

Lao PDR Nutrition Country Fiche

Despite impressive rates of economic growth, the high prevalence of stunting in Lao PDR is falling slowly (48% in 2006 to 44% in 2011). Furthermore, stunting rates among the lowest quintile are three times higher than the better off, and appear to have actually worsened by 7% over the same period. Vulnerability to wasting is evident and micronutrient deficiencies widespread with the country losing nearly US\$200 million annually to undernutrition. However, with strong and sustained support from the EU and others, nutrition governance is rapidly evolving.

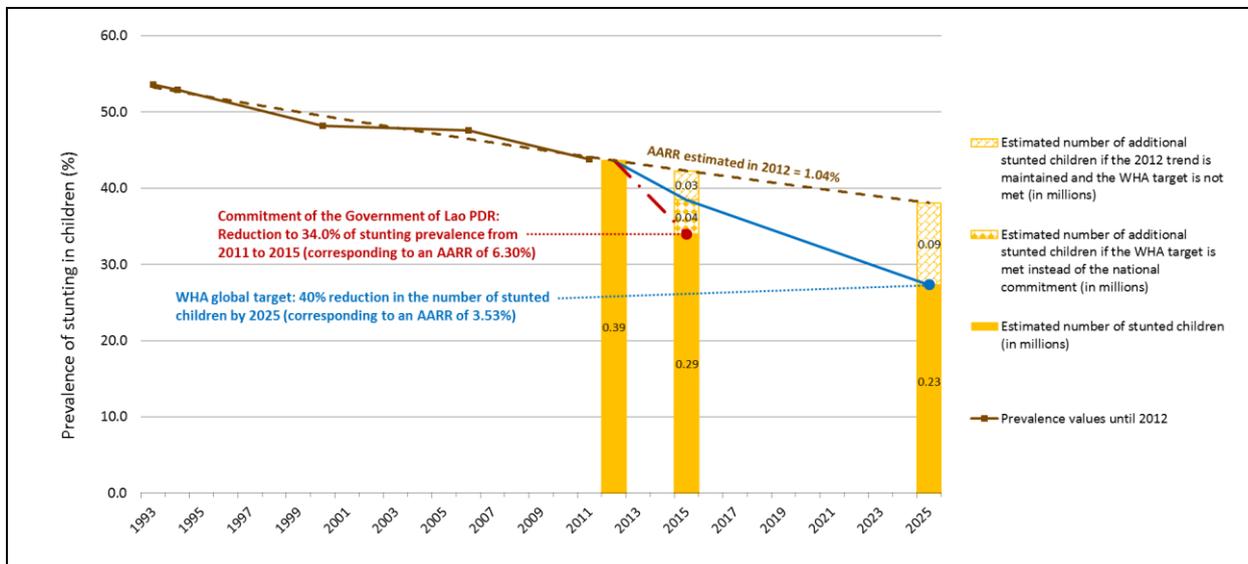
Progress against the World Health Assembly targets¹

WHA Nutrition Indicators	GNR 2015 analysis of progress ²
Stunting of children under-five years of age	Yellow
Wasting of children under-five years of age	Red
Overweight of children under-five years of age	Green
Anaemia of women of reproductive age	Red
Low birth weight	NA
Exclusive breastfeeding of infants under six months	Green

Data last referenced by EU

Prevalence	Year
43.8%	2011 ³
6.4%	2011 ³
2.0%	2011 ³
31%	2011 ⁴
14.8%	2011 ⁵
40.4%	2011 ⁵

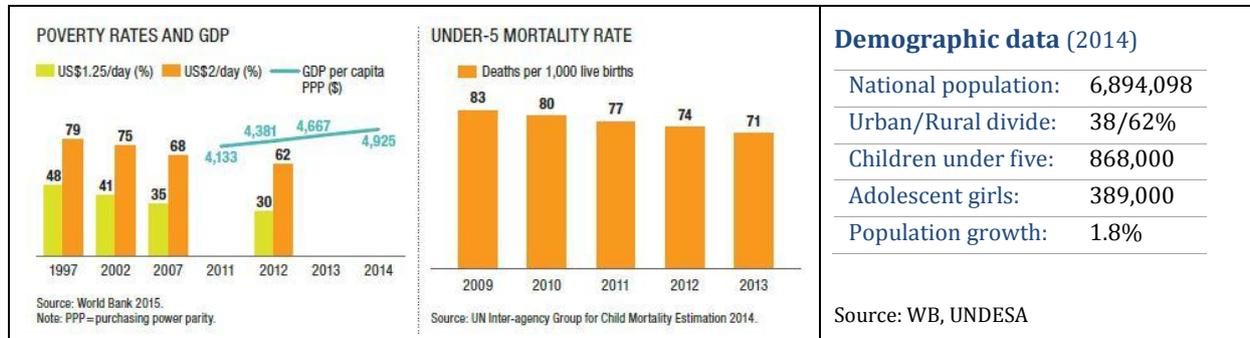
EU Analysis of Stunting Trends and Projections



Implications for Development Planners⁶

The line graph shows the historic trend in prevalence of stunting and the forward projection (based upon data until 2012) with the current average annual rate of reduction (AARR) of 1.04% (brown dotted line) as well as the projected AARRs of 6.30% (red broken line) and 3.53% (blue line) to meet the government's own commitment and the WHA target (respectively). In 2012, **390,000 children under-five were stunted**. Given the current trend and considering the population growth, 320,000 children will be stunted in 2025. However, the WHA target calls for additional efforts of government and development partners to reach an extra 90,000 children and avert them from stunting.

Economics and Demography



Key Dimensions of Nutrition

Key dimensions of nutrition in Lao PDR are threefold: First, up to 80% of the population relies on subsistence agriculture, which is increasingly at risk from commercial logging, rubber plantations and mining. Commercial activities can also contribute to unhealthy household environments. Second, breastfeeding and complementary feeding practices are inappropriate. Moreover, the prevalence of child marriage and teen pregnancies is very high and women are often illiterate, in particular in the more remote areas. Third, 28% of the population has no access to safe drinking water and 37% no access to improved sanitation.

Nutrition Governance

Member of SUN Movement: Yes since 2011	HANCI ranking (out of 45): Not ranked
<p>Government's commitment to nutrition (including N4G event):</p> <p>The Government of Lao PDR's goal in the seventh National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) 2011-2015 is to reduce the prevalence of stunting to 34% by 2015. For the first time nutrition (and stunting) have been included as a key performance indicator in the draft eighth NSED.</p>	
<p>Multi-sectoral policy framework for nutrition:</p> <p>A "Multisector Food and Nutrition Security Master Plan", adopting a 'convergence' approach, has been piloted in three provinces (Oudomxay, Luang Namtha and Saravane) and is being scaled-up as from 2016.</p>	
<p>Multi-sectoral platform for nutrition coordination:</p> <p>Under the Prime Minister's Office, the National Nutrition Committee was established in July 2013.</p>	



Support of the EU

MIP Focal Sector(s) for nutrition 2014-2015 1) Sustainable Agriculture and Food and Nutrition Security.

As a SUN donor convenor, the EU Delegation in Lao PDR has committed to the long term strengthening of nutrition governance through capacity development and a planned increase in levels of finance.

Enhance mobilisation and political commitment for nutrition:

- Quarterly meetings of development partners on food and nutrition security are convened with UNICEF and an EU co-funded assessment of the economic impact of undernutrition undertaken in 2013, led many donors to consider increasing their level of investment in nutrition.
- The EU funded regional project MYCNSIA⁷, (€3.1 million in Lao PDR) reinforced Government recognition of nutrition as a political priority and supported the translation of the convergence approach into a National Nutrition Policy (2016-2025) and Plan of Action (2016-2020), as well as strengthening the capacities of ASEAN at regional level.
- The EUD, with UNICEF, facilitated the creation of high-level political space for support to nutrition through its bi-annual policy dialogue with the Government. This led to the first High Level Nutrition Forum in 2015 – with the 2016 Nutrition Forum expected to take place at the sub-national level.

Scaling-up actions:

- The EUD is working with UNICEF and World Bank to support the Government in scaling-up a nationwide and coordinated multi-sectoral Social and Behaviour Change Communication Campaign.
- The EU is investing in a number of sectors (including water and sanitation, agriculture and women's empowerment) to enhance nutrition sensitivity.
- A forthcoming EU funded initiative on food fortification will support the Government to better prioritise policies and programmes addressing micro-nutrient deficiencies.

Strengthen expertise and knowledge-base:

- The MYCNSIA project has facilitated a strategically important national exercise to collect baseline data.
- A core EU priority is to support efforts towards a national framework for measuring progress as a result of the convergence of nutrition investments.
- From 2016, the Government will be able to receive EU support via the National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN) initiative, to link data on investments, implementation and impact, while building capacities to use this information for policy development.

¹ http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/nutrition_globaltargets2025/en/

² Global Nutrition Report 2015. For stunting and overweight: red = "Off course: No progress", orange = "Off course: Some progress" or "On course: At risk", green = "On course: Good progress"; For exclusive breastfeeding: red = "Off course: Reversal" or "Off course: No progress", orange = "Off course: Some progress", green = "On course"; For wasting and anaemia: red = "Off course", green = "On course". In some cases the GNR analysis will differ from the EU analysis on stunting because the EU database precedes 2000 and projects trends from a longer historic perspective.

³ Lao social indicator survey LSIS (MICS/DHS) and additional analysis from UNICEF/WHO/WB 2014.

⁴ Global Nutrition Report – 2015 Nutrition Country Profile Lao PDR.

⁵ Lao social indicator survey LSIS (MICS/DHS).

⁶ The figures presented here using the EC-DEVCO stunting tracking tool might differ from those generated by the WHO tracking tool (<http://www.who.int/nutrition/trackingtool/en/>) because there are differences in the methods used regarding: i. the calculation of the estimated numbers of stunted children in 2012; ii. the calculation of the target number of stunted children in 2025; iii. the demographic assumptions made; and iv. the historical stunting prevalence considered.

⁷ Mother and Young Child Nutrition Security Initiative in Asia (MYCNSIA) 2011-2015.