two companies for comparison and draw lessons.

Feedback from consultation at national level:

- Other community members who do not receive the CCT try to obstruct other community members not to join the project's activity because they do not well understand about the condition of receiving CCT;
- District partners from other projects still lack understanding of RRPM project;
- Long distance between community and healthcare center pose challenges to pregnant women and mother to access for regular healthcare services;
- Lack of local market in some communities make buying food for children challenging (e.g. mothers have to travel a long distance to district market to buy recommended food for their children);
- CCT payment are still delays for most villages;
- Some Village Facilitators are not motivated because of low allowance;
- Implementation of various activities of different projects in one village take time for the community;
- Different selection criteria for Village Facilitators under RRPM and HANSA projects cause confusion;
- PMT tool is new and not yet consistent (in terms of results);
- HANSA project has difficulty gathering participants in the community because beneficiary under HANSA compare with CCT beneficiaries under RRPM;

#### **3.5.4. Expectation of local community for RRPM2**

- The project should set up a nutrition fund in the village, and this is to support nutritional practice, and make the project activities sustainable;
- Nutritional knowledge needs to be provided to also those who are not receiving CCT and also who are potential beneficiaries of the project in the future;
- Nutritional knowledge should also be provided to families with kids over two years old because the parent may need to learn about the proper nutritional practice;
- Request the project to improve the road condition of the village because the distance to the community hospital (e.g. 28km far from Lan Xieng village, which makes people's journey to the hospital very difficult (Lan Xieng village);
- Need more village loudspeaker to cover the whole area of the village for SBCC works;
- The project should consider providing CCT for the child up to 3 years old;

- If mother of a child under two is pregnant, both kids should be eligible to receive CCT;
- Is any possibility of increasing the CCT payment from LAK200,000 to LAK 300,000 due to the high living cost;
- There should be a well-coordinated and agreed work plan among projects of convergence program;
- Hope all potential HHs are eligible to receiving CCT.

### **3.6. Potential E&S risks and impacts under RRPM II**

#### **3.6.1. Environmental risks**

Field observation (in Oudomxay) indicated that ethnic minority are likely residing in close proximity. Low level of access to latrine and environmental sanitation (e.g. management of garbage, standing water...) could reduce the vector-borne diseases and disease that may increase vulnerability of children under two to malnutrition (e.g. diarrhea, acute respiratory infections...).

#### Recommendations:

Since environmental hygiene and sanitation that supports achievement of improved nutrition status and sustainable adopted of nutritional practices under RRPM2 is not covered under RRPM2, it is recommended other governmental development program be considered to assist environmental hygiene and sanitation in project area under RRPM2.

#### **3.6.2. Social risks**

##### **3.6.2.1 Risk of exclusion and inclusion errors**

Review of GRM record of RRMP showed 200 grievances (from 57 villages) have been recorded as “exclusion” and 4 grievances (from 3 villages) were categorized as “inclusion”. It is noted that of the 200 grievances related to exclusion, only 46% of the number of grievances are resolved timely and the remaining 54% (108 cases are still under resolution process). Based on GRM record of RRPM, exclusion errors dominates (compared to inclusion errors).

It is noted that errors of exclusion and inclusion are common in CCT programs. Possible error may include a) proxy means tests contain an element of statistical error in making their predictions of household welfare, b) outreach to potential beneficiaries to inform them of the benefits of the program and its application procedures is lacking and they never apply<sup>51</sup>.

#### Recommendations:

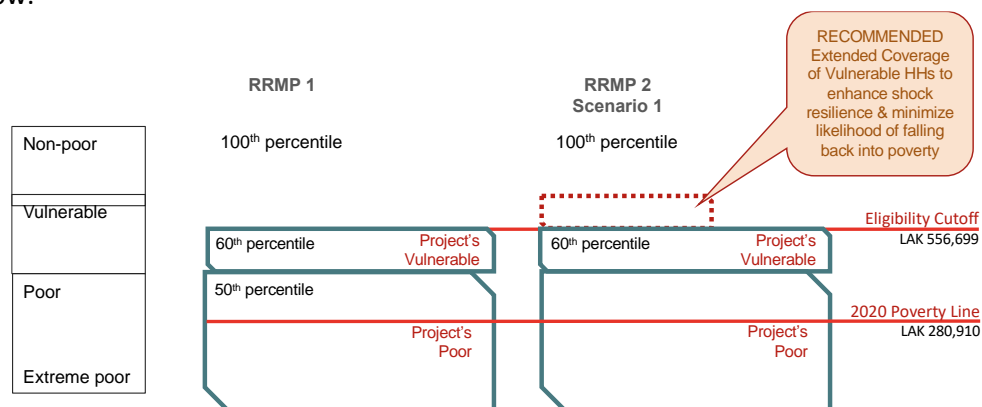
- Consider enlarging the program to reduce the exclusion errors;
- Improve training of enumerator to minimize errors during data collection and data entry;
- Consider fine-tuning of relevant technical aspects of PMT model to reduce exclusion errors.

##### **3.6.2.2 Risk of exclusion of group that are truly vulnerable**

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<sup>51</sup> Fiszbein, Ariel; Schady, Norbert; Ferreira, Francisco H.G.; Grosh, Margaret; Keleher, Niall; Olinto, Pedro; Skoufias, Emmanuel. 2009. Conditional Cash Transfers : Reducing Present and Future Poverty. World Bank Policy Research Report. Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank.

Under RRPM, Proxy Means Test (PMT) was carried out based on the latest LECS6 survey<sup>52</sup>. PMT model has been developed based on the six indicators stipulated in the Decree 348 (GoL) with a set of variables based on the LECS6 data set. The PMT has established a cut-off point (60<sup>th</sup> percentile) by which eligible families will be identified. The 60<sup>th</sup> percentile covers “poor” and part of “vulnerable” group, as illustrated in the graph below.



In addition to risk of exclusion (that was identified above), grievances also arise from the above about the project’s 60<sup>th</sup> percentile which are referred to as “near-vulnerable” (group in dot-line rectangle).

#### Recommendations:

**To address the above risk, where budget allows, the project should cover the group of households that are just above the “vulnerable” group that RRPM defines** – based on the in PMT score ranking<sup>53</sup> (the group recommended for extended CCT coverage is hereinafter referred to as “near-vulnerable” in this Rapid ESA). The benefit of the extended CCT coverage is multi-fold. It helps:

- **Reduce the likelihood of grievance** (and resulting mistrust) of the near-vulnerable group (the group just above PMT-defined vulnerable group);
- **Reduce the inherent vulnerability of ethnic minority households** who live in remote area, and/or areas prone to natural disasters and economic shocks, etc.;
- **Enhance the resilience of the “near-vulnerable”**, thereby reducing the risk of them falling down into “vulnerable”, or even “poor” group;

<sup>52</sup> The sixth Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey that was implemented between June 2018 and May 2019 with full funding from the Government of Laos.

<sup>53</sup> Grosh *et al* (2022) suggested that in case where budget is sufficient to cover the poor, it should start with a budget that is sufficient **at least to serve all those who are poor plus any nonpoor people** who are in the program by design or due to errors in eligibility assessment. In this case, reducing errors of exclusion is vital to ending poverty and realizing the principle of nondiscrimination as articulated in the human rights frameworks, but the ability to do so is not rationed by the budget, only by potential deficiencies in the delivery system or eligibility determination mechanism. Reducing errors of inclusion may reduce costs or improve the program’s reputation, but with a budget already sufficient to serve all the poor, it will not map directly into reducing errors of exclusion.

- **Reduce discrimination** – by increasing inclusion (through reducing arbitrary nature of PMT scoring and addressing one key PMT shortcoming (not good at predicting vulnerability from shocks)<sup>54</sup>;
- **Foster sustainable adoption of improved nutrition practices of the all CCT beneficiary at PDO level**, which includes the “poor”, “vulnerable”, and “near-vulnerable”.

Where possible, consider using additional qualitative variables that represent key sources of vulnerability (based on factors that are poverty induced and risk induced)<sup>55</sup>;

Improve communication strategy to promote transparency of the PMT methods and minimize the grievances from those who are not qualified as CCT beneficiaries

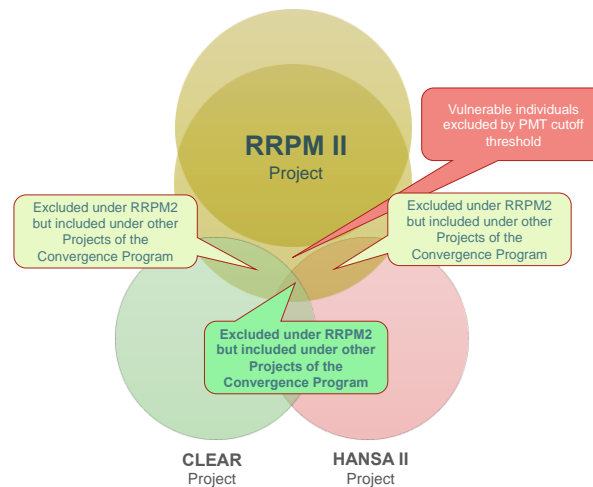
Consideration should be made to divert relevant benefits from other convergence projects to the “near-vulnerable” households to leverage the shortage of resources for CCT under RRMP2 for vulnerable group who are above threshold for vulnerability. The risk of exclusion of “near-vulnerable” group could be minimized by maximizing the inclusion of potential vulnerable group under RRMP2 into other projects of the convergence program. The outcome of the above approach could be achieved through:

- Identifying those who are a) **neediest** and the impacts on poverty and other dimensions of welfare would be greatest, and/or b) those who are those at greatest risk of adverse events (e.g. flash flood) and/or bad outcomes from them<sup>56</sup>;
- Those who have **limited access** to productive land, labor, and/or single source of income (e.g. income is generated from farming activities only).
- The above could be supported under CLEAR, for instance, by a set of income generation activities such as improved access to agricultural extension knowledge, agricultural infrastructures, and loans, and so forth;
- Enhance IEC activities to raise awareness/ understanding of the potential excluded groups and community at large to maintain the community cohesion and enhance the sense of local ownership of project activities

<sup>54</sup> Grosh *et al* 2022 noted that PMT models are designed to identify chronic poverty and low incomes based on proxies that are fixed or change only slowly over time, such as housing quality and demographics. Nevertheless, PMT have some shortcomings: a) PMT models are not designed to identify households after they suffer a shock (but more effectively in selecting persistently poor households), b) PMT models are usually NOT GOOD at predicting vulnerability to poverty from shocks whereas chronic poor people are often more vulnerable to falling back to poverty if they experience shocks (as they typically live in more hazardous places, such as places in remote, mountainous area that make them more vulnerable to climate change, and work in more jobs with significantly varied income level. They also have less ability to cope with shocks when they happen.

<sup>55</sup> Grosh *et al* 2022 (p. 408) suggested that sources of vulnerability could be identified based on factors that are poverty induced and risk induced. Grosh *et al* argued that it is important to be able to predict vulnerability to shocks before they happen as this can help guide programs such as insurance or incentives to use insurance or other risk-management strategies. They also suggested that getting support out quickly through existing social assistance programs when a shock first happens is a good strategy (even when the authorities have not yet identified the most affected people). The reason why sources of vulnerability should be taken into account because vulnerability is forward looking (ex-ante), vis-a-vis classification of households as being poor (backward looking (or ex-post

<sup>56</sup> “Grosh, Margaret; Leite, Phillippe; Wai-Poi, Matthew; Tesliuc, Emil. 2022. Revisiting Targeting in Social Assistance : A New Look at Old Dilemmas. Human Development Perspectives;. Washington, DC: World Bank.



### 3.6.2.3 Risk of misuse of CCT payment

From the consultation with beneficiary from Oudomxay province, it is noted that:

- When their children are sick, parents are likely to use part of CCT money to buy medicine for their children;
- When CCT payment is a few months late (2-3 months late under RRPM I), parents may borrow money (from whatever sources) to afford medical costs for their children, particularly for family who cash are dependent on crop cultivation and are available only when crop is harvested;
- If late payment is made, beneficiary households could not afford foods for their children and may revert back to previous nutrition practices which affect their child health and increase family expenditure on medical costs which cause the family to fall back to the vicious cycle of malnutrition which affect the intended impact of CCT, and increase vulnerability to poverty of the households in the long run;

### 3.6.2.4 Limited access to market to buy necessary food for children

In area where mothers find it difficult to find foods to improve their children's diet, it is important that the mothers be supported to turn to food that could be found (e.g. from the wild nearby) or grown easily in at the back of their house (e.g. home gardening). Since RRPM II is not directly involved in promoting home gardening, providing these mothers access to technical support and training under CLEAR (convergence program) and meanwhile providing the mothers with loan access would promote home gardening that provide the family with access to essential foods such as vegetables that offer their children good source of vitamin for their daily diet. For those who have not yet afforded home gardening, they should be trained in how they can design nutritious meals for their child using the foods that are available in the immediate community and collected from the forest nearby. Local elderlies know how to make a nutritional meal for infant/children. The indigenous knowledge should be learned, and village facilitators and community mobilizers could share such traditional knowledge to benefit young mothers and their children.

## 4. Approach to Enhancing Development Effectiveness under RRPM II

As the World Bank focuses on the development effectiveness, and project's impact, it's important the following aspects be considered and mainstreamed throughout the project implementation.

- **Inclusion.** Part of Vulnerable households may be potentially left behind in a way they could not become project beneficiaries in CCT program. Given this, criteria should be developed to provide opportunities for households who meet the criteria of participation into CCT program to receive benefit from the project. Criteria should be developed and be part of the Project Operations Manual to facilitate implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The World Bank Group defines social inclusion as:

- The process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society, and
- The process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity to take part in society.

Social inclusion is an integral part of—and vital to—achieving the World Bank Group’s twin goals of ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity. To ensure the project promote social inclusion, the following aspects should be implemented carefully and consistently over the course of the project.

- **Consultations.** Meaningful consultations can contribute to improved design, implementation, and sustainability of development interventions. The objectives of consultation with project stakeholders, particularly with project beneficiaries include receiving input for improved decision-making about the design and implementation arrangements of a development project, to contribute to improved results and sustainability. In this context, consultations can potentially give voice to the needs of different target groups, including vulnerable and marginalized groups; improve risk management by identifying opportunities and risks from and to a project (World Bank, 2012b); and increase transparency, public understanding, and citizen involvement in development decision-making. Consultations with key stakeholders also including project-affected people and civil societies. While consultations are frequently used during World Bank project preparation, engagement is less systematic during implementation.

The Bank suggested that consultation should start with clear subject and purpose, adequate stakeholder representation and methods of consultation, and disclosure of and timely access to understandable, relevant, and objective information and documentation. Meaningful consultations also require stakeholder identification and analysis, including due consideration of representativeness and inclusion of women, disadvantaged, vulnerable groups, ethnic minority peoples. In addition, safeguard policies require adequate documentation of consultations as part of the project documentation. Consultation should also be informed well ahead of the event to enable participants to prepare themselves.

Governments need to make relevant information available to citizens in accessible and understandable formats, and to build the capacity and systems to provide adequate responses to citizen feedback. Citizens need to acquire minimum skills to engage, and they need to be interested in the issue.

- **Information disclosure.** Open access to information does automatically lead to participation and impact, which also depend on such context factors as enabling legislation and grassroots activism. Information formats and activities need to be part of the design of citizen engagement processes and be based on an understanding of the target audience. Project information will be posted at community centers as well as disseminated through community meetings to ensure farming households who are potential beneficiaries of the project could study and participate as they wish. The Bank will ensure people in the project area have access to project’s information to determine how they participate in the project activities. As a good practice, the Bank’s suggested that the

information provided be relevant (responsive to citizens' interests), timely (sufficient notice), and understandable (language, format, and local context).

- **Languages.** Ethnic minority groups may be potentially excluded simply because the language used during information sessions, consultation meetings, trainings, project planning sessions are not in the language that they use on a daily basis. According to World Bank (2013, Inclusion Matters), language is an important aspect of identity and claim to political and cultural space. Language can thus be an important driver of both exclusion and inclusion. Thus, consideration should be given to frequent use of local languages during consultation, meetings, and trainings with the participation of ethnic minority groups.
- **Sociocultural norms.** Social norms can considerably affect that way men and women participate in training. Social norms contributes to establishing farming practices. Thus, changing a current farming practice mean changing a social norm that is deeply rooted in one's belief system, which may affect farmers' social network that is close to them, such as their family members, relatives, friends, neighbors, their business partners. Women in Laos spend remarkable amount of time doing house chore and farm works. They are considered appropriate more for the household role. As such, more men (than women) attend an event (meetings, trainings, etc.) outside their home. Under the project, depending on the training topics, women should be encouraged to participate as they apply the knowledge to make a joint decision with their husband.
- **Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM).** GRMs are increasingly recognized as a means to address complaints early on and manage risks in project preparation and implementation before they escalate providing multiple channels for soliciting complaints; registering complaints in a log; publishing timely and service standards for acknowledgement, response, and resolution; and ensuring transparency about the grievance procedure as well as options for mediation and appeal. The Law on Handling of Petitions launched in 2015 sets out principles, requirements and process of establishment, scope of responsibility of grievance redress institutions ranging from a village mediation unit or committee (VMU/C), District Office of Justice in consultation with concerned agencies (DAFO) and Provincial Court or Provincial Assembly recently established under the new GoL in 2016 for addressing grievances that may be raised by local citizen. The capacity of existing local and national institutions established to address grievances associated with the project also needs to be strengthened.
- **Gender Mainstreaming.** Women play important roles in behavior change, particularly in nutrition practices. However, most of the time and effort they made usually go unnoticed. By having women participating more in capacity development activities, particularly in nutrition activities and relevant SBCC, women can improve nutrition practices for their children, and family's nutritional status.