



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Information received from the Lao People's Democratic
Republic on follow-up to the concluding observations on its
combined eighth and ninth periodic reports***

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



1. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) has participated in the Interactive Dialogue on its combined 8th and 9th periodic National Report, on 2 November 2018. The CEDAW Committee (the Committee) has considered the Lao PDR's National Report (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9), and thus included in its Concluding Observation paragraph 59 which states that the Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in the Concluding Observation paragraphs 36 (b), 40 (e) and 46 (a). The Lao PDR, therefore, presents this Follow-up Report accordingly.

Women's Education

2. According to the Concluding Observation paragraph 36 (b), the Committee recommends to the State Party to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes that impede access for girls to education and raise awareness among parents and community leaders of the importance of education for women.

3. The Government of the Lao PDR has adopted measures to promote access to education for girls and eliminate discriminatory stereotypes that impede their access as follows:

(a) Adopted the Decree on Ethnic Affairs, number 207/GOV, dated 20 March 2020. Article 12 of the said Decree is the provision on the education and sport to implement a special policy for the ethnic students in poverty by waiving of school fees and giving prioritized consideration for their enrolment to vocational training, in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations;

(b) Adopted the Decree on Mobilizing the Education and Sports Personnel towards Grass Roots Building, number 499/MES, dated 12 February 2019, for the Phase 2 (2018–2019) of the Education and Sports Quality Enhancement project in 40 remote districts;

(c) Continued to implement the Decree on Allowances for Students in Poverty and Disadvantaged in the General Education stream, number 385/GOV, dated 15 December 2017;

(d) Continued to implement the Decree on Criteria for Poverty Graduation and Development Status, number 348/GOV, dated 16 November 2017;

(e) Continued to improve the curriculum for primary schools to further re-emphasize on gender equality in the Grade 1 curriculum which was effectively applied since 5 June 2019.

4. Through implementing the measures and further emphasis on awareness raising for the staffs of the education sector, parents and guardians, and community leaders with some mentionable highlights as follows:

(a) Improved the school systems and facilities including dormitories, with separate toilets in a total of 30 schools and 30 gender segregated dormitories, each accommodating 25 female and 25 male students;

(b) Students in poverty and disadvantaged received allowances support:

- Provided allowance support for lower secondary students in a total of 2,740 students, out of which 1,423 or 51.93 per cent were female recipients, allowance support for upper secondary students there were a total of 1,700 students with 1,440 or 84.70 per cent female students, and provided scholarships for students in poverty and disadvantaged for lower secondary level in a total of 1,495 recipients with 807 or 54.71 per cent female recipients;

- Provided scholarships for university students who were in poverty and disadvantaged, and especially women, for education in level C1-C2-C3 by 50 per cent;

(c) The preschool enrolment rate of children aged under 5 years old, net enrolment rate for primary schools have increased, despite the rate of continuation from lower to upper secondary school has decreased, but it is found that those students went on to enrol in vocational educations, and the rate of graduation of upper secondary school has increased.

5. Emphasized on advertising, seminars, and training session to raise awareness for the parents, community leaders, and government officials to promote and encourage equal access to education for girls and boys, such activities include:

(a) Training on management of secondary schools with a participatory based approach and promote learning for provincial and district education officials in a total of 941 participants. Also, training sessions were held for lower, upper, and comprehensive secondary school principals with a total of 1,563 participants. Training for village education development committee members with 1,569 total participants. For parents' associations' members, there were 150 participants. Finally, for female teachers, there were 4,172 participants. There were also training sessions on gender equality promotion for teachers and students with an aim to prevent and avoid gender-based discriminative practices in schools. There were also club activities for students, such as short story contests on the theme of gender equality. There were also other advertising tools employed, such as posters, stickers, readers digest books distributed in schools and communities;

(b) Organized training sessions, with advice and guidance for the multi-ethnic people, elders and leaders of respective ethnic groups, creating better understandings on the government's policy, take ownership in tackling social illnesses problems, combatting all acts of obstruction and gender-based discriminations. For instance, provided support for their access to development, education, and public health services at the village, district and provincial levels. These activities covered 9 northern and central provinces, as well as the Capital city, with a total of 11 events with the participation of more than 200 participants. Re-education campaigns were also organized for the multi-ethnic people, ethnic elders in the effort to promote access to public health services, combatting violence against women and children and access to education for the children. In the period of 2018–2019, seminars were organized for the staffs of the Lao Front for National Development, at the target provinces and districts, along with night-time gatherings/seminars for villagers (more attendants from villagers who are then free from farming activities) which were conducted in 96 villages of 32 districts in 7 provinces, namely, Phongsaly, Borkeo, Hua Phan, Xieng Khuang, Xekong, and Attapeu provinces. There were also training sessions for the Lao Front for National Development and the people who were involved in the free lunch schemes, in order to further promote age-appropriate education for children, these were conducted in 32 districts of 7 provinces, namely, Phongsaly, Luang Namtha, Oudomxay, Luang Prabang, Salavanh, Xekong, and Attapeu;

(c) Training sessions for the parents, guardians, and family members for them to become good families and gender equality families, child development and promotion, and free from violence against women and children. In this regard, there were training sessions on promoting education, health and hygiene, division of roles and no domestic violence. The said campaign has reached 15,024 families from 65 villages in 56 districts across the 17 provinces and the Capital city.

Women's Health

6. According to the Concluding Observation paragraph 40 (e), the Committee recommends the State Party to collect data, disaggregated by age and region, on unsafe abortion and the impact on women's health, including maternal mortality, and on other health issues affecting women, such as mental health, to assess the status of women's health and improve relevant services.

7. Data collection in the health sector uses the DHIS2 system based on the indicators of various sectors from central to local levels in the country-wide scope. However, the national health data collection system is still limited in terms of gender disaggregation.

8. Unsafe abortions stem from many causes, for instance, abortions conducted in inadequate facilities and with medical personnel not specifically trained, use of drugs to terminate pregnancy, premature pregnancy, pregnancy from rape, poor families, having multiple children, pregnant women with pre-existing diseases, and often lacking access to government information and services. This has resulted in health complications on pregnant women such as haemorrhage, uterine perforation, incomplete abortion, infection, and death. Access to information on reproductive health, safe sex for the youth, family planning, and especially services that are friendly to the youth is still limited. Health providers would also need to be trained on post-abortion care and to ensure access to FP services following abortions.

The statistics on unsafe abortions on a nationwide scope for the years 2019 – June 2020

Data DHIS2	Age	2019			2020			Total
		Miscarriage	Abortions	Complications	Miscarriage	Abortions	Complications	
Province	10–14	16	2	–	12	2	3	35
	15–19	569	82	9	434	100	17	1.211
	20–39	2.863	379	70	2.706	787	96	6.901
	40+	262	42	1	148	45	11	509
District	10–14	13	2	–	8	2	–	25
	15–19	464	44	5	323	41	12	889
	20–39	2.005	152	19	1.672	189	19	4.056
	40+	214	21	–	170	29	1	435
Community health	10–14	1	–	–	–	–	–	1
	15–19	17	2	–	31	3	–	53
	20–39	34	1	1	79	10	6	131
	40+	2	–	–	3	–	–	5
Total		6.460	727	105	5.586	1.208	165	14.251

9. In order to prevent unsafe abortions, the following measures will be implemented:

(a) The Maternal Mortality Monitoring Committee shall assess the conditions of the women who received treatment, abortion, and maternal mortality;

(b) Continue to implement the Decree on Free Childbirth Subsidies for the 17 provinces covered by the health insurance fund;

(c) Enforce medical laws to strictly prohibit abortion;

(d) Complete the draft Decree on Surrogacy and Abortion;

(e) Continue to implement the National Strategy and Action Plan for Health Services with the integration of reproductive health, mothers', new-born and children's health;

(f) Continue to use the handbook on prevention and treatment of unsafe-abortion related complications for the health providers and the manual for youth-friendly health services, a national handbook on youth-friendly services, and the pedagogical of youth-friendly health services.

Rural Women

10. According to the Concluding Observations paragraph 46 (a), the Committee recommends the State Party to implement measures, including temporary special measures, to increase access for rural women to education, health, competitive markets, and income-generating activities, including by integrating a provision into the national rural employment strategy for support to young rural women, women heads of household and women with disabilities.

11. The Government of the Lao PDR has adopted the following measures:

(a) The Law on Allocation of Settlement and Occupation, number 45/NA, dated 15 June 2018. This law guarantees for the Lao multi-ethnic people living in the allocated area to have adequate shelter, productive land, and stable employment with an aim to end illegal migration, poverty alleviation, improve the livelihood of the Lao multi-ethnic people;

(b) Adopted the Decree on Lifelong Learning, number 208/GOV, dated 23 March 2020. This is a policy for both men and women to have opportunities in accessing education and enhancing their levels, both in and outside of schools;

(c) Continued to implement projects to enhance education quality in 40 remote districts, in connection with the 3 builds initiative;

(d) Continue to implement health insurance for the poor, which covers women with disabilities and disadvantaged throughout the country;

(e) Adopted the Decree on the Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises, number 299/GOV, dated 4 September 2019. It was adopted for the purpose of providing support for SMEs' growth, increasing production, trade, and services. The Government provides funding for respective periods in the form of credit loans through commercial banks or other financial institutions for SMEs, with a maximum interest rate of 3 per cent;

(f) Integrated women's rights into the 6 key priorities of the National Strategy on Rural Employment;

(g) Disseminated on sex education for the population aged 15 and above, especially on protection against HIV-AIDS, create and train more midwives, pregnancy caregivers and nurses especially for community health centres, disseminate on family planning, implement the policy on free-of-charge childbirth and medical treatment for children under the age of 5 years old, especially for women in rural and remote areas, create multiple advertising tools as appropriate for target groups on caring for mothers and children, vaccination, family planning, prevention of premature pregnancy, protection against STDs, integrating combatting of AIDS into the curriculums of the schools, universities and various medical education institutions, create manuals on quality treatment standards, access to health insurance, upholding quality treatment services by implementing the 5 goods and 1 satisfaction initiative, and aimed at implementing the National Strategy and Action Plan for service with integration of sexual health, mothers, infants and children and strategy on nutrition and comprehensive data system (DHIS2).

12. The implementation of the existing measures, special temporary measures, and new measures have contributed to rural women's access to education, health treatment, employment, and income generating activities, as follows:

(a) The rate of school enrolment across the 40 districts in poverty has increased, especially in 2019: gross rate of enrolment of children at the age of 5, the net rate of enrolment for primary school, rate of lower-secondary school completion, and gross rate of upper-secondary school enrolment;

(b) Citizens who were illiterate, disadvantaged and dropped-out from schools have received continuous education support schemes to complete primary and lower secondary education level across the country, with significant delivery rate:

- Illiterate citizens in the age group between 15-40 years old have received additional learning and 5,924 people have completed primary education, accounting for 40.51 per cent of the targeted 14,624 people, out of whom 3,029 were women or 44.74 per cent of the target 6,770 people;
- Citizens in poverty and disadvantaged in terms of education in the age group of 6-14 have received additional continuous education and completed primary education in a total of 1,765 people, of whom 830 or 47.02 per cent were female;
- Citizens in the target age group of 15-35 who were disadvantaged and dropped-out of school and did not complete lower secondary education have received additional continuous education in a total of 16,387 people or 94.03 per cent of the 17,427 target persons, of whom 7,351 were female and achieved 100 per cent of the target;
- Women in poverty and disadvantaged especially rural women, women who were heads of households, and women with disabilities can access health services in the 2018–2020 period: the number of women who receive free-of-charge pre-natal and after birth check-ups, and childbirth services was 474,976 persons/year;
- Mothers' mortality rate was 119 deaths in 2018 and 113 deaths in 2019;
- 6,042 married couples have received contraceptive implants (regulars), 1,908 received intrauterine devices (IUD), and 17,911 condoms in 2019. 1,463 female sterilization has been performed and 302,135 birth control injections were administered;

(c) Organized vocational and 3 months short-term vocational trainings for women on cooking, textile, and beauty services for 200 women trainees, of whom 132 went on to take up professions and enterprises as follows:

- Open food or dessert stalls, open small restaurants, become kitchen assistance at various restaurants and hotels;
- Used their textile and knitting techniques to work from home, set up small textile shops, or become workers at textile factories;
- Opened small and medium sized beauty salons or become beauty assistance and also provide mobile beauty services;
- Become staff of the Lao Women's Union at provinces and districts as trainers or other roles;

(d) Young women, women who were heads of households, and women with disabilities have received short-term vocational training:

- In the industrial sector including designing and colour-dyeing of Lao traditional cloth-weaving, textiles, pottery and crafts, water processing, welding and

moulding, electricity instalment and wiring, water production, electric utilities-refrigeration repairs, construction, carpentry and furniture making, and cattle farming;

- In the agriculture sector, they were trained on rubber plantation, seedling selection, selection of fruit strain selection techniques, how to grow mushrooms, how to grow grass for animal feeding, raise goats, raise chicken, how to keep frogs and catfish, sapling techniques, cattle raising, pig farming, learned combined techniques of plantation-livestock-weeding and crop protection;
- The service sector has provided training to help rural women develop vocational skills and have more career options or jobs to generate more income;

(e) Training on farming techniques: tamarinds, tea, coffee, corn, tapioca; chicken, pigs, goats, cows and fish farms for 11,540 groups from 853,075 persons, of whom 420,864 or 49 per cent were female. Up to the present, 1,018,808 farmers in poverty and disadvantaged are now able to access crops plantation and livestock, of whom 837,521 or 45 per cent were female;

(f) There are 35 out of 102 business units with the One District One Product (ODOP) scheme that are owned by women;

(g) Training on marketing for those in the crafts production business reached 1.290 participants enabled them to better understand identify investment opportunities, market research and new innovations in conducting business;

(h) Providing Funds and loans through commercial and micro financing institutions:

- Women have received credits from commercial banks¹ (in a total of 16,59 billion Kips covering 22,04 per cent of the total credits issued;
- Women who received credits through micro-financing institutions that take deposits in a total of 22,411 cases, a total of 300,2 billion Kips or 28,43 per cent;
- Women who received credit through micro-financing institutions that do not take cash deposits, in a total of 11.895 cases, a total amount of 87,76 billion Kips or 45,38 per cent;
- Women who received credits from collectives of credit and savings in a total of 3.839 cases, a total amount of 35,64 billion Kips or 38,34 per cent;
- Women who received credit from micro-financing institutions established specifically manage by LWU in a total of 3.266 cases or amount of 76.472.350.000 Kips;

(i) Young women, women who are heads of households, and women with disabilities in rural areas have received employment through government agency in a total of 3.566 persons, of which 1.230 were in the agriculture and forestry sector, 945 in the industrial sector, and 1.391 persons in the service sector;

(j) During 2019–2020, encourages people with disabilities to receive training and employment through social participation programs and income-generating activities for people with disabilities, enabling rural women to be trained and engaged in raising frogs, raising fish, and growing mushrooms in Oudomxay and Xaignabouli provinces. The Disability Employment Project in Houaphanh Province has trained

¹ The group of State-owned commercial banks, State joint-venture banks, branches of foreign commercial banks, business groups under parenting foreign banks and group of private commercial banks.

women with disabilities in gardening and caring for sakura trees, making cookies, making cafes, small-scale handicrafts and beauty salons.

Challenges

13. Despite having made considerable progress, the Lao PDR acknowledges that it remains one of the least developed countries at the lower-middle income level. The road and transportation condition is still not accessible all-year-round for the rural areas, the majority of the population comprise of multi-ethnic people with relatively high poverty rate, the outdated perspectives are still a part of Lao society, added with budgetary constraints and less than optimal data collection system, these are the main challenges that the country continues to face.

14. COVID-19 pandemic and repeated natural disasters have both, directly and indirectly, impacted the Lao PDR's socio-economic development efforts, leaving many targets unreached in general, more specifically, the action plans, projects, activities, and attracting funding from the international community in relation to the advancement of women, gender equality, and implementing our international obligation under the CEDAW have had to be left incomplete.

15. Premature sexual intercourse has become more common and on the rise. Currently, 18 per cent of adolescent girls have their first sexual intercourse before the age of 15, and 32.8 per cent before the age of 18. There are 23.5 per cent of married adolescent girls aged 15-19 who do not have access to modern family planning services.
