

**Final review**

**Lao PDR Decent Work Country  
Programme (DWCP)**

**2017-2021**

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CO	Country Office
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
DWT	Decent Work Team
ICT	information and communications technology
ILC	International Labour Conference
ILO	International Labour Organization
LDC	Least Developed Country
LFS	labour force survey
LFTU	Lao Federation of Trade Unions
LMI	labour market information
LNCCI	Lao Chamber of Commerce and Industry
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MoLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MOU	memorandum of understanding
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
MoIC	Ministry of Industry and Commerce
MoLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MRC	Migrant Worker Resource Centre
MSMEs	micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
NGO	non-governmental organization
NHI	National Health Insurance
NHIB	National Health Insurance Bureau
NPA	National Plan of Action
NRES	National Rural Employment Strategy
NSEDP	National Socio-Economic Development Plan
NSPS	National Social Protection on Strategy
PES	public employment services
OSH	occupational safety and health
RBM	results-based management
RBSA	Regular Budget Supplementary Account
ROAP	Regional Office for Asia-Pacific
SHP	Social Health Protection
TRIANGLE	Tripartite Action for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers
TSC	Tripartite Steering Committee
TTC-IR	Technical Committee on Industrial Relations
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNRC	UN Resident Coordinator
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1.1 Overview

The Lao PDR Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) 2017-2021 provides a five-year framework for cooperation between the ILO Office and the national constituents (the Lao PDR Government and employers' and workers' organizations). The document was co-developed through an intensive process of consultations between the ILO Office and its national constituents during 2016 and early 2017. The DWCP represents the joint commitments of the ILO Office and the tripartite partners to support the implementation of targeted components of relevant national and international development frameworks with respect to progressing the Decent Work Agenda in Lao PDR.

The review was conducted during July to October 2021 by a team consisting of an international team leader and a national team member. A mixed method qualitative/quantitative approach was followed. In light of the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, a blend of online and direct interaction with DWCP stakeholders in Lao PDR was employed.

The main purpose of the review was DWCP performance improvement and learning. In this context, the review assessed DWCP performance to date; challenges and opportunities experienced during implementation; priority areas for the next five-year country programme; and lessons learned for future DWCP development, planning and implementation purposes. The review covered the period of the DWCP implementation from June 2017 to September 2021, encompassing both national and provincial localities and governance structures within which the programme operates.

Key elements of the landscape within which the review was conducted included the ongoing impacts of COVID-19; the commitment of the Government of Lao PDR to implementation of its Road Map for SDGs achievement (reflected in country's new 5-year 9<sup>th</sup> National Social and Economic Development Plan, NSEDP, 2021-2025); and the finalization of the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Lao PDR, 2022-2026, as part of the global reform of the UN Development System.

## 1.2 Findings by review criteria

### 1.2.1 Relevance

The design and implementation of the DWCP was found to be highly relevant in the Lao PDR context. It (i) aligned closely in design and implementation with national, regional and global policies, strategies and plans; (ii) adapted effectively and transparently to changing circumstances, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic; and (iii) demonstrated in practice the comparative advantages of the ILO at country level. With respect to attention to cross-cutting policy drivers, social dialogue and tripartite cooperation were generally seen by the ILO national constituents as strong and distinctive aspects of ILO's role performance in Lao PDR, despite the constraints caused by COVID-19. Step-by-step progress was made towards the establishment of a high-level National Tripartite Labour Committee<sup>1</sup> and associated sub-committee in 2021. Progress was also made with respect to ratification of international labour standards, with agreement by the Lao PDR Government to ratify OSH conventions C.155 and C.187 during 2021.

While DWCP implementation demonstrated some good examples of addressing gender equality concerns, including in areas where women's priorities were primary such as the garment sector and cash transfers for mothers and infants, scope remains to strengthen attention to gender mainstreaming across all areas, including supporting increased women's voice, representation and leadership within the world of work. Likewise, there is a need to give greater explicit attention to inclusion of persons with disability and other vulnerable groups in the next DWCP design.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Tripartite Labour Committee, once established, will be the formal and regularized high-level mechanism for discussion of all labour related issues. The existing Technical Tripartite Committee on Industrial Relations (established in 2010) operates at the technical level, although high level tripartite meetings have been held.

Environmental sustainability and climate change impacts were given explicit attention within the design and implementation of the ILO's engagement on rural employment. However, considerably stronger attention is needed to the integration of these issues into the design and implementation of the next DWCP across all areas. Finally, although not explicitly stated as a cross-cutting issue in the DWCP, addressing the priorities and needs of informal women and men workers was in practice a key focus of DWCP implementation, particularly with respect to rural employment and social protection.

The review further found that the core programmatic priorities and partnerships of the current DWCP should carry forward into the next country programme, based as they are on long term systemic change agendas which transcend individual DWCPs. At the same time, the strategic focus and long-term impact of the programme can further be strengthened by an overarching prioritization in context of COVID-19 post recovery in the following areas: (i) increasing rural employment in line with the National Rural Employment Strategy (NRES); (ii) expanding social protection coverage, systems and effectiveness in line with the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS); (iii) prioritising the priorities and needs of informal women and men workers in all spheres; and (iv) supporting Lao PDR's LDC graduation in 2026.

### **1.2.2 Coherence**

The DWCP design and implementation was found to be overall coherent with the targets in SDGs 1, 4, 5 and 8 in particular, although the timing of the development and adoption of the DWCP meant that it was not possible for the relevant indicators in the SDG Global Indicator Framework to be incorporated. These were adopted by the UN General Assembly on 6 July 2017, after the signing of the DWCP on 30 May 2017. Although there is room for ongoing improvement, the programme was further found to be generally coherent with those of the Lao PDR Government and ILO social partners in relevant areas (building on the extensive consultations with all relevant parties in DWCP design), and with engagements in Lao PDR of the wider UN system and other international development partners. With respect to internal ILO dynamics and coherence, while there are good examples of linkages and synergies across programme areas, scope was identified for further strengthening of these in the next DWCP.

### **1.2.3 Effectiveness**

The programme was found to be overall effective. It achieved good results overall in difficult circumstances. 84 percent of targets were found to be achieved, on track for achievement or partially achieved, with useful lessons learned about assumptions made in programme design. An impressive research and publications output was achieved, although dissemination and ensuring effective use remains a challenge. The quality of partnerships and levels of trust with constituents and other stakeholders were found to be consistently high.

The ILO's engagement within the UNCT is widely recognized as effective and highly valued, reflected in the increased leadership role of the ILO under the UNSDCF 2022-2026. The DWCP governance process through the Tripartite Steering Committee and M&E Working Group has been affected by the impact of COVID-19 on the ability to meet and the pressure of other priorities, but it remains a core foundation of DWCP effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Attention to re-energizing and streamlining the governance process is recommended in the next five-year period. Finally, an adequate level of monitoring and evaluation has been maintained, with evaluations conducted in the major programmatic focus areas. Attention to the early development of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEAL) plan is recommended under the next DWCP, with an explicit and strategically planned approach to the learning aspects.

### **1.2.4 Efficiency**

The programme is found to be efficient overall in terms of use of human and financial resources. It is effectively and transparently managed and coordinated to deliver results in an economic and timely way. Partnerships are effectively developed and leveraged to contribute to DWCP results in particular areas. The resource mobilization target for the DWCP was exceeded and considerable resources have already been mobilized for ongoing work carrying forward into the next DWCP.



Two particular issues remain to be addressed however. The first issue is a concern conveyed by several stakeholders about delays in financial transfers, as well as about associated payment modalities. An examination of the steps involved in the transfer chain indicates that (i) there are at least three potential delay points and (ii) there is a lack of clarity among stakeholders about the steps and requirements. There is thus a need for better availability of information about requirements at different stages and for ensuring that partners have the necessary capacities to facilitate the process at their end. The second issue concerns the pressures on the ILO Joint Projects Office in Lao PDR of a greatly increased workload, including at representational, resource mobilization and UNSDCF leadership levels. These pressures have been magnified in the COVID-19 pandemic context due to the constraints on the ability of ILO Country Office staff and regional specialist staff to visit Lao PDR. These two issues were also raised in the last DWCP review in Lao PDR and require urgent attention.

### **1.2.5 Impact**

As also highlighted in the next section on sustainability, a long-term timeframe transcending several DWCPs is required to maximize the impacts of initiatives with national partners to realize the Decent Work Agenda, labour rights and locally driven social dialogue as a core form of interaction and cooperative interaction between constituents.

In the absence to date of impact assessments and use of tools such as tracer studies, the assessment of DWCP impact in this context is a challenge – e.g. changes in lives and performance as a result of new policies, laws and strategies, as well as institutional and technical capacity development. It is still possible however to identify evidence of impact in some areas – e.g. increased rural employment in coffee and chicken production as well as motor cycle repair in Sekong Province; reduction of industrial accidents in the garment and coffee sectors; MSME development through access to affordable bank loans; and improved nutrition and health for mothers and children in 1,000 villages due benefits of a pilot cash transfer scheme.

As a high-level effect, it is also possible to discern increased ownership of the ILO normative agenda by the tripartite constituents, which is in turn related to impact.

In light of the challenges identified, it is proposed that (i) a thematic review be conducted of capacity development initiatives under the DWCP in order to identify success factors, lessons and recommendations for improving impact; and (ii) data availability be increased through stepped-up support to the LSB (especially for labour force surveys) and the statistical unit as MoLSW.

### **1.2.6 Sustainability**

The likelihood of net benefits of DWCP implementation being sustained in the medium to longer term is variable. There are good examples of sustainability emerging from the current DWCP, as well as areas where sustainability is not yet assured and ongoing attention is needed in the next DWCP period. This in turn recognizes that the Decent Work Agenda is a long-term one that can transcend two or more DWCPs in particular areas.

Key factors in sustainability demonstrated during DWCP implementation include national ownership and financing (progressive increases of national budget support over time is an important factor in this regard); the role of DWCP governance at national level; embedding decent work norms and labour standards in national policies, laws, strategies and plans; sustainably strengthening institutional and technical capacities; building sustainability planning into programme and project design; monitoring and managing risks; and sustaining benefits for women and vulnerable groups

## **1.3 Lessons learned**

Several lessons were identified by the desk review and stakeholder consultations to inform the design and implementation of the next DWCP. Key among these are:

- National ownership and commitment is the foundation of successful and sustainable DWCP implementation. Inter alia this requires working with a long-term perspective; promoting mutual respect; investment of the necessary time and resources into effective partnerships; being realistic about what can be progressed within existing human and financial resources.
- Broadening partnerships beyond the tripartite constituents, including within the wider Lao PDR government system, and the National Assembly, can be a crucial contributor to sustaining DWCP interventions. Strengthening engagement with the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) is an important priority in this context.
- While the ILO has provided significant capacity strengthening support to its constituents and partners over many years, the significant gaps that remain indicate a need for more systematic and long-term approaches.
- Enhancing information sharing, synergies and mutual reinforcement among DWCP projects is crucial for promoting greater efficiency and impact in country programme implementation.
- An increased focus on strategically targeted support to strengthening constituent and other stakeholder capacities for the collection and analysis of labour market information will both address significant gaps and contribute to evidence-based policy advocacy and development.
- Increasing private sector engagement through the LNCCI role within the DWCP Tripartite Steering Committee, as well as through LNCCI and direct private sector involvement in programme, project and activity design is a vital factor for leveraging resources and skills for sustainable DWCP implementation.

## 1.4 Recommendations

### Recommendation 1. Further enhance the relevance of the next DWCP by:

- 1.1 Strengthening overall focus and prioritization of effort:** Recognizing the inclusion of the Decent Work Agenda and of the ILO's specific mandate within the UNSDCF, particularly under Priority 2, place an overarching focus within the next DWCP on (i) contributing to Lao PDR COVID-19 recovery efforts; (ii) increasing rural employment in line with the National Rural Employment Strategy (NRES); (iii) expanding social protection coverage, systems and effectiveness in line with the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS); (iv) prioritising the priorities and needs of informal women and men workers in all spheres; and (v) supporting Lao PDR's LDC graduation in 2026.

**Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office and constituents, with DWCP drafting team. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** Low, related to DWCP consultancy costs.

- 1.2 Carrying forward long-term priorities and programming which are making a difference and contribute to the above:** In the context of the above overarching priorities, the next DWCP should further build on and carry forward long established decent work priorities, programmes and partnerships in the following areas:

<i>ratification, implementation, monitoring and reporting of international labour standards</i>	<i>transition from informal to formal economy and decent employment creation, including MSME and entrepreneurship development</i>
<i>reform of legal frameworks in the areas of OSH, skills development, labour protection, employment and social welfare</i>	<i>strengthening constituent capacities for national policy engagement, social dialogue and provision of membership services</i>

<i>TVET / skills development in response to labour market requirements</i>	<i>labour market information collection, analysis and dissemination</i>
<i>strengthening tripartite and bipartite social dialogue mechanisms and processes, including their contribution to national policy and decision making</i>	<i>evidence-based and regularized minimum wage setting</i>
<i>working conditions and OSH</i>	<i>migrant labour rights, protection and reintegration</i>
<i>private sector development, productivity and competitiveness</i>	<i>elimination of child labour by 2025</i>

**Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office, constituents, and other national stakeholders according to the focus area. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** High overall in line with the respective project / activity requirements in each case.

**1.3 Promoting inclusive participation in social dialogue mechanisms and processes:** In supporting the establishment and functioning of the new high-level National Tripartite Labour Committee in Lao PDR, pay particular attention to practical measures to support (i) the voice, representation and leadership by women and informal workers; and (ii) participation of other key governmental ministries and agencies with a key role with respect to decent work promotion. Such attention should further apply as relevant to social dialogue mechanisms and processes in all areas and at all levels.

**Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office and constituents. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** Low.

**1.4 Conducting an independent review of tripartite and bipartite social dialogue mechanisms and processes in Lao PDR:** Such review would provide an assessment and recommendations in areas including the effectiveness, impact, sustainability and inclusiveness of such mechanisms and processes at national and provincial levels, as well as their contribution to national policy making and decision making.

**Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office and constituents, with ROAP/RPS support. **Priority:** Medium. **Resource need:** Low, related to the cost of employing external expertise and consultation costs.

**1.5 Strengthening attention in DWCP design, implementation and monitoring to cross-cutting policy drivers:** Ensure performance expectations are clear and explicit in DWCP and project outcomes, outputs, indicators, targets and risk/mitigation analysis. Particular prioritization should be given in this context to gender equality and women's empowerment; non-discrimination and leaving nobody behind; and environmental sustainability.

**Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office and constituents, with DWCP drafting team. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** Low, related to DWCP consultancy costs.

## **Recommendation 2. Strengthen DWCP coherence with UN engagement in Lao PDR, as well as internally across DWCP programmes and projects, by:**

**2.1 Proactively contributing to the UN delivering as one:** Prioritize proactive joint planning and cooperation with UNCT counterparts within the UNSDCF, including support for and promotion of UN joint programme approaches, where relevant and feasible, in the design and implementation of the DWCP 2022-2026.

**Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office and constituents, with DWCP drafting team. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** Low, related to DWCP consultancy costs.

- 2.2 Strengthening linkages and mutual reinforcement between DWCP projects/activities and (i) larger national priorities and outcomes and (ii) other DWCP projects and activities within Lao PDR:** Measures to this end should include explicit cross-referencing in project and M&E design; including within results frameworks; and annual work plan for DWCP implementation which both sets out and integrates the contributions from all projects (donor and RB-funded) towards overall national, UNSDCF and DWCP priorities and outcomes.

**Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office and constituents, with DWCP drafting team. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** Low, related to DWCP consultancy costs.

**Recommendation 3: Further improve the effectiveness of DWCP design and delivery in Lao PDR by:**

- 3.1 Strengthening the theory of change:** Based on the content and model set out in the UNSDCF 2022-2026, with participation by constituents to the degree possible.

**Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office and constituents, with DWCP drafting team. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** Low, related to DWCP consultancy costs.

- 3.2 Continuing to support sustainable development of constituents' institutional and technical capacities at national and provincial levels:** Approaches should be based on regular needs assessment; iterative and long-term approaches which consolidate and apply learning; continuous review, monitoring and learning; use of local language in verbal interactions and written material; and directly adding value in specific strategic areas such as social dialogue, policy engagement, international labour standards, social protection promotion, OSH, minimum wage setting, collective bargaining and social partner membership services (refer also to recommendation 5.1).

**Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office, with constituents. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** Dependent on particular projects and activities developed to support LDC graduation.

- 3.3 Thoroughly testing the assumptions which underpin DWCP programme, project and activity design:** Ensure that assumptions (i) are clearly and carefully identified (ii) well-grounded in actual institutional capacities; and (iii) take account of other potentially conflicting priorities at all levels. Further (i) ensure that reliable data sources exist or can be developed to provide a basis for monitoring, evaluation, and continuous learning; and (ii) promote an adaptive management approach which proactively responds to changing circumstances and understandings.

**Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office, with constituents. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** Low.

- 3.4 Continue to strengthen the DWCP M&E and learning system:** Develop a MEAL plan early in the next DWCP period which (i) identifies strategic evaluation and review priorities, including the thematic evaluation of capacity development under recommendation 5.1 and the review of tripartite and bipartite social dialogue mechanisms and approaches under recommendation 1.4; (ii) explicitly builds learning opportunities into project design and implementation; and (iii) links with relevant evaluation and learning processes under the UNSDCF and NESDP 9.

**Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office, with constituents and named other stakeholders. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** Dependent on particular projects and activities developed to support LDC graduation.

#### **Recommendation 4. Enhance the efficiency and transparency of ILO operations in Lao PDR by:**

**4.1 Improving the speed and transparency of ILO disbursements:** Explore ways to speed-up the transfer of payments for activities under the DWCP, including through (i) training and other capacity support as necessary for partners on payment and accountability requirements as a routine part of every programme/project design and implementation; (ii) ensuring transparent up-to-date information is available on the ILO and Lao Government payment processes and requirements so that all parties have common knowledge and understandings; and (iii) examining with UNCT counterparts the possibility of developing consistent grant disbursement criteria and procedures across the UN system in Lao PDR.

***Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office and ILO Country Office, in consultation with the relevant Lao Government counterparts and partners. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** Low.*

**4.2 Strengthening the capacity of the ILO Joint Projects Office in light of increasing demands:** In recognition of the increased representational, resource mobilization and staff management responsibilities of the National Coordinator role, as well as increased programme coordination and M&E requirements, consider (i) the addition of a national M&E officer within the core staff team; (ii) upgrading the classification of the National Coordinator role; and (iii) increasing external communications capacity.

***Implementer(s):** ILO Country Office, ROAP and Geneva HQ. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** Low/medium, related to salary cost of upgraded position and addition of one national officer.*

#### **Recommendation 5: Strengthen the longer-term impact of DWCP programmes and projects by:**

**5.1 Better understanding the constraining and enabling factors of capacity development engagement in Lao PDR in order to improve systemic impact:** Conduct a thematic evaluation of DWCP institutional and technical capacity development efforts under the DWCP in order to (i) identify factors which constrain and hinder sustained impact; (ii) identify and promote good practices; and (iii) make recommendations to improve long term sustainable results (refer recommendation 3.2).

***Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office with constituents, selected other partners, with ROAP/RPS support. **Priority:** Medium. **Resource need:** Low/medium related to employment of independent expertise.*

**5.2 Strengthening the ILO's role in (i) Lao PDR Government / development partner strategic dialogues and (ii) UNSDCF leadership:** Invest the necessary resources at ROAP and Country Office levels to ensure selective and influential ILO engagement in (i) the annual national Lao PDR / development partner Roundtable meetings; (ii) prioritized associated sector working groups; (iii) the joint leadership role (with UNICEF) of UN activity under Priority 2 of the UNSDCF; and (iv) prioritized UNCT working groups.

***Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office, ROAP and Country Office. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** Low, dependent on travel and CO staff and DWT specialist time.*

#### **Recommendation 6. Enhance the longer-term sustainability of DWCP results by:**

**6.1 Strengthening ILO constituent engagement in UNSDCF processes and activities:** Continue to facilitate and support direct engagement by ILO constituents within all relevant consultative and planning opportunities under the UNSDCF, in order to ensure that (i) employers' and workers' organization have a stake in the wider UN effort and (ii) their voices and perspectives are increasingly visible and influential across UN engagement in Lao PDR.

**Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office with constituents, in liaison with the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** Low.

- 6.2 Bringing great continuity and coherence to ILO constituent capacity development:** Jointly develop 5-year capacity development strategies for each of MoLSW, LNCCI and LFTU in order to strengthen impact and ensure sustainability of capacity development initiatives, supported by annual activity and resourcing plans. Link such planning to the respective relevant constituent strategic planning documents.

**Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office and constituents. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** Low.

- 6.3 Putting preparations for Lao PDR's LDC graduation in 2026 at the centre of DWCP's theory of change and programming strategies:** In this context prioritize (i) sustained attention to the ratification and implementation of international labour standards related to international trade requirements (particularly the EU GSP+); (ii) working closely to this end with ILO constituents, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the National Assembly, the Ministry of Planning and Investment, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; (iii) development of a multi-year ratification strategy and plan which takes LDC graduation into account; (iv) strengthening the availability of labour-related data to inform evidence-based long-term policy development and planning through more regular labour force surveys (including time use-modules); and (v) strengthening the relevant statistical capacities of the Lao Statistics Bureau and the MoLSW statistics unit.

**Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office, with constituents and named other stakeholders. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** Dependent on particular projects and activities developed to support LDC graduation.

- 6.4 Making exit strategies and sustainability planning core components of programme and project design:** Include joint consideration with partners of exit strategies and sustainability planning from the beginning of programme and product development. This should include (i) long-term planning for increased step-by-step national budget commitments where relevant and (ii) development of a sustainability plan as a product of all project activity.

**Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office, with ILO partners. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** Low.

- 6.5 Further strengthening constituent ownership and leadership of DWCP governance:** Measures to this end should include (i) full and proactive engagement by constituents in the next DWCP development, oversight and implementation; (ii) ensuring alignment with constituents' own priorities, planning and capacities; (iii) ensuring greater regularity of meetings of the Tripartite Steering Committee (TSC), at least 6-monthly; (iv) reviewing and (as necessary) adjusting the DWCP monitoring framework as a standard agenda item in TSC meetings; (v) rotating the TSC chair role among constituents; (vi) re-energizing the M&E Working Group as a technical platform which supports and feeds into the TSC; (vii) ensuring active participation by MPI at all levels as a DWCP signatory; and (viii) adjusting the TSC Terms of Reference to enable the TSC to act as an overall project advisory body, with smaller tripartite technical task teams providing coordination and guidance at individual project level. The latter would report to meetings of the TSC.

**Implementer(s):** ILO Joint Projects Office and constituents. **Priority:** High. **Resource need:** Low.

## 2. COUNTRY BACKGROUND

**COVID-19 sets back development trajectory:** As of 25 September 2021, Lao PDR had recorded 21,527 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 16 deaths (Lao Phattana News), with the country undergoing a third national lockdown following a resurgence of the virus. Until the recent upsurge, the impact of the pandemic



had been largely socio-economic as domestic and regional supply chains and trade collapsed. Of Lao PDR's total population of 7.1 million, almost half a million people are estimated to have lost their jobs, pushing large numbers back into poverty and further exacerbating pre-existing inequalities. As a result, the COVID-19 pandemic has put at risk Lao PDR's hard-won development gains of the last decade and hinders its progress towards the SDGs and its ambitions for upper middle income status. The SDGs most likely to be highly negatively affected goals 1, 2, 3, 8 and 10.<sup>2</sup>

A multi-agency assessment of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on returnee migrant workers in Lao PDR<sup>3</sup> further found that the pandemic had aggravated gender inequalities concerning unpaid care work, discriminatory behaviours (especially towards migrant returnees) and potential risks of gender-based violence. It also indicated that access to and the provision of social security support for workers to cope with the pandemic are very limited. When workers have social protection coverage, it was found that the level of benefits received in practice is very low. Overall, families in rural areas and women were found to be most affected by the negative impacts of the pandemic.

**National development policy framework:** The DWCP responded to and supported implementation of the Lao PDR Vision 2030 and the SDGs; the Lao PDR Social-Economic Development Strategy 2016-2025, the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) and a range of national relevant laws, policies, strategies and plans. Key objectives of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSED (2016-2020) were poverty reduction, graduation from LDC status (now targeted for 2026), effective management and use of natural resources and strong regional and international integration.

LDC graduation remains a core focus within the 9<sup>th</sup> NSED (2021-2025) which will underpin the design of the next DWCP. The 9<sup>th</sup> NSED is structured around six outcomes: (1) continuous quality, stable, and sustainable economic growth; (2) improved quality of human capital with (*inter alia*) abilities to meet development needs; (3) a skilled workforce with improved skills, secure employment and higher incomes, capable of meeting the demands of socio-economic development; (4) environmental protection and natural disaster risk reduction; (5) robust infrastructure development and active engagement in regional and international cooperation and integration; and (6) efficient public administration, and equal, just, and protected society following the direction of effective and strict rule of law. Across all outcomes, the 9<sup>th</sup> NSED aims to guide national development that is quality, green, sustainable and focused.

Within this national framework, Lao PDR's first UN Sustainable Development Cooperation framework (UNSDCF), 2022-2026 sets out the directions and basis for a greatly enhanced level of UN overall focus, coordination and collaboration at country level. The UNSDCF Strategic Priorities are SP1 - people's wellbeing; SP2 - inclusive prosperity (led jointly by the ILO and UNICEF, work in this area includes transition after LDC graduation; social protection; private sector development and trade; and skills development); SP3 - governance and rule of law; and SP4 – environment climate change and resilience. The next DWCP will be integrated within this broader framework.

A number of key considerations are relevant in this context to the design of the next DWCP. To meet its

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<sup>2</sup> Sustainable Development Solutions Network. (30 June 2020). Sustainable Development Report 2020: The Sustainable Development Goals and Covid-19.

<sup>3</sup> Oxfam et al. Covid-19 impact assessment: Socio-economic Impacts on Returnee Migrant Workers in Lao PDR. (December 2020). Participating partners included Oxfam in Laos, GRET in collaboration with the Bamboo and Non-timber forest products Development Association (BNDA) and Confluence, HELVETAS in collaboration with the Association for the Development of Women and Legal Education (ADWLE), Health Poverty Action (HPA), the joint ILO-UN Women Safe and Fair Programme, as part of the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, the Community Association for Mobilizing Knowledge In Development (CAMKID), the Informal Worker Advancement Association (IWAA) and the Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU).

development challenges and achieve the LDC graduation target, Lao PDR needs not only greater public and private investments and improved public services, but also policies that help distribute the benefits of growth more widely. Recent data<sup>4</sup> shows that income growth for those at the top end of the scale people was double that of those at the bottom end. Inclusive growth that leaves no one behind inter alia requires policies which stimulate domestic consumption, enhance social security, improve labour standards and enforcement, strengthens social dialogue and collective bargaining, and progressively improves wage and salary levels in line with productivity growth.

**Pre-COVID progress significant, but marked by increasing inequality:** Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Lao PDR's gross domestic product (GDP) had grown at a rate of between 4 per cent and 8.6 per cent for the last 25 years. Since the first Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey (LECS) in 1992/1993, poverty incidence had fallen from a 46 per cent share of the total population to 18.3% in 2018/2019. Likewise, the country's Human Development Index (HDI) had risen from 0.400 in 2000 to 0.613 in 2020. Progress in first achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and subsequently in attaining the SDGs, was encouraging.<sup>5</sup>

However, not all had equally benefited from economic growth and progress. Poverty persisted, basic services were not yet available in many districts, and inequality was increasing within urban areas, between urban and rural areas and between provinces. The high rate of economic growth was not being translated into an equally high rate of poverty reduction. For each 1 per cent of GDP increase per capita, poverty decreased only by 0.47 per cent, making Lao PDR lag in terms of capacity to transform economic growth into poverty reduction compared with neighbours like Cambodia or Viet Nam. While net enrolment in education had increased in recent years it was still much lower among the poor, particularly in levels above primary education. As a result, Lao PDR's workforce remains the least literate and numerate in South-East Asia.

**Predominance of informal employment:** High levels of workforce informality are a key feature of Lao PDR's economic and employment landscape, with significant implications for the realization of social protection and labour rights and entitlements. The 2017 Lao PDR Labour Force Survey (LFS) found that 44 percent of total rural employment at that time was in the informal sector, while the formal sector accounted for 19 percent of total rural employment.<sup>6</sup> However, informality can be found beyond the informal sector. When including informal employment outside the informal sector (in the formal sector and in households), the total informal employment rate in rural areas was as high as 88 percent. This rate was higher among rural women than men. A significant part of rural employment is furthermore of a seasonal nature, with informal rural workers employed for short periods each year in the production of coffee, tea, bananas, rubber, rice and other seasonal crops. Subsistence households are a key feature of the informal rural economy, where 67 percent of Lao PDR's population lives.<sup>7</sup> This indicates significant scope for increasing productive employment, food security and poverty reduction. The policy of the Lao Government is to progressively link such households to the mainstream (cash) economy, beyond current limited engagement when opportunities are available.

Contributing family workers accounted for almost half of employment (48 per cent), followed by own-account workers (26 per cent) and employees (25 per cent). Labour underutilization was identified by the LFS as a further key issue in Lao PDR, with rate of 33 percent in rural areas and 14 per cent in urban areas. Youth accounted for 37 percent of underutilized labour, reflecting the difficulties they face in fully taking

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<sup>4</sup> Inferred from Lao Statistics Bureau, Poverty in Lao PDR Key findings from the Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey (LECS 6), 2018-2019.

<sup>5</sup> Lao PDR Government. (September 2020). National Social Protection Strategy.

<sup>6</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. (2019). Lao Labour Force Survey, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau. (21 October 2016). Results of Population and Housing Census 2015 (English Version)



part in the labour market.<sup>8</sup>

Lao PDR is also a large source country of workers abroad, mainly to Thailand. Poverty, a lack of employment opportunities and the pull of better life elsewhere drive demand for migration. Many are in irregular employment situations, with all the risks to wellbeing and rights deficits this brings. Women migrants are particularly at higher risk due to their lower levels of education and their concentration in low-paid low-skilled occupations.

**Labour rights deficits prevalent:** Although Lao PDR has ratified a number of International Labour Conventions,<sup>9</sup> the enforcement of international labour rights and standards is generally limited across the Lao PDR workforce, with poor working conditions, low wages, and long hours prevalent in most sectors. Key contributing factors include the high levels of informal and vulnerable work; weak and under-resourced enforcement of the Labour Law and international labour standards; and the limited capacities and outreach of the Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU). As indicated below, occupational safety and health (OSH) is a particular issue, despite the existence of some elements of a national OSH legal and policy architecture.<sup>10</sup> Child labour also remains a significant issue, affecting 42 percent of children, many of whom are also not in school, according to UNICEF.

More broadly Lao PDR has ratified seven out of nine core human rights treaties and is cooperating with human rights mechanisms and bodies, accepting 160 of 226 recommendations made during the 3rd cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

**Low level of social protection coverage reinforces vulnerability of workers and families:** Recent years have seen important steps forward in the development of social protection in Lao PDR. These include (i) improved and expanded national health insurance coverage, including for informal economy workers, pregnant women and infants; (ii) improved and strengthened income protection; and (iii) expansion of social welfare assistance in areas ranging from educational support to emergency assistance and rehabilitation for disaster victims.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, it is estimated that just 10 percent of workers employed in formal workplaces in the private sector are covered by the National Social Security Fund (NSSF). For informal workers who are eligible to register with the Voluntary Social Security Scheme (VSS) under the NSSF, the coverage level is much lower. In 2018, VSS registrations accounted for only 3 per cent of total NSSF registrations, despite the high levels of informality within the workforce. By the end of 2020, only 13,076 informal workers were registered nationwide under the VSS (LSSO, 2021). Compulsory private enterprise registrations accounted for 36 per cent of all registrations; compulsory government registrations for 61 per cent. (Oxfam 2021). A number of social protection challenges underpin these low levels of participation in the social protection system. These include fiscal constraints; a lack of institutional and human resource capacity; and low levels of public awareness and employer compliance.

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<sup>8</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. (2019). Lao Labour Force Survey, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Forced Labour 1930 (No. 029); Night Work of Young Persons, 1919 (No. 6); White Lead (Painting), 1921 (No. 13); Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No. 182); Equal Remuneration, 1951 (No. 100); Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), 1958 (No. 111); Minimum Age, 1973 (No. 138); Tripartite Consultation, 1976 (No. 144); Night Work (Women), (No.4), Denounced 2014; Night Work, 1990 (No. 171). *Source*; International Labour Organization, NORMLEX Information System on International Labour Standards. Available at <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:1:0::NO:RP>:

<sup>10</sup> Relevant legislation, strategies and plans currently in place or under development are the Labour Law, 2013; National OSH Decree, 2019; Amended Law on Social Security, 2018; Chemical Management Law, 2017; Law on Hygiene, Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2001; Law on Agriculture, 1998; National Social Protection Strategy (2020); 3rd National OSH Plan and National Labour Inspection Plan.

<sup>11</sup> National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS), 2025

**OSH issues rife despite laws and policies in place:** Although some elements of a national OSH policy and legal architecture are in place,<sup>12</sup> ensuring implementation is backed-up by adequate enforcement, coordination across government agencies, resources and skills remains a critical challenge. Key issues and gaps in existing national OSH arrangements include the lack of a functional system of recording and notification of occupational fatal and non-fatal injuries and diseases; weak compliance and enforcement of laws, including the Labour and Investment Laws; lack of capacity (resources, finance, systems) at all levels; weak coordination and complementarity within government (horizontal and vertical); high levels of informal and seasonal employment workers outside the scope of OSH services; the low levels of LSSO membership in the private sector and among informal workers; and the unregulated use of hazardous chemicals in agricultural production.

**Gender inequalities persist:** Women generally occupy the lower rungs of the labour market and predominate in more vulnerable sectors of the economy. While they play a critical role in agriculture and ensuring their families' food security, women are often pushed into the informal economy and marginal livelihoods, with limited control over or access to assets and resources for income generation. Lao women on average spend 2.4 hours per day on unpaid care work, compared with 0.5 hours per day for men. This affects their ability to engage in education, training and leadership roles. While women account for more than half of the owners of newly registered SMEs, female entrepreneurs are less likely to have a bank account or credit line and face more barriers than male counterparts in accessing finance. Gender-based violence remains prevalent, with one in seven women experiencing physical or sexual violence from their partners at least once in their lifetime, many on a multiple basis.<sup>13</sup> Women with intersecting deprivations are more likely to be left behind.

**Persons with Disabilities:** Up to 14 percent of the population live with varying degrees of disabilities, many of them being survivors of accidents involving unexploded ordnances (UXOs). Despite legislative protection for the rights of persons with disabilities,<sup>14</sup> barriers in accessing services, seizing economic opportunities and skills development trainings are widespread. Women and girls with disabilities are doubly disadvantaged and stigmatized. A predominantly charity-based and medical approach to disability assessment has led to an underestimation of the number of people living with a disability and inadequate policy interventions.<sup>15</sup>

**Climate change present systemic challenges for the future:** Lao PDR is among the most vulnerable countries to projected climate change trends, as its communities face significant climate-related hazards that are exacerbated by poverty, malnourishment, and high exposure of poor and marginalized communities.<sup>16</sup>

With 74 percent of Lao PDR's population in vulnerable employment in rural areas, many of whom with seasonal jobs, addressing the impact of climate change, be it mitigation or adaptation, will be critical. The ADB and World Bank observe that significant adaptation effort is required to address reductions in yields driven by projected increases in the incidence of extreme heat during the growing season of staple crops

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<sup>12</sup> Relevant legislation, strategies and plans currently in place or under development are the Labour Law, 2013; National OSH Decree, 2019; Amended Law on Social Security, 2018; Chemical Management Law, 2017; Law on Hygiene, Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2001; Law on Agriculture, 1998; National Social Protection Strategy (2020); 3rd National OSH Plan and National Labour Inspection Plan.

<sup>13</sup> Lao National Commission for Advancement of Women and the Lao Statistics Bureau, with support from UNFPA, UN Women and WHO. (2014). Lao National Survey on Women's Health and Life Experiences.

<sup>14</sup> The Disability Law, 10 December 2018, states for example, that "Labor units, public and private organizations, as well as international organizations in Lao PDR must prioritize and create conditions for people with disabilities to apply for employment opportunity in accordance with their ability and capacity; and provide basic facilities for people with disability in work place."

<sup>15</sup> Lao PDR-United Nations. United National Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022-2026

<sup>16</sup> ADB / World Bank (16 June 2021). Climate Risk Country Profile - Lao PDR

such as rice, particularly for poorer communities operating subsistence and rain-fed agriculture.<sup>17</sup> The potential impacts will also have significant implication for health, infrastructure, poverty reduction efforts and labour migration (external and internal).

These challenges put the spotlight on Lao PDR's national policies and strategies to promote climate change adaption, green growth and disaster preparation and management, in line with its international commitments. Key in this context will be improved climate change information; long-term planning; stronger policy coordination across sectors; stronger international cooperation; taking account of implications for women, informal workers and vulnerable groups; mainstreaming relevant skills into education and training; and promoting climate resilient economic development models.

**Social dialogue and tripartite architecture:** The high-level Tripartite Committee and associated sub-committees prioritized within the current DWCP remain to be established, although steps in this direction are underway. A decree on the establishment of such a body is currently under development. In the meantime, the main national tripartite body dealing with labour and industrial relations issues is the Technical Committee on Industrial Relations (TTC-IR). This was established in 2010, the same year Lao PDR ratified C.144 on tripartite cooperation. Serviced by the MOLSW Department of Labour Management, the TTC-IR meets at least quarterly and consists of 18 members (8 from the government and five each from LFTU and LNCCI, nominated by the respective constituents. There are no formal requirements for representation of women, which is low.

In the current DWCP period, the TTC-IR has provided key inputs for the revision of minimum wages (from 900,000 LAK to 1,100,000 LAK), reform of the Social Security Law, the PM's Decree on labour disputes resolution and the PM's Decree on OSH. The committee has provided a platform for discussing COVID-19 impacts and response, as well as issues related to disputes resolution at company levels and the establishment of the new national tripartite committee. Other tripartite committees exist at provincial level with varying degrees of regularity and effectiveness; for advising and managing the Social Security Fund, and for DWCP governance (consisting of Vice-Ministerial or Presidential-level level representation of MPI, MoLSW, LNCCI and LFTU). The OSH Decree provides for the establishment of national and provincial / capital OSH committees. No formal sector tripartite bodies exist currently.

At the bipartite level, Lao Labour Law provides for consultation involving employee representatives or a majority of workers within a labour unit to finalize the acceptance of internal regulations to implement the Labour Law. The law also provides for bipartite mechanisms for OSH, collective bargaining and dispute resolution. The LFTU reports that workplace consultations occur where they have a presence, but collective bargaining remains relatively rare, particularly within the private sector. Key issues identified by an ILO regional office study of social dialogue in Lao PDR include a lack of capacity for dialogue and negotiation; lack of data to support evidence-based discussion; low levels of understanding of international labour standards; lack of capacity to deliver on agreements; and limited cooperation between employers' and workers' organizations. Issues and gaps at national level are magnified at provincial level.

### 3. BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

#### 3.1 Key components of the review

The review was conducted during July to October 2021 by a team consisting of an international team leader (Don Clarke) and a national team member (Latsany Phakdisoth).

The **main purpose** of the review was DWCP performance improvement and learning. In this context, the review assessed DWCP achievements to date; challenges and opportunities experienced during implementation; priority areas for ongoing development of constituent capacity; and lessons learned for

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid

future DWCP development, planning and implementation purposes. It further identified recommendations for consideration in developing the next DWCP, within the context of the UNSDCF.

The **scope** of the review covered the 5-year period of the DWCP implementation from 2017-2021, encompassing both national and provincial localities and governance structures within which the programme operates. It further covered the full range of DWCP interventions, including advocacy and policy advice, capacity development, technical advice, pilot activities and research, as well as the diversity of partnerships with local and international counterparts. All sources of funds (external and internal) that contributed to the delivery of DWCP outcomes and outputs were taken into account.

The **primary clients** of the review are the ILO tripartite constituents. The ILO Country Office for Thailand, Cambodia, and Lao PDR is also a key client. Other intended users include the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), the Decent Work Team (DWT) within the ROAP, EVAL within ILO HQ, and DWCP donors.

## 3.2 Analytical framework and questions

Taking the above key considerations into account, the core structure for the framework and related questions was provided by the six evaluation criteria – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability – of the OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet). These criteria provide a normative framework to determine the merit or worth of an intervention (policy, strategy, programme, project or activity) and serve as the basis upon which evaluative assessments are made. Guiding principles provided by OECD EvalNet further indicate that the criteria should (i) be applied thoughtfully to support high quality, useful evaluation; (ii) not be applied mechanistically; and (iii) be covered according to the needs of the relevant stakeholders and the context of the evaluation.

The analytical framework for the review and associated core questions are set out in Annexes 8 & 9.

## 3.3 Methodology and approach of the review

### 3.3.1 Overview

The review team used a mixed-methods approach - quantitative and qualitative, with rigorous triangulation of information. The evaluation's overall approach was guided by the principle of credibility – that is, ensuring that the best evidence available is harnessed, and that it is analysed appropriately, to generate findings, conclusions and recommendations that ILO management can feel confident acting upon.

Due to the COVID-19 situation, the international consultant was not able to travel to Lao PDR. However, the national consultant is locally based which has provided a level of direct contact and continuity to assist with local stakeholder engagement. The review team primarily conducted interviews on a virtual basis, but engaged face-to-face when possible at local level within current COVID-19 restrictions imposed by the Lao PDR Government.

The international consultant was responsible for virtual interviews with key representatives of UN counterparts, DWCP donors and ILO staff. He was also involved in high level interviews with Lao Government representatives jointly with the national consultant, thus creating a combined virtual and face to face approach. Interviews in Lao were done by the national consultant, thus avoiding interpretation challenges which otherwise could be a limitation. The review team had regular team meetings and met regularly with the ILO Coordinator in Lao PDR on planning and logistical matters. Good communication between the consultants is essential for the review to run smoothly. A Standard Table for Recording Interview Feedback has been produced for this purpose.

### 3.3.2 Data sources and collection methods

**Desk review:** The team conducted a desk review of all relevant documents provided by the ILO National Joint Projects Office in Vientiane, supplemented by additional selective research where necessary. The desk review findings inform and feed into stakeholder interviews and the national stakeholder workshop to review initial findings.

**Stakeholder interviews:** The team conducted semi-structured interviews with Lao PDR,<sup>18</sup> Bangkok and Geneva based key informants, including Lao tripartite constituents, other relevant ministries, selected UNCT members, project partners and ILO staff. The latter included specialist staff within the ILO regional Decent Work Team (DWT) and the Director and Programme Officer from the ILO Country Office for Cambodia, Lao PDR and Thailand in Bangkok. In total 70 people (30 women) were consulted. Annex 1 provides details of those consulted.

**Stakeholders' workshop:** A national stakeholder workshop was convened with support of the ILO National Joint Projects Office on 23 September 2021 to (i) review initial review findings; (ii) gather additional information from the participants in line with the review questions, and (ii) contribute to the development of evidence-based recommendations on priorities and approaches for the next DWCP, in the context of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

**Data analysis and triangulation:** The team analyzed data from all sources collected by the review through content examination, looking for patterns, categories, taxonomies and key themes. Emerging findings were tested and validated through the triangulation of multiple sources of data.

**Cross-cutting themes:** The ILO's key cross-cutting policy drivers (gender equality, non-discrimination, international labour standards, social dialogue and environmental sustainability) were reflected in the analytical framework and questions. These were a key reference within the above processes, as well as in drafting of the review report and its recommendations. Data reported by the team was disaggregated by sex to the extent possible with respect to delivery of development cooperation projects and other interventions under the DWCP.

### 3.3.3 Review management and administration

As indicated in the Term of Reference (Annex 10), the review was coordinated and managed by ILO Coordinator in Lao PDR with technical support from the Regional M&E Officer. The Country Office for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR (via the Lao National Joint Projects Office) provided the relevant programme documentation and the list of stakeholders for interview. Arrangement of key informant interviews were supported and facilitated by the Lao National Joint Projects Office and MoLSW.

### 3.3.4 Review deliverables

By the conclusion of the process, following main outputs were delivered:

- Deliverable 1: The Inception Report.
- Deliverable 2: ILO EVAL 'Diagnostic instrument to assess the evaluability of DWCPs in the context of the SDGs' – completed template.
- Deliverable 3: Draft Review Report, including findings of EVAL SDG assessment instrument.
- Deliverable 4: Final Review Report.

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<sup>18</sup> Two virtual interviews were included with selected provincial interlocutors.

### 3.3.5 Key considerations in the review process

The following two particular considerations which arose in the DWCP operational context provided key themes for review consultations:

- **Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic:** The pandemic has had considerable impacts on the implementation of the DWCP, requiring adjustments in prioritization and planning at activity delivery level and greater reliance on online communications and capacities in areas such as skills development and other training delivery, as well as communications with stakeholders throughout the country. An assessment of such impacts and how decisions on adjustments was made was part of all stakeholder consultations.
- **UN reform context:** A key development in the UN landscape for the review was the development and adoption of Lao PDR's first UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). Developed as part of the current reform of the UN Development System, the UNSDCF provides the framework for strengthened and coordinated UN cooperation in support of Lao PDR priorities, policies, strategies and plans to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

This review took account of the UNSDCF and expectations of intensified cooperation between UN agencies in this context by (i) examining the participation and influence of the Office and constituents in its formulation; (ii) ensuring it was a key reference point in seeking feedback on priorities for the next DWCP; (iii) examining current and potential collaborative arrangements with other UNCT members; and (iv) examining the flow of DWCP results and lessons into Lao PDR Government reporting on progress towards the attainment of national development priorities and the SDGs.

As note above, a particular tool in this context was the ILO EVAL 'Diagnostic instrument to assess the evaluability of DWCPs in the context of the SDGs.' In applying this tool, it was recognized that:

- (i) the approach is particularly geared to the alignment of DWCPs to the new generation of UNSDCFs as well as to national SDG implementation, monitoring and reporting
- (ii) the current DWCP is coming to the end of its timeframe just as the first Laos UNSDCF has been adopted.

Accordingly, the review applied the tool flexibly to maximize the value it can add from an SDGs perspective to the assessment of current DWCP design and implementation, as well as the design of the next DWCP.

The EVAL assessment template, completed to the degree possible in the current context, is attached in Annex 11. In particular, the tool assisted in shedding light on:

- The degree to which a clear understanding exists among the Office, constituents and other stakeholders of the linkages between the DWCP and SDG targets.
- The extent to which the current DWCP (developed soon after the adoption of the SDGs and before the development of the SDG indicators) is aligned with and reflects the relevant SDGs and targets in the Lao PDR context.
- The extent to which DWCP contributions to SDG implementation feed into and are reflected in national monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes, such as Voluntary National reports to the annual UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF).
- The role played by the ILO constituents in contributing to SDG implementation, monitoring and evaluation in Lao PDR.
- The degree of cooperation with UN agency counterparts in the context of the Lao PDR UNPF 2017-2021, and the factors which have facilitated or constrained such cooperation.
- The degree to which constituents have contributed to the formulation of the UNSDCF 2022-2026 both (i) directly in their own right and (ii) through the governance mechanism of the DWCP and engagement in UNSDCF formulation by the ILO Coordination Office.

### 3.3.6 Review limitations and issues

As noted above, managing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic was a major consideration in the design and conduct of the review. The approach adopted was the handling of the majority of in-country consultations by the National Consultant, with the International Consultant handling online English-language interviews with UN counterparts, donors and ILO staff. High-level in-country consultations (e.g. with the Vice-Minister of Labour) were conducted jointly. Notes were produced on all consultations in a standard format to facilitate a common knowledge base and shared understandings between the two consultants.

One aspect of the review which was more constrained by COVID-19 was the conduct of field visits to engage with beneficiaries outside the capital, Vientiane. Consultations were held with two provincial officials, but direct consultation with community beneficiaries was not possible. This was mitigated by drawing upon relevant available evaluation reports to provide wider stakeholder perspectives.

Data availability also posed a challenge in the assessment of certain indicators. To the extent possible, direct contact through the Lao PDR National Joint Projects Office was used to follow-up with relevant stakeholders to extract and interpret whatever data or feedback could be gathered.

As noted above, use of the ILO EVAL 'Diagnostic instrument to assess the evaluability of DWCPs in the context of the SDGs' was part of the design of this review. The focus of this assessment tool was found however to largely not fit the status and design requirements of the current DWCP vis-à-vis the recently adopted UNSDCF 2022-2026 in Lao PDR. As noted elsewhere, for example, the Global SDG Indicators Framework was not yet finalized and available when the DWCP was co-designed with constituents. The degree of close alignment and joint UN agency planning required under the UNSDCF was also largely not applicable to the same degree in 2016 when the DWCP was largely drafted. The template was thus completed to the degree possible and relevant, and contributes to the analysis which follows.

However, the standards and expectations set out in the evaluability assessment tool will be incorporated into the design of the DWCP 2022-2026, as set out in current guidance by ILO HQ. This will also draw on the early experience of DWCP development under the new requirements in Bangladesh and Vietnam.

## 4 BACKGROUND TO THE PROGRAMME

### 4.1 Overview

The Lao PDR DWCP 2017-2022 provides a five-year framework for cooperation between the ILO Office and the national constituents (the Lao PDR Government and employers' and workers' organizations). The document was co-developed through an intensive process of consultations between the ILO Office and its national constituents during 2016 and early 2017. It obtained final tripartite endorsement in Vientiane on 3 March 2017. The DWCP represents the joint commitments of the ILO Office and the tripartite partners to support the implementation of targeted components of relevant national and international development frameworks.

Implementation of the DWCP has been supported by a mix of financial and human resources from the national constituents, the ILO and development cooperation projects supported by international development partners. National constituents and the ILO Office worked together to strengthen local ownership of DWCP initiatives and outcomes and contribute to long-term sustainability and impact.

The current final phase of the DWCP coincides with three key considerations which will considerably shape both the review of implementation to date and recommendations for the next DWCP which will follow. These considerations (i) are the ongoing commitment of the Government of Lao PDR to implementation of its Road Map for SDGs achievement (reflected in country's 5-year 9<sup>th</sup> National Social and Economic



Development plan – NSEDP, 2021-2025); (ii) the finalization of the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Lao PDR (2022-2026); and (iii) the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 4.2 Key components of the DWCP 2017-2021

The Lao PDR DWCP 2017-2021 sets an overarching goal, priorities, outcomes and outputs, with associated indicators and targets (refer Table 1). These align with the Sustainable Development Goals and targets (especially SDGs 1, 4, 5 and 8); the Lao PDR Socio-Economic Development Strategy 2016-2025; the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-economic Development Plan (NSEDP); and the Lao PDR-UN Partnership Framework (UNPF) 2017-2021.

DWCP design and implementation was guided by the overall goal to increase decent work for inclusive and sustainable development in Lao PDR through employment creation, technical/vocational skills development, application of international labour standards, development of the social protection system, and social dialogue. Four critical decent work challenges provided key drivers in this context. These were (i) generating more and better jobs, including maximizing the impact of the demographic dividend in Lao PDR; (ii) addressing vulnerability through strengthening and expanding social protection; (iii) addressing inequalities, particularly gender, ethnicity, disability; and (iv) strengthening social dialogue via improved mechanisms and capacities.

Recognizing the predominant concentration of the population in rural areas and the centrality of decent and productive work to addressing poverty and promoting livelihood opportunities, the DWCP placed particular emphasis on the promotion and creation of rural employment. Strengthening tripartite cooperation and social dialogue was highlighted as a cross-cutting priority across all other aspects of the programme.

*Table 1: DWCP 2017-2021 – priorities and outcomes*

<b>DWCP Goal: Increased decent work and improved labour standards, social protection and social dialogue for inclusive and equitable development</b>		
<b>Priority 1</b> Promote employment and technical/vocational skills development in line with market demand	<b>Priority 2</b> Promote ratification and implementation of international labour standards	<b>Priority 3</b> Strengthen and expand social protection
<b>Outcome 1.1</b> Increased number of relevant policy frameworks, strategies and regulations for creating decent jobs in rural areas.	<b>Outcome 2.1:</b> Increased quality of labour standards and protection through Labour Law implementation.	<b>Outcome 3.1:</b> National Social Protection Strategy and new social transfer tax-funded programme(s) developed, adopted and implemented.
<b>Outcome 1.2:</b> Increased decent and productive employment through (i) improved matching of jobseekers and labour market requirements; (ii) entrepreneurship development for women, men and youth; and (iii) development of policy and legal instruments to support safe labour migration.	<b>Outcome 2.2:</b> Increased ratification and application of international labour Conventions.	<b>Outcome 3.2:</b> Increased access for workers and families to social protection benefits, including social health protection.
<b>Outcome 1.3:</b> Increased policy capacity, competency standards, and certification and accreditation arrangements to support promotion		



of technical/vocational skills for women, men and youth.		
<b>Cross-cutting priority 4: Strengthen tripartite cooperation and social dialogue</b>		
<b>Outcome 4.1:</b> Increased quality of mechanisms and procedures for tripartite cooperation and social dialogue	<b>Outcome 4.2:</b> Increased capacity of employers to advance Decent Work Agenda and social dialogue.	<b>Outcome 4.3:</b> Increased capacity of workers to advance Decent Work Agenda and social dialogue.

As listed in Annex 7, a number of donor-funded development cooperation projects have provided key resources and inputs for DWCP implementation

## 5 KEY FINDINGS

The following section documents and analyses progress, lessons and issues within the five guiding criteria of the review: Relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Recommendations for improvement and future prioritization, particularly within the context of the next DWCP, are included in each case.

### 5.1 Relevance (is the DWCP doing the right things?)

**Overall assessment:** The design and implementation of the DWCP was found to be highly relevant in the Lao PDR context. It (i) aligned closely in design and implementation with national, regional and global policies, strategies and plans; (ii) adapted effectively and transparently to changing circumstances, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic; and (iii) demonstrated in practice the comparative advantages of the ILO at country level. With respect to attention to cross-cutting policy drivers, social dialogue and tripartite cooperation were generally seen by the ILO national constituents as strong and distinctive aspects of ILO's role performance in Lao PDR, despite the constraints caused by COVID-19. However, capacity and resourcing gaps faced by the country's current major tripartite mechanism, the Technical Committee on Industrial Relations (TTC-IR), meant that it didn't play a major role per se as a collective entity in the COVID-19 response. At the same time, step-by-step progress was made towards the establishment of a high-level National Tripartite Committee and associated sub-committee in 2021-2022. Progress was also made with respect to ratification of international labour standards, with agreement by the Lao PDR Government to ratify OSH conventions C.155 and C.187 during 2021.

While DWCP implementation demonstrated some good examples of addressing gender equality concerns, including in areas where women's priorities were primary such as the garment sector and cash transfers for mothers and infants, scope remains to strengthen attention to gender mainstreaming across all areas, including supporting increased women's voice, representation and leadership within the world of work. Likewise, there is a need to give greater explicit attention to inclusion of persons with disability and other vulnerable groups in the next DWCP design.

Environmental sustainability and climate change impacts were given explicit attention within the design and implementation of the ILO's engagement on rural employment. However, considerably stronger attention is needed to the integration of these issues into the design and implementation of the next DWCP. Finally, although not explicitly stated as a cross-cutting issue in the DWCP, addressing the priorities and needs of informal women and men workers was in practice a key focus of DWCP implementation, particularly with respect to rural employment and social protection.

The review further found that the core programmatic priorities and partnerships of the current DWCP should carry forward into the next country programme, based as they are on long term systemic change agendas which transcend individual DWCPs. At the same, the strategic focus and long-term impact of the programme can further be strengthened by an overarching prioritization in context of COVID-19 recovery in the following areas: (i) increasing rural employment in line with the National Rural Employment Strategy (NRES); (ii) expanding social protection coverage, systems and effectiveness in line with the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS); (iii) prioritising the priorities and needs of informal women and men workers in all spheres; and (iv) supporting Lao PDR's LDC graduation in 2026.

## **Alignment with national and international policies, priorities, strategies & plans**

The design of the current DWCP drew on a detailed country diagnostic study conducted in line with ILO HQ requirements, the Common Country Assessment of the UN; an extensive consultation with national ILO constituents via a series of joint workshops and individual stakeholder meetings; a workshop with UNCT members; and interviews with a diverse range of other national and international stakeholders.

The design is specific in its alignment to selected outcomes and outputs of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP 8 as well as to SDGs 1, 4, 5, 8 (targets 8.3, 8.5, 8.7 and 8.8); the Lao PDR-UN partnership Framework (UNPF) 2017-2021 which was under development simultaneously; and a range of specified national laws, decrees, strategies and plans related to the country's commitments to the Decent Work Agenda and certain international labour standards. The DWCP design also explicitly aligned with the Vientiane Declaration on Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, 2016-2025, which underpins all international cooperation with Lao PDR national counterparts. At the regional level, the DWCP prioritized linkages with the Vientiane Declaration on Transition from Informal Employment to Formal Employment towards Decent Work Promotion in ASEAN and selected actions under the ILO's own regional Bali Declaration (2016)

At the same time, as summarized later, the DWCP contributed in specific ways to the ongoing expansion of the national policy and legal architecture related to decent work and its alignment (albeit not yet complete in all areas) with international labour standards.

All interviews with national partners, including the ILO constituents, highlighted a strong alignment between their own priorities and DWCP priorities and outcomes (and the development cooperation projects supporting these). The LFTU pointed out, for example, that the extensive consultative process to develop the current DWCP meant that their priorities were already integrated into the programme from the start. Evidence gathered from project reports and evaluations in areas such as social protection, rural employment and OSH indicated that the DWCP priorities and outcomes were further well aligned with beneficiary needs at community level.

Matters related to DWCP design and fit for purpose are further elaborated in Section 5.3 on effectiveness.

## **Adaptability to changing circumstances**

One element of relevance concerns the ability to stay relevant as circumstances and country needs change. The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly intensified pre-existing challenges in this regard. The ILO Joint Projects Office, supported by the Country Office and specialist staff based in Bangkok, demonstrated considerable flexibility and timely adaption to manage the impact of COVID-19 on programme and project management. Frequent reference was made by stakeholders, for example, to adjustments in activity delivery modalities and timeframes being made jointly and transparently with the ILO office. This included a shift to online communications for training where feasible and postponement of certain activities at local level where direct engagement was necessary. (e.g. a planned survey by LSSO of the needs of informal workers with respect to social protection access), and in cases where ILO specialist staff from Bangkok were unable to travel to Lao PDR. Low levels of digital literacy within the LNCCI and LFTU also presented challenges. These point to areas needing attention within capacity development support under the next DWCP – not just for crisis purposes as currently, but as a core component of social partner ongoing operations and communications with members and other stakeholders.

One example of COVID-19 adjustments which typified others was provided by the Department of Social Welfare within the MOLSW. The pandemic forced the repeated postponements of trainings to health centres in Phouvong District in Attapeu Province on the use of forms as part of the ILO/UNICEF/MOLSW

pilot project on unconditional cash transfer to pregnant women and infants. The district was one of three in Attapeu and Savannakhet Provinces which were selected to pilot the approach.

After consultation with the ILO office, it was agreed to provide virtual training by national department staff to colleagues at the Samanxay District Hospital in Attapeu, who had been part of the pilot for longer, who in turn directly trained the more recently involved staff in Phouvong District. The department further set-up WhatsApp groups for the involved health centres to continue exchanging information on the implementation of the pilot project.

### **ILO comparative advantage in Lao PDR**

Feedback from ILO national constituents consistently highlighted several points that distinguished the ILO's contribution to the achievement of the country's development objectives. Foremost among these were:

- Its tripartite base and facilitation of social dialogue which anchors the ILO in key sectors of society and provides an effective approach to ensuring cross sector cooperation and consensus building based on shared interests and common solutions. One interlocutor highlighted the ILO's tripartite base as a critical element in sustainability as the local constituents develop as the champions and implementers of the Decent Work Agenda in Lao PDR.
- Expertise on policy and technical matters related to the implementation of Lao PDR's international and national commitments to the Decent Work Agenda, including ratified international labour standards. Interlocutors commented on the relevance of the technical expertise brought into Lao PDR by the ILO (e.g. ILO specialists from the Decent Work Team (DWT) and regional office in Bangkok, as well as international consultants in particular areas). One key partner in the social protection field emphasised that ILO technical support is appropriate to the Lao context, and doesn't rely on a "copy and paste" approach. Such engagement continued by online means to the extent possible following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, but at a lower level.

At the same time, two prominent international partners reported perceptions that the ILO's strengths at policy level are not necessarily replicated at community level. This is a factor in the involvement of ILO and Oxfam together in the new EU-funded social protection project. The experience of this project, working with an INGO on the ground, is seen as potentially providing useful lessons for the ILO's future work.

- The ability of the ILO Joint Projects Office to facilitate links with relevant experience and counterparts in other countries, particularly within ASEAN. Approaches in this respect included participation in regional workshops and the use of expertise from Thailand (e.g. in OSH training and social protection support).
- The ability of the ILO Office in Lao PDR to build high levels of trust based on mutual respect, openness, transparency and a commitment to shared priorities and objectives. The relationship of trust and cooperation with the current Minister of Labour and Social Welfare was cited as an influential example in this context. The role of the ILO National Coordinator was frequently referred to as a significant contributing factor in this regard, along with the ability of the ILO Office to engage in Lao language.

Although not a comparative advantage per se, the ability of the ILO to mobilize financial resources to support initiatives under the DWCP was also mentioned by several partners as a major contribution to moving the Decent Work Agenda ahead in Lao PDR.

### **Integration of cross-cutting policy drivers into DWCP design and implementation**

The degree of integration of cross-cutting issues into DWCP design and implementation is both an important indicator of relevance to national and stakeholder priorities and a critical component of effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The following cross-cutting policy drivers were prioritized in the DWCP:

**International labour standards:** The ratification and implementation of international labour standards is a core dimension of the ILO's normative mandate. The DWCP period has seen an agreement by the Government of Lao PDR to ratify two conventions in 2021, exceeding Target 2.2.1. These are C.155 on OSH and C.187 on a promotional framework for OSH. The ratification proposal is currently being reviewed by the National Assembly. The ILO further supported tripartite discussion and capacity development on requirements and obligations for ratification, implementation and reporting of international labour standards; this included follow-up of the discussion on individual cases related to convention C.182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour at the 2019 International Labour Conference (ILC).

C.182 and other ratified conventions, e.g. C.111 on discrimination in employment, provide reference points for MOLSW and social partner policy and legal framework development. However, the attention and application is variable. C.100 on gender pay equity has not received the same focus, for example, and needs to be given greater profile within the next DWCP period, including with respect to ongoing efforts to develop a regularized and evidence-based minimum wage setting system.

As of July 2021, all reports requested by the ILO supervisory bodies, pursuant to Articles 19 and 22 of the ILO Constitution, were submitted, except C.006 (night work for young persons, which is due in 2025).

**Social dialogue:** Social dialogue and tripartite cooperation were generally seen by the ILO national constituents as strong and distinctive aspects of ILO's role performance in Lao PDR, despite the constraints caused by COVID-19. However, the capacity and resource gaps faced by the country's current major tripartite mechanism, the Technical Committee on Industrial Relations (TTC-IR), meant that it didn't play a major role per se as a collective entity in the COVID-19 response. Rather the response was led by the Government, with support of the social partners who also played active roles (often with ILO support) among their own members.

At the same time, step-by-step progress was made towards the establishment of a high-level National Tripartite Committee and associated sub-committee for Lao PDR (DWCP Target 4.1.1). A Terms of Reference for the new body has been endorsed at ministerial level and awaits final approval and the necessary decree is being prepared. It is expected that the committee will be functional in 2022. In the meantime, ongoing training has been provided by ILO to social partners on social dialogue and tripartite cooperation. Another platform for social dialogue is the DWCP Tripartite Steering Committee. This is examined in its own right in Section 5.6.2.

**Gender and non-discrimination:** The ILO's project reporting is sex-disaggregated, enabling monitoring of gender differentiated engagement, outreach and impacts of DWCP implementation. Generally, these are variable, with some areas being women specific (e.g. OSH promotion and cash transfers in the garment sector, and the mother and infant cash transfer pilot project), and others requiring rigorous attention to gender mainstreaming in broader contexts (e.g. gender awareness raising within rural employment and OSH promotion initiatives at community level). The desk review and stakeholder feedback generally indicated that DWCP implementation has paid attention to gender mainstreaming and vulnerable groups, although there is scope for strengthening this element of project design and monitoring, with more specific inclusion of gender equality and disability inclusion elements within project indicators and targets. The mid-term evaluation of the OSH promotion project in the garments and coffee sectors found, for example, that:

“while there are gender references throughout the project design, there is scope for more explicit and systematic attention to gender during 2020 and in a project second phase, including with respect to gender equality in partner leadership in line with targets agreed with tripartite partners in the Lao PDR Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) 2017-2021; OSH committee leadership and participation; incorporating specific gender dimensions of OSH in project analysis and design; attention to working hours, work-life balance and childcare provision; and addressing safe workplace issues such as violence and sexual harassment in line with national legislation and commitments. To add greater depth in such areas, a

comprehensive OSH and gender study is proposed to underpin future project design, along with an expansion of partnerships with relevant UN and civil society organizations. “

Making an assessment on the inclusion within DWCP activities of persons with disabilities is difficult due to inadequate data availability. This is an area requiring attention in project and activity design and resourcing in the next DWCP. Data is similarly largely absent in the case of ethnic populations, although any project reaching out to rural communities, particularly in remote areas, will be engaging with indigenous communities (e.g. rural employment generation in Sekong Province, where cultural dimensions have been part of project implementation, and increasing informal worker access to social protection country-wide as well as within specific sectors such as coffee and tea production).

**Environmental sustainability:** The DWCP commits to promoting an environmentally sustainable world of work, with particular reference to the rural employment component of the country programme and linked to the ILO Green Initiative. However, what this means in policy and programmatic terms is not specifically reflected in the results framework nor in the risks and assumptions table. Nor is there a broader focus on environmental sustainability and climate risks across the country programme design as a whole, including in the country context overview.

The focus on environmental sustainability with respect to rural employment has been followed through at the design and implementation level. Strategic priority 6 for the draft National Rural Employment Strategy (NRES), for example, is ‘Sustainable, decent and productive rural employment is resilient to climate change.’ Four specific actions to this end are listed. The wider project document for the second phase of the ILO Rural Employment Project (which encompasses the NRES) includes reference to climate change risks. As part of the NRES development, a national learning workshop on climate change and rural employment was held with the 25-member National NRES Drafting Committee, which consisted of representatives of all relevant Government Ministries, mass organizations and other agencies.

There is both scope and a need to build on these developments to ensure a stronger, explicit focus on environmental sustainability and climate risks across all areas of the next DWCP, reflected specifically in both the results framework and the risks and mitigation analysis.

While not specifically identified as a key cross cutting policy driver per se in the DWCP, addressing the **high levels of informality and vulnerability** of the Lao PDR workforce fitted this category in practice and has been a major focus for the DWCP as a whole. Initiatives to this end are a particular priority under Outcome 1.1 on rural employment and Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2 on social protection. The new national strategies developed under the DWCP in both areas aim to deliver tangible benefits for informal women and men workers. They have put related strategic and planning foundations in place for the next DWCP period. Locality-specific improvements in local livelihoods for informal workers are already evident under the Rural Employment Project in Sekong and Savannakhet Provinces under Outcome 1.1. Likewise, improved occupational safety and health conditions are evident for informal workers in the coffee sector of Champasak Province under Outcome 2.1 on labour standards and implementation of the Labour Law.

## **Recommendation 1. Further enhance the relevance of the next DWCP by:**

**1.1 Strengthening overall focus and prioritization of effort:** Recognizing the inclusion of the Decent Work Agenda and of the ILO’s specific mandate within the UNSDCF, particularly under Priority 2, place an overarching focus within the next DWCP on (i) contributing to Lao PDR COVID-19 recovery efforts; (ii) increasing rural employment in line with the National Rural Employment Strategy (NRES); (iii) expanding social protection coverage, systems and effectiveness in line with the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS); (iv) prioritizing the priorities and needs of informal women and men workers in all spheres; and (v) supporting Lao PDR’s LDC graduation in 2026.

**1.2 Carrying forward long-term priorities and programming which are making a difference and contribute to the above:** In the context of the above overarching priorities, the next DWCP should further build on and carry forward long established decent work priorities, programmes and partnerships in the following areas:

<i>ratification, implementation, monitoring and reporting of international labour standards</i>	<i>transition from informal to formal economy and decent employment creation, including MSME and entrepreneurship development</i>
<i>reform of legal frameworks in the areas of OSH, skills development, labour protection, employment and social welfare</i>	<i>strengthening constituent capacities for national policy engagement, social dialogue and provision of membership services</i>
<i>TVET / skills development in response to labour market requirements</i>	<i>labour market information collection, analysis and dissemination</i>
<i>strengthening tripartite and bipartite social dialogue mechanisms and processes, including their contribution to national policy and decision making</i>	<i>evidence-based and regularized minimum wage setting</i>
<i>working conditions and OSH</i>	<i>migrant labour rights, protection and reintegration</i>
<i>private sector development, productivity and competitiveness</i>	<i>elimination of child labour by 2025</i>

**1.3 Promoting inclusive participation in social dialogue mechanisms and processes:** In supporting the establishment and functioning of the new high-level National Tripartite Labour Committee in Lao PDR, pay particular attention to practical measures to support (i) the voice, representation and leadership by women and informal workers; and (ii) participation of other key governmental ministries and agencies with a key role with respect to decent work promotion. Such attention should further apply as relevant to social dialogue mechanisms and processes in all areas and at all levels.

**1.4 Conducting an independent review of tripartite and bipartite social dialogue mechanisms and processes in Lao PDR:** Such review would provide an assessment and recommendations in areas including the effectiveness, impact, sustainability and inclusiveness of such mechanisms and processes at national and provincial levels, as well as their contribution to national policy making and decision making.

**1.5 Strengthening attention in DWCP design, implementation and monitoring to cross-cutting policy drivers:** Ensure performance expectations are clear and explicit in DWCP and project outcomes, outputs, indicators, targets and risk/mitigation analysis. Particular prioritization should be given in this context to gender equality and women's empowerment; non-discrimination and leaving nobody behind; and environmental sustainability.

## 5.2 Coherence (how well does the DWCP fit?)

**Overall assessment.** The DWCP design and implementation was found to be overall coherent with the targets in SDGs 1, 4, 5 and 8 in particular, although the timing of the development and adoption of the DWCP meant that it was not possible for the relevant indicators in the SDG Global Indicator Framework to be incorporated. These were adopted by the UN General Assembly on 6 July 2017, after the signing of the DWCP on 30 May 2017. The programme was further found to be coherent with those of the Lao PDR Government and ILO social partners in relevant areas (building on the extensive consultations with all relevant parties in DWCP design), and with engagements in Lao PDR of the wider UN system and other international development partners. With respect to internal ILO dynamics and coherence, while there are good examples of linkages and synergies across programme areas, scope was identified for further strengthening of these in the next DWCP.

### Alignment of DWCP with SDG targets <sup>19</sup>

At the time the current DWCP was being developed in 2016 and early 2017, guidance for application of SDG linkages within DWCPs was still being developed by ILO HQ, ROAP and the Country Office. The SDG Global Indicator Framework was adopted by the UNGA on 6 July 2017, i.e. after the DWCP was signed by constituents on 30 May that year. While SMART performance indicators are part of the current results framework, they are hence not specifically designed to contribute to measurement against SDG indicators. Since then, understandings and guidance on the integration of the SDG and decent work agendas have developed considerably at all levels within ILO programming, with good support being provided by ILO HQ and ROAP to the Lao ILO Coordination Office, backed up by proactive and regular communications.

The need to ensure stronger explicit linkages with SDG targets and indicators within the next DWCP is well understood within the ILO National Joint Projects Office, by Lao PDR Government counterparts, and to a lesser extent by employers' and workers' organizations.

The ILO has contributed to the development of the two Voluntary National Reports on SDH implementation. These were submitted to the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) by the Lao PDR Government in 2018 and 2020. In the first report, the section on SDG 8 particularly highlighted work underway at that time with ILO support on promoting rural employment. Reporting on DWCP implementation is provided to the Lao PDR Government via the DWCP Tripartite Steering Committee process. This was provided in 2018 and 2019 in the form of consolidated reports covering all aspects of DWCP implementation, as well as lessons learned.

At the time of DWCP development, specific reporting on SDG contributions and the possibility of joint SDG reporting by UNCT members was not yet on the radar. As a result these were not explicitly included in the current DWCP design.

### Synergies with other relevant national and international programmes

The comparative advantage of the ILO in Lao PDR is well understood and expressed by stakeholders, including other UN agencies and bilateral donors (refer to Section 5.1.3). The ILO's tripartite structure, focus on social dialogue and role with respect to international labour standards particularly distinguish its contribution in the national context.

The overall normative, technical and capacity development orientation of its country engagement mean that it needs to position itself alongside and in support of national and other international programmes.

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<sup>19</sup> This section draws on the completed template of ILO EVAL 'Diagnostic instrument to assess the evaluability of DWCPs in the context of the SDGs (refer Annex 11).



The two overall major products of the current DWCP, the NRES and NSSP, are designed to provide platforms for the strengthening of synergies between all relevant national and international actors.

### **Alignment with wider UN system <sup>20</sup>**

As noted, the current DWCP design drew on the UN Common Country Assessment (CCA) at the time, identified alignments at outcome level with the Lao PDR UN Partnership Framework 2017-2021, and drew on feedback from discussion of the final draft at a workshop with UNCT members. UNCT members with whom the ILO had current working relations were interviewed directly as part of the DWCP design process.

Collaboration was subsequently developed in the current DWCP period with UNICEF and UNCDF in the context of specific projects on a case-by-case basis, (rather than as a result of DWCP design per se). A project proposal currently under consideration for SDC funding to support implementation of the NRES has involved collaboration with UNFPA for specific elements pertaining to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

### **Internal ILO synergies and interlinkages in DWCP design and implementation**

The extent to which coherence and synergies are demonstrated across and between the various components of the DWCP, as well as between the relevant staff at ILO CO, regional office and Lao PDR in-country office levels, is an important element of coherence.

Stakeholder and ILO staff feedback indicated that challenges remain in linking individual development cooperation projects both to each other and to the wider DWCP (and national) outcomes. Although efforts are made within the ILO National Joint projects Office, the tendency and incentives within project teams are to focus on activities and results only in that particular sphere. Work planning allows little time for wider reflection and sharing of mutually beneficial information, lessons and developments. Key factors in addressing this situation include (i) spelling out explicit linkages with the SDGs and larger national and DWCP priorities and outcomes in project and activity design and planning; (ii) explicit cross-referencing to other relevant projects in project and M&E design, including within results frameworks; and (iii) enhancing the capacities for oversight and coordination within the ILO National Joint Projects Office.

Specialist staff in the ILO regional office also have an important role to play, both in ensuring that they reach out to colleagues also supporting specific aspects and the Lao programme, and in looking for and reinforcing mutually reinforcing links with other work streams on the ground. Good coordination is evident, for example, between ACTRAV, ACT/EMP and collective bargaining/social dialogue staff in regional office. At the same time there is scope to more specifically link their capacity development support to LNCCI and LFTU with other projects where those two bodies are active – e.g. on project advisory committees or activity level involvement in areas such as OSH, rural employment, social protection and developing a regularized evidence-based minimum wage system.

### **Recommendation 2. Strengthen DWCP coherence with UN engagement in Lao PDR, as well as internally across DWCP programmes and projects, by:**

**2.1 Proactively contributing to the UN delivering as one:** Prioritize proactive joint planning and cooperation with UNCT counterparts within the UNSDCF, including support for and promotion of UN joint programme approaches, where relevant and feasible, in the design and implementation of the DWCP 2022-2026.

**2.2 Strengthening linkages and mutual reinforcement between DWCP projects/activities and (i) larger national priorities and outcomes and (ii) other DWCP projects and activities within Lao PDR:** Measures

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<sup>20</sup> This section draws on the completed template of ILO EVAL 'Diagnostic instrument to assess the evaluability of DWCPs in the context of the SDGs (refer Annex 11).

to this end should include explicit cross-referencing in project and M&E design; including within results frameworks; and annual work plan for DWCP implementation which both sets out and integrates the contributions from all projects (donor and RB-funded) towards overall national, UNSDCF and DWCP priorities and outcomes.

### 5.3 Effectiveness (are DWCP outcomes being achieved?)

**Assessment:** The programme was found to be overall effective. It achieved good results overall in difficult circumstances. 84 percent of targets were found to be achieved, on track for achievement of partially achieved, with useful lessons learned about assumptions made in programme design. An impressive research and publications output was achieved, although dissemination and ensuring effective use remains a challenge. The quality of partnerships and levels of trust with constituents and other stakeholders were found to be consistently high.

The ILO's engagement within the UNCT is widely recognized as effective and highly valued, reflected in the increased leadership role of the ILO under the UNSDCF 2022-2026. The DWCP governance process through the Tripartite Steering Committee and M&E Working Group has been affected by the impact of COVID-19 on the ability to meet and the pressure of other priorities, but it remains a core foundation of DWCP effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Attention to re-energizing and streamlining the governance process is recommended in the next five-year period.

Finally, an adequate level of monitoring and evaluation has been maintained, with evaluations conducted in the major programmatic focus areas. Attention to the early development of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEAL) plan is recommended under the next DWCP, with an explicit and strategically planned approach to the learning aspects.

#### Major achievements summary

The DWCP sets out 10 outcomes and 44 targets under its four overarching priorities. Within this framework, implementation of the current DWCP has been marked by a number of important achievements. These are set out in detail by DWCP target in Annex 4. Highlights include:

- Strengthened legal frameworks (e.g. revision of the Social Security Law and Trade Union Law; and Decrees on OSH, dispatch of Lao workers to work abroad and dispute resolution).
- Steps to create a high-level National Tripartite Labour Committee., which is on track for establishment in late 2021-early 2022.
- Strengthened national social protection system through (1) adoption of the National Social Protection Strategy; (2) accelerated harmonization of the health insurance system encompassing the labour / social welfare, health and public security ministries; (3) the piloting of cash transfer systems through implementation of a COVID-related scheme in the garment sector and an unconditional cash transfer (with UNICEF) to pregnant women and infants in Savannakhet and Attapeu Provinces (see further below); (4) enhanced capacity of staff and systems, including in communications; (4) development of social protection financing options (with UNCDF); (5) a national health costings assessment; (6) supporting MoLSW to develop a decree to establish a Social protection commission; and (7) efforts to expand social protection coverage among private sector and informal workers.
- Development of a National Rural Employment Strategy (due to go to the National Assembly for adoption in 2021) and creation of rural jobs, related skills development and strengthened governmental capacities at provincial and district level in Savannakhet and Sekong Provinces.

- An increase in the minimum wage through tripartite dialogue in 2018.
- Strengthened labour inspection technical capacities and tools (e.g. enhanced check list).
- Lao Government agreement to ratify OSH conventions C.155 and C.187, alongside increased OSH awareness and improvements in the garment sector and Chamapsak Province coffee sector.
- An increased number of Migrant Worker Resource Centres at provincial level (now five, three managed by LFTU and two by MoLSW). Dissemination by LFTU of information on migrant worker safety to workers in government, factories and education institutions, in partnership with the Lao Youth Union. Research by LFTU currently underway on the impact of COVID-19 on migrant workers to support the response and inform longer-term measures.
- Raised awareness of issues and ways forward with respect to the future of work through a high level national consultation as part of the ILO's Centennial Year.
- Increased MSME capacities and access to finance as result of expansion of business development services, including SME Service Centre based at LNCCI. 800 MSMEs reached to date in 17 provinces. 148 of these so far have been able access financial support through low interest bank loans. Requirement by banks that applicants for financial support have undergone ILO "Laos for business" training.
- The Government (MOIC) and the LNCCI (SSC) now have a standardized Business and Financial Planning Training tool kit which has been integrated into the National SME Government Programme.
- Improved labour market data through labour force surveys in 2017 and 2021 (including child labour survey in the latter case).
- 27 skills standards developed, including two that meet ASEAN skill standards. Production of a second national employer skills needs survey by LNCCI.
- Cash transfers provided by LSSO to 20,000 garment sector workers and 3,000 shoe sector workers registered with the LSSO who lost jobs and earnings as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with PPE and associated training (including in factory dormitories).
- Unconditional cash transfers via the LSSO to up to 1,400 mothers and infants in collaboration with UNICEF in Savannakhet and Attapeu Provinces, in conjunction with the development of local mutual support networks.
- Accelerated progress in association with the two above initiatives of collaboration with private sector counterparts to develop an efficient cash transfer system via use of cell phone technology (some 20 per cent of garment workers eligible for cash transfers were found to have no bank account).
- Research by LFTU of the effects of COVID-19 on workers to assist in response planning. This will also be used in a new Japan project on pandemic good practice, with a focus on strengthening social dialogue.
- Steps with UNICEF towards addressing gaps in the definition of a child in Lao PDR, which is important for implementation of the current National Strategy and Plan of Action on Prevention and Elimination of the Child Labour in Lao PDR, 2014 – 2020, and the revised version currently under finalization.
- Improved constituents' capacities through training and guideline production in areas including: (1) for MoLSW on labour inspection, OSH, eliminating child labour and disputes resolution; and (2) for LNCCI and LFTU on COVID-19 response in the workplace, international labour standards, social dialogue, minimum wage setting, disputes, OSH and membership services.

## Breakdown of DWCP progress by targets

The following table sets out the current status of achievement, with four months of the DWCP period to be completed. A detailed summary of progress by outcome and target is provided in Annex 4.1.

Achieved	On track	Partially achieved	Not achieved	Not rating	total
22	4	11	6	1	44
50%	9%	25%	14%	2%	

Overall 84 percent of the targets have been achieved, are on track for achievement or are partially achieved.<sup>21</sup> This constitutes a very positive rate of achievement, particularly when account is taken of the impact of COVID-19 for 40 percent of the DWCP timeframe. Key factors in the non-achievement of six targets are:

- Insufficient time or human and financial resources to complete planned activities, including as a result of delays, changed priorities and adjusted project modalities due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- Certain assumptions that were made at the time of DWCP design in areas related to local capacities, data availability and an ongoing lead role in one particular focus area (PES and LMI) which were not sustained in practice (refer below for elaboration)

## Theory of change

A clear and well-grounded theory of change is key to ensuring relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

While the term ‘theory of change’ is not used explicitly in the DWCP (as at the time of developing the DWCP it was not well understood or accepted by constituents), the DWCP sets out:

### At an overall programme level

- alignment with the 8<sup>th</sup> NESDP, SDGs, UNPF, ILO P&B and the ILO Bali Declaration
- cross-cutting themes
- development cooperation projects supporting DWCP outcomes which had been confirmed at the time of DWCP finalization
- decent work challenges
- a set of programme drivers which are anchored in local priorities and issues as described in the country overview, as well as links between these drivers.
- expected results by the end of the DWCP period
- risks and mitigation measures for the DWCP as a whole

### At outcome level

- A programme strategy which includes links to outcomes and outputs in NESDP 8, the UNPF, the SDG and the P&B, and includes the roles the ILO constituents play.

While the above are elements of a fully developed theory of change, there is clearly scope and a need to both strengthen and make more explicit the theory of change in the next DWCP, and to engage with

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<sup>21</sup> At the time of completion of this report, final data was awaited on Indicator and Target 1.2.3, and confirmation of data was not yet available on Indicator and Target 4.2.3.

constituents to prepare to actively engage in this development. The next DWCP will benefit from a clearer articulation of the change the DWCP is setting out to contribute to; the key conditions and drivers for change; enabling factors and how they link together; and underlying assumptions.

The basis for moving forward in this direction has been enhanced by developments such as the RBM training workshop for constituents with ROAP support early in the DWCP period, along with an increased attention to theory of change thinking and results-based approaches in interaction more generally between national and international partners, including in the ILO context

### Assumptions underpinning DWCP design

Three key assumptions in the design of the current DWCP proved to not be sustained in practice, reinforcing the importance of ensuing that design is well grounded in realistic assessments of local conditions and capacities.

The **first** assumption concerned the capacities (or likely development of capacities) of the MOLSW, LNCCI and LFTU to follow through commitments in the DWCP in areas such as workplace injury and industrial disease data (MOLSW), implementation of C.111 on pay equity (MOLSW), a regularized and evidence-based minimum wage system (all constituents) and child labour action reports (LNCCI and LFTU). As in all areas of the DWCP, the advent of COVID-19 for some 40 percent of the implementation period has also had a major impact on priorities and resourcing.

The **second** assumption was that the ILO would continue to play the lead role in providing technical assistance and resourcing for development of PES and LMI, building on the progress and lessons of the above-mentioned ILO/China South-South Cooperation Project on PES and LMI. The outputs, indicators and targets set out in the DWCP reflected the recommendations of an independent evaluation and indications that a second phase of the project would follow. In the event, a shift occurred in the lead international partner role for work in this area, with the ADB stepping in and the ILO stepping back, albeit with an ongoing lower-level capacity support role in specific areas. A new ILO sub-regional project with the Chinese partner in this area commenced in 2020 and will continue into the next DWCP period in Lao PDR.

The **third** assumption concerned the availability of up-to-date sex-disaggregated data for the assessment of progress in implementation of DWCP outcomes and outputs. This links to the capacity issues indicated above (e.g. in developing a system for recording and disseminating OSH data), as well as more systemic issues concerning the gathering and dissemination of labour market information and gender statistics in all fields.

Related to the above is the issue of adaptability to changing circumstances and lessons in programme oversight and management. It is notable that the non-realization of these assumptions was not reflected in adjustments to the DWCP results framework (although adjustments were made early in the life of the DWCP to the indicator and target for development new vocational skills and competency standards as the result of a recommendation by the DWCP M&E Tripartite Working Group). Factors in the lack of change made to the results framework include the need to strengthen adaptive management approaches within all aspects of DWCP implementation; a decline in functionality of the M&E Working Group; and the impact of COVID-19 on meetings of the DWCP Tripartite Steering Committee in 2020-2021 due to the refocussing of national priorities and resource allocations.

### Knowledge generation and dissemination

The development of knowledge and its wider dissemination takes many forms, ranging from the interaction within training and thematic workshops to targeted research and publications. Examples of the former included (i) a multi-stakeholder training workshop on climate change challenges to rural employment as part of the ILO / Lao PDR National Rural Employment Strategy formulation process; and (ii) a high-level dialogue convened on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ILO and the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lao PDR's

membership, to discuss recommendations of the ILO's Global Commission on the Future of Work. More than a hundred participants from among ILO constituents, other government ministries, NGOs, UN agencies and embassies attended to discuss the report of the Global Commission entitled 'Work for a brighter future' which was released in January 2019.

With respect to research and publications, the DWCP period saw an impressive output related to specific project interventions, as follows:

- Employer Skills Needs Survey (Amid COVID-19 Response) April 2021.
- Integrated report on the company skills needs and community survey in Atsaphon and Sepon districts of Savannakhet province.
- Report on a 2018 baseline survey in Savannakhet Province, Lao People's Democratic Republic.
- Guidelines for value chain development for linking smallholder farmers to markets.
- Labour market and capacity assessments: Review of TVET suppliers in Kaysone, Atsaphone and Sepon districts of Savannakhet province.
- Cultural inventory of Xieng Louang Cluster, Dak Chueng District, Sekong Province.
- Options for improving income-generating capacity of coffee farmers in Dak Cheung district, Sekong province, Lao PDR.
- Report on an irrigation mission in Sekong province, Lao People's Democratic Republic.
- Mapping provinces for inclusion in ILO's rural employment project in the Lao PDR.
- Value chain assessment. OSH Risk assessment and intervention design in the coffee value chain.
- Improving occupational safety and health in the global value chain of coffee in Lao People's Democratic Republic: Drivers and Constraints.

A further publication 'Simulation of macro-economy wide impacts of social protection in Lao PDR report' is currently under preparation.

While knowledge generation initiatives through workshops and similar events and published research can be planned and resourced within a project framework, the challenge can often be the follow-up promotion and use of the studies which are produced. This routinely falls back to the already overstretched ILO Joint Projects Office.

Related to this area is the issue of broader ILO public communications, visibility and outreach in Lao PDR. Currently all media statements and PR are handled through the centralised online capacities of the ILO office in Bangkok, with limited visibility or accessibility (due to being only available in English) within Lao PDR. A consultancy role has now been established to boost attention to this in this area, funded by line items in project budgets. The Joint Projects office reports some improvement in ILO profile as a result, but ongoing strengthening of relevant communications capacities and systems is needed.

### **The quality of partnerships to support DWCP implementation**

Lao PDR stakeholder feedback universally rated the quality of partnership with the ILO office in Lao PDR as highly positive, with references as noted elsewhere to high levels of trust, accessibility, transparency and responsiveness. The role of the ILO National Coordinator was frequently highlighted in this context, with commendation expressed about her professionalism, commitment, openness, focus on results and effective partnership, and local and international knowledge. Some interviewed stakeholders highlighted the ability of the ILO office to build trust and confidence in the working relationship as a comparative advantage of the ILO in Lao PDR. The ability to generally communicate in Lao language (through an interpreter where necessary for international staff) was highlighted by some feedback as an important feature of ILO engagement.

## Planning and programmatic cooperation within the UNCT

The UN Resident Coordinator and other UNCT members interviewed for this review highly commended the role, visibility and substantive contributions made by the ILO Country Office within UN collective processes in Lao PDR.

The Office will move into the next DWCP period as the lead agency, with UNICEF, for coordination of implementation of UNSDCF (2022-2026) Priority 2 on Inclusive Prosperity. This priority encompasses transition after LDC graduation; (where ratification of international labour standards will be an important factor in trade concessions especially under the EU GSP+), social protection; private sector development and trade; and skills development. This designated role indicates recognition of the ILO Office's contribution and leadership within the UNCT, as well as its role in the shaping of the UNSDCF. The LNCCI and LFTU also actively participated in consultative workshops as part of the design process.

The ILO was further the lead agency for the first two years of the current UN Partnership Framework (UNPF) (2017-2021) Outcome 1 on rural livelihoods and Outcome 2 on social protection. UNDP took lead thereafter on a rotational basis. Currently the ILO is the lead agency for the UN Joint Programme (UNJP) on Social Protection in Lao PDR: "Leaving No One Behind: Establishing the basis for social protection floors in Lao PDR," which was approved by the Joint SDG Fund. The primary objective of the UNJP is to support implementation of the NSPS through a focus on systems development through pilot implementation of the Mother and Early Childhood Grant (MECG) in Savannakhet and Attapeu Provinces.

Through the much valued participation of the CO Director based in Bangkok, the ILO has been an important contributor to meetings of the UNCT, while designated locally-based staff have actively engaged in the UNCT M&E and communications groups.

Within the wider national Lao PDR / international development partners architecture, the ILO is a member of the education sector working group (which includes TVET), the trade and private sector working group, and the rural development sector working group. Ongoing commitment and technical support from the Bangkok-based CO and regional office teams will be essential during the next DWCP period to ensure the ILO can engage in both its UNSDC leadership roles and within national dialogue processes to maximum value.

## DWCP governance

An important factor within DWCP effectiveness is the role of tripartite governance of the programme. The DWCP Tripartite Steering Committee (TSC) is a key anchor of country ownership of the DWCP, its development and its implementation (refer to Section 5.6.2 for elaboration of this role). The TSC consists of representatives of the ILO constituents, plus the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) and has been chaired on a rotating basis to date under the current DWCP. The two meetings to date in 2018 and 2019 were chaired by MOLSW and LFTU. The third TSC meeting which was postponed due to COVID-19 was to have been chaired by LNCCI. The TSC Terms of Reference requires the committee to meet at least annually, supported at the technical level by the Tripartite M&E Working Group which the ToR states should meet at least every quarter.

The validation meeting for consideration of the preliminary findings of this review was set up on a different basis than a usual TSC meeting, being chaired by the Vice-Minister for MPI. At least two further tripartite meetings will be convened in 2021 to consider the draft DWCP for the next five-year period.

Despite indications by constituents during the early period of the current DWCP of a commitment to taking on more of the servicing of the TSC, the ILO National Joint Projects Office continued to play the primary



gathering, drafting and coordination role in this respect in the pre-COVID-19 period, including the bulk of the work required to prepare the progress reports presented to each meeting.

Soon after the current DWCP was launched, a Results-based Management (RBM) workshop was held for all constituents, supported by the evaluation team in the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. This workshop produced a monitoring framework for the DWCP (later simplified by the ILO National Joint Projects Office), responsibility for which lies with the M&E Working Group with support of the Office. In this capacity the Working Group recommended that Indicator and Target 1.3.3 should be amended to better fit with what was realistic in the context. As earlier noted in Section 5.3.4 a number of further adjustments could have been made to indicators and targets in line with an adaptive management approach (e.g. in the area of PES and LMI).

However, even before the advent of the COVID-19, the regularity of meetings of the Working Group had declined and new members had less familiarity with RBM approaches. As a result, the role and previous contribution of this group, which has been regarded as a good practice example within the region<sup>22</sup>, is greatly in need of a revisit and reactivation.

### **Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEAL)**

DWCP effectiveness (and its impact and sustainability) is enhanced by systematic monitoring, evaluation and learning to improve both performance and accountability. The DWCP commits to (i) the carrying out of mid-term and end-of-term reviews, linked to similar processes under the UNPF; (ii) evaluation of development cooperation projects carried out under the DWCP; and (iii) the development of and regular updating (at least quarterly) of the DWCP monitoring plan.

As noted above, a key mechanism of the DWCP MEAL system is the Tripartite M&E Working Group, which both provides a venue for developing M&E capacities and reports to the DWCP Tripartite Steering Committee. The DWCP stipulates at least quarterly meetings of the working group, which increasingly proved to be problematic in practice, particular during the pandemic period. Reactivating the role and regularity of working group has already been identified by the ILO and MoLSW as a priority for the next DWCP period (refer to Recommendation 6.5).

In the event, resourcing constraints and other pressures meant that the mid-term DWCP review was not able to be conducted in the period before the COVID-19 pandemic struck. At the same time, the two DWCP progress reports that were produced with the M&E Working Group in 2018 and 2019, and with active constituent input, provided valuable progress reporting and identification of lessons learned.

Six evaluations at project level were complete in the following areas: the Vision Zero Fund OSH project (a mid-term evaluation); the rural employment project (mid and end-of-term evaluations); support to the extension of social health protection in Southeast Asia (mid-term and final evaluations, including Lao PDR)<sup>23</sup>; and progress under the National Plan of Actions on the elimination of the worst forms of Child labour in Lao PDR. The final report on the rural employment project evaluation was not yet available as this review was being completed. The findings and recommendations of the evaluations that were available are reflected in this DWCP review. Details of each are included in the listing of references in Annex 2.

While not all areas of project activity have been subject to evaluation since 2017, the above processes have covered the two major areas of DWCP engagement (rural employment and social protection), as well as

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<sup>22</sup> Review of DWCP tripartite governance mechanisms in Asia-Pacific. Final draft report: September 2019.

<sup>23</sup> A final evaluation has been conducted, but was not yet available at the time of the finalization of this DWCP review.



contributing to implementation of the Lao PDR child labour eradication plans. It will be important to develop a MEAL plan for the DWCP early in the next implementation period and to reflect the resourcing requirements in budget planning. Key in this context will be explicitly building the learning aspect into project planning via workshops to share lessons and good practice, with including with other UNCT members and development partners.

### **Recommendation 3: Further improve the effectiveness of DWCP design and delivery in Lao PDR by:**

**3.1 Strengthening the theory of change:** Based on the content and model set out in the UNSDCF 2022-2026, with participation by constituents to the degree possible.

**3.2 Continuing to support sustainable development of constituents' institutional and technical capacities at national and provincial levels:** Approaches should be based on regular needs assessment; iterative and long-term approaches which consolidate and apply learning; continuous review, monitoring and learning; use of local language in verbal interactions and written material; and directly adding value in specific strategic areas such as social dialogue, policy engagement, international labour standards, social protection promotion, OSH, minimum wage setting, collective bargaining and social partner membership services (refer also to recommendation 5.1).

**3.3 Thoroughly testing the assumptions which underpin DWCP programme, project and activity design:** Ensure that assumptions (i) are clearly and carefully identified (ii) well-grounded in actual institutional capacities; and (iii) take account of other potentially conflicting priorities at all levels. Further (i) ensure that reliable data sources exist or can be developed to provide a basis for monitoring, evaluation, and continuous learning; and (ii) promote an adaptive management approach which proactively responds to changing circumstances and understandings.

**3.4 Continue to strengthen the DWCP M&E and learning system:** Develop a MEAL plan early in the next DWCP period which (i) identifies strategic evaluation and review priorities, including the thematic evaluation of capacity development under recommendation 5.1 and the review of tripartite and bipartite social dialogue mechanisms and approaches under recommendation 1.4; (ii) explicitly builds learning opportunities into project design and implementation; and (iii) links with relevant evaluation and learning processes under the UNSDCF and NESDP 9.

## **5.4 Efficiency (How well are resources being used?)**

**Overall assessment:** The programme is found to be efficient overall in terms of use of human and financial resources. It is effectively and transparently managed and coordinated to deliver results in an economic and timely way. Partnerships are effectively development and leveraged to contribute to DWCP results in particular areas. The resource mobilization target for the DWCP was exceeded and considerable resources have already been mobilized for ongoing work carrying forward into the next DWCP.

Two particular issues remain to be addressed however. The first issue is a concern conveyed by several stakeholders about delays in financial transfers, as well as about associated payment modalities. An examination of the steps involved in the transfer chain indicates that (i) there are at least three potential delay points and (ii) there is a lack of clarity among stakeholders about the steps and requirements. There is thus a need for better availability of information about requirements at different stages and for ensuring that partners have the necessary capacities to facilitate the process at their end. The second issue concerns the pressures on the ILO Joint Projects Office in Lao PDR of a greatly increased workload, including at representational, resource mobilization and UNSDCF leadership levels. These pressures have been magnified in the COVID-19 pandemic context due to the constraints on the ability of ILO Country Office staff

and regional specialist staff to visit Lao PDR. These two issues were also raised in the last DWCP review in Lao PDR and require urgent attention.

### **Provision of inputs (financial and staff)**

**Resource mobilization:** At the beginning of the DWCP period, a resource mobilization target of \$10 million was set to meet programme implementation needs across all areas. As of September 2021, \$ 14.021 million had been raised from external donor, ILO regional programme and ILO internal ILO sources, as detailed in Annex 5. This includes \$2.66 million in resourcing for development cooperation projects which extend into the next DWCP period. The exceeding of the target represents both the highly successful resource mobilization efforts by the ILO Joint Projects Office and confidence in ILO capabilities to deliver agreed results in the Lao PDR context among national partners and international donors.

The mobilizing of resources inevitably brings risks of being donor-driven, putting the spotlight on the robustness of the framework provided by the DWCP to support balanced decision-making which maintains the strategic priorities of the country programme while allowing flexibility for innovation, taking relevant opportunities and responding to changes in the context. As the summary of progress made by outcome and target in Annex 4 shows, the strategic integrity of the DWCP as agreed by constituents in 2017 has been well held. At the same time, certain areas have grown within the overall framework, particularly with respect to MSME development as the result of a significant infusion of donor support. Such developments are assessed to have both fitted within existing priorities and to have added additional value to DWCP impact.

**ILO Regional and Country Office staff engagement:** Constituents, other national partners, UN counterparts and the ILO National Projects Office all commented very positively on the role and support of the CO team (Director and Programme Officer) and DWT specialist team. The role of the CO Director in strategic and higher-level engagements within the UNCT, as well as with constituents and other counterparts, was widely recognized as crucial and significant despite the constraints imposed by travel and other commitments. As noted elsewhere, the technical and capacity development support provided by DWT specialists was commended by stakeholders for its relevance, accessibility and responsiveness. Specialist support has been maintained to the degree possible by virtual means during the pandemic, although direct visits for more in-depth interaction and follow-up have been sorely missed. The inability of the CO Director and specialist staff to travel to Lao PDR during the pandemic has magnified the challenges of managing a non-resident presence in Lao PDR (and other countries, such as Cambodia). This has required the ILO Joint Projects Office to step increasingly into specialist support space, for example, adding to the workload of the National Coordinator.

**In-country project staff:** The DWCP period has seen a considerable increase in the number of staff, including two international staff (as of September 2021), employed on contracts related to the delivery of specific projects and funded by the project budget. While reflecting the relevance of and demand for ILO support in DWCP priority areas, this has also contributed to an increase in the demands on the National Coordinator role. There is now a core among the national staff who have worked on more than one project, this contributing to the building-up of a pool of local expertise around the ILO's mandate and contribution to national development priorities. The effective deployment of this growing expertise will be important in managing the expected increased demands on the ILO National Projects Office during the next DWCP.

**Core staffing of ILO National Joint Projects Office:** The ILO National Coordinator role in Lao PDR is one of 18 such roles globally (five in Asia and the Pacific). This staffing modality has been recognized within the ILO as a cost-effective way to extend the ILO's physical presence. However, the scope of the roles can vary greatly from those more akin to a liaison role, to those (as the Lao PDR and Cambodia cases) which cover responsibilities such as resource mobilization, high-level representation, overseeing relatively large numbers of project staff, and playing lead roles within the UNCT and national government/partner dialogue processes.

The employment status of such roles also varies across regions, with funding modalities including RB, PSI and development cooperation sources. The current ILO National Coordinator position in Lao PDR is an RB position at NOB level. There has been no job classification adjustment in 10 years, even as the role scope and responsibilities have expanded. While there is a strong case to review the job descriptions of the National Coordinator role across the board, the case is particularly pressing in the Lao PDR case. The UNRC and other UN stakeholders stated their concerns about the demands placed on the ILO National Coordinator role and its lack of formal recognition within the ILO system. A review of the position and consideration of its upgrading to match its actual scope and responsibilities is thus recommended. It is also recommended that core office capacity (as distinct from the individual project management arrangements) be increased through the establishment of a locally-recruited M&E position to focus on quality monitoring, evaluation and reporting support, including at a whole-of-DWCP level. In the meantime, the SDC agreement to fund a UNV volunteer to support work on M&E from February 2022 is a welcome interim step.

In 2020, each ILO project shared costs to mobilize resources to hire a communications consultant, which has begun to improve local visibility and outreach in the absence of online and social media channels at country level (centralized via regional office). It will be important to maintain this capacity, including to ensure that the ILO contribution to the overall UN effort under the UNSDCF is visible, recognized and appreciated.

The core resourcing constraints of the Office is related to its status as in effect an under-resourced outpost of the CO in Bangkok. This organizational model requires requiring regular travel by the CO Director and DWT specialists as well as a heavier reliance on the use of external consultants.

**Management of funding transfers for DWCP implementation:** Delays in the transfer of ILO payments for activity implementation, and the modalities of payment (tranche arrangements), were by far the biggest concern raised by stakeholders. Several stakeholders referred to being required to borrow from other hard-pressed budget lines to meet up-front costs of activity implementation. One prominent partner even indicated that they would reconsidered collaboration with the ILO if the issues persisted. One example given is that of the funds for the once-off cash transfer of 900,000 Kip to 20,000 garment workers and 3,000 shoe factory workers in response to the impacts of COVID. The LSSO states that the plan for ILO/BMZ support was made in May 2020, but the actual funds were not transferred until February 2021.

On examination, it is clear that the issue lies within a funding transfer chain that since 2018 has involved the procedures of the ILO, the Lao PDR Treasury Department and local partners. There appears to be a lack of awareness and understanding of the steps in the chain, with delays being attributed to the ILO. In fact there are at least three potential delay points in the new system:

- ILO processing: The ILO Country Office in Bangkok and ILO Joint Projects Office in Lao PDR report that processing time has been reduced since access to the internal ILO financial management system (IRIS) has been made available locally.
- Treasury Department: ILO funds are now first transferred to the department, which requires a formal letter from the final recipient before they are released.
- The national partner: As well as being required to submit the letter to the Treasury Department, the partner needs to submit a satisfactory report to the ILO necessary before further funding tranches can be released. If the report does not meet requirements, there may be delays as amendments are requested and made.

With respect to the payment modality, the current standard ILO Office approach is to provide either a 70 percent or a 30 percent initial tranche depending on the nature of the activity, and a 5 percent final payment upon satisfactory delivery. Arrangements for the middle portion of the grant can be negotiated, depending on partner needs and capacities. However, some partners stated that the initial 30 percent payment they have received is not sufficient to enable them to move ahead with implementation of the activity concerned,

(which, for example, may require up-front payments for venue hire and DSA payments for a training workshop).

It is clearly important to more specifically identify the delay points, why these exist and ways to speed-up the payment processes while ensuring transparency and accountability. Assuming that the necessary due diligence has been done with respect to selection of the partner at the beginning, the overriding concern should be to expedite the agreed payments in a timely fashion to contribute to positive results.

Given the apparent confusion that exists among national stakeholders in this area, it would seem necessary to produce a simple description of the overall process and the requirements for all parties concerned at each point. This would include a simple outline by the ILO of the payment modality options and criteria so that partners can be empowered to negotiate for what works best for them and achieving the intended result.

Ensuring that all partners have the institutional capacities, skills and understandings required to produce the necessary validation letters to the Treasury Department and satisfactory reporting to release funding tranches is clearly another pressing need.

Given that some national partners also work with other agencies within the UN system, ensuring that the system itself takes consistent approach in this area would be helpful, based on the same bottom-lines of transparency, accountability and results. This would reflect, in practice, the commitment of the UN to 'delivering as one,' including through harmonized business practices. Such an approach would further enable the monitoring of grant practices across the whole system and the sharing of relevant good practices.

### **Contribution of programme management to DWCP efficiency**

The programme is found to be efficiently implemented, managed and coordinated overall, with transparent reporting, despite the limited core resourcing of the ILO National Joint Projects Office. A degree of complexity has been added by the number of project staff now responsible for different parts of the programme, but every effort is made to ensure cohesion across the various work streams to the degree possible. The recommended strengthening of Office capacity would contribute positively in this regard, contributing to efficiency as synergies and cohesion is enhanced.

A particular programme management strength has been the effective leveraging of partnerships with the constituents and other national stakeholders, with the use of implementation agreements as an effective and useful tool in this context. The current DWCP period has seen a number of new partnerships developed, ranging from the Association of the Lao Garment Sector (ALGI) and Lao Coffee Association (LCA) at national level to regional authorities in Savannakhet and Champasak Provinces. The use of implementation agreements has proved to be an effective programme management tool in this context. The Vision Zero OSH project mid-term evaluation found, for example, that while developing them can be time-consuming, experience to date indicated that it is an investment that promotes ownership and commitment among project partners as well as accountability for interventions. Furthermore, such agreements can be the first step towards integrating interventions into the existing institutional and service delivery structures of a partner organization, thus enhancing sustainability of activities and results. The impact of such agreements could be further enhanced by including specific commitments on coordination and synergies with other actors.

Programme reporting by the ILO National Joint Projects Office is transparently provided at two primary levels:

- To constituents and MPI through the DWCP progress reports (two in the current DWCP period, as noted). As stated in the DWCP, it is intended that this will in turn feed into Lao PDR national NESDP and SDG reporting, although the extent to which this happens in practice is difficult to discern. The reporting

requirements of the UNSDCF which will have a stronger focus on consolidated results achieved by UN agencies working together will likely change reporting dynamics.

- To the ILO CO, regional office and HQ through the internal reporting system, which is not accessible to national constituents.

There is limited connection between the two reporting systems. It would be desirable from an efficiency perspective to develop ways in which the respective reporting flows can be synergized.

#### **Recommendation 4. Enhance the efficiency and transparency of ILO operations in Lao PDR by:**

**4.1 Improving the speed and transparency of ILO disbursements:** Explore ways to speed-up the transfer of payments for activities under the DWCP, including through (i) training and other capacity support as necessary for partners on payment and accountability requirements as a routine part of every programme/project design and implementation; (ii) ensuring transparent up-to-date information is available on the ILO and Lao Government payment processes and requirements so that all parties have common knowledge and understandings; and (iii) examining with UNCT counterparts the possibility of developing consistent grant disbursement criteria and procedures across the UN system in Lao PDR.

**4.2 Strengthening the capacity of the ILO Joint Projects Office in light of increasing demands:** In recognition of the increased representational, resource mobilization and staff management responsibilities of the National Coordinator role, as well as increased programme coordination and M&E requirements, consider (i) the addition of a national M&E officer within the core staff team; (ii) upgrading the classification of the National Coordinator role; and (iii) increasing external communications capacity.

### **5.5 Impact (what difference does the DWCP make?)**

**Overall assessment:** As also highlighted in the next section on sustainability, a long-term timeframe transcending several DWCPs is required to maximize the impacts of initiatives with national partners to realize the Decent Work Agenda, labour rights and locally driven social dialogue as a core form of interaction and cooperative interaction between constituents.

In the absence to date of impact assessments and use of tools such as tracer studies, the assessment of DWCP impact in this context is a challenge – e.g. changes in lives and performance as a result of new policies, laws and strategies, as well as institutional and technical capacity development. It is still possible however to identify evidence of impact in some areas – e.g. increased rural employment in coffee and chicken production as well as motor cycle repair in Sekong Province; reduction of industrial accidents in the garment and coffee sectors; MSME development through access to cheap bank loans; and improved nutrition and health for mothers and children in 1,000 villages due to benefits of a pilot cash transfer scheme.

As a high-level effect, it is also possible to discern increased ownership of the ILO normative agenda by the tripartite constituents, which is in turn related to impact.

In light of the challenges identified, it is proposed that (i) a thematic review be conducted of capacity development initiatives under the DWCP in order to identify success factors, lessons and recommendations for improving impact; and (ii) data availability be increased through stepped-up support to the LSB (especially for labour force surveys) and the statistical unit as MoLSW.

## Diffusion of norms and impact

International norms researchers and theorists Mona Lena Krook and Jacqui True<sup>24</sup> describe the process of norm adoption and implementation as a dynamic and evolving one which brings together both ‘internal’ and ‘external’ sources of dynamism. In the case of the ILO’s normative agenda, the adoption and regular monitoring of and reporting on international labour conventions by the International Labour Conference is a key ‘external’ driver. At national level, champions for the adopted conventions, and the norms they embody, engage with and influence others. The DWCP provides a framework which brings both sources of dynamism together around practical outcomes and deliverables.

This norm diffusion process is still at a relatively early stage in Lao PDR, but is gathering momentum. This is reflected in (i) the increasing embedding of international labour standards in policy and legal frameworks (both new and revised), and (ii) indications of a growing understanding of the practice and benefits of social dialogue. The latter is reflected in the progress (albeit slow) towards establishing the new National Tripartite Committee and requests from constituents for ongoing support to strengthen social dialogue capacities and processes in the next DWCP.

To the degree that the normative agenda of the ILO (developed through tripartite consensus) is increasingly reflected in the conceptual frameworks and practice of local constituents and other local actors, the stronger the likelihood of the Decent work Agenda progressing in concrete ways through policy and legal frameworks, strategies, national plans and (in time) increased national budget allocations.

In this context, certain key institutional sites at different levels play important roles, as follows:

**National and provincial level:** Although their effectiveness is highly variable and affected by resource constraints, several national and provincial level tripartite bodies provide venues within which social dialogue understandings and practices are developed and practiced, and the benefits are demonstrated. The main one of these at national level is the Technical Committee on Industrial Relations. Provincial versions of this body function to a greater or lesser degree, but tend to be ineffectual in practice. The Social Security Fund is advised and overseen by a tripartite body and the OSH Decree provides for the establishment of national and provincial / capital OSH committees. No formal sector tripartite bodies exist currently.

**The DWCP Tripartite Steering Committee:** The TSC provides an important hub for learning about, practicing, demonstrating and ‘diffusing’ the norms and benefits of social dialogue (refer to Section 5.6.2 for elaboration).

**Enterprise level:** Collective bargaining provides a vital platform for social dialogue and embedding international labour standards as reflected in relevant legislation, particularly the Labour and Social Security Laws. The current DWCP period has met its targets in this respect, with 106 new collective agreements which have benefited 13,680 workers (9,918 female) and 52.6 percent of the labour disputes (295/561) received by the MOLSW since 2017 being resolved through social dialogue or statutory procedures.

**Constituents themselves within their own institutional frameworks:** Raising understanding of international labour standards and the benefits of social dialogue has been an important focus of their cooperation with the ILO office under the current DWCP.

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<sup>24</sup> Mona Lena Krook, Jacqui True. (November 19 2010). Rethinking the life cycles of international norms: The United Nations and the global promotion of gender equality



**Other international development partners:** The EU, SDC and BMZ, among others, are also champions of the ILO normative agenda and referred to this as a key rationale for their support of the ILO in interviews for this review.

### Indications of impact at local level

Within and linked to this ‘higher-effect’ context, a number of specific impacts in particular areas can be discerned. The following selected examples are provided as illustrations rather than a comprehensive list:

- In 2019, through support from the ILO Luxembourg-funded regional project covering Lao PDR, Vietnam and Myanmar, technical assistance was provided to MoH and MoLSW on merging statutory health insurance schemes under the LSSO and National Health Insurance (NHI). The continued expansion of the NHI Fund now covers all 17 provinces of Lao PDR, except Vientiane Capitale, and has brought the overall health coverage total for all schemes, including LSSO and NHI and a variety of police schemes to a total of 94 percent nationwide. The merger process has further contributed to institutional sustainability and greater efficiencies in service provision. The impact arising from this development is the improvement of access to services for the majority of Lao PDR’s population, with flow-on benefits (yet to be measured) to health, well-being and productivity. This can be directly linked to achievement of **SDG Targets 1.3 and 3.8**.
- Following training from the ILO under the rural employment project, agricultural extension officials who provide technical advisory services at provincial level were able to introduce coffee farmers to zero-waste methodologies for producing animal feed and fertilizer. As a result, approximately 100 coffee-producing households in target villages from the poorest areas of Dak Cheung district in Sekong Province, were able to increase their income five-fold.<sup>25</sup> In Savannakhet Province, a skills needs assessment tool was developed in 2019 and piloted in target districts, villages and selected companies to inform skills development interventions. Through ILO support, the provincial Department of Labour and Social Welfare together with the local skills development centres are now able to conduct assessments related to the recruitment of rural workers and offer improved employment services and skills training. As a result, more informal women and men workers are able to find employment which improves their lives and those of their families. This can be directly linked to achievement of **SDG Targets 4.3, 8.3 and 8.6**.
- Garment and coffee sector stakeholders, including small-holder farmers, government and private sector representative entities involved in the ILO Vision Zero Fund OSH project reported (i) improved technical knowledge enabling more effective labour inspections; (ii) enhanced capacities in OSH promotion in the targeted sectors and beyond; (iii) reductions in occupational accidents in the pilot garment factories and farming communities; (iv) improved safety in handling hazardous chemicals; (v) the establishment of workplace OSH Committees in a majority of the pilot garment factories, with positive impacts on safety and health at work; (vi) strengthened commitment by private sector and state training institutions to mainstreaming OSH into training and/or membership services (e.g. ALGI, LCA and ARC) and ; and (vii) increased OSH knowledge and strengthened collaboration at the provincial government level in Champasak as the result of the establishment of an inter-departmental working group to coordinate and drive change.<sup>26</sup> These impacts can be linked to achievement of **SDG Target 8.8**.

The Impacts shown in these and other areas under the DWCP (refer to Annex 4 link to findings and recommendations under each of the other criteria sections of this report (relevance, coherence, effectiveness and sustainability). Continuing to strengthen DWCP impact in the next five-year phase requires

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<sup>25</sup> International Labour Organization. Final Progress Report: National Rural Employment Strategy in Lao PDR towards increasing opportunities for decent and productive employment in rural areas, 01 May 2017 – 31 December 2020.

<sup>26</sup> For example, the Ministry and Champasak Department of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW/DoLSW), the Lao Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI), the Association of the Lao Garment Industry (ALGI), the Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU), the Lao Coffee Association (LCA), and the Southern Laos Agricultural Research Centre (ARC).

structured attention to and resourcing of continuous monitoring, learning and application in practice of lessons.

## **Recommendation 5: Strengthen the longer-term impact of DWCP programmes and projects by:**

**5.1 Better understanding the constraining and enabling factors of capacity development engagement in Lao PDR in order to improve systemic impact:** Conduct a thematic evaluation of DWCP institutional and technical capacity development efforts under the DWCP in order to (i) identify factors which constrain and hinder sustained impact; (ii) identify and promote good practices; and (iii) make recommendations to improve long term sustainable results (refer recommendation 3.2).

**5.2 Strengthening the ILO's role in (i) Lao PDR Government / development partner strategic dialogues and (ii) UNSDCF leadership:** Invest the necessary resources at ROAP and Country Office levels to ensure selective and influential ILO engagement in (i) the annual national Lao PDR / development partner Roundtable meetings; (ii) prioritized associated sector working groups; (iii) the joint leadership role (with UNICEF) of UN activity under Priority 2 of the UNSDCF; and (iv) prioritized UNCT working groups.

## **5.6 Sustainability (will the DWCP benefits last?)**

**Overall assessment:** The likelihood of net benefits of DWCP implementation being sustained in the medium to longer term is variable. There are good examples of sustainability emerging from the current DWCP, as well as areas where sustainability is not yet assured and ongoing attention is needed in the next DWCP period. This in turn recognizes that the Decent Work Agenda is a long-term one that can transcend two or more DWCPs in particular areas. Progressive increases of national budget support over time is an important factor in this regard. The following sections examine key factors in ensuring sustainable net benefits from DWCP engagement, as follows:

- national ownership and financing
- the role of DWCP governance at national level
- embedding of decent work norms and labour standards in national policies, laws, strategies and plans
- sustainably strengthening institutional and technical capacities
- building sustainability planning into programme and project design
- monitoring and managing risks
- sustaining benefits for women and vulnerable groups

### **National ownership and financing are essential foundations of sustainability**

At the core of sustainability is national ownership. The second DWCP progress report prepared by the M&E Working Group (July 2019) highlights the issue of ownership among its lessons. It states that “national ownership and leadership are crucial to the successful implementation of the partnership and results...” To this end, it is “necessary to make a more explicit linkage, institutionally and individually, as well as from top managers to desk officers of the constituent offices, (to the fact) that the DWCP constitutes part of their office work plan and not an addition or separate work.”

It was further observed that where national budget allocations are supporting DWCP interventions, the “commitment and ownership of implementing partners is significantly high. Continued advocacy for national budget allocations towards the ILO's supported interventions will therefore be important and will ensure sustainability.”

The review endorses these messages and proposes that priority be given to engagement with the relevant



national counterparts to support increased national budget commitments to implement and sustain DWCP outcomes over time. This should be combined with the joint development where appropriate of exit strategies and sustainability plans at project level (refer below for elaboration).

Recent years have seen some movement in this direction with increased allocations within fiscal constraints in areas including social protection expenditure, and the costs of Lao PDR's second labour force survey in 2017 (although the current third LFS is depending on resources mobilized by the ILO). National budget allocations will be fundamental to the implementation over time of the National Rural Employment Strategy which has been designed to provide guidance and cohesion to allocations within various ministry budgets around a set of shared objectives and significant actions, supplemented for the period necessary by international partner financing.

### **DWCP governance as a space for growing ownership and embedding norms**

The importance of DWCP tripartite governance within a sustainability context was emphasized by a regional review of DWCP tripartite governance mechanisms in Asia-Pacific (final draft report, 2019), for which Lao PDR was one of four case studies. This study cited the Lao PDR example as demonstrating the value of a governance structure which combines links at Ministerial level to broader national policy priorities on the one hand, with the engagement of constituents at a technical and planning level, on the other. Together these two levels within the DWCP governance arrangements can contribute to building an influential and long-term core of knowledge, continuity and trust-based working relations around the DWCP.<sup>27</sup>

Lao PDR constituents consulted for the above regional review noted the importance of the knowledge they gain about international labour standards as a result of their engagement in DWCP governance, formulation and implementation. They also pointed out that the working relations developed in the DWCP Tripartite Committee and M&E Working Group informally carry over into wider issue-based social dialogue through direct participation of the same constituent representatives.<sup>28</sup>

DWCP governance is thus a key space within which constituents can learn about, practice, and demonstrate the norms of social dialogue, and from there take their understandings, approach and working relationships out to other processes and institutions. Some interviewed international interlocutors emphasized the crucial role of the ILO's tripartite base in Lao PDR as a contributor to sustainability, observing that the more the constituents are owners and promoters of the norms underpinning the Decent Work Agenda and social dialogue, the stronger the national ownership of the DWCP will be. The ILO's tripartite approach thus provides an important condition for sustainability.

To strengthen its engagement in DWCP governance and implementation, the LFTU has established an internal DWCP committee which is chaired at Vice-President level. Early in the current DWCP period, they and other constituents indicated a commitment to strengthening their ownership of the country programme through taking over core governance functions agenda setting, servicing and drafting of reports which currently rely heavily on input from the ILO National Projects Office. More regular governance meetings were also seen as important to strengthen continuity, mutual support, networking and internal capacity development.

The full realization of this DWCP governance potentiality remains work in progress, however. As noted in Section 5.6.2, the increase in ownership of DWCP agenda-setting and servicing by constituents that was envisaged early in the DWCP period has not yet fully developed in practice. The impacts of COVID-19,

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<sup>27</sup> Clarke, Don. (September 2019). Review of DWCP tripartite governance mechanisms in Asia-Pacific. Final draft report

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

resourcing constraints and other priorities have all had their impact. Progress in establishing the new high-level National Tripartite Labour Committee has also been slower than anticipated, but it remains on track for completion in late 2021 or early 2022. At the same time, constituents remain involved to the extent they can under current circumstances in the advisory committees at individual project level, also a key component of the overall DWCP governance architecture. Often these involve the same personnel as broader DWCP meetings.

Taking these developments into account, it is recommended that a more streamlined and less demanding DWCP governance structure be established which reduces the level of commitment required at individual project level and expands the role of the TSC to include individual project oversight, based on reports provided by smaller tripartite technical support teams set up at project level. Advice and recommendations would also be provided as necessary by a reactivated M&E Working Group.

### **Ratification and implementation of international labour standards**

International standards adopted by tripartite dialogue in the International Labour Conference are a core component of the ILO's normative mandate. They provide the cornerstone of the sustainability of ILO engagements at national level through being embedded in national legal, policy, institutional and programmatic frameworks, this influencing long-term national development. The DWCP target to ensure the ratification of at least one new international labour convention by 2021 is on track with ratification of OSH conventions C.155 and C.187 planned for this year after extensive social dialogue and related capacity development support. At the same time, reporting on the implementation of ratified conventions to the ILO's international supervisory bodies has improved, with all due reports having been provided.

In the period leading-up to Lao PDR's LDC graduation in 2026, the ILO's international standards mandate will take even greater importance in the context of considerations of impact and sustainability. If Laos is to qualify for trade concessions under the EU GSP+, it needs to meet its obligations to 27 international human rights conventions. These include internal labour conventions: Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (C.138); Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (C.182); Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (C.105); Forced Compulsory Labour Convention (C.29); Equal Remuneration of Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value Convention (C.100); Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation Convention (C.111); Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (C.87); and the Right to Organise and to Bargain Collectively Convention (C.98).

Of the listed international labour conventions, Lao PDR has ratified C.182, C.100, C.111, and C.138. Two of the remaining conventions required for GSP+ status, C.87 and C.98 remain contentious in the Lao PDR context. It is thus recommended that Lao PDR develop a multi-year ratifications strategy linked to longer term development priorities and needs, including with respect to the implications of LDS graduation.

### **Policy, laws, strategies, plans – progressively embedding ILS alignment**

As observed earlier, (and validated by stakeholder feedback), DWCP design and implementation has been well-aligned with national policy, legal and strategic policy frameworks. Key among these is the Lao PDR Vision 2020 and relevant SDG targets; the Lao PDR Social-Economic Development Strategy 2016-2025, the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) and a range of national relevant laws, policies, strategies and plans as referenced elsewhere.

The DWCP has further contributed in specific ways to the further development of this national policy, legal and strategic architecture, with a focus on progressive alignment with international labour standards. This has included technical and capacity development support to the development and adoption the National Social Protection Strategy, the National Rural Employment Strategy (final adoption pending); the Decree on

Labour Dispute Resolution (No. 76); the Decree on Occupational Health and Safety (No. 22); and the Decree on the placement of Lao PDR Labour to Work Abroad (No. 68, with IOM).

In addition, the revision of Ministerial Agreement on the Recruitment Agencies (No. 43) is in the process of finalization; the second Lao national OSH profile was developed; and the National Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labour was revised and is expected to be approved by Nov 2021. These alignments and developments were cited by several stakeholders as evidence of ILO relevance in Lao PDR and underpin the highly relevant rating for the DWCP in Section 5.1.

Closely related to this area is the embedding of the Decent Work Agenda, international labour standards and social dialogue into the new UN Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2026 for Lao PDR. The explicit reflection of these ILO mandates under UNSDCF Strategic Priority 2 on inclusive prosperity<sup>29</sup> (for which the ILO will be the lead agency with UNICEF) reflects a significant investment by the ILO Office in the UNCT formulation process, supported by the engagement of the social partners in the business and civil society forums convened to contribute to the process. The UNRC commended the ILO's contribution to UNSDCF development.

The embedding of ILO agendas will provide opportunities for greater engagement by the UNCT more broadly in areas including decent and productive work creation and labour rights, potentially strengthening outreach, availability of resources, impact and sustainability. The challenge in the next DWCP period will be to build on the opportunities provided through:

- Ensuring that the ILO National Projects Office in Lao PDR is adequately resourced and supported to play an effective and consistent role in leading work, with UNICEF, under Strategic Priority 2.
- Supporting and facilitating increased direct engagement by the ILO constituents in relevant UNSDCF processes and activities (including planning consultations and evaluations), thus increasing their visibility within and contribution to the overall UN effort in the country.

### **Sustainably strengthening institutional and technical capacities**

Effective and sustainable capacity development at institutional and technical levels, based on local priorities, needs and learning preferences is also at the core of DWCP sustainability. A proper assessment of the impact and sustainability of the diverse range of capacity development initiatives under the DWCP (refer Annex 7 is difficult without the availability of follow-up monitoring of how these have affected both organizational and individual performance. A specific in-depth review in this area is thus recommended.

Stakeholder feedback and a review of project and evaluation documents in the meantime indicates variable degrees of impact and sustainability. Generally stakeholder feedback viewed once-off training initiatives, with limited continuity and follow-up, as having limited long-term value. The focus in reporting covers numbers in attendance (with sex disaggregation) and on-the-spot evaluation feedback, but with no provision for tracer studies or other approaches to gauge longer-term impact and sustainability.

A particular focus of DWCP capacity engagement since 2017 has been around a number of interrelated initiatives to support the Lao PDR Government's social protection agenda (itself also developed with considerable support by the ILO and other international partners).

The scale and diversity of approaches employed and actors involved, with the ILO in a strategic position through its support to the development of the NSPS, provides a good opportunity to demonstrate what it

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<sup>29</sup> Strategic Priority 2 includes transition after LDC graduation; social protection; private sector development and trade; and skills development.

takes to genuinely achieve a sustained capacity shift which delivers tangible results to the Lao PDR population.

Support provided under the DWCP in this area shows the value of a consolidated and integrated approach which builds on long-term engagement, along with WHO and other international actors and multiple donors. Capacity development and technical engagement in the current DWCP period has encompassed the following interlinked initiatives:

- supporting the LSSO and NHIB in their institutional merger process, and identifying financing options, with a view to achieving universal health coverage nationwide by 2025.
- supporting development of information systems to increase efficiency in the administration and monitoring of social health protection, including supporting the LSSO in the assessment and development of its E-office system and supporting the Ministry of Health in developing a MIS masterplan for the NHI scheme
- strengthening the capacity of social security officials from 18 provinces to conduct public awareness raising campaigns on the benefits of being part of the national social security system, with a focus on private sector workers, Employment Insurance and Employment Injury Insurance.
- developing options and advocacy for sustainable financing for social protection (with UNCDF), and raising awareness of ethnic minorities on NHI benefits.
- developing systems in partnership with the private sector to make cash transfers efficiently via cell phone technology in the context of (i) piloting of a social welfare scheme for pregnant women and infants in two provinces (with UNICEF) and (ii) an LSSO scheme to make once-off cash transfers to garment workers who lost their jobs due to COVID 19 (with BMZ support).

One particular capacity development approach highlighted by the NHIB for its strategic impact in this context is the granting of scholarships for tertiary education study in relevant areas. This is seen as a successful investment in long-term institutional capacity development. LFTU have shown interest in a similar investment to build long term capacity.

A second major focus of capacity development under the DWCP has been ongoing support for the ILO's national constituents. In the case of MoLSW, this has included training of labour inspectors at national and provincial in areas including strategic compliance planning and use of the new inspection checklist within the agriculture sector. The MoLSW Skills Development and Employment Department (SDEP) reports that they are now able to develop skills standards after an initial period of capacity support from the ILO.

For the social partners, capacity development support has had a strong awareness and knowledge building orientation. This has included training in the areas including social dialogue, International Labour Standards in the area of OSH such as C155 and C187, minimum wage setting and service delivery to members, including at the provincial level.

Both social partners have been affected by the impacts of COVID-19, with a loss of membership income even affecting LNCCI's ability to pay ASEAN employer body fees. The issues of already inadequate IT infrastructures and skills have been brought to the fore with demands of working outside the office and communicating with members, leading to increased attention (which will carry into the next DWCP period) of strengthening capacities around effective digital and online communications

The current DWCP highlights a need, identified by the ILO social partners during its development phase, for a more strategic, consolidated and longer-term approach to capacity development, supported by multi-year cooperation frameworks and an annual review and planning process. Other stakeholder feedback for this current review highlighted a similar need more broadly (for example, in the case of the LSB where current ILO support tends to be more project focused than systemic).

The intention under the current DWCP was to explicitly link such frameworks in the case of the social partners to the implementation of the programme as a whole, with a focus on practical areas where the LNCCI and LFTU respectively will be making a contribution. However, such cooperation frameworks were not developed. As a result, the need remains for a longer-term planning approach based on clear identification and prioritization of social partners' capacity development gaps and requirements.

A further key aspect of sustainable capacity development is alignment with broader partner strategic plans, where these are in place. This is critical for adding value to what is already prioritized and underway as part of the partner's core business. For MoLSW, the key relevant document in this context is its 5<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan (2021-2025). For LNCCI, the Strategic Action Plan for the Private Sector in Lao PDR 2021-2025 provides the primary basis. For the LFTU, key points of reference are provided by its national organising strategy and nine district-level organising plans for building its presence in the private sector, and its Policy and Action Plan on Migration.

### **Planning for sustainability within programme and project design**

Several indications of sustainable benefits at project level emerged in desk review and stakeholder interviews. Selected examples include:

- Through the ILO Vision Zero Fund (VZF) OSH project in the garment and coffee sectors, the development of a pool of local OSH trainers; the integration of OSH into the broader training programme of the Agricultural Research Centre in Champasak Province; and commitments by LNCCI, the Association of the Lao Garment Industry (ALGI) and the Lao Coffee Association (LCA) to support members in the establishment and effective functioning of OSH Committees in line with the national OSH Decree.
- Examples of ownership demonstrated by senior government leaders and officials in presenting and advocating for the ILO-supported rural employment and social protection programmes. The Prime Minister highlighted the NRES in his presentation to the Lao National Business Forum convened by LNCCI, for example, including informing participants of the impending discussion of the strategy in the National Assembly. The real 'test' of the sustainability of the NRES will follow in 2022 when budget allocations are made for implementation. The strategy is premised on increased allocations by relevant ministries to rural employment promotion that falls within their mandate, with increased overall coordination across ministries and supplementary resources provided by international development partners.
- Increased MSME capacities and access to finance as result of expansion of business development services, including the SME Service Centre based at LNCCI. 148 of 800 MSMEs reached to date in 17 provinces by business development services have been able to improve their prospects for sustainability through access to low interest bank loans. The value of the ILO "Laos for business" training has been embedded into the process by banks requiring loan applicants to undertake the course.
- Accelerated progress in collaboration with private sector counterparts to develop an efficient cash transfer system for the LSSO via use of cell phone technology.

The workplan of the above-mentioned VZF OSH project also included a specific output around the production of a sustainability plan, aimed at ensuring that the net benefits of the project continued within a national policy and institutional context. In the event this was not produced due to pressures caused by the COVID-19 response. Nonetheless, the fact that this was scheduled as part of the pre-COVID-19 project plan was commented on favourably by the mid-term evaluation. *Inter alia*, this has helped to keep sustainability considerations visible within project implementation and points to the value of specifically building sustainability into project design from the beginning.

The development of exit strategies as a tool in planning for sustainability is an area also requiring attention in DWCP design and implementation. Although the term is not explicitly used in current project documentation under the DWCP, its underlying meaning is reflected in the above examples of sustainable benefits from project activities. It can be helpful to make expectations with respect to sustainability visible and explicit through jointly developed and monitored exit strategies which, *inter alia*, include long-term national budget planning where relevant. Such strategies don't necessarily imply the end of ILO support, but rather set out a pathway to sustainability than can include a reorientation of the support provided for an agreed further period, building on progress and lessons to date. The development of such strategies should be part of discussion with partners from the beginning of any project development and provide a key reference for regular review, planning and adjustment throughout the project implementation cycle.

### **Managing risks as a factor for sustainability**

While the impacts of COVID-19 could not have been anticipated in the design of the DWCP, the ILO Office response has been universally commended by stakeholders, with particular to the flexibility, transparency and 'jointness' of the response.

The predominant risks identified in the DWCP were a lack of resources and relevant skills; delays in financial transfers; lack of coordination among relevant government agencies; and low levels of understanding of social dialogue and tripartism, especially at provincial and local levels. The identified risks have generally been borne out in practice, with attention being paid to mitigate these through ongoing training, a focus on harmonization of health insurance institutions and processes, and the use of social dialogue to find solutions and facilitate coordinated approaches.

The impacts of climate change were also included in the project design as a risk for rural employment initiatives in Savannakhet and Sekong Provinces. In practice this has been reflected to only a limited extent to date through the strengthening of irrigation infrastructure by installing concrete lining in Sekong Province to better withstand major weather events. In one other major project (the OSH project in the garment and coffee sectors), the mid-term evaluation of indicated that climate change was "not yet visible in project planning and implementation" in this area.<sup>30</sup>

The DWCP states that the DWCP Tripartite Steering Committee, supported by the M&E Working Group provide the main overall mechanism for monitoring risks and for adjusting the DWCP as necessary. As noted earlier, one change was made at indicator and target level to the DWCP at the recommendation of the M&E Working group to ensure a better grounding in the local context. As also noted earlier, assumptions in certain target areas were also made at the design stage which were not sustained in practice, including with respect to local capacities and data availability. Appropriate changes to the DWCP results framework were not made in these areas. This related to a decline in the functionality of the M&E Working Group even before the advent of COVID-19, and a revealed need for stronger adaptive management capacities within the wider ILO staff and constituents.

### **Sustaining benefits for women and vulnerable groups**

The sustainability of net benefits of DWCP implementation will be compromised if there is not rigorous and consistent attention to tangible results with respect to gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as the priorities and rights of vulnerable groups. These include informal workers generally, returned migrant workers, persons with disability and ethnic populations.

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<sup>30</sup> Mid-term internal evaluation of Occupational Safety and Health in Lao PDR Supply Chains: A Vision Zero Fund project.

As observed earlier, while there are important components of the DWCP which specifically focus on the priorities and needs of women (e.g. garment sector workers and mothers and infants), the degree and effectiveness of mainstreaming gender across the country programme as a whole is variable. Examples are provided earlier with respect to the scope for strengthened mainstreaming in the coffee sector elements of the Vision Zero Fund OSH project, as one illustration. At the same time, gender considerations are a prominent focus within the designs of the rural employment project and the associated soon-to-be adopted NRES, as well as the new ILO / Oxfam project getting underway this year with EU support to increase access of informal workers to social protection.

The mid-term evaluation of the Rural Employment Project indicated that activities at village level have provided a high level of opportunity for women. While a degree of favouring of men in some activities was noted (e.g. motor cycle repairs and fish raising), women were active in poultry raising and mushroom production. Local staff of the Lao Women's Union (LWU) staff received gender mainstreaming training and proceeded to provide gender awareness development at village level, including regular follow-up by trainers and mentors. Villagers themselves claimed (the men and women) that this has changed their way of thinking and results in men sharing in housework and women participating in more activities.<sup>31</sup>

In the meantime, the NRES was yet to be finally adopted by the National Assembly at the time this review was completed, so an assessment of the degree to which its gender equality provisions have been implemented is not yet possible.

Overall, stakeholder feedback and project documentation review indicated the trends within DWCP implementation are towards paying greater attention in design and implementation to gender considerations. There is scope however for more explicit and closely monitored attention to the priorities and rights of other population groups most likely to be left behind, particularly persons with disabilities who are largely absent in planning and reporting. To sustain and deepen the positive trends and address the gaps, several measures can be taken in the development of the next DWCP. These include:

- Ensuring that gender and other inclusion considerations are given specific attention in contextual analyses developed as part of programme and project design.
- As appropriate in the project context, including a blend of specific targeted and mainstreaming measures which are supported by specific references in indicators and targets to reinforce monitoring and visibility. Where relevant, this should include attention to issues such as voice, representation and leadership and addressing gender-based violence.
- Integrating gender statistics and inclusivity considerations into capacity support for the LSB and statistics unit of MoLSW to strengthen the availability of gender and inclusion responsive labour market information. As indicated elsewhere, a time-use module should be included in at least one of the labour force surveys conducted in the next DWCP period to provide data on gender dynamics.

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<sup>31</sup> Connell, John G. (October 2018). Mid-term evaluation of national rural employment strategy in Lao PDR towards increasing opportunities for decent and productive employment in rural areas.



## **Recommendation 6. Enhance the longer-term sustainability of DWCP results by:**

- 6.1 Strengthening ILO constituent engagement in UNSDCF processes and activities:** Continue to facilitate and support direct engagement by ILO constituents within all relevant consultative and planning opportunities under the UNSDCF, in order to ensure that (i) employers' and workers' organization have a stake in the wider UN effort and (ii) their voices and perspectives are increasingly visible and influential across UN engagement in Lao PDR.
- 6.2 Bringing great continuity and coherence to ILO constituent capacity development:** Jointly develop 5-year capacity development strategies for each of MoLSW, LNCCI and LFTU in order to strengthen impact and ensure sustainability of capacity development initiatives, supported by annual activity and resourcing plans. Link such planning to the respective relevant constituent strategic planning documents.
- 6.3 Putting preparations for Lao PDR's LDC graduation in 2026 at the centre of DWCP's theory of change and programming strategies:** In this context prioritize (i) sustained attention to the ratification and implementation of international labour standards related to international trade requirements (particularly the EU GSP+); (ii) working closely to this end with ILO constituents, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the National Assembly, the Ministry of Planning and Investment, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; (iii) development of a multi-year ratification strategy and plan which takes LDC graduation into account; (iv) strengthening the availability of labour-related data to inform evidence-based long-term policy development and planning through more regular labour force surveys (including time use-modules); and (v) strengthening the relevant statistical capacities of the Lao Statistics Bureau and the MoLSW statistics unit.
- 6.4 Making exit strategies and sustainability planning core components of programme and project design:** Include joint consideration with partners of exit strategies and sustainability planning from the beginning of programme and product development. This should include (i) long-term planning for increased step-by-step national budget commitments where relevant and (ii) development of a sustainability plan as a product of all project activity.
- 6.5 Further strengthening constituent ownership and leadership of DWCP governance:** Measures to this end should include (i) full and proactive engagement by constituents in the next DWCP development, oversight and implementation; (ii) ensuring alignment with constituents' own priorities, planning and capacities; (iii) ensuring greater regularity of meetings of the Tripartite Steering Committee (TSC), at least 6-monthly; (iv) reviewing and (as necessary) adjusting the DWCP monitoring framework as a standard agenda item in TSC meetings; (v) rotating the TSC chair role among constituents; (vi) re-energizing the M&E Working Group as a technical platform which supports and feeds into the TSC; (vii) ensuring active participation by MPI at all levels as a DWCP signatory; and (viii) adjusting the TSC Terms of Reference to enable the TSC to act as an overall project advisory body, with smaller tripartite technical task teams providing coordination and guidance at individual project level. The latter would report to meetings of the TSC.



## 6. SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES IN DWCP IMPLEMENTATION

The country overview details a number of interrelated challenges in areas including the economic and health impacts of COVID-19 (including in relation to the return of migrant workers from Thailand); climate change and environmental degradation; high levels of informality, poverty and economic inequality; persistent gender inequality; generally low skill and educational attainment levels; and a range of other challenges. The following additional challenges related to DWCP implementation were highlighted by desk review and key informants:

- Lack of sustainable government and social partner **human and financial resourcing**. This has been compounded by the impact of COVID-19 on available national human and financial resources.
- **Skill gaps** in areas including general project management and adaptive management, including within the ILO context. Low levels of English language capacity were also raised by some stakeholders, particularly with respect to preparation of proposals, report writing and general communication with English-speaking ILO specialist and project staff. At the same time, it is important to continue developing the pool of available Lao interpreters and translators who are familiar with the language and terminology of the ILO to enable interactions to be conducted in local language to the degree possible.
- Limited **absorption capacity** at local levels due to educational, literacy and language barriers.
- **Financial transfer delays and modalities** which cause delays in project implementation and/or impose financial burdens on partners. This was cited as a challenge by a significant number of stakeholders. Current steps involve the ILO office at country and regional levels, the Lao PDR Treasury Department and the partners themselves, who need to meet certain specified requirements. There is a need to ensure all stakeholders are 'on the same page' with respect to the steps and procedures and that national partners have the necessary capacity to efficiently meet the requirements.
- Frequently weak **cross-programme linkages** between individual projects and larger national and DWCP outcomes, priorities, policies and programmes – as well as between projects themselves. The result can be less than optimal efficiency in the use of resources and the sharing the benefits of lessons learned in order to increase the impact of programme delivery.
- Weaknesses in **project design** in areas such as ensuring adequate provision and resourcing for the groundwork for project implementation; realistically assessing and taking account of institutional capacities and resourcing at national and provincial levels, as well as local absorption capacities; and allowing sufficient time for delivering project outputs and outcomes.
- **Lack of data**, linked to institutional capacity and systems gaps, in key areas such as occupational accidents and injuries, disputes resolution, gender equality, disability and other areas. This affects the quality of monitoring and reporting, as well as policy formulation and planning at national level.
- Variable levels of **knowledge among ILO project staff and national partners** about the broader DWCP framework and its priorities, outcomes and targets. This affects the ability to understand where a particular project or activity fits into and contributes to larger goals and outcomes, and the potential for stronger horizontal linkages with other relevant initiatives which can enhance overall impact and sustainability.

## 7. SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED

- **National ownership and commitment** is the foundation of successful and sustainable DWCP implementation. *Inter alia* this requires working with a long-term perspective; promoting mutual respect; investment of the necessary time and resources into effective partnerships; being realistic about what can be progressed within existing human and financial resources. Although the process of developing the current DWCP put significant emphasis on national ownership and being realistic in terms of progress and timeframes, in reality several assumptions were made about local capacities and systems which proved to be overly optimistic in the circumstances, even taking account of the impacts of COVID. These assumptions were a key factor in the non-achievement of certain targets under the current DWCP.
- **Broadening partnerships** beyond the tripartite constituents, including within the wider Lao PDR government system, can be a crucial contributor to sustaining DWCP interventions. The new joint project with the EU and Oxfam (and Oxfam's community-based CSO partners) on increasing informal worker access to social protection provides an opportunity to test a new modality for DWCP implementation.
- While the ILO has provided significant **capacity strengthening** support to its constituents and partners over many years, the significant gaps that remain indicate a need for more systematic and long-term approaches. These should consolidate and reinforce learning over time; be based on clear partner-driven needs assessments; be guided by clear joint strategies for longer term change; and be underpinned by regular review and monitoring to enable continuous learning and improvement.
- Enhancing data and information sharing, **synergies and mutual reinforcement among DWCP projects** is crucial for promoting greater efficiency and impact in DWCP implementation. Experience indicates that such approaches tend to occur to only a limited extent in a context where human resources are limited, under pressure and primarily charged with meeting their own separately funded project objectives. Connections and synergies between progress and projects need to be explicitly included in programme project and activity design and ToRs, as well as in the job descriptions and performance expectations of the relevant staff.
- Increasing **private sector engagement** through the LNCCI role with the DWCP Tripartite Steering Committee, as well as through LNCCI and direct private sector involvement within programme, project and activity design is a vital factor for leveraging resources and skills for sustainable DWCP implementation.

## Annexes

### Annex 1: List of people consulted

No	Name	Title	Organization
<b>Government</b>			
1.	Mr. Leepao Yang	Vice-Minister	MOLSW
2.	Mr. Vilay Phanthavong	Deputy Head of Cabinet	MOLSW
3.	Mr. Thipphasone Soukhathammavong	Deputy Director General (DDG)	Department of Planning and Cooperation, MOLSW
4.	Mr. Khonsy Mahavong	DDG	Department of Development and Employment, MOLSW
5.	Mr. Sourisack Souphanthong	DDG	Department of Development and Employment, MOLSW
6.	Ms. Soysavanh Outhaphone	Deputy Director	Department of Development and Employment, MOLSW
7.	Ms. Phetchinda Sisomvang	Deputy Director of Policy and Planning Division	Department of Development and Employment, MOLSW
8.	Mr. Inthavone Singdala	Deputy Director of Skill Standard Development Division	Department of Development and Employment, MOLSW
9.	Mr. Souksakhone Siharaj	Deputy Director of Skill Development Management Division	Department of Development and Employment, MOLSW
10.	Mr. Phetsamone Duangdala	Deputy Director of Labour Market Information Division	Department of Development and Employment, MOLSW
11.	Mr. Oudon Manivong	DDG	Department of Labour Management, MOLSW
12.	Mr. Somchit	Director of Policy and Planning Division	Department of Labour Management, MOLSW
13.	Mr. Somvang Singpaseuth	Deputy Director of Labour Inspection Division	Department of Labour Management, MOLSW
14.	Mr. Moukda Sengvilay	Deputy Director of Labour Protection Division	Department of Labour Management, MOLSW
15.	Mr. Sonephet Duangprachanh	Deputy Director of OHS Division	Department of Labour Management, MOLSW
16.	Mr. Yangchen Parm	Technical Officer	Department of Labour Management, MOLSW
17.	Mr. Phitsana Xayasanh	Technical Officer	Department of Labour Management, MOLSW
18.	Mr. Vongkham Phanthanouvong	Director General	Department of Social Welfare, MOLSW
19.	Mr. Souphonexay Lopaengsy	Deputy Director, Division of Social Welfare	Department of Social Welfare, MOLSW
20.	Mr. Kamsouk Somphavong	Deputy Director, Division of Child Protection and Assistance to Trafficked Victims.	Department of Social Welfare, MOLSW

No	Name	Title	Organization
21.	Ms. Lattanaphone Vongsouthi	Director of NIU Division	Department of Planning and Cooperation, Ministry of Industry and Commerce
22.	Ms. Sonevilay Phengthavanh	Trade Officer	Department of Planning and Cooperation, Ministry of Industry and Commerce
23.	Mr. Kingxay Chounlamountry	Director of SME Support Division	SME Department, Ministry of Industry and Commerce
24.	Mr. Bounghnorth Chanthavone	DDG	Lao Social Security Office
25.	Ms. Chanpheng Maniseng	DDG	Department Labour Protection, Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU)
26.	Mr. Bouavanh Santhongdy	Director of Division	Labour Protection Department, LFTU
27.	Ms. Phailin Ladsabod	Director of Division	Labour Protection Department, LFTU
28.	Ms. Chanthavone Arphayyasard	DDG	Department of International Cooperation, LFTU
29.	Ms. Phonekeo Souvannaphoum	Deputy Director of Division	Department of International Cooperation, LFTU
30.	Ms. Souphavanh Southimath	Technical Officer	International Cooperation Department, LFTU
31.	Ms. Daovading Phirasayphithak	Deputy Secretary General	Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI)
32.	Mr. Phutthasone Phomvisay	Director of SME Service Center; Deputy Secretary General	Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI)
33.	Mr. Sysomphorn Phetdaoheuang	DDG	Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI)
34.	Mr. Alounsith Maniphon	Director of International Organization division	Department of International Cooperation, MPI
35.	Ms. Phiengsavanh Thammasith	Deputy Director of International	Department of International Cooperation, MPI
36.	Mr. Phimmasone Aminthalat	Vice President	Association of Lao Garment Industry (ALGI)
37.	Mr. Bountham Chanthavong	Chief of Office	Association of Lao Garment Industry (ALGI)
38.	Mr. Sivixay Xayyaseng	Head of Office	Lao Coffee Association
39.	Mr. Aliya Dengkayapichit,	Management team member	Lao Coffee Association
40.	Mr. Viengxay Viravong,	Deputy Director	National Health Insurance Bureau (NHIB)
41.	Ms. Dasavah Manivong	Deputy Chief	National Health Insurance Bureau (NHIB)

No	Name	Title	Organization
42.	Ms. Konglan Sengthonkham	Technical Officer	National Health Insurance Bureau (NHIB)
43.	Ms. Phimmanivanh	Technical Officer	National Health Insurance Bureau (NHIB)
44.	Mr. Vilaysouk Sisoulath	DDG	Department of Social Statistics, Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB)
<b>Development partners</b>			
45.	Ms. Sara Sekkenes	UN Resident Coordinator	United Nations
46.	Mr. Christian Engler	Deputy Director of Cooperation	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
47.	Dr. Ms. Christina Seeberg-Elverfeldt	Head of Development Cooperation	German Embassy
48.	Ms. Francesca Arato	Programme Manager-Governance	European Delegation to Laos
49.	Dr. Ms. Pia Rebello Britto	Country Representative	UNICEF Lao PDR
50.	Ms. Maryam Onyinoyi Abdu	Chief of Social Policy Monitoring and Evaluation	UNICEF Lao PDR
51.	Ms. Yali Zhang	Chief of Child Protection	UNICEF Lao PDR
52.	Ms. Vanhpheng Sirimongkhoun	National Professional Officer	WHO Laos PDR
53.	Dr. Ms. Eunkyong Kim	Technical on Health Financing	WHO Laos PDR
54.	Mr. Nicolas Tasch	Attache	Embassy of Luxembourg
<b>ILO</b>			
55.	Mr Graeme Buckley	Director of ILO CO for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR	ILO Bangkok
56.	Ms. Khemphone Phaokhamkeo	ILO Coordinator for Lao PDR	ILO Lao office
57.	Ms. Loveleen De	Project manager	ILO Lao office
58.	Ms. Anjali Patel	Project technical officer	ILO Lao office
59.	Ms. Viengprasith Thiphasouda	Project Coordinator	ILO Lao office
60.	Ms. Anonglack Phaniphong	Project Assistant	ILO Lao office
61.	Mr. Vongtavanh Sayavong	Project Coordinator	ILO Lao office
62.	Ms. Keovanlay Phanthavong	Project Coordinator	ILO Lao office
63.	Mr. Thongleck Xiong	Project Coordinator	ILO Lao office
64.	Mr. Bounthavy Bounmy	Project Coordinator	ILO Lao office

No	Name	Title	Organization
65.	Ms. Anousone Sosengin	Project Coordinator	ILO Lao office
66.	Mr. Noutthong Alounthong	Provincial project coordinator	ILO Lao office
67.	Mr. Sayphet	Sekong provincial coordinator	ILO Lao office
68.	Ms. Yuki Otsuji	Specialist in Workers' Activities, ACTRAV	ILO Bangkok
69.	Mr. Dong Eung LEE	Senior Specialist on Employers' Activities	ILO Bangkok
70.	Ms. Jittima Srisukham	Programme Officer	ILO Bangkok

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### Annex 3: Review workplan

Task	July				August					September				October	
	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	4	11
<b>1. Inception report preparation</b>															
Desk reviews															
Initial meetings with ILO Coordinator for Lao PDR and ILO Regional Evaluation Officer in Bangkok															
Submission of draft Inception Report															
commenting period by ILO															
Updating of 2020 -2021 progress report of the DWCP in the M&E framework table, in consultation with the ILO National Coordinator															
Finalization of Inception Report															
<b>2. Data collection, draft report preparation and review</b>															
Conducting KIIs															
Stakeholders' workshop for presentation of initial findings															
VC with ROAP and interested ILO colleagues on key findings and recommendations															
Data analysis and draft report preparation															
Submission of the draft report															
commenting period by ILO															
<b>3. Review report finalization and submission</b>															
Consolidated comments sent to the review team															
Revision and submission of final review report															

Colour code  Activities by review team  
 Activities by ILO

#### Annex 4: DWCP progress table 2017 – September 2021

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
<b>Priority 1: Promote employment and technical/vocational skills development in line with market demand</b>				
<b>Outcome 1.1: Increased number of relevant policy frameworks, strategies and regulations for creating jobs in rural areas</b>				
<b>Indicator 1.1.1:</b> Availability of gender, ethnicity, disability and environmentally-sensitive National Rural Employment Strategy (NRES), action plan and associated costings.	<b>Target 1.1.1.</b> National Rural Employment Strategy and action plan developed, adopted and coasted through an inclusive national process, drawing on lessons from pilot activities in two provinces, with (i) initial implementation underway by 2021 and (ii) reflection of gender, ethnicity, disability and environmental sustainability considerations.	<p>The draft NRES and its action plan (with tentative programmes, projects and costings) were presented to the Cabinet. They were generally endorsed by the former Prime Minister (PM), with minor recommended adjustments, in October 2020. The NRES was later reviewed and discussed at the meeting of the Politburo in August 2021.</p> <p>The NRES has been included in the 9<sup>th</sup> NESDP, under Target 2.</p> <p>The full costing of the NRES has not started yet, due to the strategy not yet being finally officially approved. As a result, initial implementation will not be underway until 2022.</p>	On track for final approval in 2021, with further development of action plan and costings to follow in 2022.	Due to the transition of the government and PM, the updated version was submitted to the Politburo for review and approval in August 2021. The NRES is the first strategy to be submitted to the Politburo and National Assembly (NA).

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
		<p>The implementation plan for the NRES has been discussed between ILO, MOLSW and potential donors (SDC, USAID, Japanese Embassy).</p> <p>The NRES incorporates gender, ethnicity, disability and environmental sustainability considerations.</p>		
<b>Indicator 1.1.2:</b> Number of new or improved policies and services/measures related to rural employment introduced as extension of existing laws and strategies in 2 provinces.	<b>Target 1.1.2.</b> At least one gender-responsive measure taken to address identified policy or service gaps in each province by 2019.	Skill development and internship manual for rural skill development was revised to include gender dimensions, among others, for use in the Southern Skill Development Center in Champasak (2018) and the Sisombat Private Skill Development School in Savannakhet (2020).	Achieved	The manual was revised in close consultation with private sector counterparts to ensure their need were reflected. The manual was adopted and is in use at the two institutes
<b>Indicator 1.1.3:</b> Number of South-South Cooperation (SSC) initiatives conducted as part of implementation of 'Vientiane Declaration on 'Transition from	<b>Target 1.1.3 (a)</b> Five-year action plan adopted to implement Vientiane Declaration by 2018; includes focus on rural jobs and taking account of gender, ethnic community and disability considerations.	The five-year action plan adopted in late 2017 includes focus on rural jobs and specific measures to take account of gender, ethnic community and disability considerations.	Achieved	

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
informal employment to formal employment towards decent work promotion in ASEAN.'	<b>Target 1.1.3 (b)</b> At least three South-South Cooperation activities related to rural employment elements of the Vientiane Declaration implemented by Lao PDR and ASEAN counterparts by 2019.	<p>Lao PDR successfully led the implementation of 2 actions: (1) a regional capacity building workshop on promoting rural development, sustainable tourism and short rural supply chains, and (2) a regional workshop on decent work promotion in rural economy through productivity growth, local employment promotion and transition from informal employment to formal employment.</p> <p>A consultation in preparation for the ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML) was organized by the MOLSW with support from ILO, which brought together representatives from government, workers and employers, UN agencies, and INGOs/NPAs to discuss and agree on recommendations that the Lao PDR delegation brought to the 12th annual regional AFML in Thailand.</p>	Achieved	

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
<b>Outcome 1.2: Increased decent and productive employment through (i) improved matching of jobseekers and labour market requirements; (ii) entrepreneurship development for women, men and youth and (iii) development of policy and legal instruments to support safe labour migration</b>				
<b>Indicator 1.2.1:</b> Availability of national strategy and action plan for development of public employment services (PES) and Labour Market Information (LMI).	<b>Target 1.2.1 (a).</b> National strategy and action plan for development of Public Employment Services and Labour Market Information developed and adopted by 2018, including the following: (i) establishment of legal basis for public employment services in line with C88; (ii) enhanced MoLSW role in regulating and monitoring standards for employment services (public and private) within Lao PDR in line with C181; and (iii) greater integration of services provided by employment service job centres (ESJs) and Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs).	<p>A national strategy and action plan for development of public employment services (PES) and Labour Market Information (LMI) not yet available.</p> <p>However, MOSLW implemented some activities improve PES and LMI. This included training of staff to provide employment services, supporting MOSLW to put its LMI system online and capacity development support to the MOSLW and the LSB on labour market statistics and analysis.</p> <p>In Champasak and Sayabuly where MRCs are under MOSLW oversight, the MRCs and ESJs have been merged as envisaged. However, in Luangprabang, Bokeo and Savannaket where the MRCs are under LFTU oversight, they have not merged with the ESJs, but work closely together.</p>	Partially achieved	<p>Two factors have influenced the non-achievement of components (a) and (b) of this target.</p> <p>The first was a shift in government priorities towards major changes in labour legislation towards dividing the current labour law into three distinct laws by 2023 (i.e. a skill development law, an employment law, and a labour protection law). The planned PES and LMI strategy has not been accorded the same priority as originally envisaged in this context.</p> <p>The second factor was a shift in the lead international partner role and the overall orientation of work in this area after the DWCP was finalized. The ADB became the principle international partner for most of the DWCP period, with a focus on PES systems. As a result, the ILO played a much more restricted role that had been envisaged in tripartite</p>

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
				consultations leading to the adoption of the DWCP.
	<b>Target 1.2.1 (b)</b> MOUs developed between MoLSW and the LNCCI and the LFTU respectively for cooperation in implementing PES/LMI strategy by 2018.	Links to the development of a PES/LMI strategy under 1.2.1 (a), which is not available, therefore the target is not able to be implemented.	Not achieved	
	<b>Target 1.2.1 (c).</b> Employer skills need surveys conducted annually from 2018 (with pilot project initiated by 2018 to gather such data on a sector and/or specific geographic basis).	Annual surveys not conducted due to lack of LNCCI resources and reliance on external support. ILO supported one employers' skill need survey in 2020 to assess the needs of the employers after the COVID-19 pandemic.	Partially achieved	The LCNNI has requested ILO support for more regular such surveys in the next DWCP period.
<b>Indicator 1.2.2:</b> More regular Labour Force Surveys conducted.	<b>Target 1.2.2.</b> At least three Labour Force Surveys conducted by 2021.	<p>ILO provided technical support to the Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB) on survey tools and sampling design for two Labour Force Surveys - the 2<sup>nd</sup> LFS in 2017 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2021.</p> <p>The LFS 2021 will include the measurement of child labour (Output 7.1) and recruitment</p>	Partially achieved	The Lao PDR Statistics Law (2010) requires national LFS to be carried out every five years., so this target was seeking to speed-up the process. The LFS 2017 was supported by the national budget with ILO technical support, while ILO and JICA provided funding and technical support to the current LFS 2021 process.

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
		<p>costs of migrant workers (Output 7.5).</p> <p>ILO also supported the LFS pilot study on measuring unpaid domestic and care work; and piloting the sampling design for reliable measurement of labour migration statistics within an LFS.</p>		<p>The 2017 LFS was one of the first to be conducted under the new guidance and definitions adopted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS). LSB has institutionalized the new LFS tools and is seeking the ILO's support for more regular surveys.</p> <p>MOLSW is further supposed to conduct an annual labour survey which focuses on number of employment and unemployment, but this does not currently happen due to lack of resources.</p>
<b>Indicator 1.2.3:</b> Number of jobseeker registrations and job placements.	<b>Target 1.2.3.</b> By 2021, 60% of registered jobseekers per annum placed in formal employment, at least 50% of whom are women and 2.8% are people with disabilities in line with national disability statistics.	Final data not available at time of completion of review report, but anecdotal feedback indicated partial achievement.	Partially achieved	As noted above, the ILO role in this area was restricted in light of the shift in lead international partner role following the finalization of the current DWCP.
<b>Indicator 1.2.4:</b> Legislation, policies and MoUs linked to labour migration adopted or	<b>Target 1.2.4.</b> At least one piece of legislation, policy and/or MOU adopted or revised to	With ILO and IOM joint support, MOLSW revised and finalized Decree No. 68 on the placement	Achieved	For Decree No. 245, any future revision would need to be closely aligned with international labour standards.



Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
amended in line with international standards and good practices.	better reflect international standards by 2021.	<p>of Lao PDR Labour to Work Abroad, last reviewed in 2002.</p> <p>The revision of Ministerial Agreement on the Recruitment Agencies, No. 043 is in the process of finalization.</p> <p>MOU with Japan was revised to shift the focus from sending interns to sending workers.</p>		
<b>Indicator 1.2.5:</b> Number of provinces in which migrant labour services are available through MRCs working in liaison with ESJs.	<b>Target 1.2.5.</b> MRCs operational and working in liaison with ESJs in at least five provinces by 2021, including at least two MRCs managed by the LFTU	<p>MRCs are functioning in five provinces, with three managed by the LFTU. In Champasak and Sayabuly provinces where MRCs are under the MOLSW, mergers between MRC and ESJC have taken place. However, in Luangprabang and Savannakhet where MRCs are under the LFTU, such mergers are not possible, but the respective centres work closely together.</p> <p>The fifth MRC in Bokeo Province was operationalized from July 2021 after its official launch.</p> <p>LFTU conducted awareness training on migration and</p>	Achieved	Links to Target1.2.1 (a) iii above.

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
		human trafficking risks that benefited more than 2,000 workers (1,784 were females) in 21 garment factories in Vientiane.		
<b>Indicator 1.2.6:</b> Number of employers' and workers' organizations and business service providers with increased technical capacity to provide entrepreneurship training to women, men and youth.	<b>Target 1.2.6.</b> By 2021, at least two employers' organizations, workers' organizations or business service providers have received training and other support to increase their technical capacity to deliver entrepreneurship leadership and skills training to women, men and youth, including in the informal economy.	<p>Under the projects 'Technical assistance for capacity building for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)' funded by WB and 'Supporting resilience of Lao MSMEs in response to COVID-19' funded by SDC, at least 10 Business Development Support (BDS) providers including the LNCCI SME Service Centre, EDC, MFA, TACDO, LJI, BNP and others have been equipped and trained to provide entrepreneurship leadership and skills training to women, men and youth, including in the informal economy.</p> <p>The ILO has further supported the BDS by offering them a range of additional training tools and approaches to diversify their products. A key training tool in this context is</p>	Achieved	<p>Each BDS has its own strength, expertise and constituency, providing diversity and a strong BDS network to meet the capacity needs of MSMEs.</p> <p>The ILO has further supported the SME Support Division of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce to implement the Lao PDR SME Strategy, including the preparation of training manuals (an area in which officials are keen to develop their own capacity through being part of future manual development). They suggest that new tools are needed on business clustering, value chain development and packaging design, and that the 'Start-up Your Own Business' manual requires updating.</p>

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
		<p>the ILO “Laos in Business” package.</p> <p>Through the coordination of the LNCCI SME Service Centre, a total of 803 enterprises (373 formal) have received Laos In Business Training. This consists of 370 Microenterprises (146 formal), 422 Small enterprises (220 formal) and 11 medium enterprises (7 formal) that have been capacitated to complete business plans and financial plans. This presents an achievement for the project and the BDS providers and presents the commercial banks with a large number of potential customers</p> <p>148 out of trained MSMEs/SMES have been able to access funding sources through low interest bank loans.</p>		

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
<b>Outcome 1.3: Increased policy capacity, competency standards and accreditation arrangements to support promotion of technical/ vocational skills for women, men and youth</b>				
<b>Indicator 1.3.1:</b> Number of initiatives to strengthen capacity of national mechanisms for development of technical/vocational skills policy and systems.	<b>Target 1.3.1.</b> At least two <b>initiatives</b> to strengthen National Training Council (NTC) and MoLSW technical capacity for national technical/ vocational skills policy and systems development by 2021.	Support is provided to MOLSW, which is member of NTC, but not to NTC directly.  ILO provided support to MOLSW on revising its skill development manual (indicator 1.1.2).	Partially achieved	NTC is chaired by Ministry of Education (MOE), with LNCCI and MOSLW as members, among others.
<b>Indicator 1.3.2:</b> Number of new technical/ vocational skills and competency standards promulgated at national level.	<b>Target 1.3.2.</b> At least five new technical/vocational skills/competency <b>standards</b> promulgated at national level by 2021, with special attention to addressing skills/competency standards in non-traditional occupations for women	Skill standards on bricklaying and plastering have been developed for mutual recognition with Thailand Three new national skills standards in agriculture were completed and wait for official endorsement.	Partially achieved	No evidence of attention to addressing skills/competency standards in non-traditional occupations for women.
<b>Indicator 1.3.3 (new):</b> Number of workers who are certified and accredited ( <i>replacement indicator as a result of recommendation by the tripartite M&amp;E Working Group</i> )	<b>New Target 1.3.3.</b> 27 vocational skills and competency standards (ICT, tourism, automotive and construction)	27 skill standards have been developed (construction :10; automobile: 7; ICT 6; and services: 4);	Achieved	

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
<b>Indicator 1.3.4:</b> Number of new technical/ vocational skill areas developed under the ASEAN Mutual Recognition of Skills (MRS) in line with the ASEAN Qualifications Regional Framework (AQRf).	<b>Target 1.3.4.</b> At least three new technical/vocational <b>skills</b> areas developed under ASEAN MRS by 2021.	Two national skills standards, bricklaying and plastering, under MRS were developed.	Partially archived	Due to internal processes, it took five years to develop the two standards to which the government had committed.
<b>Priority 2: Promote ratification and implementation of international labour standards</b>				
<b>Outcome 2.1: Increased quality of labour standards and protection through Labour Law implementation</b>				
<b>Indicator 2.1.1:</b> Number of gender-sensitive regulations prepared in consultation with the social partners and promulgated by 2019 to strengthen implementation of the 2014 Labour Code.	<b>Target 2.1.1.</b> At least two gender-sensitive regulations prepared in consultation with the social partners and promulgated by 2019 to strengthen implementation of the 2014 Labour Code, with the principles enshrined in C.100 and C.111, and the outstanding comments of the CEACR respecting those Conventions, taken into consideration as appropriate.	Decree on Labour Dispute Resolution (No. 76) was approved in 2018 (A Decree on Occupational Health and Safety (No.22) was developed and approved in 2019 (see also Indicator 2.1.3 below).  The second Lao national OSH profile was developed.  The National Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labour was revised and is expected to be	Achieved	MOLSW officials advise that C.100 and C.111 provide background to the development of legal documents such as the Decrees listed.

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
		approved by Nov 2021 (also refer to 2.1.5 below).		
<b>Indicator 2.1.2:</b> Number of actions taken to implement annual action plans for Ministerial Decision 4277 on labour inspection	<b>Target 2.1.2.</b> By 2018 annual action plans for labour inspection developed and implemented in line with international labour standards, e.g. C81, including OSH components and measures to increase number of female inspectors; at least two actions taken annually to implement action plans	<p>ILO supported the preparation of the first ever national Labour Inspection Plan to provide national strategic direction on priorities and budget allocation.</p> <p>ILO provided annual capacity development support to labour inspectors on OSH hazards and risks in the garment industry and agriculture by providing training on OSH inspection skills and the national OSH Decree.</p> <p>OSH Training was conducted for labour inspector in northern provinces in 2021.</p>	Partially achieved	<p>Lao PDR has not yet ratified C.181.</p> <p>No specific measures to increase the number of female labour inspectors have yet been introduced.</p>
<b>Indicator 2.1.3:</b> Number of actions taken to implement Prime Ministerial Decree (2017) on OSH	<b>Target 2.1.3.</b> Action plan for implementation of Prime Ministerial Decree on OSH by National Constituents developed by 2018, with at least two actions taken annually to implement the plan by 2021.	<p>Although a national action plan has not yet been developed, ILO-Korea is planning to support the development of such a plan to cover a 5-year period.</p> <p>In the meantime, implementation of the Decree is relying on annual national budget allocations and a</p>	Partially achieved	The commitment to ratification of OSH conventions C.155 and C.187 in 2021 also contributes to Target 2.2.1.

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
		<p>number of actions have been taken as follows:</p> <p>The OSH Decree was disseminated to national and provincial tripartite constituents in all provinces (2021).</p> <p>The ILO also supported (i) the strengthening of OSH capacities of relevant government bodies, the LNCCI and LFTU on OSH at national and local levels to (i) roll-out OSH knowledge to beneficiaries, and (ii) the development and dissemination of OSH training material.</p> <p>The National OSH Profile of Lao PDR was developed and endorsed by tripartite constitutions in 2021 (replacing the previous 2005 version). The profile is an important part of Lao PDR efforts to improve the national OSH system and prepare for the ratification of the ILO convention C.187 on Promotional Framework for OSH (2006) and C.155 on OSH</p>		

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
		<p>(1981). (Also refer to Indicator 2.2.2 below).</p> <p>OSH training was provided to workplace committees in garment industry (2020) and dormitories (2021); OSH trainings were also provided to coffee farmers, cooperatives, and plantations who are members of the Lao Coffee Association in Champasak province (2020 and 2021).</p> <p>ILO provided PPE to all 50 garment factories in response to COVID (2021).</p> <p>A study of OSH in banana plantations in northern Laos identified critical gaps and has been used by the ILO) for funding mobilization and policy influence and advocacy (2020).</p>		
<b>Indicator 2.1.4:</b> national baseline established by Lao PDR Government for monitoring of workplace accidents.	<b>Target 2.1.4.</b> National mechanism established and related capacity developed for sex disaggregated reporting of workplace accidents by 2018.	No action	Not achieved	A key factor in non-achievement was lack of human and financial resourcing for the necessary system/infrastructure development within MOLSW.



Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
				Currently NSSF work accident/injury claims provide the only data source in this area.
<b>Indicator 2.1.5:</b> Number of reports by National Constituents on actions taken to implement National Plan of Action (NPA) on the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour	<b>Target 2.1.5.</b> By 2018 annual reports by national constituents developed and disseminated on implementation of the NPA in their respective areas of responsibility	<p>A revised National Plan of Action (NPA) on the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour final evaluation report was prepared in 2019. The final draft will be presented to the national tripartite committee before submitting to the Prime Minister for approval before the end of November 2021.</p> <p>A National Tripartite Committee for the implementation of the National Plan of Action was appointed in 2020 to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the National Plan of Action.</p> <p>The ILO and UNICEF have been collaborating on improving the definition of a child in Lao PDR in light of current discrepancies and loopholes.</p>	Not achieved	<p>Although there has been progress made in this area under the current NAP with ILO technical and financial support, the expected greater involvement by the social partners within their own membership, reflected in annual reports on NAP implementation, has not been evident due to resource and other constraints.</p> <p>At a more general level, an independent evaluation of implementation of the current NAP in 2019 found that: (i) Overall, it appears that while partners have been challenged by resource constraints and limited coordination capacity, there has been quite some progress on actual implementation of the NPA priorities, particularly in the agriculture and education sectors and on the general capacity development for local government departments.</p>

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
				(ii) The primary modus operandi for the NPA is delivery of results through mainstreaming into existing policies and programmes in sector ministries and this strategy seems to have worked well, though available documentation is limited. <sup>32</sup>
<b>Outcome 2.2: Increased ratification and application of International Labour Conventions</b>				
<b>Indicator 2.2.1:</b> Number of International Labour Conventions ratified by Lao PDR	<b>Target 2.2.1.</b> Lao PDR has ratified at least one additional international labour Convention by 2021.	Two ILO conventions, C.155 on OSH and C.187 on a promotional framework for OSH have been selected and proposed by tripartite constituents for Lao PDR to ratify in 2021. The proposal is now being reviewed by the National Assembly. The government is planning to submit to the ILO by the end of 2021.	On track for ratification in 2021.	It is further noted that ratification of several ILO conventions is required for access to trade concessions under EU GST+ arrangements following Lao PDR graduation from LDC status in 2026. Those remaining to be ratified in this context by Lao PDR are C.105 and C.29 on forced labour; C.87 on freedom of association and the right to organise; and C.98 on the right to organise and to bargain collectively.

<sup>32</sup> Report on the review of the National Plan of Actions on the elimination of the worst forms of Child labour in Lao PDR: Revised DRAFT for discussion 08 November 2019. Birgitte Krogh-Poulsen, Poulsen Consulting

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
<b>Indicator 2.2.2:</b> Number of actions taken annually to implement international labour Conventions.	<b>Target 2.2.2 (a).</b> By 2021, at least five actions taken to implement international labour conventions, with particular attention to C100 and C111.	<p>ILO supported tripartite discussion on requirements and obligations on ratification, implementation and reporting; this included follow up of the discussion on individual cases related to convention C182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour at the 2019 International Labour Conference (ILC).</p> <p>Several further actions were taken to implement C.182 on the worst forms of child labour and C.144 on tripartite consultation (refer to Indicators 2.1.5 and 4.1.1).</p>	Partially achieved	While C.111 on discrimination in the workplace provides a reference in actions taken implement international labour conventions, there is no evidence of action taken on C.100 on equal pay for work of equal value.
	<b>Target 2.2.2 (b).</b> At least one initiative by 2019 to strengthen national constituent capacity to implement, monitor and report on ratified Conventions.	<p>ILO supported tripartite partners on preparation for ratification of C.155 and C.187 and reporting obligations of other conventions under article 19 of ILO constitution (2020).</p> <p>ILO supported capacity building of LNCCI and LFTU members from all 18 provinces on ILO conventions including ratification, implementation and reporting requirements (2021).</p>	Achieved	

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
<b>Indicator 2.2.3:</b> Lao PDR's constitutional obligations to submit report on ratified Conventions and other standards-related matters satisfied in a timely manner.	<b>Target 2.2.3.</b> All reports requested by the ILO supervisory bodies, pursuant to Articles 19 and 22 of the ILO Constitution, are submitted by 2021.	As of July 2021, all reports requested by the ILO supervisory bodies, pursuant to Articles 19 and 22 of the ILO Constitution, were submitted, except C.006 (night work for young persons, which is due in 2025).	Achieved	
<b>Priority 3: Strengthen and expand social protection</b>				
<b>Outcome 3.1: National Social Protection Strategy and new social transfer tax-funded programme(s) developed, adopted and implemented</b>				
<b>Indicator 3.1.1:</b> Availability of gender, disability and ethnicity-sensitive National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS), action plan and associated costings.	<b>Target 3.1.1 (a).</b> ABND on social protection completed by 2017 as basis for formulation of NSPS and prioritizing government social protection initiatives, with active engagement by national constituents and including gender, ethnicity and disability considerations.	ABND findings and recommendations were officially endorsed in 2018.	Achieved.	The ABND was found to be a relevant and effective platform for engagement of and consensus building among key stakeholders.
	<b>Target 3.1.1 (b).</b> NSPS including gender, ethnicity and disability considerations developed, adopted and costed by 2020 through an inclusive national process involving national constituents that (i) draws on	The Strategy and costings were officially endorsed in 2020. An action plan and monitoring framework for the Strategy drafted and submitted to MOLSW for their consideration.	Achieved.	A number of initiatives to implement the NSPS are already underway with ILO support, in collaboration with other UN agencies and donors, and will carry forward into the next DWCP

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
	outcomes of ABND process and (ii) uses costings from the rapid assessment basic protocol developed under the ABND.	<p>NSPS has been incorporated into the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP outcome 3, output 5.</p> <p>Social protection financing options are currently being explored by LSSO, MOLSW, Ministry of Finance and international partners, including the ILO, UNICEF and UNDCF.</p>		
<b>Indicator 3.1.2:</b> Number of new social transfer tax-funded programmes established as result of ABND recommendations	<b>Target 3.1.2.</b> At least one new social transfer tax-funded programme designed based on the ABND recommendations and (i) implemented by 2021 and (ii) at least 50% funded by domestic resources.	<p>Pilot mother and early childhood grant (MECG) launched with UNICEF in 2021 in Attapeu and Savvanakhet provinces, beneficiaries enrolled and some receiving cash benefits. MECG is 100% funded by the UN Joint Programme on Social Protection (UNJP), with a focus building the system for potential replication and scaling up. The pilot is based on unconditional cash transfer approach and involves 1,400 beneficiaries (up from 900).</p> <p>Social protection chart of accounts has been proposed to MOF to include into the national chart of accounts.</p>	Partially achieved	<p>Moving towards a phased increase / introduction of national budget allocations in this and other areas under the NSSP is a priority (note the chart of accounts initiative with MOF).</p> <p>A parallel second mother and early childhood grant programme (conditional) has also been launched in four northern provinces; the initiative is funded by a WB loan through the poverty reduction fund (with poverty reduction objective).</p> <p>Progress in implementation of the MECG programme has been accompanied by the development of information management</p>

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
		One-time COVID-19 compensation(900,000kip) was made to 20,000 garment workers and 3,000 shoe workers from the factories that have registered with LSSO.		systems at national and provincial levels, working with UNITEL Mobile.
<b>Outcome 3.2: Increased access for workers and families to social protection benefits, including social health protection</b>				
<b>Indicator 3.2.1:</b> Number of formally employed women and men enrolled in National Social Security Fund (NSSF), excluding armed forces and police officials.	<b>Target 3.2.1.</b> At least 300,000 formally employed women and men workers (excluding armed forces and police officials) enrolled in NSSF by 2021.	314,753 (female: 144,810) as of August 2021.	Achieved	it is estimated that just 10 % of workers employed in formal workplaces in the private sector are covered by the NSSF. For informal workers who are eligible to register with the Voluntary Social Security Scheme (VSS) under the NSSF, the coverage level is much lower.
<b>Indicator 3.2.2:</b> Percentage of poor women and men covered by social protection schemes	<b>Target 3.2.2.</b> At least 95% of poor women and men covered by social protection schemes by 2021, with people with disabilities comprising at least 2.8% of social protection beneficiaries.	Although the national coverage of social security and other social protection schemes remains low, National Health Insurance (NHI) has achieved 94% overall national coverage and clearly covers a major proportion of poor women and men. NHI currently covers 17 provinces out of 18 provinces,	Partially achieved.	The development and roll-out of universal National Health Insurance has involved technical and/or financial support from the ILO, WHO, World Bank and ADB.

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
		<p>with Vientiane Capital as the exception currently.</p> <p>NHI data doesn't specifically distinguish disability. However, calculations based on 2015 National Census figures indicate that persons with disabilities account for the 2.58% of the population covered by NHI.</p>		
<b>Indicator 3.2.3:</b> Number of initiatives to harmonize social health arrangements and institutional systems.	<b>Target 3.2.3.</b> At least two initiatives to complete harmonization of social health insurance benefits and information technology (IT) systems by 2020.	<p>ILO support pilot implementation of merger of three health insurance systems in Vientiane and Sekong provinces. In 2017/2018, the merged model was scale up in all provinces except Vientiane capital.</p> <p>Laos Health Insurance Information System Master Plan has been developed in April 2021.</p> <p>ILO also support: the development of implementation guidelines for the smooth implementation of the NHI merged scheme.</p>	Achieved	This is a key government priority area, with financing from the national budget and support from several international development partners, including the ILO which particularly focused on the harmonization of health systems. Further work by the ILO on health insurance data management is currently under design.

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
		<p>Costing exercise on benefit package including a costing methodology and tools</p> <p>Dissemination of the Social Security Law including workshops.</p>		
<b>Indicator 3.2.4:</b> Existence of revised Social Security Law and regulations in alignment with international standards, with focus on informal sector access	<b>Target 3.2.4</b> Social Security Law revised, approved and disseminated by end of 2018, with active engagement of national constituents and input of ILO-produced actuarial valuations.	<p>Social Security Law revised, approved and disseminated in late 2018. The revision is based on ILO-supported actuarial valuations completed in 2015.</p> <p>Coverage of the informal sector is stipulated by the law.</p>	Achieved	<p>The drafting of a Social Welfare Law is planned for the next DWCP period, with ILO support requested.</p> <p>Increasing informal worker access to social security is a priority of the National Social Protection Strategy and current related initiatives supported by the ILO which will carry forward into the next DWCP.</p>
<b>Cross-cutting priority 4: Strengthen tripartite cooperation and social dialogue</b>				
<b>Outcome 4.1: Increased quality of mechanisms and procedures for tripartite cooperation and social dialogue</b>				
<b>Indicator 4.1.1:</b> Establishment of National Tripartite Committee and associated sub-committees.	<b>Target 4.1.1.</b> National Tripartite Committee and at least two associated sub-committees established by end of 2018; subcommittees include one on gender equality and non-	<p>TOR is available, endorsed at ministerial level and awaiting Ministerial approval.</p> <p>Training provided by ILO to social partners on social</p>	On track to be achieved within 2021-2022	Final establishment delayed by internal review and approval processes



Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
	discrimination at work, with at least 30% female members.	dialogue and tripartite cooperation.		
<b>Indicator 4.1.2:</b> Number of evidence-based tripartite minimum wage reviews	<b>Target 4.1.2.</b> National constituents (i) agree on procedures and criteria for more regular minimum wage reviews; (ii) agree on measures to ensure that gender considerations are addressed in this context and (iii) hold at least two reviews under revised approach by 2021.	<p>There is no national agreement on procedures and criteria for regular minimum wage reviews. Minimum wage was revised in 2018 on a once-off basis.</p> <p>ILO provided capacity development support to social partners on minimum wage setting, including in the area of research and analysis</p> <p>Guideline for employers on establishing a minimum wage was developed.</p>	Not achieved	Several factors constrained progress in this area. These included conflicting priorities for constituents and the impact of COVID-19 which led to the postponement of a tripartite meeting planned to move discussion forward on the development of the wage setting process.
<b>Indicator 4.1.3:</b> Increase in number of collective bargaining agreements at enterprise or sectoral level negotiated between employers and workers	<b>Target 4.1.3.</b> Ten per cent increase in number of collective bargaining agreements negotiated between employers and workers by 2021.	<p>During 2017-2020, there were 106 new collective agreements, benefiting 13,680 workers (9,918 female)</p> <p>The 2017 baseline was 500 CBAs</p>	Achieved	Key factors in this respect are (i) the low level of collective bargaining, linked to low levels of union coverage in the private sector; (ii) low capacities of LFTU for collective bargaining, membership expansion and monitoring.

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
<b>Indicator 4.1.4:</b> Percentage of recorded industrial disputes which are resolved before reaching the courts.	<b>Target 4.1.4.</b> Thirty per cent of recorded industrial disputes resolved through social dialogue or statutory procedures by 2021.	561 cases of labour disputes have been received by the MOLSW since 2017, as follows:  2021: 9 2020: 152 2019: 119 2018: 106 2017: 175  295 cases (52.6%) have been resolved.	Achieved	Monitoring and reporting in this area is the responsibility of the MOLSW. Disputes are mostly resolved by the ministry.
<b>Outcome 4.2: Increased capacity of employers to advance Decent Work Agenda and social dialogue</b>				
<b>Indicator 4.2.1:</b> Number of LNCCI initiatives to influence national laws, policies, strategies and plans.	<b>Target 4.2.1.</b> At least two LNCCI initiatives annually to influence national laws, policies, laws, strategies and plans.	Input provided by LNCCI from employer perspective on range of policy and legal reforms and initiatives (e.g. OSH Decree, Decree on Labour Dispute Resolution, Trade Union Law and the revised Social Security Law).  Participation by LNCCI in once-off tripartite process to revise the minimum wage. In 2018.  The LNCCI survey of employer's skills needs in 2020 contributed	Achieved	The PM's Decree on "the Organization and Operation" of the LNCCI (2020) mandates the body to:  "participate in discussion with the concerned government organizations to determine the minimum wage (and) develop or revise the Labour Law periodically...", and  "provide comments, consultation and recommendations to government organizations on the development or revision of laws

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
		to government PES and TVET efforts to match skills with and market demand.		and policies in order to create a better business environment..”
<b>Indicator 4.2.2:</b> Number of LNCCI capacity development initiatives to strengthen capacity to (i) engage in tripartite cooperation and/or (ii) serve member interests	<b>Target 4.2.2</b> At least two initiatives annually (averaged over five years) to strengthen member capacity to (i) engage in tripartite cooperation and/or (ii) serve member interests in line with the LNCCI National Strategic Policy Framework.	<p>At least two LNCCI capacity building initiatives conducted annually on average, e.g. for:</p> <p>LNCCI's board on the process, principles and technical issues associated with minimum wage setting</p> <p>LNCCI 's board on ILO OSH conventions 155 and 187 to prepare for ratification</p> <p>national and provincial LNCCI board members on Lao Labour Law, social dialogue, international labour standards, ILO resolution 198 on employment relations, and the new strategic plan of LNCCI</p> <p>the LNCCI-SME Service Centre on the use of entrepreneurship training modules.</p> <p>In addition, a manual on business and financial planning</p>	Achieved.	Ongoing capacity development support in these and other areas requested by LNCCI

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
		has been prepared, along with guidelines for employers on the minimum wage, employer's roles and responsibilities and how to take care of employees.		
<b>Indicator 4.2.3:</b> Percentage increase in MSME membership of LNCCI	<b>Target 4.2.3.</b> 20 percent increase in MSME membership of LNCCI by 2021.	Estimated at 16-20 %. To be confirmed by LNCCI.	Achieved (tbc)	
<b>Indicator 4.2.4:</b> Percentage increase in number of women in LNCCI leadership and management positions	<b>Target 4.2.4.</b> At least 30% of leadership and management positions held by women by 2021.	19% of leadership and management positions held by women by 2021, including a female Vice President and board members.	Not Achieved	
<b>Outcome 4.3: Increased capacity of Workers to advance Decent Work Agenda and social dialogue</b>				
<b>Indicator 4.3.1:</b> Number of LFTU initiatives to influence national laws, policies, strategies and plans	<b>Target 4.3.1.</b> At least two LFTU initiatives annually to influence national laws, policies, laws, strategies and plans, including revision of Trade Union Law in 2017.	Input provided by LFTU from worker perspective on range of policy and legal reforms and initiatives (e.g. OSH Decree, Decree on Labour Dispute Resolution, Trade Union Law and the revised Social Security Law).  Participation by the LFTU in once-off tripartite process to	Achieved	

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
		<p>revise the minimum wage in 2018.</p> <p>LFTU conducted a survey on the impact of COVID-19 as a basis for its own support to members to contribute to the government response.</p> <p>Jointly with the Lao Youth Union, LFTU conducted an awareness raising project on the safety of migrant workers in workplaces and educational institutions, supported by the ILO Safe and Fair Project.</p>		
<b>Indicator 4.3.2:</b> Number of LFTU capacity development initiatives to strengthen capacity to (i) engage in tripartite cooperation and/or (ii) serve member interests	<b>Target 4.3.2.</b> At least two initiatives annually (averaged over five years) to strengthen member capacity to (i) engage in tripartite cooperation and/or (ii) serve member interests in line with LFTU priorities, including in implementation of the Trade Union Law and LFTU action plan on protection of migrant workers.	<p>At least two capacity building initiatives conducted annually for LFTU, staff and members on average, e.g on:</p> <p>the process, principles and technical issues associated with minimum wage setting</p> <p>ILO OSH conventions 155 and 187 to prepare for ratification</p> <p>on Lao Labour Law, social dialogue and international</p>	Achieved	Ongoing capacity development support in these and other areas requested by LFTU

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
		<p>labour standards for For provincial LNCCI board members.</p> <p>With ILO support, the LFTU is developing a network of trainers at national and local levels.</p> <p>LFTU has strengthened its involvement in the DWCP Tripartite Steering Committee through the establishment of an internal DWCP committee chaired by the Deputy President.</p>		
<p><b>Indicator 4.3.3:</b> Percentage increase in number of formal and informal workers covered by unions</p>	<p><b>Target 4.3.3.</b> At least 50% increase in number of private sector formal workers and 100% increase in the number of informal workers (disaggregated by sex) covered by unions by 2021.</p>	<p>3,348 workers in 66 enterprises (1,411 females) have become LFTU members since 2017.</p> <p>Baseline: 184,314 workers were members of LFTU in 2016.</p> <p>LFTU are working with and supporting 53 informal workers' groups, compared with 20 groups in 2017.</p>	Not achieved	<p>LFTU does not yet have a policy and framework to include informal workers as member. Thus, no informal workers are members although they have work with and support informal worker groups as indicated.</p> <p>The 'not achieved' rating in this case is indicative of an overly optimistic assessment of the capacity of the LFTU to increase membership in the period concerned. It also did not take</p>

Indicators	Targets	Results to date	Current status	Comment
				account of the lack of LFTU policy on informal worker membership.
<b>Indicator 4.3.4:</b> Percentage increase in number of women in LFTU leadership and management positions	<b>Target 4.3.4.</b> At least 30% of leadership and management positions held by women by 2021.	About 40% of leadership and management positions held by women by 2021, the LFTU President and Deputy President. 50% of Director-Generals and Deputy DGs are women.	Achieved	It is notable that currently the Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, a Vice-President of LNCCI and the President of LFTU are female.

Annex 4.1: Summary status of DWCP targets

Outcome	Achieved	On Track	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Pending for data
1.1	3	1			
1.2	3		3	1	1
1.3	1		3		
2.1	1		2	2	
2.2	1	1	1		
2.3		1			
3.1	2		1		
3.2	3		1		
4.1	2	1		1	
4.2	3			1	
4.3	3			1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>



<b>% to 44 indicators</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>2%</b>
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## Annex 5: DWCP financial table – income and expenditure as of (17 September 2021)

Funding sources	Amount mobilized	Amount expended	Remaining to be expended in 2021	Carry forward into next DWCP	Project short name	Project duration
SDC	2,966,733.00	2,435,542.00	531,191.00	503,057.00		
	2,140,000.00	2,111,866.00	28,134.00	project ended	NES	May 2017 – June 2021
	826,733.00	323,676.00	503,057.00	503,057.00	MSME	Jan 2021 - May 2022
AGFUND	100,000.00	100,000.00	-		NES	May 2017 – June 2021
Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of P.R. China	383,925.38	227,997.89	155,927.49	Project will end in Dec 21	ILO-China	Jan 2019 - Dec 2021
Australia	1,150,000.00	574,290.73	575,709.27	575,709.27	Triangle in ASEAN	2015-2025
Canada	50,000.00	15,000.00	35,000.00	35,000.00	Triangle in ASEAN	
EU	2,348,682.00	1,519,864.00	828,818.00	804,850.00		
	1,037,000.00	320,000.00	717,000.00	717,000.00	Safe & Fair	2018-2022
	111,682.00	23,832.00	87,850.00	87,850.00	Ship to Shore	August 2020 – July 2024
	1,200,000.00	1,176,032.00	23,968.00	project ended	OHS	2018 - Mar 2021
World Bank (Ministry of Industry and Commerce)	1,149,254.00	1,119,059.00	30,195.00	Project ended	SMES	April 2018 - March 2020
BMZ	2,257,400.00	2,227,483.00	29,917.00			
	147,400.00	117,920.00	29,480.00	Project in Mar 2021	OHS	2018 - Mar 2021
	2,110,000.00	2,109,563.00	437.00	Project will end in 2021	Covid-19	Jan – Nov 2021
JICA	641,392.00	197,321.00	444,071.00	444,071.00	Child labour survey	Sept 2020 - March 2022

Funding sources	Amount mobilized	Amount expended	Remaining to be expended in 2021	Carry forward into next DWCP	Project short name	Project duration
UNSDG Fund	816,539.00	544,376.00	272,163.00	272,163.00	UNJP	Jan 2020 – Feb 2022
DFAT	134,200.00	114,781.00	19,419.00	19,419.00	UNJP	Jan 2020 – Feb 2022
Republic of Korea	319,927.00	-	319,927.00	319,927.00	ILO-Korea	1 June 2021 – 31 Dec 2023
Luxemburg	542,858.00	527,058.00	15,800.00	Project will end in Oct	ILO-Lux	2018 - October 2021
ILO	200,000.00	188,546.00	11,454.00	11,454.00	Child labour survey	Sept 2020 - March 2022
ILO GLO/19/25/UNF	144,095.00	-	144,095.00	144,095.00	Unpaid domestic works survey	Aug-June 2022
ILO RBTC	243,246.00	229,284.00	13,962.00	-	ILO RBTC	
	65,000.00	58,088.00	6,912.00			2017 - 2021
	89,246.00	82,196.00	7,050.00			2017 - 2021
	48,000.00	48,000.00				2017 - 2021
	41,000.00	41,000.00				2017 - 2021
ILO RBSC	473,000.00	473,000.00	-		NES	May 2017 – June 2021
ILO-Japan Partnership programme	100,000.00	100,000.00	-		NES	May 2017 – June 2021
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,021,251.38</b>	<b>10,593,602.62</b>	<b>3,427,648.76</b>	<b>2,665,723.27</b>		

## **Annex 6: Summary of stakeholder priorities for future DWCP cooperation**

This section summarizes key areas and activities proposed by stakeholders for consideration.

### **Legal framework**

- Support the upgrade of Ministerial Agreement No. 4277 on Labour Inspection to Decree.
- Support the upgrade of OHS Decree to OHS Law by 2024.
- Support the development of Social Welfare Law by 2024.
- Technical assistance and mobilization of funding to support establishment of a Skill Development Fund under the soon to be finalized decree in this regard.

### **International commitments**

- Support to achieve the child labour NPA targets.
- Support to annual reporting requirements of the Convention 155 and 187, once they are ratified.
- Link ratification strategy for international standards to international trade requirements (noting that 8 international labour standards are included among the 27 human rights conventions which are required to be ratified for access to trade concessions under the EU GSP+)

### **Policy and study**

- Maximise the value and use of data gathered in the LFS and social indicator survey in order to strengthen policies and programmes.
- Conduct a study on informal work in Laos – important to better understand the diversity, dynamics and drivers of informality.
- Further research on impact of COVID on workers and their families.
- Medium term and long term support to returned migrant workers, due to COVID-19; the support should be designed for those who would like to stay in Laos and those who want to go back to work in Thailand. Samples of support could be an establishment of community tailor shops, this would help the workers to stay and work in own community.

### **Minimum wage**

- Development an evidence-based system for establishment of minimum wage, e.g what kind of factors need to be considered when establishing the minimum wage.
- Strengthening the capacity of tripartite organizations on minimum wage negotiations.
- Revision of minimum wage.

### **Social protection**

- Continue support in SP and expand the support to a larger geographical area.
- Continue support in the implementation of SP strategy and its nine priorities.
- Strengthening capacity of child protection network (now there are 1000 villages in the network), if they have good understanding on children protection, they will able to prevent child labour issues.
- Translate Social Protection Policy into a detailed action plan for LFTU.

## **OSH**

- Creation of a model OSH group or village, which other groups or villagers can visit and learn.
- Expansion OSH support to northern provinces where there are many banana plantations that use unsafe chemicals.
- Expansion of support beyond workplace safety , e.g to workers' dormitories, in light of COVID-19.

## **Labour inspection**

- Financial support for the labour inspectors and dispute mediators to implement their activities.
- Training to labour inspectors on inspection checklist (many of inspectors have not received the training yet).

## **Statistics capacity**

- Regular support to strengthen LSB and MOLSW capacity on labour statistics.
- Support to quarterly (sampling) employment survey.
- Support evaluation of LSB.

## **Identification of funding sources**

- Support to identify potential new funding sources for the NHI.
- Support to identify funding sources for Skill Development Fund, under the process of establishment.

## **Tripartite cooperation**

- Development of a clear work plan for tripartite partners and identify which activities or priorities are for LFTU, LNCCI and MOLSW.
- Consider on how to support the tripartite organizations to work as a team, not competitors.

## **ILO internal procedures**

- Development of clear financial and administration guidelines for ILO Lao staff and project partners.
- One training for all project partners together to ensure all partners and ILO staff are on the same page regarding financial and administration requirements.
- Delegation of minor decision making to ILO Lao office, to speed up activity implementation.
- Set up system to ensure continuation of activities when responsible ILO officers are on leave.

## **Linkages between projects and DWCP**

- Strengthen linkage between the projects and the DWCP.
- Establish clearer and stronger contribution of each project to DWCP.

## **Other**

- More support to LSSO to expand their social security coverage; increased social security coverage will reduce pressure on NHI system, and to conduct an evaluation of their work .
- More attention to Provincial Chamber of Industry and Commerce, particularly on capacity strengthening, this will help them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.
- More attention to small provinces, e.g activities on dissemination and training
- More attention to self-employed activities in addition to creation of waged jobs.

## Annex 7: Current development cooperation projects

No	Project Name	Implementing partner(s)	Total Resources Needed	Total Available Resources	Disaggregate by donor	Period	Expenditure to date (as a figure and a percentage)	Link to main Outcome of UNPF	Link to SDG Target
1	National Rural Employment Strategy in Lao PDR towards increasing opportunities for decent and productive employment in rural areas Project	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Sekong and Savannakhet Provincial DoLSWs and relevant provincial departments together with workers (LFTU) and employers' (LNCCI) organizations and line ministries and provincial departments	US\$ 2,800,000	Total: US\$2,813,000	SDC: \$2,140,000 AGFUND: \$100,000 ILO RBSA: \$473,000 ILO-Japan Partnership programme \$100,000	May 2017 – June 2021	US\$2,779,133	1	8.3
2	Strengthening Skills Development and triangular cooperation	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, LFTU, LNCCI		US\$383,925.38	Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of P.R. China	Jan 2019 - Dec 2021	US\$227,997.89	4	8.6

No	Project Name	Implementing partner(s)	Total Resources Needed	Total Available Resources	Disaggregate by donor	Period	Expenditure to date (as a figure and a percentage)	Link to main Outcome of UNPF	Link to SDG Target
3	Tripartite Action to Enhance the Contribution of Labour Migration to Growth and Development in ASEAN (TRIANGLE in ASEAN)	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MOLSW), Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU), Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI)		1,200,000	Regional programme funded by DFAT and Canada (where Australia funds US\$ 20,000,000; and Canada funds US\$ 5,500,000)	2015-2025	577,290.73	1	8.8
4	Safe & Fair: Realizing women migrant workers' rights & opportunities in the ASEAN region project	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MOLSW), Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU), Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI)	1,037,000	1,037,000	EU - Spotlight Initiative (25,500,000 EUR Regional programme funding)	2018-2022	320,000 (up to date 8/2021)	1	8.8

No	Project Name	Implementing partner(s)	Total Resources Needed	Total Available Resources	Disaggregate by donor	Period	Expenditure to date (as a figure and a percentage)	Link to main Outcome of UNPF	Link to SDG Target
5	South East Asia Regional Programme on Labour Migration in the Fishing Sector	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare Lao Federation of Trade Unions Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry		US\$111,682		August 2020 – July 2024	U\$23,832	1,7	
6	Technical assistance for capacity building for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)	Lao National Chamber of Commerce, Department of SME promotion	US\$1,200,000	US\$1,149,254	World Bank's supported project on SME access to finance to Ministry of Industry and Commerce	April 2018 - March 2020	US\$1,119,059	1, 7	8.3
7	Supporting resilience of Lao MSMEs in response to COVID-19	Lao National Chamber of Commerce	US\$826,733	US\$826,733	SDC	Jan 2021 - May 2022	US\$304,448	1,7	8.3



No	Project Name	Implementing partner(s)	Total Resources Needed	Total Available Resources	Disaggregate by donor	Period	Expenditure to date (as a figure and a percentage)	Link to main Outcome of UNPF	Link to SDG Target
8	Occupational Safety and Health in Lao PDR supply chains	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, LNCCI, LFTU	US\$1,400,000	US\$1,347,400	EU – US\$1,200,000 BMZ – US\$147,400	2018 - Mar 2021	US\$1,335,000	7	8.8
9	Country Assessment on the Impact of COVID-19 to Child Labour and Youth towards the Implementation of the NPA to Eliminate Child Labour and Promote Decent Work for Youth in Lao PDR	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Lao Statistic Bureau, National Committee for implementation of National Action plan on the elimination of child labour	US\$1,000,000	US\$841,392	ILO – US\$200,000 JICA - US\$641,392	Sept 2020 - March 2022	US\$240,000	1, 7	8.7
10	UN Joint Programme on leaving no one behind: Establishing the basis for social protection			US\$950,739	UNSDG Fund: US\$816,539 DFAT: US\$134,200	Jan 2020 – Feb 2022	US\$654,121	2	1.3

No	Project Name	Implementing partner(s)	Total Resources Needed	Total Available Resources	Disaggregate by donor	Period	Expenditure to date (as a figure and a percentage)	Link to main Outcome of UNPF	Link to SDG Target
	floors in Lao PDR								
11	ILO/Korea Partnership Programme “Supporting the Implementation of Sustainable Social Protection Floors for Workers and their Families in ASEAN – Phase III”	Lao Social Security Organisation, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, LFTU, LNCCI		US\$ 319,927 (Lao PDR component)	Republic of Korea	1 June 2021 – 31 Dec 2023	0		1.3

No	Project Name	Implementing partner(s)	Total Resources Needed	Total Available Resources	Disaggregate by donor	Period	Expenditure to date (as a figure and a percentage)	Link to main Outcome of UNPF	Link to SDG Target
12	Support to the extension of Social Health Protection in South-East Asia	In Lao PDR, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, National Social Security Fund, Ministry of Health, National Health Insurance Bureau, Lao Federation of Trade Unions, Lao Chamber of Commerce and Industry		US\$542,858	Luxemburg	2018 - October 2021	US\$527,058	2	1.3
13	"Keeping livelihoods in time of COVID-10 - Income Support for Garments Factory Workers in Lao PDR"	Lao Social Security Organization  Association of Lao Garment Industry  Lao Federation of Trade Union		US\$2,110,000	BMZ of Germany	Jan – Nov 2021	US\$2,109,563	2	1.3

No	Project Name	Implementing partner(s)	Total Resources Needed	Total Available Resources	Disaggregate by donor	Period	Expenditure to date (as a figure and a percentage)	Link to main Outcome of UNPF	Link to SDG Target
14	Technical support to pilot Labour Force Survey study on Measuring unpaid domestic and care work; Piloting the sampling design for reliable measurement of labour migration statistics within a Labour Force Survey.	Lao Statistic Bureau of Ministry of Planning and Investment		US\$144,095	ILO GLO/19/25/UNF	Aug-Dec 2021		1	8
15	Technical support on international labour standards	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare  Lao Federation of Trade Unions  Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry		US\$65,000	ILO RBTC	2017 - 2021	US\$65,000	1	8

No	Project Name	Implementing partner(s)	Total Resources Needed	Total Available Resources	Disaggregate by donor	Period	Expenditure to date (as a figure and a percentage)	Link to main Outcome of UNPF	Link to SDG Target
16	Technical support to strengthen institutions, mechanisms and processes of social dialogue for promoting decent work	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare  Lao Federation of Trade Unions  Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry		US\$89,246	ILO RBTC	2017-2021	US\$79,246	1	8
17	Technical support to strengthen institutional capacity of employers' organizations	LNCCI		US\$48,000	ILO RBTC	2017-2021	US\$48,000	1	8

No	Project Name	Implementing partner(s)	Total Resources Needed	Total Available Resources	Disaggregate by donor	Period	Expenditure to date (as a figure and a percentage)	Link to main Outcome of UNPF	Link to SDG Target
18	Technical support to strengthen institutional capacity of workers' organizations	LFTU		US\$41,000	ILO RBTC	2017-2021	US\$41,000	1	8
				US\$14,021,251.38			US\$10,450,748.62		

## Annex 8: Analytical Framework for review

*Adapted from those provided in the Review Terms of Reference, with particular emphasis on (i) SDG, UNPF/UNSDCF linkages and (ii) gender equality / mainstreaming dimensions.*

Key point of enquiry	Source of information/analysis	Data and methodological challenges
<b>Relevance (Is the DWCP doing the right things?)</b>		
The extent to which DWCP priorities, outcomes, outputs, targets and indicators respond to national policies, priorities, strategies and plans; tripartite constituents' priorities and needs; beneficiaries' priorities and needs; and prioritized SDGs and targets – and continue to do so during the changing situation of COVID-19 pandemic, including through adjustments in design and implementation as necessary.	Interviews with stakeholders.  Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.  Review of programme documentation, DWCP progress reports, reviews and evaluations.	The review schedule and COVID-19 restrictions impose constraints on obtaining direct beneficiary perspectives.  <u>Mitigation measures:</u> The review will rely on the degree to which community beneficiary feedback is reflected in project evaluation reports, plus proxy feedback through the intermediaries working with the beneficiaries (e.g. constituents and government agencies).
The extent to which the DWCP design is fit for purpose to effectively address these priorities / and needs (i.e. through its underlying theory of change, strategies, modus-operandi, risk analysis, context analysis, etc.).	Interviews with stakeholders.  Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.  Review of programme documentation, DWCP progress reports, reviews and evaluations.	Accounting for lack of clear/comprehensive articulation of the theory of change in the current DWCP design and the need to continue strengthening constituent awareness of the value of ToCs.  <u>Mitigation measure:</u> Analysis of the current DWCP design to pinpoint areas for development/improvement in the next DWCP.
The extent that DWCP is based on the ILO's niche and comparative advantage in the country, including vis-à-vis other UN agencies.	Interviews with stakeholders, including UNCT members with whom the ILO has worked and office of the UN Resident Coordinator).  Interview with ILO Coordination Office.  Review of UNPF evaluation report, as well as programme documentation, DWCP progress reports, reviews and evaluations.	Depends on qualitative feedback from stakeholders and appreciation of the normative aspects of the ILO role.  <u>Mitigation measure:</u> The 'high-level' overview feedback from the RCO will be important, alongside stakeholder perceptions linked to their involvement with the ILO alongside other international agencies.
The extent to which the relevant cross-cutting issues (international labour standards, social dialogue, gender and non-discrimination, and environmental sustainability) have been integrated into the design and implementation of the DWCP.	Interviews with stakeholders, including Lao Women's Union.  Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.  Review of programme documentation, DWCP progress reports, reviews and evaluations.	Initial perusal of programme documentation indicates that the integration of environmental sustainability may be an area where attention had not been consistent and data is lacking.  <u>Mitigation measure:</u> Raise questions about cross-cutting issues in all consultations, and follow-up with prompting questions where

		necessary. Conduct additional selective research to address gaps.
<b>Coherence</b> ( <i>How well does the DWCP fit?</i> )		
The extent to which the DWCP in design and implementation reflects, leverages and reinforces the synergies and interlinkages between the Decent Work Agenda and the SDGs and related targets.	<p>Interviews with stakeholders.</p> <p>Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.</p> <p>Review of programme documentation, DWCP progress reports, reviews and evaluations.</p> <p>Review of relevant Lao Govt national reporting, including on NESDP progress and on the SDGs to the HLPF and A.P. Regional Sustainable Development Forum.</p>	No major data challenges anticipated.
The extent of synergies and interlinkages in practice between (i) DWCP priorities, outcomes and actions and (ii) the policies/ programmes/ interventions being implemented by government, social partners, UNCT and other relevant partners in the country.	<p>Interviews with stakeholders.</p> <p>Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.</p> <p>Review of programme documentation, DWCP progress reports, reviews and evaluations.</p> <p>Review of UNPF evaluation report.</p>	<p>Access to the necessary information on the policies/ programmes/ interventions of other actors in order to assess synergies and interlinkages, may be a challenge.</p> <p><u>Mitigation measure:</u> Triangulation of information/data available through the review of documentation with stakeholder feedback.</p>
The extent to which the DWCP is adding value while avoiding duplication of effort.	<p>Interviews with stakeholders, particularly the RCO and selected UNCT members.</p> <p>Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.</p> <p>Review of UNPF evaluation report.</p> <p>Review of programme documentation, DWCP progress reports, reviews and evaluations.</p>	No major data challenges are anticipated.
<b>Effectiveness</b> ( <i>are the DWCP outcomes being achieved?</i> )		
The extent to which DWCP design and implementation is guided in practice by a realistic theory of change at overall and other appropriate levels that (i) captures the change pathway, including the roles the ILO constituents play; and (ii) is linked the achievement of Lao PDR's national development priorities and the SDGs.	<p>Analysis of DWCP design.</p> <p>Interviews with stakeholders.</p> <p>Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.</p>	<p>The post DWCP design lessons learned report (2017) identified gaps in the articulation of a clear ToC as a weakness in the current document. One key issue noted was lack of "stakeholder readiness" to engage in the development of a ToC, and the need for greater attention in constituent capacity support to ToC value-addition and processes.</p> <p>These earlier discussions can be revisited with a view to assessing current understanding and support for a much stronger ToC profile in</p>



		the new DWCP, linked to the UNSDCF.
<p>The extent to which the DWCP has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its outcomes, including any differential results across groups (including women, informal workers, persons with disability, ethnic populations and other marginalized groups).</p> <p><i>(Note: output progress categorized as achieved; on track and likely to be achieved; unlikely to be achieved - with explanation; and removed from the results framework - with explanation).</i></p>	<p>Updating and review of programme documentation, particularly DWCP progress reporting, relevant development cooperation project evaluation reports, and records of TSC meetings.</p> <p>Interviews with stakeholders.</p> <p>Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.</p>	<p>Lack of disaggregated data in the areas specified for differential analysis.</p> <p><u>Mitigation measure:</u> identifying additional research, including other UN agencies (e.g. UNW and UNFPA), NGOs (including working in fields such as gender and disability) – and triangulating this with interview feedback.</p>
<p>The extent to which knowledge generated has been disseminated/shared with tripartite constituents and public.</p>	<p>Interviews with constituents</p> <p>Review of programme documentation, progress reporting, the DWCP communication plan, publications produced and data on dissemination and feedback (including available online data).</p>	<p>Lack of data on dissemination of publications and public statements in terms of numbers reached and feedback on usefulness.</p> <p><u>Mitigation measure:</u> Seek information from ILO Coordination Office and constituents.</p>
<p>The quality of partnerships to support DWCP implementation, including in the context of efforts to implement the SDGs, and encompassing constituents, other government ministries and agencies, UNCT members, Lao mass organizations, CSOs and others.</p>	<p>Interviews with constituents and partners.</p> <p>Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.</p>	<p>Producing an overall assessment based on qualitative feedback.</p> <p><u>Mitigation measure:</u> Ask interviewees to assess the quality of partnership on a scale of 1-5 (5 = excellent, 1 = poor).</p>
<p>The extent of planning and programmatic cooperation with other member agencies of the UNCT in Lao PDR.</p>	<p>Review of programme documentation.</p> <p>Interviews with RC) and selected UNCT members.</p>	<p>Availability of counterpart UN staff given heavy COVID-19 related workloads.</p> <p><u>Mitigation measure:</u> Ensure meetings arrangements made well in advance and using personal links in the relevant offices.</p>
<b>Efficiency (How well are resources being used?)</b>		
<p>The extent to which the DWCP delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way. The extent that inputs (e.g. funds, expertise, time, etc.) into outputs, outcomes and impacts, are provided in the most cost-effective way possible, as compared to feasible alternatives in the context.</p>	<p>Interviews with stakeholders.</p> <p>Review of programme documentation.</p> <p>Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.</p> <p>Review of budget and expenditure data.</p>	<p>No major data challenges anticipated.</p>
<p>The extent to which expected outputs have been delivered within the expected timeframe, or a timeframe reasonably adjusted to the demands of the evolving</p>	<p>Working session with ILO National Coordinator, leading to compilation of up-to-date progress report covering all</p>	<p>No major data challenges anticipated.</p>

context (including the impacts of COVID-19).	<p>results under the DWCP until July 2021.</p> <p>Interviews with constituents.</p> <p>Review of programme documentation.</p>	
How efficiently the DWCP is being implemented, managed, coordinated, monitored and reported on (i) in its own right, (ii) as part of relevant national development progress monitoring and reporting under the NESDP, and (iii) as part of national SDG planning, monitoring and reporting processes?	<p>Interviews with stakeholders, including (specifically) MPI.</p> <p>Interview with ILO Coordination Office.</p> <p>Review of programme documentation.</p> <p>Review of relevant Lao Govt national reporting, including on NESDP progress and on the SDGs to the HLPF and A.P. Regional Sustainable Development Forum.</p>	<p>The first part of this point covers several aspects related to efficiency, creating complexity in seeking data and feedback.</p> <p>Tracking the DWCP – NESDP – SDG reporting linkages may not be easy due to lack of transparent process.</p> <p><u>Mitigation measures:</u></p> <p>It will be necessary to address each of the aspects of efficiency in their own right in consultations with stakeholders and ILO staff. These will arise under different questions in the interview process.</p> <p>The DWCP/NESDP/SDG linkages should be a specific focus in the interview with MPI, triangulated with available information in government and programme reporting.</p>
The extent to which the tripartite constituents have actively participated in (i) the governance / oversight, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the DWCP and (ii) in wider SDG planning and implementation processes linked to the Decent Work Agenda. The degree to which the Tripartite Steering Committee has been effective as the overall national DWCP governance mechanism.	<p>Interviews with constituents.</p> <p>Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.</p>	<p>The degree of effectiveness of the TSC will require both a review of actual outputs and a qualitative assessment. The latter may be affected by turn-over of staff involved.</p> <p><u>Mitigation measure:</u> Prioritize interview participation of constituent representatives who have attended at least 2 DWCP tripartite meetings during the last 3 years.</p>
The extent to which coherence and synergies are demonstrated across and between the various components of the DWCP and between the relevant staff at ILO Country and Regional Office levels.	<p>Interviews with constituents.</p> <p>Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.</p> <p>Review of programme documentation.</p>	<p>No major data challenges anticipated.</p>
<b>Impact (What difference does the DWCP make?) The extent to which the DWCP has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.</b>		
The extent to which social, environmental and economic impacts of the DWCP can be identified that (i) are longer term or broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness criterion (i.e. beyond the immediate results); and (ii) contribute in measurable ways to achievement of the SDGs.	<p>Interviews with stakeholders.</p> <p>Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.</p> <p>Review of programme documentation, DWCP progress reports, reviews and evaluations.</p>	<p>Lack of data in key areas.</p> <p><u>Mitigation measures:</u> Identifying and drawing on wider research in relevant areas, e.g from other UN agencies, research institutes, etc, supported by leveraging relevant information and analysis from the qualitative research.</p>

	Review of relevant Lao Govt national reporting, including on SDGs to to HLPF and A.P. Regional Sustainable Development Forum.	
The extent to which indirect, secondary and potential consequences of the DWCP can be identified in terms of holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms as well as potential longer term effects on people's well-being, human rights, gender equality, and the environment, including in relation to achievement of the SDGs and related targets.	<p>Interviews with stakeholders.</p> <p>Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.</p> <p>Review of programme documentation, DWCP progress reports, reviews and evaluations.</p> <p>Review of relevant Lao Govt national reporting, including on SDGs to to HLPF and A.P. Regional Sustainable Development Forum.</p> <p>Review of insights on Lao PDR from global surveys (e.g ILO-Gallup, Global Values and other such surveys as applicable).</p>	<p>While ratification and application of relevant normative instruments such as ILS can be monitored, tracking and verifying wider normative change is complex. This is compounded in the Lao PDR context by lack of availability of sources such as regular public opinion polling and in-depth social research/surveys.</p> <p><u>Mitigation measure:</u> Identifying and drawing on a wider range of research sources, such as those listed opposite.</p>
<b>Sustainability (will the DWCP benefits last?)</b>		
The extent to which the necessary financial (including national budget provision), economic, social, environmental and institutional capacities, policies and legal frameworks are in place to sustain net benefits of the DWCP over the medium and long-term; and the contribution of the DWCP to ensuring that these are in place	<p>Interviews with stakeholders, particularly MPI.</p> <p>Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.</p> <p>Review of relevant national budget documentation.</p> <p>Review of programme documentation, DWCP progress reports, reviews and evaluations.</p> <p>Review of relevant Lao Govt national reporting, including on NESDP and on SDGs to to HLPF and A.P. Regional Sustainable Development Forum.</p>	<p>The national budgetary aspect of the research may prove problematical in light of lack of accessibility in this regard.</p> <p><u>Mitigation measures:</u> Use opportunity of consultation with MPI to pursue this question.</p> <p>Apply the 'snowball method' by asking various sources about information, reports and analysis they are aware of, which can then be tracked and accessed.</p>
The likelihood of the identified net benefits of DWCP implementation being sustained over the medium and long-term.	<p>Interviews with stakeholders, particularly MPI.</p> <p>Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.</p> <p>Review of relevant national budget documentation.</p> <p>Review of programme documentation, DWCP progress reports, reviews and evaluations.</p> <p>Review of relevant Lao Govt national reporting, including on NESDAP and on SDGs to to HLPF</p>	The assessment of this point will draw on data and qualitative feedback from most of the above data and analytical sources, including with respect to national budget commitments and planning.

	and A.P. Regional Sustainable Development Forum.	
The existence or otherwise of exit strategies in key programmatic areas and the degree to which these are monitored and applied in practice.	Interviews with stakeholders and ILO national staff.  Review of programme documentation.	No major data challenges anticipated.
The extent to which analysis and ongoing monitoring of resilience, risks and potential trade-offs within and across the programme are conducted as part of DWCP implementation, and adjustments are made to the programme when deemed necessary.	Interviews with stakeholders, particularly TSC members (constituents).  Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.  Review of programme documentation, DWCP progress reports, reviews and evaluations.  Review of TSC meeting notes and progress reports.	The degree to which such ongoing monitoring, analysis and decision-making are recorded will need to be verified.  <u>Mitigation measure:</u> Triangulation of interview and desk review information in order to make an overall assessment.
The extent to which benefits with respect to gender equality, addressing discrimination and leaving no-one behind are likely to be sustained; and what key factors linked to the DWCP will assist in ensuring this.	Interviews with stakeholders.  Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.  Review of programme documentation, DWCP progress reports, reviews and evaluations.	A qualitative assessment will need to be made by balancing / triangulating the various stakeholders perspectives with available desk review data.
The extent to which the ILO was able to draw on its country analysis from a decent work perspective; its agency mandate and comparative advantage; and its programmatic experience and lessons to influence the priorities and design of the UNSDCF (2022-2026).	Interviews with the RCO and other UNCT members.  Review of the UNSDCF from a decent work mapping perspective.  Interviews with ILO staff in Lao PDR and DWT specialists in ROAP.	No major data challenges anticipated.

## Annex 9: Core questions for stakeholder interviews

To be applied selectively as indicated and adapted according to the nature of the partner/stakeholder). Follow-up / prompting questions on SDG links and gender/inclusion to be woven through.	
Core questions	Target stakeholders
1. Can you briefly describe your organization's involvement in the implementation of the DWCP?	All
2. What do you/your organization see as the major achievements of the DWCP in your area of focus (with examples)? What achievements are you most proud of? What difference have these made to (i) your constituency and (ii) your work?	Constituents, MPI, <sup>33</sup> project partners <sup>34</sup> ,

<sup>33</sup> A separate interview question structure will be created for MPI, incorporating the references to MPI under "Data and methodological challenges" in the Analytical Framework.

<sup>34</sup> Includes LSSO and other Lao Government Ministries and agencies.

	UNCT <i>(to be adapted as necessary for MPI and UNCT)</i>
3. What made it possible to achieve these results (success factors)?	As above
4. In your view, how have these helped Laos PDR to meet (i) its development priorities and objectives and (ii) its SDG commitments (with examples)?	As above
5. How likely is it that the achievements will continue in the medium and longer term? What factors will help to ensure that the achievements continue?	As above
6. Can you mention specific examples where the support of the ILO / the Office has played a significant role in achieving your own organization's priority outcomes? Describe the ILO's role and effectiveness in these cases.	Constituents, project partners
7. How would you describe the ILO's comparative advantage or strengths in the Lao PDR context – for example, compared to the role of other international agencies?	Constituents, LSSO, project partners UNCT, MPI <sup>35</sup>
8. How has the ILO supported you to link with international policies and commitments - for example, international labour standards and the SDGs? What value have such linkages added to your work?	Constituents, LSSO, project partners
9. Is the DWCP inclusive in practice of addressing the priorities and needs of women and groups in Lao society who may be left behind (with examples)?	Constituents, LSSO, project partners
10. How would you assess the impact of technical and capacity building support you have received under the DWCP? How could the ILO / the Office improve its role and support in this regard?	Constituents, LSSO, project partners
11. How would you assess the quality of your overall relationship with the ILO Office in Lao PDR? Are there areas for improvement?	Constituents, LSSO, project partners
12. What impact has COVID-19 had on (i) your own area of work and (ii) cooperation under the DWCP? Can you describe the adjustments that were made to DWCP implementation in your focus area? How was your organization involved in the decisions that were taken?	Constituents, LSSO, project partners, UNCT <i>(to be adapted for UNCT)</i>
13. What other particular challenges have been experienced in your focus area in implementing the DWCP? How have these been addressed in your experience?	Constituents, LSSO, project partners, UNCT

	<i>(to be adapted for UNCT)</i>
14. What future challenges do you foresee in achieving your organization's priorities / objectives concerning decent work? How can these be addressed in cooperation with the ILO / Office under the next DWCP?	Constituents, LSSO, project partners, UNCT <i>(to be adapted for UNCT)</i>
15. Are there lessons from your partnership with the ILO/ the Office under the DWCP that can help improve future cooperation and results? (e.g. what has worked well or not worked ?)	Constituents, LSSO, project partners, UNCT <i>(to be adapted for UNCT)</i>
16. Looking ahead to the next DWCP, what particular priorities would you propose should be included for (i) joint action and (ii) the way the ILO / the Office works in practice?	Constituents, LSSO, project partners, MPI, <i>(to be adapted for UNCT and MPI)</i>
Additional questions for constituents (and MPI if representatives have participated in TSC meetings)	
17. How was your organization involved in the development of the current DWCP? What has your involvement been in the governance of the DWCP through the Tripartite Steering Committee (TSC)?	Constituents
18. How visible are issues concerning (i) Lao Government policy, (ii) the SDGs in meetings of the TSC in your experience?	Constituents
19. What have been the strong points of the role of the TSC? What suggestions do you have to improve its role?	Constituents
20. How have you been involved in the development of the new UNSDCF in Lao PDR? How did the ILO/the Office support or facilitate your involvement? What influence did such involvement have on the content of the UNSDCF? What could be done differently next time to facilitate your input into the UNSDCF?	Constituents

## Annex 10: Review Terms of Reference

### Final Review of the DWCP for Laos PDR (2017-2021), June – September 2021

#### 1. Background

The second Decent Work Country Programme of Lao PDR (2017-2021) is coming to its final implementation. In 2021, the 5-year 9<sup>th</sup> National Social and Economic Development plan – NSEDP (2021-2025) of Lao PDR has been finalized, and the new UN Cooperation Framework (UNCF) for Lao PDR (2022-2026) has been finalized to align with the 9th NSEDP.

With the UN reform, the revamped UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) determines new working modalities where cooperation, coherence and results-orientation constitute the backbone to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. The UN Reform and the revamped cooperation frameworks enhances pressure on UN agencies to produce not just data but also quality, accessible, timely and reliable evaluative evidence on effectiveness of our contributions to the Decent Work Agenda priorities and the SDGs. Therefore, the ILO is encouraged to yield evidence on country decent work results in a timely manner as it engages proactively in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of UNSDCF and related partnership arrangements.

The development of new development cooperation projects and DWCP will not only require programmatic and operational alignments with UN Cooperation Frameworks, but also an increased use of evaluation findings on ILO's results at country, regional and system-wide levels. The ILO Country Office for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR is encouraged to apply EVAL's diagnostic tool to improve the evaluability of DWCPs and UNSDCF. This tool enables us to identify the strengths and weaknesses of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks and capacities to report on country programme objectives linked to Decent Work results, the UNSDCF and SDGs, as well as identify the level of participation of constituents in the process.

## **2. Rationale**

The DWCP final review aims at assessing achievements made, challenges and opportunities encountered during the implementation of the current DWCP (2017-2021) to facilitate learning by constituents, ILO and other key stakeholders, and to reflect them in the new DWCP 2022-2026 for Lao PDR and the new UNSDCF implementation.

The Regional M&E Officer, in coordination with EVAL, will support the evaluability assessment of the DWCP, using components of the SDG diagnostic instrument developed by EVAL. The evaluability assessment will be used as a checklist to identify key elements needed for inclusion in developing the next DWCP. These could amount to areas where additional analysis and research may need to be undertake"

## **3. Purpose and scope**

**Purpose.** The main purpose for DWCP final review is for DWCP improvement and learning. The DWCP evaluability assessment of DWCP will have the following focuses:

1. Assessment of the implementation and design of DWCP and examine how these contribute to performance against stated outcomes; Assessment of the extent to which the DWCP is aligned with and incorporates the relevant SDGs, determine whether robust M&E frameworks and capacities are in place to track progress and review SDG/DWCP contributions, and whether a mechanism for reporting is established and feeds into SDG and other evaluation processes;
2. Assessment of the constituents' capacity needs and gaps with respect to monitoring and evaluating SDGs in line with Country's National Development Plan and sectoral plans.

**Scope.** The scope of the final DWCP review covers the 5-year period of the DWCP implementation from 2017-2021 and cover both national and provincial areas of geography and structure that the DWCP operates.

As such, the scope of review would include the relevant mix of advocacy and policy advice, capacity building, services, strategic partnerships, direct demonstration projects and research that make up a DWCP. The review will engage the appropriate constituents and stakeholders, including national government, worker and employer tripartite groups, funding partners, ILO, and beneficiaries. The strategy should cover national, provincial and local levels.

All sources of funds that have contributed to the delivery of outputs and the achievement made on DWCP outcomes to date will be taken into account.

### **3. Criteria and questions**

Evaluation using EDI<sup>36</sup>. The evaluability assessment is intended to analyze the ILO's internal structure, processes and capacities to support the implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of Lao PDR contribution to the SDGs, in particular through the DWCP. The evaluation report will include a review of the extent to which the DWCP is aligned with and incorporate the relevant SDGs, determine whether robust M&E frameworks and capacities are in place to track progress and review SDG/DWCP contributions, and whether a mechanism for reporting is established and feeds into SDG and other evaluation processes. The country report will also shed some light on the role played by the ILO constituents insofar as SDG implementation, monitoring and evaluation are concerned, and identify constituent needs and capacity gaps. This assessment will use the relevant SDG DI checklist developed by EVAL. The diagnostic instrument will specifically identify:

- a. The existence of a clear understanding of the linkages between ILO operations and the SDGs targets;
- b. The extent to which the DWCP, including its priority outcomes aligns with SDGs targets and indicators; as well as how well the DWCP incorporates realistic theories of change (ToCs) that capture the change pathway, including the roles the ILO Tripartite Constituents play at this stage;
- c. The ILO's ability to contribute effectively to implementation and M&E of the DWCP that also aligning with SDG targets, including in the mitigation of identified risks and facilitation of synergies with other international partners/other UN agencies;
- d. The existence of operational reporting infrastructure and processes to report on contribution towards SDGs, including in the Country Programme Review processes.
- e. The role of the ILO Constituents in SDG monitoring, evaluation and reporting on SDG and Decent Work progress and identified needs and gaps for an effective involvement in the M&E of SDGs relevant to Decent Work,
- f. Identify areas in need for the ILO to enhance the guidance for DWCP-SDG development.

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<sup>36</sup> Diagnostic instrument to assess the evaluability of DWCPs in the context of the SDGs [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms\\_626865.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_626865.pdf)



**Relevance** (*Is the DWCP doing the right things?*)

- The extent to which the DWCP outcomes and design respond to tripartite constituents', beneficiaries', SDGs, and country's needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so during the changing situation of COVID-19 pandemic if circumstances changed. Is the DWCP well-designed to address relevant priorities / needs (i.e. its outcomes, underlying theory of change, its action, its modus-operandi, risk analysis, context analysis, etc.);
- The extent that DWCP is based on the ILO's niche and comparative advantage in the country;
- The extent to which the relevant cross-cutting issues (International labour standard-ILS, social dialogue, gender, and environmental sustainability) have been integrated into the design and implementation of the DWCP.

**Coherence** (*How well does the DWCP fit?*)

- The extent of the synergies and interlinkages of DWCP outcomes and other policies/programmes/interventions being implemented by government, social partners and other relevant partners in the countries;
- The extent that DWCP is in consistent, harmonization, complementarity and coordination with other key actors and development partners' interventions in the country;
- The extent to which the DWCP is adding value while avoiding duplication of effort;

**Effectiveness** (*are the DWCP outcomes being achieved?*)

- The extent to which the DWCP has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its outcomes, including any differential results across groups (particularly marginalized);
- The extent to which knowledge generated has been disseminate/shared with tripartite constituents and public.

**Efficiency** (*How well are resources being used?*)

- The extent to which the DWCP delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way. The extent that inputs (funds, expertise, natural resources, time, etc.) into outputs, outcomes and impacts, are provided in the most cost-effective way possible, as compared to feasible alternatives in the context;
- The extent to which expected outputs have been delivered within the expected timeframe, or a timeframe reasonably adjusted to the demands of the evolving context (including the impacts of COVID-19) ;
- How efficiently the DWCP is being implemented, managed, coordinated, monitored and reported on? The extent to which the tripartite constituents have actively participated in the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of the DWCP. The degree to which the Tripartite Steering Committee has been effective as the overall national DWCP governance mechanism.

**Impact** (*What difference does the DWCP make?*): *The extent to which the DWCP has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.*

- Identify and social, environmental and economic impacts of the DWCP that are longer term or broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness criterion - beyond the immediate results.;

- Any indirect, secondary and potential consequences of the DWCP in terms of holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms as well as potential longer term effects on people's well-being, human rights, gender equality, and the environment.

#### **Sustainability** (*will the DWCP benefit last?*)

- The extent to which the necessary financial, economic, social, environmental and institutional capacities are in place to sustain net benefits of the DWCP over the medium and long-term;
- The extent to which Analyses of resilience, risks and potential trade-offs.
- Analysing the actual flow of net benefits or estimating the likelihood of net benefits continuing over the medium and long-term.

### **4. Responsibility**

#### **4.1. Approach and methodology**

The final review will follow a participatory approach to the extent possible in the COVID-19 context through a mix of in-country interviews and online consultations. The programme goals and objectives will provide a key framework for the process, with the DWCP document, its Theory of change and other relevant documents providing key references.

**The International consultant and National Consultant will** undertake desk reviews of relevant documentation, conduct interviews and facilitate the stakeholder workshop, analyze the data collected from the methods listed below, using qualitative data analysis techniques. They will further support to write the final report.

#### **4.2. Data collection and analysis**

##### **4.2.1. Desk review**

**The National Consultant will** support the **International Consultant** to conduct a desk review of key documents. The ILO CO for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR will assemble these documents, which may include those listed below. The desk review findings will serve as the basis of discussion during the stakeholder workshop.

- National development frameworks
- UN Development Assistance Framework
- Decent Work Country Programme Document
- ILO Strategic Programme Framework and Programme & Budget
- DWCP Results Framework, Theory of Change, performance plan and implementation plan
- DWCP baseline reports and information
- DWCP Monitoring reports, and progress/ status reports
- List of projects linked to each DWCP outcome and the relevant project evaluation reports
- Other relevant studies and research undertaken
- Technical and financial reports
- National Tripartite workshop proceedings or summaries

##### **4.2.2. Interviews**

The **International consultant** will guide the **National consultant** to conduct interviews based on semi-structured questionnaires with Laos-based key informants, particularly the Lao tripartite constituents, other relevant Ministries, academia and civil society), who will be identified by CO for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR. The National Consultant will prepare succinct notes on each interview. They will further support the International Consultant to conduct interviews with selected ILO staff and other UN staff in Bangkok and Vientiane and prepare succinct notes in each case.

#### **4.2.3. Stakeholders' workshop**

**The National Consultant** will support the convening of the stakeholders' workshop in the country to which key constituents, partners and other stakeholders will be invited with the **oversight and guidance of the International consultant**. The workshop will have three purposes: 1) to gather additional information from the participants in line with the review questions, and 2) to make evidence-based recommendations on how the next DWCP should go forward.

#### **4.2.4. Data analysis and Triangulation**

**The National Consultant** will support the **International Consultant** to analyze qualitative data using the methods described above. This will involve conducting content analysis, looking for patterns, categories, taxonomies, and/or themes. In order to ensure validity and reliability, the findings that emerge should be triangulated through the use of multiple sources of data and methods of data collection.

Gender dimensions, International Labour Standards, social dialogue and environmental sustainability should be cross-cutting concerns throughout the methodology, deliverables and final report of the evaluation. With respect to the gender dimensions, there should be a gender balance within both the consultations and the review team, as well as gender-related lines of enquiry in all aspects of the consultation process. Data reviewed by the team should be disaggregated by sex as a basis for assessing the relevance, effectiveness and achievement of strategies and outcomes for both women and men. Final recommendations should be formulated on a gender-responsive basis and reflect such analysis, while both the inception and the final review report should be gender-responsive.

### **5. Deliverables for the National Consultant, under the oversight and guidance of the International Consultant**

**6.1 Inception report** (not more than 10 pages) - the value of an inception report is that it ensures a common understanding of the ToR by the involved parties. The key elements of the inception report are: 1) administrative information; 2) background and context; 3) purpose, scope and clients; 4) criteria and questions; 5) methodology; 6) deliverables; and 7) work plan. The International Consultant and National Consultant will share preparation of the inception report.

**6.2 Update of 2020 -2021 progress report** of the DWCP in the M&E framework table, in consultation with the ILO National Coordinator.

**6.3 The DWCP review report** including completion of the Evaluability Diagnostic Instrument (EDI). The results from the EDI are intended to support and inform the other phases of the DWCP development process, in particular its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) aspects, as well as initiatives to strengthen M&E and planning capacity across the government, and also employers' and workers' organizations. The International Consultant and National Consultant will share preparation of the final review report.

### **7. Implementation and management**

**The review** will be coordinated and managed by ILO Coordinator in Lao PDR with the support from the Regional M&E officer. The tripartite DWCP M&E working group in Lao PDR will serve as the Review Task Force.

The Task Force will receive the draft review report, including the results from the evaluation, and will carry out an initial quality review. If the draft is found to be of acceptable quality, the Task Force Focal Point will circulate it to constituents/ stakeholders and consolidate their comments. The comments will be used by the consultants to make revisions.

**The Country Office for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR** will provide all of the programme documentation and the list of stakeholders to be interviewed. It will organize the stakeholders' workshop with support of the National Consultant. It will further provide any other logistical support required by the review team.

**Technical Specialists:** ILO experts from the country offices, EVAL, ILO's Bureau of Programme and Management (PROGRAM), and the the Bangkok-based Decent Work Technical Support Teams (DWT) may all provide inputs. EVAL provides general guidance and support, and receives the final evaluation report.

**The Regional Evaluation Officer** forms part of the Review Task Force and, as such, will provide any special evaluation technical advice required.

## 8. Funding

Funding will be cost-shared between RO-Bangkok and CO for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR.

## 9. Timeline

The review will be carried out during July-September 2021

<b>Table 1: Provisional Plan of Work and Outputs</b>				
<i>Step/Element</i>	<i>Who (Resource)</i>	<i>By when</i>	<i>No. Days for national consultant</i>	<i>Output</i>
<b>IMPLEMENTATION:</b>				
<i>Inception and desk-based</i>				
Document and literature review	International and National Consultants /EVAL/REO	<b>30 June 2021</b> 2 days for International Consultant	3 day for National Consultant	
Initial virtual meeting	Consultants, EVAL, REO, ROAP, CO	<b>15 July 2021</b> 0.5 day for International Consultant	0.5 day for National Consultant	Discussion on use of EVAL <b>diagnostic instrument</b> (questions and answers)
Detailed planning, identification & scheduling of on-site (or virtual) meetings	Consultants, ILO Coordinator for Lao PDR	<b>By 20 July</b>	1 day for National Consultant	Detailed work schedule for on-site and online work
Draft inception report and draft EDI report	Consultants/EVAL/REO	<b>30 July</b> 3 days for International Consultant	2 days for National Consultant	This will be shared with EVAL for comments
<b>Field visit - data collection and stakeholders workshop</b>				
In-country or online interviews with stakeholders	Consultants/EVAL/REO	<b>5-6 August</b> 3 days for International Consultant	6 days for National Consultant	

<b>Table 1: Provisional Plan of Work and Outputs</b>				
<i>Step/Element</i>	<i>Who (Resource)</i>	<i>By when</i>	<i>No. Days for national consultant</i>	<i>Output</i>
Stakeholders' workshop for presentation of initial findings	Consultants, tripartite constituents and other key stakeholders	<b>By 13 August</b> 1 day International Consultant, including preparation and follow-up	1 day for National Consultant and	
VC with ROAP and interested ILO colleagues on key findings and recommendations	Consultants, ROAP, DWT, Laos ILO Office, HQ etc.	<b>By 20 August</b> 0.5 day for International Consultant	0.5 day for National Consultant	
<b>Data analysis, report drafting and finalization</b>				
Data analysis and draft report	Consultants	<b>8<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> August</b>  4 days for International Consultant	2 day for National Consultant	
Review of draft report and share it with all concerned	Evaluation Focal Point	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> September</b>		
Consolidated comments sent to consultant	Evaluation focal Point	<b>9<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> September</b>		
Finalization of report	Consultants	<b>30 September</b> 1 day for International Consultant	1 day for National Consultant	
Submission of the final report to ILO	Consultant	<b>30 September 2021</b>		
<b>Total working days</b>		<b>15 days for International consultant</b>	<b>17 days for national consultant</b>	

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## Annex 11: SDG evaluability assessment

1. EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT OF THE DWCP NEXUS WITH THE UNCF AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS					(Provisional only: Largely not applicable to the current DWCP and its relationship to the recently adopted Lao PDR UNCF. To be updated on completion of the new DWCP 2022-2026)	
			Assessment	Rating guide	Comments / Evidence for assessment	Stakeholders
1.1	Understanding how to link Decent Work Country Programmes with Sustainable Development goals, targets and indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the Country Office know how to link the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) document and logframe with the Sustainable Development (SD) goals, targets and indicators?</li> <li>Is there adequate support from HQ and Region to the Country Office on how to include SDGs in the DWCP development process?</li> <li>Has there been adequate communication on the DWCP-SDG development process?</li> </ul>	3-Strong	<p>1 – Little or no understanding in the Country Office (CO) on how to link SDG goals and targets with the DWCP document and logframe</p> <p>2 – Some level of understanding in the CO on how to reflect SDGs in DWCPs, and ongoing work to provide operational guidance in the ILO</p> <p>3 – Good and consistent understanding in the CO and region and guidance materials and support on how to include SDGs in a DWCP document and logframe</p>	At the time the current DWCP was being developed in 2016, ROAP, the CO and HQ were still identifying the implications of the SDGs for DWCP development, and guidance was still being developed. Since then, understandings and guidance have developed considerably at all levels, with good support being provided to the Lao ILO Coordination Office, backed up by adequate & regular communications.	<p>ILO CO</p> <p>ILO National Joint Projects Office</p> <p>ILO Regional Office</p> <p>ILO Constituents in Lao PDR</p>

1.2	<b>Process for developing a DWCP integrating SDGs relevant to Decent Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the process for developing the DWCP reflect upon and include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- where and how the DWCP outcomes are aligned with SDGs relevant to Decent Work and the UNCF?</li> <li>- how measuring progress and performance might need to be altered, with the SDGs built into the DWCP?</li> <li>- the need to reach beyond the traditional ILO beneficiaries and other UN agencies/international partners implicated in the success of DWCP objectives, given the link to the SDGs?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	0-Not applicable	<p><i>1 – The DWCP development process doesn't address how the outcomes of the DWCP align with the SDGs and UNCF</i></p> <p><i>2 – DWCP development process addresses SDG programmatic issues (e.g. DWCP outcome linking with SDG and UNCF but doesn't address potential changes to the DWCP performance measurement framework and relevant stakeholders to engage with</i></p> <p><i>3 – The DWCP development process addresses key questions that underpin the linkage of the DWCP to the SDGs and UNCF, its performance measurement and key stakeholders</i></p>	<p>The next DWCP development process is not yet underway, so an assessment cannot yet be made. While the development of the current DWCP in the first 12-15 months following the adoption of the SDGs takes account of the SDGs at a more general level, plans are already in sight for the development of the next DWCP to include all the listed elements, including use of local Lao SDG indicators, the Global SDG Indicator Framework and full alignment with the recently finalized UNSDCF, with the aim of meeting the requirements of category 3.</p>	<p>ILO CO</p> <p>ILO National Joint Projects Office</p> <p>ILO Regional Office</p> <p>ILO Constituents in Lao PDR</p>
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1.3	<p><b>Linkage of the DWCP with the UNCF objectives</b></p> <p><i>(As per UNCF evaluability assessment)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there clarity on the process that ILO should follow to 're-purpose'/integrate the DWCP to link it with UNCF objectives/expected results?</li> <li>• Has the ILO drawn on the Common Country Assessment in the development of the DWCP?</li> <li>• Is the UNCF guidance and Companion Package found to be adequate in developing the DWCP linked with the goals of the UNCF?</li> <li>• Has there been a discussion with all UN agencies to identify UNCF strategies (in terms of (operational and resource implications) in support of specific UNCF results? Did this include analysis of where and how DWCP might need to link to like-programmes of other UN agencies for an integrated and coordinated UN approach? Is this documented?</li> <li>• Has the development of the DWCP included an examination of the potential for new assumptions/risks regarding the 'enabling environment' for the UNCF that may now be relevant for the success of the agency's results framework, given the link to the UNCF?</li> </ul>	0-Not applicable	<p><i>1 – Generally does not address the element or meet expectations for a UNCF</i></p> <p><i>2 – Partially meets UNCF expectations, but some elements missing to be deemed at least 'adequate'</i></p> <p><i>3 – Meets expectations for a UNCF, or at least is 'adequate'</i></p>	<p>Not applicable for the current DWCP, which will not be repurposed within the context of the new UNSDCF, but will be replaced with a new document developed in accordance of the new requirements. The current DWCP drew on the UNPF CCA at the time, with the final draft discussed at a workshop with UNCT members. UNCT members with whom the ILO had current working relations were interviewed directly as part of the DWCP design process. Collaboration was developed in the current DWCP period with UNFPA, UNICEF, UNCDF and WHO in the context of specific projects (rather than as a result of DWCP design per se). Other questions about the linking of the new DWCP with the UNSDCF and about the role of the UNRC and UNSDCF processes, will be addressed in the updating of this document in the last quarter of 2021.</p>	<p>ILO CO</p> <p>ILO National Joint Projects Office</p> <p>ILO Regional Office</p> <p>ILO Constituents in Lao PDR</p> <p>UNRCO / UNCT in Lao PDR</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the development of UNCF Joint Work Plans improved clarity on whether other UNCT members are also contributing to the same UNCF result, thus reducing fragmentation and improving coherence and synergy of the DWCP?</li> <li>• Has there been an RC-led validation process to ensure all proposed UN agency country programme instruments derive from/align with UNCF outcomes?</li> <li>• Is there general agreement about the nature and extent of the coordination needed across agencies that are implicated in the attainment of the same UNCF 'result'? (i.e., coordination on design; with country stakeholders, delivery process or activities; indicators to monitor and report on; M&amp;E responsibilities)</li> </ul>				
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1.4	<b>Adequacy of the DWCP Theory of Change (TOC) in connection with Sustainable Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the TOC align the DWCP outcomes with the SD goals, targets and indicators?</li> <li>• Does the TOC include identified stakeholders and interveners (including other UN agencies) that may be implicated in the success of the DWCP, given the link to the SDGs?</li> </ul>	2-Moderate	<p><i>1 – The DWCP does not involve detailing of a TOC</i></p> <p><i>2 – DWCP has a TOC that includes linkages to UNCF but falls short in capturing how the DWCP outcomes link with the SDGs</i></p> <p><i>3 – The DWCP includes a TOC addressing how DWCP aligns with the SDGs and UNCF in terms of country programme outcomes, initiatives and stakeholders.</i></p>	<p>Alignment between DWCP outcomes and the SDGs are listed, but not spelt out or developed in detail (as noted elsewhere, the Global SDGs Indicators Framework was not yet available when the current DWCP was being developed). Some stakeholders/implementers are identified in the programme strategies under each outcome, and in a separate section of the DWCP on partnerships, but specific cooperation with other UNCT members is not identified in specific terms as this had yet to be developed in the context of designing DWCP implementation. Alignments with the then UNPF are listed, but not developed in detail.</p>	<p>ILO CO</p> <p>ILO National Joint Projects Office</p> <p>ILO Regional Office</p> <p>ILO Constituents in Lao PDR</p> <p>UNRCO / UNCT in Lao PDR</p>
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1.5	<p><b>Robustness of the DWCP Theory of Change (TOC) and its alignment with UNCF</b></p> <p><i>(As per UNCF evaluability assessment)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Is the ILO DWCP results logic (i.e., how the activities of the ILO will cause the necessary change to contribute to the achievement of the UNCF result)– conceptually sound, clear and articulated in appropriate detail?</li> <li>•Does the DWCP TOC provide a relevant and appropriate articulation of the results pathway (process and milestones) that is reflective of the UNCF result and CCA analysis?</li> <li>•Is there a clear understanding of the relationship between the DWCP and UNCF results logic, i.e. an understanding of the causal pathway for change that sees the activities of ILO eventually contributing to the achievement of UNCF outcomes?</li> <li>•Is there an identification of which programme or project outputs of the DWCP represent ‘agency contributions’, contributing directly to a UNCF output?</li> <li>•Is there sufficient acknowledgement/articulation within the DWCP TOC of the assumptions and risks that underlie the processes of change (e.g. the political,</li> </ul>	0-Not applicable	<p><i>1 – Generally does not address the element or meet expectations for a UNCF</i></p> <p><i>2 – Partially meets UNCF expectations, but some elements missing to be deemed at least ‘adequate’</i></p> <p><i>3 – Meets expectations for a UNCF, or at least is ‘adequate’</i></p>	<p>As noted, the UNCF did not exist when the current DWCP was developed. The DWCP was developed in alignment at a more general with UNPF outcomes at that time, but not designed to specifically contribute to these as is now required vis-à-vis the UNCF. As indicated above, ILO cooperation with other UNCT members developed around specific projects within the DWCP, rather than as part of DWCP design per se. The role of ILO constituents is identified in the DWCP programme strategies and further reflected in the governance arrangements for the DWCP (with the Tripartite Steering Committee ToR attached).</p>	<p>ILO CO</p> <p>ILO National Joint Projects Office</p> <p>ILO Regional Office</p> <p>ILO Constituents in Lao PDR</p> <p>UNRCO / UNCT in Lao PDR</p>
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		<p>social or economic factors that drive or hinder change) that could impact the ILO's contribution to achievement of UNCF goals?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Has the ILO, in developing the DWCP TOC, coordinated with other UN agencies implicated in the same UNCF result area, to ensure an alignment and coordination of efforts, as well as consistency across relevant UN agencies in the identification of 'enablers' for successful movement along the TOC pathway?</li> <li>•Has the role of the ILO Constituents, as agents and enablers of change, been identified within the TOC?</li> <li>•Is there clarity of the 'reach' of the DWCP in its identification of intended beneficiaries, including relevant groups identified within the UNCF guiding principles?</li> <li>•Has the RC reviewed and commented on the agency's country development programming document, identifying opportunities for synergies and complementarities across UN agencies, so as to avoid duplication and overlap?</li> </ul>			
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1.6	<p><b>DWCP performance Measurement Framework reflective of Sustainable Development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do DWCP indicators allow for measuring SDG progress and performance in synch with UNCF performance information needs?</li> <li>• Do DWCP indicators align at the national level with the Global Indicator Framework designed to monitor the SDGs (1) ? Are DWCP indicators aligned with the ILO's Decent Work Indicators (2)? Is ILO responsible for monitoring and reporting on them (3)?</li> <li>• Is an appropriate level of disaggregation identified for the performance indicators that are relevant to DWCP, UNCF and SDG progress reporting?</li> <li>• Are indicators on DWCP performance and results (covering activities, outputs and outcomes) reflected in the ToC?</li> </ul>	2-Moderate	<p><i>1 – A poor Performance Measurement Framework (PMF) is developed for the DWCP, with confusion in terms of outputs and outcomes and no indicators</i></p> <p><i>2 – SMART Performance indicators are part of the PMF but does not contribute to measure SDG progress</i></p> <p><i>3– The PMF includes SMART indicators reflective of measurement and reporting needs on progress and performance of DWCP and SDGs</i></p>	<p>While the current DWCP aligns at a general level with the SDGs, the SDG Global Indicator Framework was adopted by the UNGA on 6 July 2017, i.e. after the DWCP was signed by constituents on 30 May that year. The global indicators framework is thus not reflected in the current DWCP, but will be central to the design of its replacement for the period 2022-2026. SMART performance indicators are part of the current results framework, but are not specifically designed to contribute to measurement against SDG indicators. ?</p> <p>The DWCP indicators agreed in consultation with Lao ILO constituents generally align with the ILO's Decent Work Indicators. The ILO National Joint Projects Office is responsible for monitoring and reporting on them through annual progress reports to the DWCP Tripartite Steering Committee (TSC). In the event such reports were produced and discussed in 2018 and 2019, but the impact of COVID-19 affected the process there after.</p>	<p>ILO CO</p> <p>ILO National Joint Projects Office</p> <p>ILO Regional Office</p> <p>ILO Constituents in Lao PDR</p> <p>UNRCO / UNCT in Lao PDR</p>
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1.7	<p><b>DWCP Performance Measurement Framework reflective of the UNCF</b></p> <p><i>(As per UNCF evaluability assessment)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Are the relevant UNCF outcomes copied verbatim within the agency's Results Matrix?</li> <li>•Is there an alignment of the DWCP results matrix with the UNCF results matrix? (i.e., are the set of DWCP outputs and expected outcomes aimed at contributing to the UNCF expected result?</li> <li>•Is there agreement with the UNCT and other agencies part of a specific UNCF result area on which outputs and immediate and intermediate outcomes the ILO will be responsible to measure and report on?</li> <li>•Is there agreement that the indicators being used by the ILO to measure performance and 'success' of its DWCP are appropriate for UNCF measurement and reporting purposes?</li> <li>•Are the performance indicators used by ILO aligned with those of other agencies that are implicated in the same UNCF result area?</li> <li>•Is the appropriate level of disaggregation being identified for the measurement of indicators that are relevant to UNCF</li> </ul>	0-Not applicable	<p><i>1 – Generally does not address the element or meet expectations for a UNCF</i></p> <p><i>2 – Partially meets UNCF expectations, but some elements missing to be deemed at least 'adequate'</i></p> <p><i>3 – Meets expectations for a UNCF, or at least is 'adequate'</i></p>	<p>This section will be completed as part of the evaluability assessment of the DWCP 2022-2026. The points highlighted did not apply to the relationships between the DWCP and the UNPF at the time both were developed.</p>	<p>ILO CO</p> <p>ILO National Joint Projects Office</p> <p>ILO Regional Office</p> <p>ILO Constituents in Lao PDR</p> <p>UNRCO / UNCT in Lao PDR</p>
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		<p>guiding principles (GEWE, HRBA, LNOB) and SDG reporting?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Are the indicators SMART?</li> <li>•Are both qualitative and quantitative indicators being identified as measures of performance?</li> <li>•Does the Results Matrix/Matrix of Indicators provide clarity on the starting position (baseline) for each result indicator, as well as clear targets for all expected results (both outcome and output)?</li> </ul>			
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1.8	<b>Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy and Plan for DWCP performance reporting in connection with Sustainable Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the DWCP include a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&amp;E) plan with data collection requirements, data reporting milestones, and relevant roles, and responsibilities?</li> <li>• Is the DWCP M&amp;E plan relevant for tracking and assessing SDG progress and results? Does it include resources and accountabilities within the Country Office assigned for this?</li> <li>• Does the DWCP M&amp;E Plan include a final review / evaluation addressing ILO implementation efforts and contribution to SDG progress and results?</li> </ul>	3-Strong	<p><i>1 – The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&amp;E) Plan for the DWCP doesn't capture key data requirements, milestones, roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for measuring and evaluating DWCP and in connection with SDG progress and performance.</i></p> <p><i>2 – The M&amp;E plan includes all data and methodological requirements necessary for the DWCP and SDG performance measurement, but includes little reference to resources and the share of responsibilities.</i></p> <p><i>3 – A well-articulated M&amp;E Plan for the DWCP prepared that also integrates M&amp;E requirements, responsibilities and resources related to both the DWCP and the SDGs performance reporting.</i></p>	<p>A 3 rating is justified, although the SDGs performance reporting aspect was not yet clear and developed at the time of DWCP drafting. The listed areas are included in the non-public implementation and results monitoring plans. An M&amp;E framework was subsequently developed with support of the ILO Regional Programme Support Team. This provided the basis of ongoing monitoring of DWCP implementation. A rating of 3 is given based on the coverage of key requirements by these 3 documents on an aggregated basis. The DWCP M&amp;E plan included a final review of DWCP progress, including contribution to SDG progress, which has been conducted independently.</p>	<p>ILO CO</p> <p>ILO National Joint Projects Office</p> <p>ILO Regional Office</p> <p>ILO Constituents in Lao PDR</p>
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1.9	<b>Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) and Reporting Plans supporting the UNCF</b>  <i>(As per UNCF evaluability assessment)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the DWCP Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan and system aligned with UNCF MEL Plan and system requirements?</li> <li>• Is there clarity around roles and responsibilities of the ILO insofar as monitoring and inputting information (nature, frequency and schedule for input) into the UNCF MEL system?</li> <li>• Is there clarity of roles and responsibilities associated with future evaluation, analysis and reporting on UNCF progress and results?</li> <li>• Is there clear guidance to UN agencies on when and how the M&amp;E analysis and reporting will be supporting local reporting and decision-making, in the context of results management?</li> <li>• Are adequate resources available for the ongoing monitoring, analysis and reporting on the UN agency contribution to UNCF implementation, progress and results?</li> </ul>	0-Not applicable	<p><i>1 – Generally does not address the element or meet expectations for a UNCF</i></p> <p><i>2 – Partially meets UNCF expectations, but some elements missing to be deemed at least ‘adequate’</i></p> <p><i>3 – Meets expectations for a UNCF, or at least is ‘adequate’</i></p>	<p>Reference is made to a UNCF MEL Plan and system, which was not in place at the time of DWCP design. The focus in this area is primarily on UNCF systems and requirements, which have only been developed in the current year (the last year of the current DWCP) . These will be a focus in the development of the next DWCP, including through consultation with the UNRCO and selected individual UNCT members.</p>	<p>ILO CO</p> <p>ILO National Joint Projects Office</p> <p>ILO Regional Office</p> <p>ILO Constituents in Lao PDR</p> <p>UNRCO / UNCT in Lao PDR</p>
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1.10	<b>Reporting on DWCP and SDG performance and results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is annual reporting by the Country Office on ILO contributions to relevant SDGs and UNCF results planned, including its scope, frequency and required level of efforts?</li> <li>• Is any joint reporting on SDGs and UNCF with other UN agencies planned in the country DWCP reporting, especially in the context of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) (4)?</li> </ul>	0-Not applicable	<p><i>1 – There is no/poor plan to report on DWCP and SDG progress and performance.</i></p> <p><i>2 – Requirements and approaches to reporting on DWCP and SDG progress and performance are clear but there is no SDG reporting plan developed for the country office.</i></p> <p><i>3– A plan for reporting on both DWCP and SDG progress and performance, including ILO contribution to the SDGs, has been or is being developed. This is coordinated with other UN agencies, as appropriate.</i></p>	<p>The ILO has contributed to the development of the two Voluntary National Reports submitted to the HLPF to-date by the Lao PDR Government. As noted above, reporting on DWCP implementation is provided to the Lao PDR Government via the Tripartite Steering Committee process. Annual reporting by the CO on ILO contributions to specific SDGs within the context of the UNCF is planned for the next DWCP as part of the reformed in-country UN arrangements. Consideration will be given to joint reporting with other UN agencies where there is a basis for this in terms of the degree of cooperation being undertaken around shared objectives. At the time of DWCP design specific reporting on SDG contributions and the possibility of joint SDG and UNCF (or UNPF) reporting was not yet on the radar.</p>	<p>ILO CO</p> <p>ILO National Joint Projects Office</p> <p>ILO Regional Office</p> <p>ILO Constituents in Lao PDR</p> <p>UNRCO / UNCT in Lao PDR</p>
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