

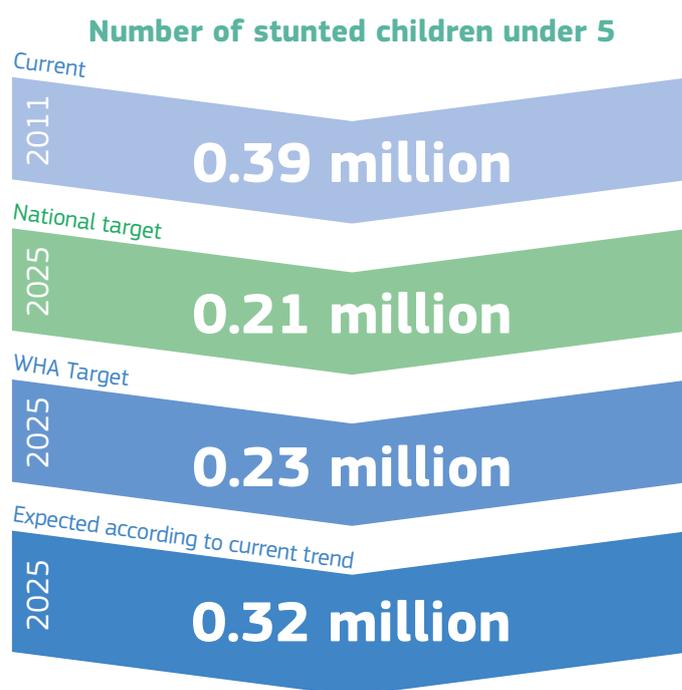
Country Profile on Nutrition

Lao PDR

The European Commission (EC) is continuing to work strategically to secure traction on its commitments to reduce stunting and to allocate EUR 3.5 billion (2014-20) for this purpose¹. Preliminary results for 2016 indicate a three-fold increase in the EC's commitments to nutrition since 2014. This is a significant development, but this pace of investment needs to be maintained in order to reach the pledge by 2020. The scope to achieve this lies in the strategic design of programmes that are still to be funded – especially in the focal sectors of Food & Nutrition Security, Sustainable Agriculture, Health and Education – so that nutrition is integrated alongside other objectives. This approach is particularly relevant to the new EU Consensus on Development which places emphasis on human development and dignity as well as partnership, prosperity, peace and the planet itself.

At 44% (LSIS 2011-12), the high prevalence of stunting in Lao PDR is falling much more slowly than might be expected from the high rate of economic growth. Furthermore, stunting rates among the poorest half of the population (predominantly rural) are three times higher than those amongst the better off while this inequality gap is continuing to widen. Around 80% of the population rely on subsistence agriculture and, in the past, too much focus on commercial agriculture has presented a challenge to rural livelihoods. Many people are without access to safe drinking water and / or improved sanitation facilities. High levels of adolescent pregnancies and maternal undernutrition, as well as suboptimal breastfeeding practices and extremely poor dietary diversity (only 13% of young children in rural areas receive a minimally adequate diet) are also important drivers of undernutrition. Through backing an innovative regional nutrition initiative, the EU, in partnership

with other Member States, has played a key role in supporting the Government's increasing acknowledgment of nutrition as a central development challenge. This has been achieved by effective advocacy for a 'convergence approach', necessitating the co-location of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions and the commitment to plan multi-sectorally (while implementing sectorally) through empowering local authorities and the establishment of Nutrition Coordination Committees at Provincial and District level.



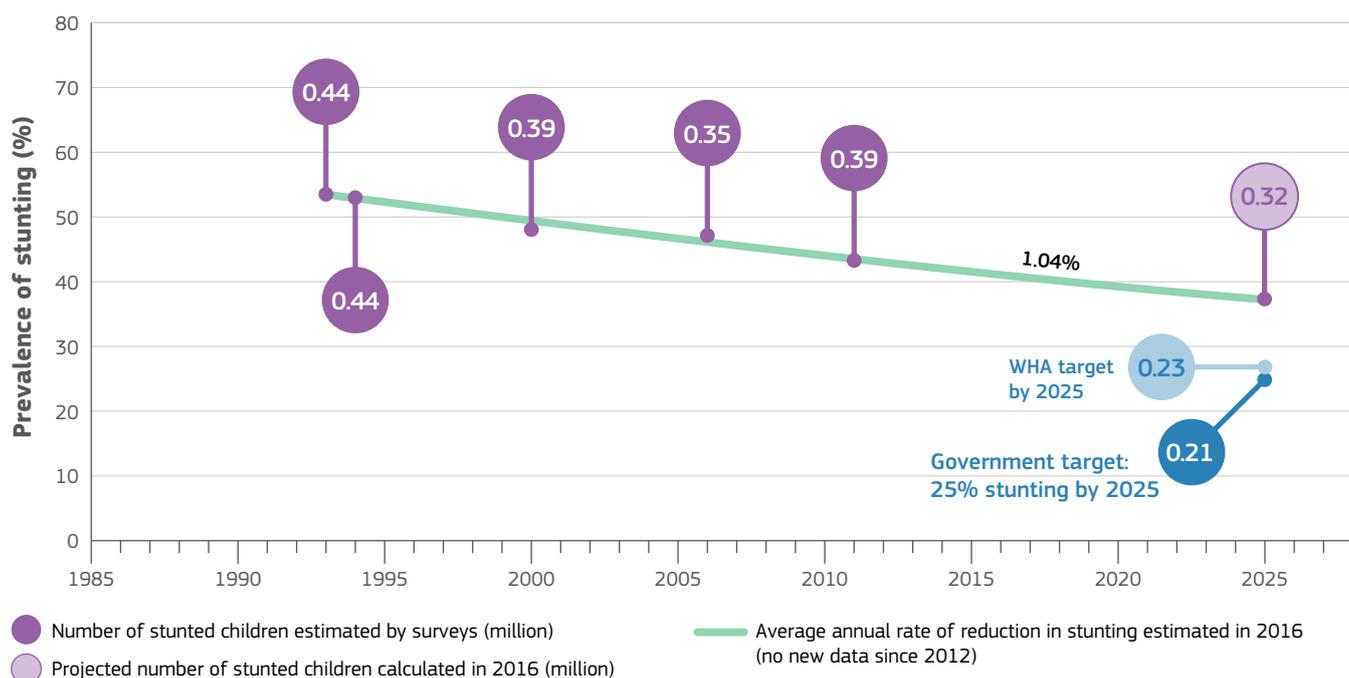
Progress against the World Health Assembly targets²

GNR 2016 analysis of progress	WHA (and SDG) nutrition indicators
Off course - Some progress	Stunting of children U5 years of age (SDG2)
Off course	Wasting of children U5 years of age (SDG2)
On course - Good progress	Overweight of children U5 years of age
Currently off course	Anaemia of women of reproductive age
NA	Low birth weight
On course	Exclusive breastfeeding of infants U6 months

Data last referenced by EU

Prevalence	Number	Year
43.8%	385 042	2011 ³
6.4%	56 262	2011 ³
2.0%	17 582	2011 ³
31.0%	1 053 461	2011 ⁴
14.8%	–	2011 ⁴
40.4%	–	2011 ⁴

Trend, projection and targets in the prevalence and number of children (under-five) stunted



Implications for development planners

Lao PDR has experienced a gradual decline both in the prevalence of stunting and the number of children stunted since 1990. However, recent projections anticipate that Lao PDR will meet neither the government’s own target nor the World Health Assembly (WHA) target by 2025. As LSIS 2016-17 data is not yet available, it is not possible to conclude whether the rate of decline in the number of children stunted is accelerating from the 1.04% estimate. If the existing rate of decline is maintained, then 320,000 children are expected to be stunted in 2025. This is over the WHA target and, by extension, that of the principal indicator for Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2). Consequently, additional efforts are required by the government and development partners to change Lao PDR’s course, and secure the level of stunting reduction needed.

Nutrition governance

	Yes/No	Comment
Member of SUN Movement	Yes	Since 2011
Government’s commitment to nutrition (including N4G event)	Yes	The Second National Nutrition Forum (2016) testifies to the high level of commitment (chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister) and stakeholder collaboration. Nutrition coordination structures at national level are now being replicated as sub-national level and the convergent, multi-sectoral approach to nutrition is being scaled up in ten target provinces.
Multi-sectoral policy framework nutrition	Yes	The National Nutrition Strategy for 2025 and the National Plan of Action on Nutrition 2016 - 2020 (identifying 22 costed priority interventions) includes robust nutrition indicators in line with WHA and SDG targets.
Multi-sectoral platform for nutrition coordination	Yes	Established under the Prime Minister’s Office in 2013, the National Nutrition Committee plays a key role in the development of multi-sectoral nutrition policy as well as oversight of implementation. While at the sub-national level, Provincial and District Nutrition Coordination meetings are being rolled out.

EU financial commitments to nutrition 2008–2016

Data collected March 2017

The EU commitments to nutrition in Lao PDR through DEVCO from 2008 to 2016 are illustrated below in Figure 1. The EU is operating in Lao PDR under the framework of a European Joint Programming for 2016–2020 which identifies nutrition as a key priority area of intervention and is one of the EU’s 3 focal sectors. The total planned allocation to the sector over the multi-annual indicative programme of 2014–2020⁵ is EUR 97 million. By the end of 2016, a total of EUR 50 million is committed under the nutrition focal sector⁶ plus EUR 3 million⁷ from the National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN) (as per the SUN methodology).

Preliminary results for 2016 indicate a 3-fold increase in the EU’s global funding commitments to nutrition since 2014 as illustrated in Figure 2. The total amount of funding commitments for nutrition globally in the last three years is EUR 1.8 billion, which represents 51 % of the EU overall financial commitment for the period 2014–2020. In 2016 alone, the EU’s financial commitments to nutrition have reached EUR 790 million. This is a significant development, but this pace of investment needs to be maintained in order to reach the EUR 3.5 billion target by 2020.

Progress against the EU’s financial pledge to reduce stunting 2014–2020:

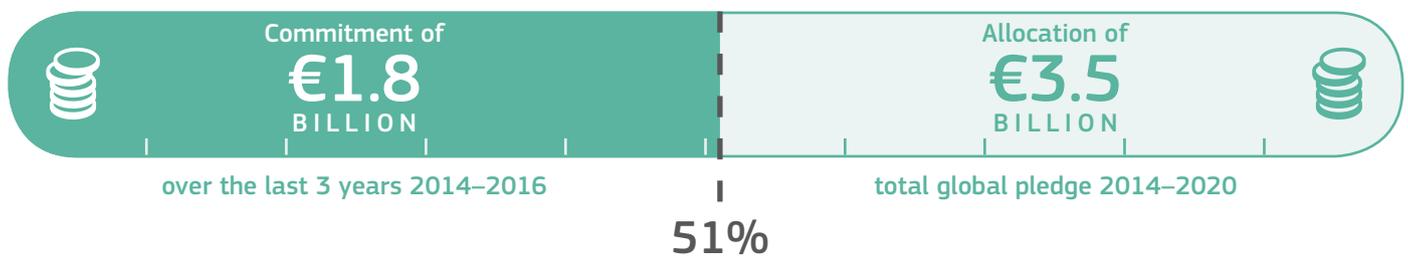


Figure 1

DEVCO Nutrition commitments in Lao PDR (In EUR million) 2008–2016

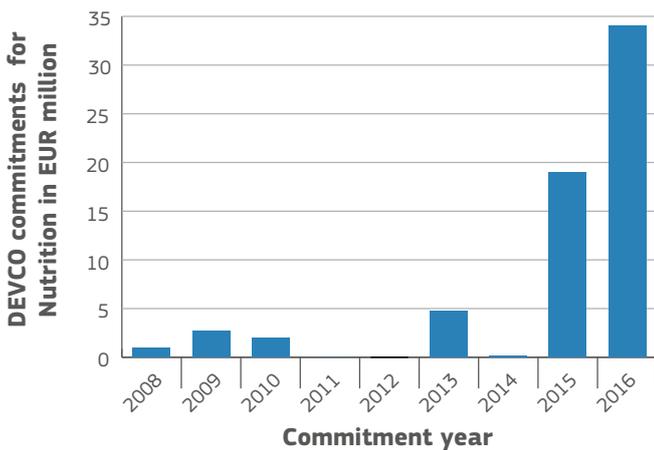
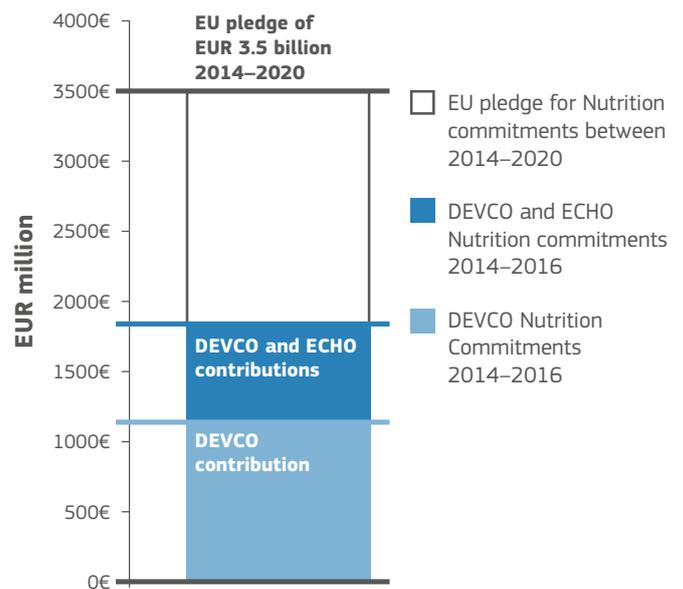


Figure 2

DEVCO and ECHO global commitments 2014–2016 to the EU pledge of EUR 3.5 billion to nutrition 2014–2020



Support of the EU and Member States

MIP Focal sector(s) for nutrition 2014–2020

The European Union along with its Joint Programming partners in Lao PDR⁸ have aligned to provide significant support toward SDG 2 and the vision statement of the Lao PDR National Nutrition Policy to 2025 “to improve the nutritional status of children and women especially the most vulnerable and hard to reach”. Building on the Action Plan on Nutrition, the EU support seeks to strengthen nutrition governance (specific objective 1); contribute to scaled-up nutrition specific support (specific objective 2); and contribute to scaled-up nutrition sensitive support (specific objective 3).

Enhance mobilisation and political commitment for nutrition

- ✓ As SUN donor convenor, the EU Delegation (EUD) in Lao PDR is playing a key role in supporting the ongoing commitment of the Government as expressed through a planned increase in levels of financing.
- ✓ The annual nutrition finance mapping exercise facilitates a better understanding of resource allocation with regards to priority nutrition interventions along with estimates of potential funding gaps. Budget analysis also suggests increased allocations for some of the key priority nutrition actions.
- ✓ As publically recognised by the European Development Partners, the Second Lao PDR Nutrition Forum in November 2016 further confirms the high level of Government commitment to address this challenge. The Forum (chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister) is a result of strategic EU engagement to support the Government in creating a high level political space for addressing the nutrition challenge.

Scaling-up actions

- ✓ The EU has worked closely in partnership with UNICEF and other Development Partners, to support the Government in scaling up a nationwide and coordinated initiative.
- ✓ The resulting National Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) Strategic Action Plan for improved health and nutrition in Lao PDR demonstrates the translation of commitment into action. Nevertheless, generally low levels of knowledge about nutrition, language and other cultural barriers, and lack of health workers counselling skills to promote behaviour change among the most vulnerable people remains a major obstacle.
- ✓ At the same time, the EU is investing in a number of sectors including water and sanitation, agriculture and women’s empowerment, to enhance nutrition outcomes.

Strengthen expertise and knowledge-base

- ✓ Bringing together existing data from all sectors impacting on nutrition in Lao PDR, both nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive, in order to generate analysis to better understand the factors underlying undernutrition through the ongoing establishment of the National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN).
- ✓ The ultimate objective of NIPN (a global initiative), is to link data on investments, surveillance, implementation and impact while building capacities to harness this information for policy prioritization, resource allocation and implementation. This will be achieved through the generation of policy briefs, analytical reports, and mapping exercises. A priority focus of EU support is to assist Government efforts towards a national framework for measuring progress as a result of the convergence of nutrition investments.
- ✓ The Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation initiative (FIRST) is a global FAO and EU partnership to provide a policy assistance mechanism for technical advice in the development and implementation of national policies and programmes, as well as supporting capacity development and stakeholder coordination. In Lao PDR, it has a special focus on the sub-national level.
- ✓ FIRST will also develop and share good practices in order to strengthen the technical and human resource capacity of District Agricultural Officers for improved nutrition-sensitive agricultural service delivery in the remote areas of Lao PDR and scaling up nutrition-sensitive agricultural value chains at the local level.

1 The EU stunting reduction target is embodied in the EU’s Communication on Enhancing Maternal and Child Nutrition and the Action Plan on Nutrition to operationalise that policy

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

3 Lao Social Indicator Survey LSIS 2011-2012 (MICS/DHS)

4 Global Nutrition Report (GNR)

5 The EU operated in Lao PDR under the Multi-annual Indicative programme from 2014 to 2015 and is currently operating in the country under the European Joint Programming for Lao PDR 2016–2020.

6 CRIS number: 37-801 – EU contribution amount: EUR 50 million – nutrition score: specific – nutrition amount: EUR 50 million. (EUR 19 million initially committed and EUR 31 million as a top up in 2016. 2016 figures are preliminary and extracted internally. Top ups made in 2016 often don’t appear during the internal extraction therefore the EUR 31 million top up wasn’t included in the global EUR 1.8 billion)

7 CRIS number: 38-332 – EU contribution amount: EUR 3 million – nutrition score: specific – nutrition amount: EUR 3 million

8 https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/laos_jp_report_web_31.03_017_0.pdf Joint Programming for Lao PDR 2016–2020.