

Lao PDR
2nd Voluntary National Review
Main Message

Lao PDR is at an important stage of its national development planning process. 2020 marked the conclusion of the implementation of the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP 2016-2020) and the development of the 9th NSEDP 2021-2025, which would guide the country development for the next five years. This development has been dominated by the challenges associated with COVID-19 response and recovery, sustainability and climate change, quality and inclusive growth, human capital, infrastructure development and the graduation from Least Developed Country status, which Lao PDR hopes to achieve.

The conclusion of 8th NSEDP and the development of 9th NSEDP come in a time where the country is in the process of preparation for the second Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, when possible, progress of SDG implementation in Lao PDR since the first VNR (2018) will have key elements of COVID-19 on the top of various challenges that the country has already encountered for the past two years.

The National Steering Committee (NSC) for SDGs implementation was set up in 2017 chaired by the Prime Minister, with members of the Committee from all concerned ministries and agencies. The National SDGs Secretariat and focal points in line ministries were appointed to lead and take ownership of each SDG to ensure smooth coordination and collaboration. Since the first VNR in 2018, there have been some key milestones on SDGs as follows:

The SDG Roadmap including the SDG advocacy and communication was finalised and approved by the NSC in 2019. It includes the institutional strengthening and partnerships, awareness-raising strategies, multi-stakeholder consultations, mechanisms to create horizontal-vertical policy coherence, and budgeting and plans for monitoring, reporting and accountability.

In 2019, 238 SDG indicators or around 60% of indicators were integrated into 8th NSEDP (2016-2020), and the remaining indicators will continue to be integrated into the up-coming development circles, respectively.

The VNR was developed based on the principle of leaving no one behind, which its process also builds on key recommendations from the first VNR and the conclusion of 8th NSEDP. The Secretariat conducted series of consultations with different stakeholders. Public officials from all 18 provinces have also been engaged with the aims to increase their understanding of the SDGs and implement relevant strategies in each province.

Securing data on localized SDGs in advance of the VNR has been challenging as a result of COVID-19 disruption. While this second VNR provides snapshot of progress toward all SDGs, the detailed discussion is on selected **Nine SDGs**, which are also in-line with the theme of the 2021 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

From LDC Graduation to the 2030 Agenda, it is a platform for the future. The country is on-track to graduate from the LDC status by having reached the threshold for graduation in the two consecutive Triennial Reviews in 2018 and 2021. This means that the country is eligible to be recommended for graduation in 2024. However, due to COVID-19 and the already existing challenges, a longer preparatory period of transition has been granted.

In addition, various SDGs have been greatly impacted. Therefore, some COVID-19 recovery measures will be implemented during the course of SDG implementation in-line with 9th NSEDP,

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including on the efforts to improve financing, macroeconomic management, business environment and investment, human capital development, job creation, macro-fiscal stability, and economic diversification to achieve more resilient, green, inclusive and sustainable growth.

Lessons Learnt and Way Forward

- **First**, the Government's strong commitment to the 2030 Agenda lies within the greater involvement of line ministries and provincial authorities, making them strong ownership of SDG localization and implementation.
- **Second**, administrative data systems in many goals still need to be harmonized, streamlined and strengthened while enhancing institutional and statistical capacity building. Importantly, high quality and disaggregated data is essential to ensure equitable progress against SDG goals and targets.
- **Third**, collaboration and coordination across line ministries and between central-local levels and across different stakeholders will be built on multi-stakeholder engagement approach.
- **Fourth**, the Government will continue working with all partners and identify practical development financing strategy needed for implementing the 2030 Agenda.
- **Last but not least**, public awareness for SDGs are important for ensuring greater support and partnerships which are essential for SDG realization.