



## REALIZING THE MDGS IN LAO PDR:

### Component 4: Support to Advancing Human Development through Policy-Informing Applied Research on Human Development Issues especially relevant for achieving the 7<sup>th</sup> NSEDP/MDGs

#### Background

Economic growth is necessary for development, but does not automatically lead to poverty reduction and increased equality. The National Human Development Reports (NHDRs) seek to widen the intellectual frontiers of Human Development from both global and local perspectives. The NHDRs share the common goal of placing people back at the centre of the development process in terms of economic debate, policy and advocacy and in order to shape a clearer path towards achieving the MDGs.

The overall development goal of the NHDRs is to create a national dialogue that widens the development choices for sustainable and equitable growth. With the support of the Government of Lao PDR, the NHDR was introduced in the 1990s and integrated into the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) process of the country aiming to ensure quality growth of the country toward its 2020 vision.

With support of UNDP, the first NHDR in Lao PDR was published in 1998, entitled the National Human Development Report (1998). UNDP continued to support the development of the second NHDR on Advancing Rural Development (2002) as well as the third on International Trade and Human Development (2006). In 2010, the fourth and most recent NHDR on

Employment and Livelihoods in Lao PDR was released, providing important material to support the implementation of the 7<sup>th</sup> NSEDP (2011-2015) as well as achievement towards the MDGs.

The Project, "Strengthening Capacity for National Human Development Reporting" (the NHDR Project), has been supported by UNDP since 1996, through a number of phases. The Project has made a significant contribution to the national planning process. This is especially the case with the fourth NHDR on Employment and Livelihoods which provided important inputs into the drafting of the 7<sup>th</sup> NSEDP, and additionally the third NHDR on International Trade and Human Development which helped bring about an unprecedented policy discussion on natural resource based development.

While the current project has come to an end, the Government has requested UNDP to continue supporting the NHDR as the next five years are very critical for Lao PDR as it strives to meet the MDGs by 2015 which will require significant amount of resources and efforts. In line with the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, UNDP is consolidating its projects with MPI under one umbrella programme: "Realizing the MDGs in Lao PDR - Consolidated Programme of Support to MPI for the Achievement of the Valuable Goals of the 7th NSEDP 2011-15". The Programme duration will be for five years, from 2011 until 2015, in line with the NSEDP 2011-15 cycle.

#### Key achievements

Through the implementation of the NHDR project, funded by UNDP, the capacity of the Government to produce high quality analysis through a process of dialogue and consensus has been strengthened.

Four NHDRs have been produced during the course of the project.

The first NHDR of Lao PDR entitled the *National Human Development Report* (1998), explains the concept and importance of Human Development. Significantly, for the first time it presents a picture of the state of Human Development in the country as of 1996, thus providing a baseline for future developmental measurements. The Report also explains some of the initiatives undertaken by the Government to improve the state of Human Development and makes references to key national plans. It also compares the development situation with that of other ASEAN countries, placing Lao PDR in a regional context.

The second NHDR, *Advancing Rural Development* (2002), takes an in-depth look at different aspects of rural society in Lao PDR. In a country where 80% of the population lives in rural areas, the report provides an important analysis of agricultural systems from wet rice paddies to uplands forestry and looks at the impact of opium growing and unexploded ordnance development. It also assesses the strengths and weaknesses of current government policies regarding rural development and concludes that decentralization is crucial in order to ensure their success. The report also includes informative chapters on ecology and the ethnic diversity of Lao PDR.

*International Trade and Human Development* (2006) is the third NHDR of Lao PDR and recommends the best path to take in order to simultaneously boost trade and Human Development. The report demonstrates that under the right conditions, increasing international integration and trade in Lao PDR could play a vital role in the realization of the MDGs and in the country's graduation from LDC status by 2020. However, increased trade does not automatically guarantee meaningful and sustainable improvements in people's lives. Greater openness to trade offers significant opportunities for Human Development, but also has the potential to widen existing inequalities. Concerted efforts on the part of the Government are required to ensure that the benefits from international trade accrue to all and are equitably distributed.

The fourth NHDR on *Employment and Livelihoods in Lao PDR* was released in mid-2010 and provides a set of recommendations on how to improve Human Development in Lao PDR through employment. It

suggests improving people's livelihoods through more and better jobs in the non-farm sector, raising employability through initiatives targeting vocational training centres and non-formal education, improving rural incomes by addressing issues such as agricultural land availability and agricultural productivity, promoting decent work and ensuring that social safety nets are available to migrant workers, and investing in people from the very beginning through an improved formal education system and the promotion of good health.

The strategic selection of Human Development topics for future NHDRs and the production of Provincial Human Development Reports (PHDRs) is important to ensure that the Human Development approach will be integrated into planning processes, from the national to provincial level. Participation at the local level is vital to ensure quality planning, and selecting appropriate topics for future NHDRs in support of NDESP implementation and producing PHDRs will help to ensure quality growth from the community level up.

## Objective

The main objective of this fourth component is to help further develop government capacity to undertake applied policy research on strategically-selected Human Development issues especially relevant to achieving the goals outlined in the NSEDP, particularly the MDGs and advancing progress towards the country's graduation from LDC status. Such policy-informing research will also help inform the formulation of annual NSEDP implementation plans, and eventually contribute to the formulation of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2016-2020.

**Support to Advancing Human Development through Policy-Informing Applied Research on Human Development Issues especially relevant for achieving NSEDP/MDGs**

	<b>Expected Results</b>	<b>Key Activities</b>	<b>UNDP Funds (USD)</b>	<b>Total Budget (USD)</b>	<b>Unfunded Budget (USD)</b>
1	<b>Further enhanced awareness of the concept of Human Development (HD), and capacity for MDG and Human Development reporting at National and sub-national levels</b>	<p>a. Develop the HD/HDI modules for national university of Laos and training modules for government officials.</p> <p>b. Translate the HD advocacy and training material into Lao and ethnic languages</p> <p>c. Conduct training on the HD concept, and HD Reporting (TOT) at the central and provincial level</p> <p>d. Create a network of partners/stakeholders to ensure sustainability and set up a regular communication plan at the central and provincial level.</p> <p>e. Disseminate the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> NHDR and regional and global HDRs through various forms e.g. policy seminars, public debates, etc.</p> <p>f. Develop a method to gather feedback from target audience to monitor the reports' influence on policies, plans, legislation, educational curricula, etc.</p> <p>g. Design a coordination plan to use HD concept and HDI training workshops, topic selection consultations, background report presentations and chapter draft discussions to raise awareness; and expand use of non-print, non-mainstream media such as community radio.</p> <p>h. Produce advocacy tools (e.g. advocacy video) and a CD Rom with NHDR/PHDR materials and coordinate use on public media.</p>	80,000	355,500	275,500
2	<b>One high quality National Human Development Report, and/or Provincial Human Development Reports produced</b>	<p>a. Through consultative process, select strategic human development themes in selected provinces for applied policy research in order to further advance the achievement of the valuable goals within NSEDP including MDGs and graduation from LDC status</p> <p>b. Create a Provincial and/or National Advisory Board and actively engage members in discussions and presentations</p> <p>c. Organise consultations with stakeholders to adapt focus topics to local priorities and coordinate background research with other ongoing or planned future initiatives.</p> <p>e. Identify writers/authors and coordinate with them for the drafting of the technical background paper</p> <p>f. Coordinate PHDR/NHDR process and presentation of drafts to different stakeholders (for NHDR, liaise with UNDP HDR Team in Lao PDR and with HDRO in NY)</p> <p>g. Produce PHDR/NHDR (design, translation, editing, printing, etc)</p>	267,000	1,208,000	941,000

