

**Management Response to Evaluation of Lao PDR and United Nations Partnership Framework (2017-2021)
endorsed by Lao PDR - UN Joint Steering Committee, 30 June 2021**

Recommendation No.	Accepted/ Partially accepted/ Rejected		
<p>Recommendation 1 - To further integrate the UNSDCF within the Lao PDR context, the UNCT needs to build on positive movement towards overcoming challenges linked to differing administrative modalities among UN agencies, development partners and the Lao PDR Govt. It also needs to identify ways to widen the partnership to include INGOs/NPAs, the private sector and new development partners. At the strategic level, the Joint Steering Committee should agree on directional issues while at the operational level a joint Theory of Change, monitoring framework and indicators should be developed together.</p>	Accepted		
<p>Explanation 1 - The UNCT acknowledges the differences in administrative modalities among UN agencies, funds and programs (AFPs) and development partners thus, greater emphasis will be put on strengthening collaboration and ensuring a more coordinated development support. The new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022-2026 (UNSDCF) will increase the engagement through the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) and advance key partnerships in support of the 2030 Agenda with the Govt of Lao PDR (GoL) and other stakeholders, including development partners, civil society, academia, parliaments and the private sector to leverage their respective strengths and drive transformative change. Further harmonisation of AFP's administrative modalities is contingent on action taken at corporate HQ level.</p>			
Actions to be taken:	Responsible entities	Timeframe	Resource implication
1.1 - Revise the ToRs for the JSC and UNCT for better coordination and engagement in the new CF cycle.	UNCT and JSC	Development and implementation of the 2022-2026 UNSDCF	time
1.2 - Increase frequency of engagement and consultation with the JSC to ensure its strategic guidance during the development stages of the new CF cycle.	JSC		time and coordination
1.3 - Explore ways to strengthen the partnerships with INGOs/NPAs, private sectors and new development partners incl. by mapping the landscape in advance of consultation processes throughout the UNSDCF process whilst emphasising that all partnerships would be governed by and in compliance with relevant laws and regulations, and carry forward the commitments made in the Vientiane Declaration.			time and Ops \$
1.4 - Communicate challenges of differing AFP administrative modalities through DCO for consideration and appropriate action.	UNCT & HQ of UN AFPs		
<p>Recommendation 2 - To ensure more effective implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF, the Lao PDR Govt needs to more actively participate in programmes designed and implemented by and with UN Agencies. The UNCT also needs to continue to fully consult the Govt throughout development of the UNSDCF and in development of major coordinated programmes to ensure full commitment and ownership.</p>			
<p>Explanation 2 - The UNCT is committed to strengthening the engagement and ownership of the Govt throughout the development and implementation of the new UNSDCF to ensure a coherent UN system-wide and whole of Govt approach at all levels, parties, and stages, thus increasing the effectiveness of the Govt- UN strategic cooperation.</p>			
Actions to be taken:	Responsible entities	Timeframe	Resource implication
2.1 - Revise the ToRs of the Result Groups (RG) to consolidate the formal basis for the co-chairmanship and participation of the Govt representatives in each outcome area.	UNCT and JSC	Development and implementation of the 2022-2026 UNSDCF	time and coordination
2.2 - Ensure active Govt participation and substantive contribution throughout the process towards the successful development and implementation of the new UNSDCF, incl. during the different phases of joint programme cycle (including identification/design phase, MTR).	UNCT, JSC and line ministries		
2.3 - Strengthen the participation of Govt during the different phases of joint programme cycle (including identification/design phase, MTR), and by promoting (high-level) joint fora and platforms to consult, advocate and communicate flagship results/frameworks.	JSC, OPM, UNCT and line ministries	Implementation of the 2022-2026 UNSDCF	Time, coordination, \$ and capacity building programming
<p>Recommendation 3 - The Sector Working Groups (SWG) and Results Working Groups (RG) should be aligned at the outcome level to the 9th NSEDP and the UNSDCF to promote and track changes at the transformational outcome level.</p>			
<p>Explanation 3 - Whilst the SWG are the key coordination platforms for thematic areas under Lao PDR's Round Table Process, (which also is guided by the principles of the Vientiane declaration on effective development cooperation) the RGs are the coordination mechanisms for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the expected outcomes of the UNSDCF. The UNCT is committed to supporting the GoL to achieve national development priorities. With this strategic direction and in the spirit of the UN Reform, the UNSDCF will be developed with integrated, strategic programme areas that not only align with the outcomes of the 9th NSEDP, but also reflect the findings of the UN Common Country Analysis and the independent evaluation of the current UNSDCF, in accordance</p>			

with the UN AFP's mandates, guiding principles and comparative advantages while taking into consideration the roles of bilateral development partners, private sectors, INGOs/NPAs and others. The structure of the SWG is determined by the GoL.			
Actions to be taken:	Responsible entities	Timeframe	Resource implication
3.1 - Ensure clear alignment between the UNSDCF and the outcomes of the 9 th NSEDP and clearly identify how the UNSDCF supports and aligns with the 9 th NSEDP in its monitoring and reporting mechanism and as also linked to the national SDGi framework.	The UNCT and JSC and other development partners	Development and implementation of the 2022-2026 UNSDCF	time and coordination
3.2 - Revise the ToRs of the JSC, RGs and UNSDCF's M&E Framework to strengthen their linkages to support the 9 th NSEDP.			
3.3 – Strengthen the commitment of the Vientiane declaration for effective development cooperation highlighting the catalytic role of ODA,' and placing strong emphasis on boosting taxes and other domestic revenues, increasing cooperation with developing countries, increasing knowledge and technology transfer and closer work with business and civil society, amongst others by: - bolster the role of the national assembly and local administration in development planning; - increase the fight against corruption, tax evasion and other illicit flows, - increase engagement with other developing countries in the national Round Table Process; - develop an inclusive financial sector; - help private business align its actions with public aims to encourage more public and private partnerships for development; and, - create new networks for knowledge exchange and green technology transfer.			
Recommendation 4 - Clarification of AFPs and reporting have been valuable, but further improvements are needed to strengthen M&E and statistical management as well as overall joint reporting.			Accepted
Explanation 4 - More emphasis will be placed on strengthening the UNSDCF M&E framework and reporting mechanism with improved data management at the indicator level to ensure regular monitoring and reporting of indicators and ownership under the AFPs in the UNSDCF.			
Actions to be taken:	Responsible entities	Timeframe	Resource implication
4.1 - Revise UNSDCF's M&E ToRs with clear leads for each indicator to strengthen reporting processes.	The UNCT and JSC	Immediately	time and coordination
4.2 - Strengthen national capacities to produce, analyse and utilize data and statistics linking data producers and users within the efforts of public administrative reform and data-driven governance in support of evidence-based policy development.	UNCT	Implementation of the 2022-2026 UNSDCF starting immediately	Time, coordination, \$ and capacity building programming
Recommendation 5 - The UNRC, through the UNPF and the up coming UNSDCF, needs to continue to support the culture change that encourages more joint programme design and implementation which better reflects the "One UN". Individual and team leadership is the key to fostering this cultural change. Some UN agencies could benefit from financial incentives or support for coordination which would encourage them to take part in more joint initiatives.			Accepted
Explanation 5 - Stronger emphasis will be put on ensuring UN AFPs are coordinated in delivery and monitoring of the achievements. UNSDCF priorities are determined based first and foremost on the country's progress on the SDGs, as well as opportunities, gaps and challenges, all against the backdrop of national imperatives. Collective priorities shape outcome objectives that steer the country programmes of each UN development entity. In the short term, the successful achievement of outcomes will be measured by delivery of joint outputs attributable to UN work articulated in the UNSDCF. In the longer term, the success of the UNSDCF will be judged by its contribution to a smooth, successful, and sustainable graduation of Lao PDR from LDC status and its achievement of the SDGs. Where possible, the UNSDCF will encourage more joint programmes and joint initiatives.			
Actions to be taken:	Responsible entities	Timeframe	Resource implication
5.1 - Revise the ToR of RG to reflect its nature as a platform for increased, and more efficient joint work that pools the capacities of different agencies at both the outcome and joint output levels.	UNSDCF Task Team, UNCT	Development and implementation of the 2022-2026 UNSDCF and beyond	time and coordination
5.2 - At the design phase of the UNSDCF, the Task team members and UNCT to put stronger emphasis on joint outputs and avoid single agency outputs.			
Recommendation 6 - Ways need to be found to overcome the effects of differing administrative modalities used by: UN agencies in the field and at UN HQ which can be identified through discussions among the agencies.			Partially accepted
Explanation 6 - While reiterating the importance of harmonizing business practices of UN entities both at the HQ and country office level to achieve significant efficiency gains and cost reductions, the UNCT acknowledges the on-going challenges linked to differing administrative modalities, funding allocation and accountability mechanisms among UN AFPs in accordance to their respective rules and policy. The UNCT is committed to streamlining and harmonising the different operational modalities among the UN AFPs to the extent possible. Further action would be required by AFP's corporate HQs to harmonise business practices.			
Actions to be taken:	Responsible entities	Timeframe	Resource implication

6.1 - UN RCO will act as the main point of contact and coordination entity with the Govt regarding challenges caused by the different administrative modalities among UN AFPs.	UNCT and HQ of UN AFPs	Streamlined overtime starting immediately	Time, coordination & \$
6.2 - The UN AFPs will ensure active communication with their regional and global HQs to seek for guidance and good practices on harmonising business practices among UN entities.			Time and coordination
6.3 - Further strengthening the Business Operation Strategy under the new cycle of 2022-2026 to better focus on joint business operations among UN AFPs.	UN OMT		Time, coordination & \$
Recommendation 7 - The UNCT needs to bring the sustainability of initiatives, including for disasters of all types, to the center of the UNSDCF and guide coordinated efforts that can have longer lasting results. UN agencies should make every effort to support policy changes being implemented at all "levels" (i.e. national, regional, district and local).			Accepted
Explanation 7 - The UNCT is committed to making effort to support policy changes at all levels from national to subnational and village level in the UNSCDF, however, the sustainability of the project is also dependent on many other factors, for instance the stability and continuity of policies and activities by Govt partners, capacity of the implementing partners, and the turn-over of the Govt staff. More emphasis will be put into ensuring continuation and adaptation of projects and activity where appropriate and applicable. Where and when feasible with reference to resource availability, the UNSDCF will include specific consideration of measures to ensure sustainability for each outcome.			
Actions to be taken:	Responsible entities	Timeframe	Resource implication
7.1 - UNCT will continue to work to strengthen the capacity of the national and subnational institutions and communities, increase their ownership so that they are appropriately configured, capacitated and resourced to advance the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.	UNCT	Development and implementation of the 2022-2026 UNSDCF and beyond	time and capacity building programming
7.2 - The Govt will work to provide an enabling environment for project implementation with stable policy framework and managed rate of turnover in Govt staff engaging in the project.	JSC and line ministries		time and coordination
7.3 - UNCT to continue supporting the Govt on the development of implementation arrangements under the NSEDP incl a financing for development strategy and the M&E framework, etc. (that includes the generation of evidence related to essential services costing, return of investment analysis, investment cases, among others) as well as general resource mobilisation efforts in support of the Implementation of the NSEDP.	UNCT, JSC and line ministries		Time, coordination, and capacity building programming
Recommendation 8 - In engaging and supporting the Govt, the UN system's support at the national and local level should be balanced to help promote the Govt's Sam Sang decentralization policy which assigns broad roles to provinces as strategic units, districts as comprehensive planning units and villages as development units.			Accepted
Explanation 8 - The UNCT acknowledges the importance of supporting GoL at national and sub-national level. When designing new programs with GoL, the UNCT will place more emphasis on consideration of distribution of support amongst different levels of Govt. where and when feasible with reference to resource availability.			
Actions to be taken:	Responsible entities	Timeframe	Resource implication
8.1 - When designing new programs in consultation with GoL, UNCT will put more effort to ensure support to GoL is appropriately distributed among the national and sub-national levels.	UNCT and line ministries	Development and implementation of the 2022-2026 UNSDCF	time and programming \$
8.2 - Work to strengthen horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms among and within Govt entities, the UN AFPs and the national and subnational levels.	UN AFPs, RCO and MoFA together with line ministries		time and coordination
8.3 - When designing, programmes and activities should meet the development capacities, needs and priorities of the provincial, district, and village levels.	UN AFPs and line ministries		time and programming \$
Recommendation 9 - Gender Mainstreaming is well integrated in how UNCT operates in Lao PDR; however, UNCT can and should extend this mainstreaming effort to the so-called technical programmes to ensure that women and girls are also sharing equally in the fruits of development. UNCT should put particular emphasis on gender equality and making sure it is mainstreamed in everything it does, including the planning and implementation of the upcoming UNSDCF.			Accepted
Explanation 9 - Gender mainstreaming and gender equality are integral to realizing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and essential part of the UNCT's mandate and support. In the new UNSDCF, this is clearly articulated under the Guiding Principles. Women, children, adolescents, youth and other groups of people considered to be vulnerable and marginalized are identified under the LNOB chapter in the UNSDCF.			
Actions to be taken:	Responsible entities	Timeframe	Resource implication
9.1 - Gender mainstreaming and gender equity will be integrated and captured in the UNSDCF, and in all AFPs programs and activities, incl. the nomination of a focal point agency that guarantees the integration of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the UNSDCF and joint programming and coordinates the support to Govt in efforts to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.	UNCT and line ministries	Development and implementation of the 2022-2026 UNSDCF and beyond	Time and coordination

Recommendation 10 - Commencing with the solid platform of GE mainstreaming and good work done on GBV, the JSC, together should address more directly women's and girls' rights and women's empowerment bringing issues related to the public and private sphere together. All rights are indivisible and need to be working together.			Accepted
Explanation 10 - Gender related issues, girls and women's empowerment and GBV are clearly articulated under the Guiding Principles for the UNSDCF.			
Actions to be taken:	Responsible entities	Time frame	Resource implication
10.1 - The JSC will continue to promote and put emphasis on gender rights and empowerment under the Guiding Principles of LNOB, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, and the Human Rights-Based Approach in the UNSDCF, incl by: - supporting the implementation of the essential services package for women and girls subject to violence, - implementing advocacy and communication campaigns, with the participation of the GoL and development partners, on the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence under the coordination of the gender focal point, and - advocating on girls' empowerment through the Noi Framework and Noi ecosystem, included in the VNR and 9 th NSEDP	JSC	Development and implementation of the 2022-2026 UNSDCF and beyond	Time, \$ and coordination
Recommendation 11 - As with gender equality and gender mainstreaming efforts, it is important for all stakeholders to utilize entry points towards a wider discussion on human rights, beginning with children's rights, educational rights, and addressing poverty alleviation, health and social justice concerns to help move the needle towards a more just and equal society.			Accepted
Explanation 11 - Human rights and international norms and commitments are integral part of UN's mandate and support to GoL. They are one of the core guiding principles of the UNSDCF and will be captured and emphasized throughout the UNSDCF in an integrated and holistic programming approach.			
Actions to be taken:	Responsible entities	Timeframe	Resource implication
11.1 - The UNCT will ensure a human rights-based approach when designing and implementing the UNSDCF and new programs. This will be monitored through the establishment of a dedicated monitoring and technical support LNOB working group.	all stakeholders involved in the UNSDCF	Development and implementation of the 2022-2026 UNSDCF and beyond	time and programming \$
Recommendation 12 - Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR) and Civil and Political Rights (CPR) are interrelated and not mutually exclusive categories. When discussing the rights of women and girls, non-Lao-Tai ethnic group rights, migrant workers' rights, etc., it is vital to demonstrate a link between the need for agency and decision making as well as the right to education, land rights and decent work.			Accepted
Explanation 12 - In reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that makes no distinction between Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR) and Civil and Political Rights (CPR), the UNCT agrees that ESCR and CPR are not mutually exclusive categories but deeply intertwined, thus, while adopting the human rights-based approach in designing programs and activities, every effort will be made to make the links clearer and highlighted.			
Actions to be taken:	Responsible entities	Timeframe	Resource implication
12.1 - The UNCT will put more emphasis on highlighting the relationships between rights, with particular focus on the vulnerable groups.	All stakeholders involved in the UNSDCF	Development and implementation of the 2022-2026 UNSDCF and beyond	time and programming \$
12.2 - UNCT will continue supporting the GoL on the implementation, monitoring and reporting process of treaty bodies (CEDAW, CRC, CRPD, etc.)			
Recommendation 13 - One of the best entry points to move from the dialogue on Environmental Sustainability to concrete action plans is through disaster risk/ disaster management which naturally leads to the climate issue and ecosystem degradation. This issue has the added benefit of highlighting gender equality and non-Lao-Tai ethnic group issues since these overlapping vulnerabilities make natural disasters even more destructive for certain populations. It is hence recommended that the UNCT, through the upcoming UNSDCF, concentrates significant environmental sustainability efforts on disaster risk/ disaster management.			Accepted
Explanation 13 - The UNCT recognizes the importance of environmental sustainability and disaster risk management especially for Lao PDR as it is one of the key outcomes of the 9 th NSEDP. The UNCT plans to have environment, climate change and resilience (aligned with Outcome 4 of the 9 th NSEDP) as one of the strategic priorities under the UNSDCF.			
Actions to be taken:	Responsible entities	Timeframe	Resource implication
13.1 - Include environmental sustainability, climate change issues and disaster risk management as strategic priorities under the UNSDCF.	UNCT and line ministries	Development and implementation of the 2022-2026 UNSDCF	time and programming \$
13.2 - Ensure appropriate consideration of resilience as both a dedicated area of work (with appropriate capacity), and in the implementation of other workstreams.			

Recommendation 14 - The UNRC, the UNCT, the Govt of Lao PDR and other stakeholders, as is possible, should be jointly involved in the development of the Theory of Change. It is imperative that the UNCT bases the new UNSDCF on increased and enhanced levels of baseline data and data coordination. The design of indicators and targets should be a joint exercise carried out in consultation with the Lao PDR Govt which will increase joint buy-in and lead to improved measurement of progress.			Accepted
Explanation 14 - The design and implementation of the UNSDCF is a joint effort between the UNCT and key Govt partners. When designing the UNSDCF, the JSC will have full oversight of the development of a shared theory of change and M&E framework to ensure joint buy-in, agreement and ownership.			
Actions to be taken:	Responsible entities	Timeframe	Resource implication
14.1 - The UNCT to increase frequency of engagement and consultancies with GoL and key Govt partners through the JSC during key development stages of the UNSDCF.	all stakeholders involved in the UNSDCF	Development and implementation of the 2022-2026 UNSDCF	time and coordination
14.2 - Revise the ToR of the RGs to consolidate the formal basis for the co-chairmanship and participation of the Govt representatives in the RGs.	UNCT and line ministries		
14.3 - Ensure active participation by the Govt and UN's focal points with substantive and timely inputs contributing to the UNSDCF process.	RC, UNCT and line ministries		
14.4 - UNSDCF M&E framework to include clear baselines for all indicators included, as well as agreed target values.	UNCT and line ministries		
Recommendation 15 - The UNCT, in close coordination with the Govt, needs to develop and jointly implement an integrated capacity development plan which responds to the needs of the Govt. This plan needs to include a specific section on building monitoring and evaluation capacity to help develop baselines and measure progress. Human capital investment is important (including investments in TVET however it is also important to invest in institutional strengthening within the Govt Public Service to become sustainable).			Accepted
Explanation 15 - The UNCT acknowledges the value of having an integrated capacity development plan which responds to the needs of the Govt. However, although some UN agencies have capacity building as part of their programs, most UN agencies do not have un-earmarked funds for additional activities and/or the flexibility to agree to open ended new programming activities. The UNCT agrees to the concept of joint programming and clear leadership of the GoL when designing those programs and where and when feasible with reference to resource availability, to introduce a capacity building plan with capacity assessment monitoring into those programs and to advocate with donors the need for earmarking funds for capacity assessments, plans and monitoring frameworks.			
Actions to be taken:	Responsible entities	Timeframe	Resource implication
15.1 - The UNCT when designing new programs with GoL will develop a capacity building plan with capacity assessment integrated into those programs where appropriate and ensure its implementation throughout the programming phase to ensure knowledge transfer, sustainability and national ownership.	JSC, UNCT and line ministries	Development and implementation of the 2022-2026 UNSDCF	time and programming \$
15.2 – provide technical capacity building support on areas outlined by MPI to strengthen planning and the results-based management and outcome-based approach of the NSEDP, including on Theories of Change.			
Recommendation 16 - Moving forward it is important to look back at relevance to ensure sustainability. The UNSCDF, as a universal mandate or blueprint, should be addressed at two levels: the strategic and operational. The Plan of Action process to concretize this could be: Step 1: Consultation Process – Bring together the Govt, UN AFPs, DPs, private sector and INGOs/NPAs in a series of consultations led by the UNRC and UNCT who are well trusted neutral parties. Step 2: Development of a Joint ToC which could provide an overarching vision for change. Step 3: Development of joint indicators. Step 4: More regular, at least annual meetings, of the JSC required.			Accepted
Explanation 16 - In the development of the UNSDCF, the RCO and MoFA, as the secretariat of the JSC will ensure that the recommended steps are carried out and key stakeholders are included at all stages, which is also part of the new guidelines in the development of the UNSDCF.			
Actions to be taken:	Responsible entities	Timeframe	Resource implication
16.1 - RCO and MoFA as the secretariat of the JSC will ensure that the below steps will be taken during the development process of the UNSDCF Step 1: Consultation Process – Bring together the Govt, UN AFPs, DPs, private sector and INGOs/NPAs in a series of consultations led by the UNRC and UNCT who are well trusted neutral parties. Step 2: Development of a Joint ToC which could provide an overarching vision for change. Step 3: Development of joint indicators Step 4: More regular, at least annual meetings, of the JSC required.	UN RCO, MoFA, JSC UNCT	Development and implementation of the 2022-2026 UNSDCF	time and programming

