

# **National Mapping Report on Agriculture, Nutrition and Gender**

Authors: Khampheng Mounmeuangxam, Frank Tolentino

Country: Lao PDR

Date: August, 4 2014

## Table of Contents

List of Acronyms.....	2
1. Introduction.....	3
2. Current Status on agriculture, nutrition and gender in Lao PDR.....	3
3. Stakeholder mapping and analysis .....	8
3.1. Stakeholder mapping.....	8
3.2. Stakeholder strategic alliances .....	11
3.3. Stakeholder analysis.....	11
4. Policy overview .....	12
4.1. Nutrition and Health related policies .....	12
4.2. Agriculture related policies .....	13
4.3. Gender related policies .....	13
4.4. Policy interrelatedness .....	14
5. Inventory of programmes and interventions.....	14
5.1. The nutrition sensitive agricultural program initiatives exist.....	14
5.2. What methodologies and tools have been used and developed in interventions?.....	15
6. Looking at practices and results in the areas of nutrition, agriculture and gender .....	16
6.1. Policy Implementation challenges .....	16
6.2. Adequacy of policies.....	16
6.3. Lessons learnt from practices.....	17
7. Concluding remark .....	18
Annexes .....	19
Annex 01. List of key informants.....	19
Annex 02. List of INGOs working on nutrition in Lao PDR .....	19
Annex 03. List of UN agencies working on nutrition in Laos.....	20
Annex 04. List of Donors with respective projects relevant to nutrition in Laos .....	20

## List of Acronyms

CFSVA	Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis
FNS-AP	Multi-sectoral Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HPA	Health Poverty Action
INGO	International Non-government Organization
LSIS	Laos Social Indicator Cluster Survey
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MCC Laos	Mennonite Central Committee Laos
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NCAW-Lao	National Commission for the Advancement of Women-Lao PDR
NNP	National Nutrition Policy
Plan Laos	Plan International Laos
RVS	Risk and Vulnerability Survey
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

## 1. Introduction

National mapping on agriculture, nutrition and gender situation in Laos was conducted in August 2014 by the national consultant and the agriculture sector leader of SNV Laos. Internet or online search was the main method used for collecting information and few interviews of key informant was done at national level to get deeper information. Some of the websites visited include that of [Lao44.org](http://Lao44.org) and the World Food Program (WFP) website. The [Lao44.org](http://Lao44.org) website is well known to most of the Lao technical experts as channel coalition for Lao information, communication and knowledge. The information on gender issue in Laos, strategy for agricultural development 2011 to 2020 (draft version) were collected from [Lao44.org](http://Lao44.org) website and food and nutrition security atlas of Lao PDR 2013 was collected from WFP website. In addition, the study report from the Manchester University on national status of children, food consumption diversity and ethnicity in Lao PDR 2014, national nutrition strategy and action plan 2010-2015, local newspapers, organisation reports, and Human Development Report of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In addition to searching on line, interviews with the representatives from three main government ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Lao Statistics Bureau, and Lao Women Union were conducted. Information about their roles and responsibilities regarding agriculture development, nutrition improvement and gender equality promotion at national level were gathered during the interviews.

Representatives from various development projects were consulted and interviews concerning interventions, implementation strategies, models, guidelines on nutrition, agriculture and gender programs/projects. These projects are currently being implemented in Laos such as the food and nutrition security project in northern region of Xiengkoung province implemented by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC Laos), nutrition improvement project in southern province of Attapue implemented by Health Poverty Action (HPA), and Plan International Laos (Plan Laos) in Bokeo province in northern Laos.

## 2. Current Status on agriculture, nutrition and gender in Lao PDR

Laos is located in Southeast Asia joining border with Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, China, and Burma. It has a total land area of 236,800 Km<sup>2</sup> and current population of 6,541,432, comprise of (3,254,452 men and 3,259,980 women (Lao Statistics Bureau 2012). The growth rate of Gross

Domestic Product (GDP) was at 7.9 percent and GDP per capital was 1,396 USD in 2012<sup>1</sup>.

Even though the GDP of Lao PDR has grown up considerably, malnutrition remains a major challenge for Laos to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG). Based on information from Nutrition Centre of Ministry of Health, about 24 percent of mortality of children under one year of age comes from insufficient breast feeding by their mothers. According to the data in 2012, 44.2 percent of children less than five years was stunted, 26.8 percent underweight, and 5.9 percent was wasted<sup>2</sup>. For 13 out of 17 provinces, stunting levels are higher than World Health Organisation's (WHO) critical threshold of 40 percent<sup>3</sup>. The prevalence of stunting and underweight is closely associated with poverty and geography. Children in rural areas without road access are twice as likely to be malnourished than children in urban areas. Micronutrient deficiencies are also suspected to be a critical problem in Laos, in particular for iron, vitamin A, Iodine and zinc<sup>4</sup>.

In Laos, poor maternal education has been cited as one of the causes of malnutrition. The Laos Social Indicator Cluster Survey (LSIS) 2012 estimated that about 69 % of young women (age 15-24) are literate compared to 77% young men with variation across the regions<sup>5</sup>. Cultural beliefs is another factor influence in child health outcome in many developing countries including Laos. Cultural beliefs and practices can have both positive and negative impact on child health. In Laos, different ethnic groups have certain beliefs that may influence child and maternal health. As noted report from studies, most Khamu mothers discard colostrum from 1- 6 days for the fear of causing diarrhoea. The baby is instead fed by dipping cotton bud into honey or glucose for the period until white appears and some infants are also fed chewed rice or rice soup from day one.

According to the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2013, Lao PDR ranked 25<sup>th</sup> out of 56 countries which is a serious or worse hunger situation. The GHI for Lao PDR is 18.7 and is considered an extremely alarming hunger situation. In broad terms, there are two main farming systems: namely the lowland rainfed and/or irrigated farming systems of the Mekong flood plains and its tributaries, and the upland shifting farming systems. A third, smaller system, consist of horticultural crops and coffee cultivated on the Bolaven plateaux.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lao statistics Bureau, <http://www.nsc.gov.la>

<sup>2</sup> WFP 2013, Food and Nutrition Security Atlas of Lao PDR

<sup>3</sup> WFP 2013, Food and Nutrition Security Atlas of Lao PDR

<sup>4</sup> WFP 2013, Food and Nutrition Security Atlas of Lao PDR

<sup>5</sup> Laos Social Indicator Cluster Survey 2012

Rice (especially glutinous rice) is a single staple food for Lao people and rice cultivation remains the most prevalent agro-economic activity. Rice farming covers 72 percent of total cultivated areas, and uses traditional varieties in the upland and improved varieties in the low lands. In 2012 total rainy season rice cultivated area was 706,028 ha and production reached 2,763,150 tons, dry season rice cultivated area was 107,967 ha and production reached 509,920 tons, and upland rice cultivated area was 119, 772 ha and production reached 216,140 tons. The maize crop is a second crop after rice with total maize cultivated area in 2012 of 196,815 ha and production volume reached 1,125,485 tons. Vegetable and bean cultivated area was 121,596 ha through the country<sup>6</sup>.

According to the report of WFP in Laos, rice dominates the diet with average daily intake of 491 grams per person accounting for 77 percent daily energy needs<sup>7</sup>. The dietary diversity score for Lao people is lower even if there are available diverse food in the country but of course diversity varies among the regions and provinces. According to Katsushi S. Imai, in 2014 the average children in Vientiane, Bolikhamxay and Khammuane provinces have a food diversity score of more than one. Houapnah province has lowest food diversity score of 1.60 and Vientiane capital has highest food diversity score of 4.10 while most of the remaining provinces have scored 2 on average. In addition, the study also found that children in household that rears livestock consume diversified diets and that in turn leads to higher nutritional status<sup>8</sup>.

According to the Risk and Vulnerability Survey, 2013 (RVS), households with poor or borderline food consumption tend to have lower education attainment, plots of land is smaller and fewer vegetable plots, and engage in more cash crop cultivation as key source of income. In addition, they tend to have diets heavily based on rice consumption with substantially lower intake of animal protein. According to Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) 2006, the food insecure populations of Laos tend to be households engaged in sifting cultivation in upland areas on steep sloping fragile land, smallholders and unskilled labourers. They are asset-poor households, with limit and no access to infrastructure, and subject to poor sanitation conditions. Mostly they are from Non-Lao-Tai ethnicities living in the rural areas.

According to human development report of UNDP In 2013, Laos ranked 139<sup>th</sup> out of 187 countries on Human Development Index (HDI)<sup>9</sup> while

---

<sup>6</sup> Lao statistics Bureau, <http://www.nsc.gov.la>

<sup>7</sup> WFP 2013, Food and Nutrition Security Atlas of Lao PDR

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Kobina Annim and Katsushi. S. Imai, 2014. Nutritional status of children, food consumption diversity and ethnicity in Lao PDR, Economics School of Social Science the University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL

<sup>9</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_Human\\_Development\\_Index#Low\\_human\\_development](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_Human_Development_Index#Low_human_development)

gender inequality ranked 118<sup>th</sup> out of 187 countries on the Gender Inequality Index<sup>10</sup>. According to report from Lao government, in 2010 the number of poor households were accounted for 20.40 percent of total households in the country, while it was reduced in 2013, still the number of poor households remains at 10.57 percent<sup>11</sup>. The differences of traditional beliefs among the ethnic groups in Laos remains to be a factor that influence gender inequality. According to study by Elizabeth MANN and Nee Loungkhot 2008, In Thai Dam tribe the men have right to inherit properties from their parents because of their traditional beliefs and practices from generation to generation, and Hmong tribe men in charge of connection with ghost at home and farm before women are going to start cutting trees for crops cultivation<sup>12</sup>. In term of land right, villagers living in rural areas do not think of land right since they have practiced the traditional way of land utilization and allocation.

Women in Laos account for over half (54 percent) of the agricultural workforce (Agriculture strategy 2020) and participate in a variety of agricultural services, thus provide significant contribution to the national economy and to the sector but often remains unaccounted for<sup>13</sup>. According to the report on gender situation in Laos 2005 of Lao women Union, women play important role in agriculture production and natural resources management as responsible for food security at household level. They are responsible for crops production and harvesting to selling to the market and their production accounts for 40- 60 percent of household income and might reach up to 80 percent in the remote areas<sup>14</sup>. In addition, women are responsible for other general income activities including small scale business and handicrafts production at household level. While they have participated in economic activities for livelihood at household level, women are not accepted and have less power on decision making such as in irrigation and credit schemes. Only women in Lao-Tai group have control on budget and play a key role at family level on financial management decision making.

Literacy rate between men and women in Laos is slightly significant. World Bank 2013, reported that in 2012 literacy gap between men and women is 70 percent for women while men is 85 percent. In addition, the gender bigger gap is in the remote rural areas, women 54 percent while 81 percent for men that are home to smaller ethnic groups. Women in remote areas have less opportunity to access to education in particular at

---

<sup>10</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>

<sup>11</sup> Poverty Reduction Fund, 2014. <http://www.prflaos.org>

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth MANN and Nee Luangkhot 2008, Study on women's land and property rights in rural Laos

<sup>13</sup> Lao PDR, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Strategy for Agricultural Development 2011-2020. Final draft version 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Lao women Union 2005, gender situation in Lao PDR

secondary school, gender gap is 10.8 percent at secondary school in 2012 based on reported by World Bank 2013<sup>15</sup>. The potential reasons for women going to their secondary school less is that the certain traditional belief of their parents and most of women getting marry at young age especially in remote areas. The result, most of women have less opportunity to access to work and better quality of life due to lower education.

The women role in the decision making at national level, the political representation of women in the National Assembly has grown by 25 percent in 2012. It is among highest in the region. Women hold the high ranking official positions at ministry level is increased. At the minister position level, women accounting for 8.2 percent and 12.8 percent at vice minister<sup>16</sup>. However, women continue to struggle to participate in equal numbers. Women in general, are mainly responsible for water supply and energy for cooking yet their voices are still often excluded from local and national decision-making process about how to manage risks from natural disaster and climate change.

The key factors leading to food and nutrition insecurity in Lao PDR:

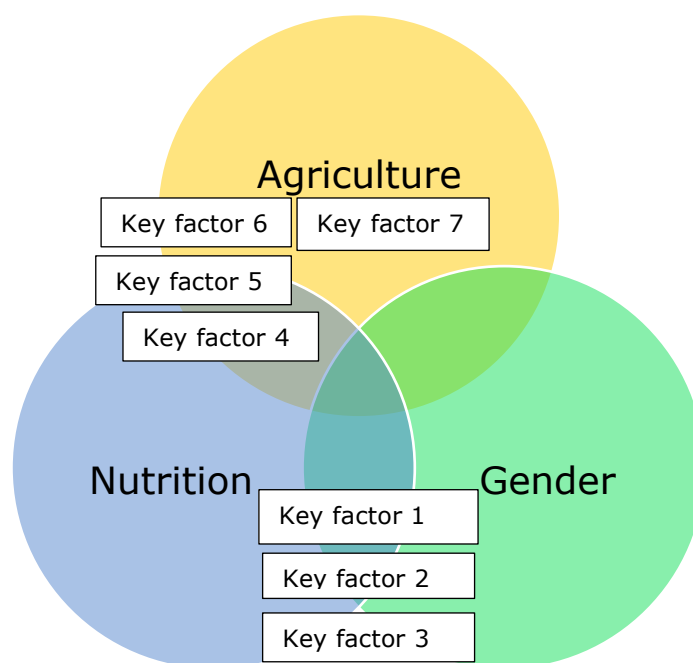
1. Lack of knowledge on nutritious food of pregnant and post-partum women.
2. Strongly cultural belief of various ethnic groups especially food taboos for pregnant and post-partum women.
3. Lack of knowledge on appropriate child feeding and child care practices.
4. Small plot of arable land and fragile especially in northern uplands.
5. Lack of diversity of food available all year round.
6. Focus on cash crops production rather than diversified crops.
7. Natural disasters (flooding and drought).

---

<sup>15</sup> World Bank 2012. Country Gender Assessment for Lao PDR

<sup>16</sup> Leaflet of Overview Lao Women Union 2012.





*Figure 1: key factors and how they are related to agriculture, nutrition and gender*

### 3. Stakeholder mapping and analysis

#### 3.1. Stakeholder mapping

The stakeholders engage with agriculture, nutrition and gender included government institutions, private sector, and INGOs. There are four main government institutions involve such as Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Education, and Lao Women Union. For INGOs, there are about 16 organizations working on nutrition sector.

Actor (Organisation)	Food and Nutrition Security Objectives	Actors with whom the collaborate with on Food and Nutrition Security related work	Nature of collaboration	Comments
Ministry of Health	Provision of micro-nutrients to children, caring serious under nutritious children, Water and sanitation improvement,	Provincial and District Health Office	Supporting and coaching on technical aspect	
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Drafting and proposing strategies and long term plans and at the same time managing, supporting, inspecting, and evaluating the implementation of strategies and action plans.	Signing agreements, MOUs with foreigner partners, international organizations, foundation, individuals as approved by the government.	Build relationship and cooperating, encouraging aid and investment from domestic and external donors for the development and management of agriculture and forestry practices.	
Ministry of Education	School meal programme, school garden programme,	Heath, development partners and Agriculture	Coordination with organisation concerned	Adding nutrition content into culaculum of primary secondary and higher schools
Lao Women Union	Promote the implementation of the policy on gender equality and advancement of women in the implementation of national socio-economic development To promote and increase Lao women 's Union profile of all levels to be active and strong, armed at strengthening	All sectors relating to women and children 's interest all	Coordinate with organization concerned	

	roles and duties of women			
INGOs	Implementation of interventions related with food security and nutrition projects in the community level	Implementing with Agriculture, Health sectors	Coordinate for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating	Coordination mechanism between government line agencies and INGOs need to be improved and strengthened

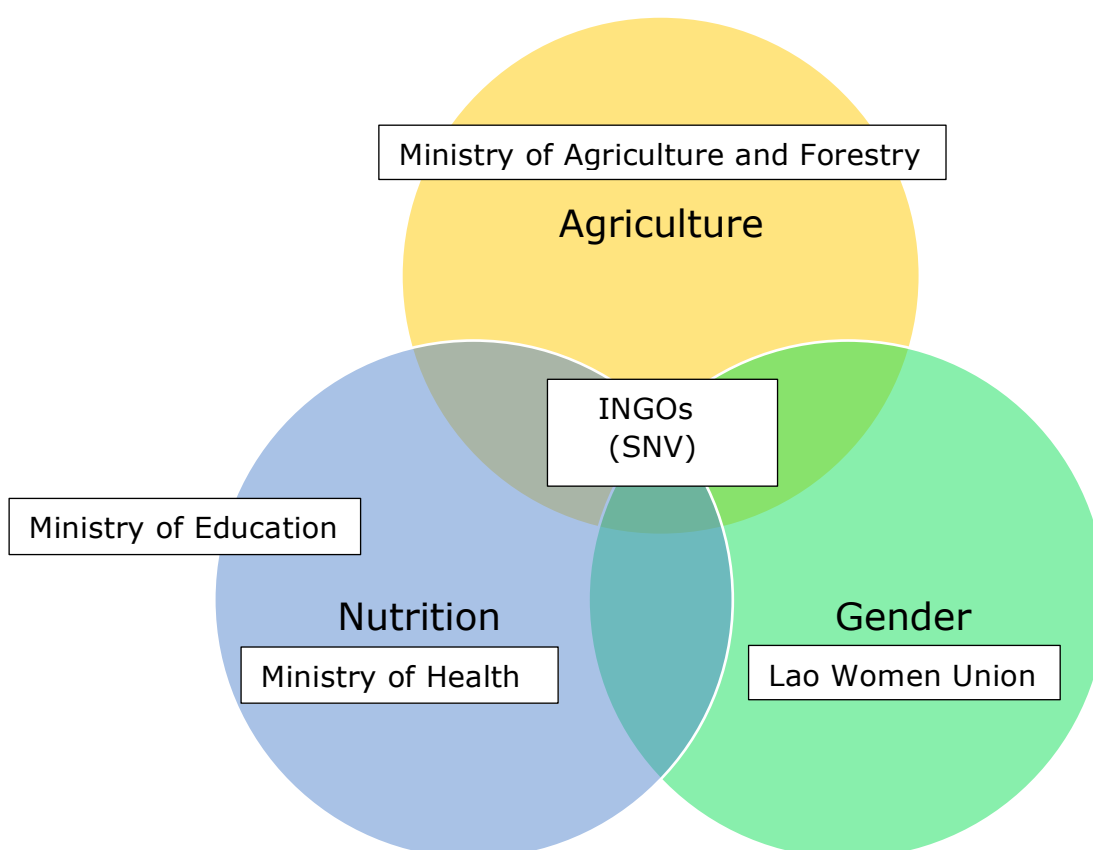


Figure 2: Stakeholder map

The primary stakeholders included Ministry of Health and Ministry of agriculture and forestry. The secondary stakeholders are Ministry of education and Lao Women Union. The third including International Development Agencies and INGOs working in Laos.

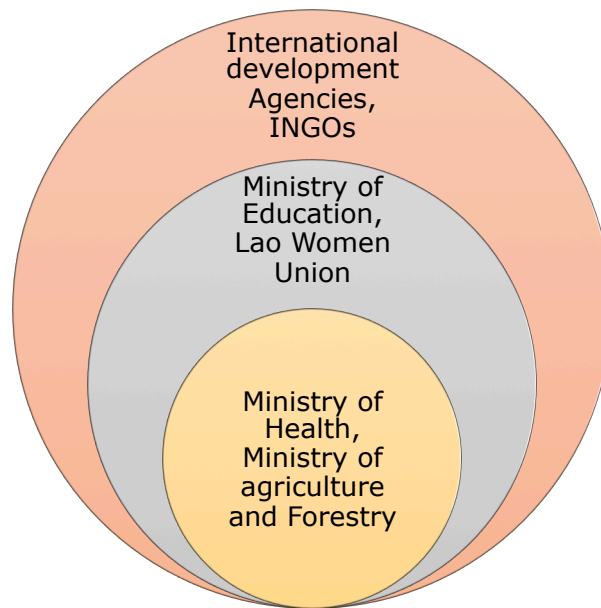


Figure 3: Priority map stakeholder

### 3.2. Stakeholder strategic alliances

The existing coordination and networking among the stakeholders involve on food and nutrition security is stipulated in the Multi-Sectoral Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan (FNS-AP) from 2014 to 2020. Three main stakeholders are involved such as the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Education. Gender aspect is less mentioned. Coordination between stakeholders is a challenge in resolving food and nutrition security problem in Laos because each stakeholder works on its own mandate with less networking or coordination with other stakeholders. For example the Ministry of health is implementing the nutrition project alone and the Ministry of agriculture and forestry implements the food security project without collaboration with health sector. There is a close link between the two projects thus coordination and collaboration are very much needed. The FNS-AP envisions to address the weakness of coordination mechanism among different stakeholders who are involve in food and nutrition security sector but this is a new approach for Laos.

### 3.3. Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder	Main interest in	Influence in	Potential in term
-------------	------------------	--------------	-------------------

Group	relation to FNS	relation to FNS	of collaboration
Ministry of Health	High	High	key player
Ministry of Agriculture	High	High	Key player
Ministry of Education	Low	High	Need to become key player
Lao Women Union	Low	High	Need to become key player
INGOs	High	Low	Need to be considered as it's likely that can play an influential role when they are invited

## 4. Policy overview

### 4.1. Nutrition and Health related policies

- National Nutrition Policy (NNP) issued in December 2008. The NNP is aimed at accelerating the reduction of malnutrition among all ethnic groups and decreasing associated morbidity and mortality risks. In the long term this will reduce national expenditure associated with malnutrition.
- National Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan for 2010-2015. This is a strategic action plan for the stakeholders, ministries, development partners, and private sector to guide them on implementing and developing programs on malnutrition reduction and influencing factors.
- National Strategy for the Rural Water Supply and Environmental Health sector issued 2004. This strategy is linked with national framework for health sector. It provides guidance and support to: improve access, use and sustainability of water supply and sanitation facilities in rural areas, and maximise health and socio-economic benefits from access to water supply and sanitation facilities.
- Multi-sectoral Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan (FNS-AP) for 2014 to 2020. The National Nutrition Committee established in July 2013 includes representatives from Ministry of Health, Ministry of Planning and Investment, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Education, National Commission for Mother and children, and Lao Women Union. The Deputy Prime Minister is the chairman of this committee. At the same time, the secretariat to National

Nutrition Committee was also established which is chaired by Ministry of Health and Co-chaired by Ministry of Agriculture and forestry, and Ministry of Planning and Investment. The pilot implementation of the first phase in 204-2015 will be done in three provinces (Oudomxay, Luangnamtha and Saravan). Currently, the coordination mechanism at the provincial and District level is ongoing.

#### 4.2. Agriculture related policies

- Four goals and 13 measures were formulated by MAF in 2010. The goals and measures provide guidance to MAP personnel responsible for preparing and implementing agricultural development interventions and other development-related activities at all level of government. The four goals are including: 1) food production, 2) commodity production, 3) stop slash and burn cultivation, and 4) sustainable forest management and balance between exploitation, utilization and protection/conservation.
- Strategy for Agricultural Development 2011 to 2020 (Final Draft Version). This strategy has not yet been finalized and in process of consultation with the stakeholders. The vision and development goals by 2020 include: 1) gradual introduction and increased application of modernized lowland market-orient agricultural production, adapted to climate change and focus on smallholder farmers, and 2) conservation of upland ecosystems, ensuring food security and improve the livelihood of rural communities. The four goals for 2015 was also formulated and one of them is improvement of livelihood (through agriculture and livestock activities) which has a food security component.

#### 4.3. Gender related policies

- National Commission for the Advancement of Women-Lao PDR (NCAW-Lao) was established in 2003. Under guidance of NCAW-Lao it is expected that ministries develop strategies and action plans in accordance to gender mainstreaming principles and address gender equality issues at national, provincial, district and village levels. It is also recommended that ministries develop effective sector gender mainstreaming strategies.
- The National strategy for the Advancement of Women 2011-2015. It's overall goals are to: increase understanding of gender equality; enable more women to joint decision-making positions; provide opportunities for women and girls to access health care, education,

training, employment, income generation, infrastructure and social protection; promote wider participation of women from all ethnic groups in economic activities and social services; and strengthen gender machinery in-county especially the NCAW.

#### 4.4. Policy interrelatedness

For agriculture strategy focusing on market-orient agricultural production rather than promotion diversified crop production and home consumption. Most of the government projects promote the target farmers to produce for marketing for example maize and banana cultivation in the country. The mono cultivation system in the large area in the uplands will pose negative impact on land fertility in the long term due to soil erosion. Additionally, promotion of modern mechanization, and external inputs might increase debt to farmers due to dependent on external inputs for farming.

The NNP goes on to say that investments in agro-based industries, hydropower, and mining sectors present economic development potential. However, uncontrolled development in these sectors present an increasing risk to food security as people access to natural resources and environmental sustainability is compromised. Important principle of the NNP relate to the empowerment of women and vulnerable groups, plus "no-harm" which relate to control adverse impacts on nutrition from other development sectors.

### 5. Inventory of programmes and interventions

#### 5.1. The nutrition sensitive agricultural program initiatives exist

Program	Organisation (funding/implementing)	Location	Objectives/content				
			Nutrition	Agriculture	Nutrition Agriculture	Gender	Gender Nutrition Agriculture
Livelihood Opportunity and Nutrition Grain (LONG) Project	Poverty Reduction Fund (PRF)	Houaphanh, Savannaket provinces			√		
Northern Upland Development Programme (NUDP)	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Houaphanh, Luangparbang and Phonsaly provinces			√		

The Agro-Biodiversity Initiative (TABI) Project	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Houaphanh, Xiengkhouang, and Luangparbang Provinces		√			
Tha Thom Food Security Project	MCC Laos	Xaysomboun province			√		
Community Based Nutrition	HPA Laos	Attapreu province			√		
Maternal Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) and Nutrition Programme	Plan Laos	Bokeo province	√			√	
Food security and Nutrition Project	Croix-Rouge Francaise (CRF)	Sayaboury Province			√		
The Sustainable Food Security Development Project	Comité de Coopération avec le Laos (CCL)	Phongsaly Province		√			
Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC)	Natural Agriculture in Development	Vientiane Province		√			
World Renew (World Renew)	Community Livelihood Development Project	Xieng Khouang Province			√		
World Vision Lao PDR (WVL)	Ngommalath Area Development Program	Khammouane province			√		

## 5.2. What methodologies and tools have been used and developed in interventions?

- School gardening promotion: school garden methodology is to increase food availability for students as well as their families. The project provided the materials such as vegetable seeds, watering, and land preparing materials and organized the training on vegetables growing methods to the teachers and students. Mostly this intervention is focusing on primary school students.
- Health and sanitation campaign: The project team and district health officers meet and discuss with target groups topics such as reproductive age of women and their children. The messages and tasks of this team include: 1) personal health care instruction, 2) community sanitation awareness, 3) child health measuring



regarding on malnutrition status, 4) women and children vaccination campaign, practices, provide micro-nutrients (Vitamin A, Iron), and 5) nutrition awareness for women by using nutritional groups poster. This method, is called "*mobile clinic*".

- Food preparing promotion: Some projects focus more specifically on food preparing methods to mothers and child caregivers. This method focuses on appropriate food preparing to keep nutritious food for families as well as for children.
- Home gardening promotion: The project supporting the necessary materials such as watering, seeds, and train to the target families, in addition, poultry rearing and fish culture are also promoted in community who are interested in.
- School meal programme: This programme target the rural schools particularly for ethnic groups. The World Food Programme (WFP) has implemented this with the Ministry of Education. Mostly provision of maize powder and fish cans to the students during school days, their parents are going to cook for their children for every day at the school.

## 6. Looking at practices and results in the areas of nutrition, agriculture and gender

### 6.1. Policy Implementation challenges

Capacity of government staff in the provincial and district is limited and have less number of staff to implement the policies. Low education and strong cultural belief of community people living in the remote rural areas is another obstacle for policy implementation especially the advancement of women and nutrition policies. Additionally, financial allocation to implement policies is not reasonable and limited. Gender equality issue is a concern that women stop their education or school enrolment as they are needed to assist in household works and then get married at young age that impact to the opportunity for studying at higher level.

### 6.2. Adequacy of policies

Existing policies on agriculture, health, and gender sectors is adequate at all levels from national to community. But the challenge is how to integrate between sector such as agriculture and health or agriculture and gender. Unclear implementation mechanism and coordination between ministries is another challenge for integration of policy.

The rationale to integrate the policies between and among ministries is to bring them on the workshop and discuss how to link agriculture policy to health and gender in practice and looking for gap within the specific existing policy.

### 6.3. Lessons learnt from practices

Many projects and programmes concerning food and nutrition in Laos are face with issues. One good practice towards effectively solving malnutrition in rural areas in Laos is through the use of a community person that plays the role of a nutrition knowledge speaker. The selected community person will be trained and provided knowledge on health care and nutrition content from health or nutrition expert then she or he can bring the messages to her or his community people. This approach or method address the communication gap between community and development workers.

According to study result of Katsushi S. Imai 2014, some recommendations are made for the relevant ministries involving the multi-sectoral food and nutrition security action plan for Laos PDR from 2014 to 2020 as well as other development partners those who are working on food and nutrition security sector. The recommendations are:

- There should be a campaign for the consumption of diversified foods rather than a single or couple of food items.
- To ensure consumption of diversified food items, rearing of livestock especially poultry has to be promoted
- The consumption of diversified foods and rearing of farm animals should be accompanied with adequate education on the nutritional contents of different food items and requisite cooking practices. Thus, education on appropriate care practices, especially knowledge on child feeding requirements, should be improved
- Malnutrition interventions should take into consideration differences across ethnic groups for specific nutrition outcomes. One such specific consideration should be a direct campaign against **unfriendly nutrition** cultural practices such as pregnancy and post-partum food taboos and early instruction of pre-lacteal foods.

Some lessons learnt from the MCC is that first, capacity building to government staffs working in the district, health service centres, village teachers, and village health workers is important to achieve the project goal. Second, for school garden should be focusing on the secondary school because in the primary school the young children are not able to work in the garden so that their parents have to responsible for land clearing and fencing works.

The lesson learnt from World Vision Laos is that many parents do not understand the impact of malnutrition. They are unable to identify it and do not know about importance of eating nutritious food. Additionally, many families do not have enough food at home and do not know best way to cook it for optimal nutritional value. The world vision has conducted behaviour change and empower caregivers, and promote home garden. For serious malnutrition child, mother and her child should be attended course that taken 12 days as providing nutritious food and at the end of course the child should be increased at least 200 g of weight as target indicator.

The opportunity for new project or programme on food and nutrition security and gender awareness is the integrated agriculture, health and gender sector together by focusing on community behaviours change approach especially eating and caring combined with supporting piloting on promotion of nutritious vegetables production and poultry rearing at household level. However, existing rice cultivated area and newly opened areas should be improved to maximize yield increase of rice and combined with supporting small irrigation improvement as well. Empowerment of women to play role as household income controller and decision maker. The target people should be the reproductive age women, pregnant women, post-partum women and children under 2 years. But selected person from community to be the nutrition worker need to be considered because in different ethnic groups use the unique language for communication in particular women who are mostly unable to speak and listen Lao language. Given women's centre role in household food security as well as impact of their individual nutrition status on overall family wellbeing, women should be the target for these efforts. This should include taking steps in health extension services to counter pregnancy-related food taboos and improve women's overall nutrition knowledge and practices, and to work closely with women in the rural communities to provide them with the tools and practice good nutrition.

## 7. Concluding remark

The information search online is still limited for Laos due to the limited websites created for the different ministries. The existing websites do not have all the information and documents needed for this mapping exercise. Mostly, the development projects are focus on the single sector and very few projects work on the integration with the relevant stakeholders.

The process for requesting with meeting with the ministries involve with agriculture, nutrition and gender has taken enormous time as government rules and protocols (of course bureaucratic processes involve) have to be followed and observed. The number of tools and methodologies for agriculture, nutrition and gender interventions gathered and searched

online was very limited. The interview with the key informants from INGOs such as MCC, Plan Laos, and HPA has provided concrete more results. The existing ministry websites do not have wide range of documents concerning the subject and most updated information are not available.

## Annexes

### Annex 01. List of key informants

Rathiphone Oula, manager secretariat of the National Nutrition Committee, Ministry of Health.

Boualaphanh Inthaxay, Health Officer, Plan International Laos.

Bounchan Khammoungkhoun, MCC Laos.

Karen Thompson, Country programme coordinator, PHA Laos.

### Annex 02. List of INGOs working on nutrition in Lao PDR

1. Adventist Development and Relief Agency;
2. Burnet Institute;
3. CARE International;
4. Center for Human Ecology Studies of Highlands (CHESH);
5. Christian Reformed World Relief Committee Laos;
6. Catholic Relief Services;
7. Gape;
8. Health Frontier;
9. Health Poverty Action (formerly Health Unlimited);
10. Medecins du Monde;
11. Norwegian Church Aid (NCA);
12. Plan International;
13. Population Service International (PSI);
14. Save the Children;

15. Village Focus International; and
16. World Vision International.

### Annex 03. List of UN agencies working on nutrition in Laos

1. UNICEF;
2. World Health Organization (WHO);
3. World Food Programme (WFP);
4. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); and
5. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

### Annex 04. List of Donors with respective projects relevant to nutrition in Laos

1. Agence Française de Développement (AFD): Ongoing health program, including Mother and Child Health;
2. The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAid): Programming in process;
3. European Union (EU): Food Security projects with NGOs supporting the Linking Agriculture, Nutrition and Natural Resources (LANN) Program and Northern Uplands Development Program aimed at improving livelihoods;
4. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD): Working with the World Food Program to support the Livelihood Initiative for Nutrition under the 'Soum Son Seun Jai' Project;
5. German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ): Implements nutrition activities with the European Union Food Facility and German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development funds in the Northern Lao;
6. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC): Northern Uplands Development Programme (NUDP) with EU, AFD and GIZ, aiming at improving livelihoods in remote areas; and
7. World Bank: Community Nutrition Program with Ministry of Health.