

Data Impact on Gender Equality in Work: Introducing the 19th ICLS Definitions of Work in **Lao PDR**

Summary

The commitment of Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) to gender equality in the world of work is evident in laws, strategies, and other policy mechanisms. Strong institutions—Lao Women's Union, the National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children, and the Women Parliamentarians Caucus—are working with civil society to empower women in the economy and close gender gaps. Priorities include getting more women into leadership and decision-making roles and increasing land use rights for women.

Lao PDR first introduced the new concepts of work, employment, and labor underutilization adopted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in its 2017 Labour Force Survey (LFS). The changes had a big impact on national labor statistics. There was a huge drop in the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) as own-use production was excluded from the definition of employment. Unemployment rose as the percentage of people seeking paid employment were better identified by the new definition.

The new statistics confirmed and revealed important gender gaps. Women's participation in paid employment continues to be significantly lower than men's. One of the reasons women don't or can't enter the labor market is because other family members need or believe women should stay at home. Time spent on unpaid care and domestic work—and its associated value—are not yet visible in national statistics. Women who are in paid employment earn significantly less than men and are more likely to be working without pay in a family-owned business. Low education and illiteracy are high, particularly among women in rural areas.

The findings of the 2017 LFS provide valued evidence for the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. They use the data and concepts to explain the size and structure of the labor force and in policy discussions around labor underutilization, own-use production, youth unemployment, informality, social protection, rural employment, and labor migration. Data is used to monitor the national strategic development plan.

While sex-disaggregated and gender-related statistics are a priority, gaps between the collection, analysis, and use of available data remain large. Mainstreaming gender into



policy is still seen as the responsibility of the central agencies working on gender issues (Lao Women’s Union and the National Commission for the Advancement of Women and Mothers and Children) rather than a priority to be addressed directly within each sector. Support is needed for ministries and agencies—such as departments under the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and related agencies—to analyze data and statistics with a gender lens and to use the information for gender-sensitive targets and policies.

About this case study

In 2013, the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians agreed upon a new definition of work with subcategories relating to both paid and unpaid working activities.ⁱ The changes narrowed the definition of employment to work for pay or profit only. People who produce goods for subsistence, volunteer, or work for training are no longer classified as being employed, which in some countries was a significant part of the labor force.

As the table below shows, the changes to the definition of employment were significant.ⁱⁱ

Labor Force before the 19th ICLS		Labor Force after the 19th ICLS	
Employed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All who work for pay ▪ All who work for profit ▪ All who work for training ▪ All who work to produce goods for own final use ▪ All who volunteer for organizations ▪ All who volunteer to produce goods for households 	Not employed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Everyone else whether or not they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provide services for own final use ◆ Volunteer providing services for households 	Employed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All who work for pay ▪ All who work for profit (employers, own-account workers, contributing family workers, etc.) 	Not employed if they exclusively: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide services for own final use ▪ Volunteer providing services for households ▪ Work unpaid for training ▪ Produce goods for own final use ▪ Volunteer through/for organizations ▪ Volunteer producing goods for households

The changes also introduced new measures of underutilization. They go beyond unemployment to measure how many people meet the new definition of employment but are not working for as many hours as they want to be (underemployed). Statistics are also produced on how many people are not employed or unemployed but are either actively seeking employment or are available to start (potential labor force).

Combined, the new definition and measures of work provide a different but more relevant picture of a country’s labor force and the types of work people are engaged in. From a gender perspective, this was a landmark step towards making the work that women typically do visible. The 19th ICLS framework puts more emphasis on measuring all forms of work including:

- Crucial caring and domestic activities that women are overwhelmingly responsible for, that households and economies rely on to function (own-use production of services);
- Work women do to produce food and other goods which enable them and their families to survive (own-use production of goods);



- Work women do for pay or profit (formal and informal employment); and
- Volunteer work and work in exchange for training.

Widespread adoption of these new definitions has not yet been achieved and policy implications remain uncertain. Data2X has found case studies of first movers to be an effective tool to inspire similar data collection efforts in additional countries and to open dialogue on policy impact. The case studies seek to achieve these outcomes for the measurement of women's work.

Background

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is lower-middle income country in East Asia.ⁱⁱⁱ In 2018, it had an estimated population of 7 million people (50 percent female, 50 percent male) with a fertility rate of 2.8 children per woman. The population is young with almost a third of the population (32 percent) being children (age 0–14), well above the regional average of 20 percent. Older people (age 65 and above) are 4 percent of the total population.^{iv}

The United Nations Human Development Index (HDI)^v for Lao PDR increased between 1995 and 2018, signifying progress in life expectancy, knowledge, and standard of living. Gender gaps in the HDI values imply that women still have a lower quality of life compared to men. Lao PDR should be nearing a window of demographic dividend¹—the potential growth that can occur in the economy when the proportion of working-age people exceed that of non-working age—as fertility declines and the size of the working age population grows. Developing human capital and engaging both women and men in the world of work is essential for reaping those benefits.

For a long time, the labor market in Lao PDR has been segmented in three ways: individuals were considered (1) employed, (2) unemployed, or (3) inactive. In 2013, the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS)—the international body that oversees standards in labor statistics—agreed that these categories failed to accurately capture all the ways that individuals engage with the economy and labor market. They agreed on the first international statistical definition of “work,” including five major activities that individuals can be involved in.

Two important aspects of this new definition are that “work” includes both paid and unpaid productive activities, including unpaid domestic and care work in the home—which can now be measured separately and more comprehensively. Second, it clarifies that an individual can be involved in more than one activity at the same time, meaning that the combination of paid and unpaid work becomes easier to measure and show in national statistics.

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1. A demographic dividend is the potential for economic growth that can happen when a population shifts to having a higher proportion of people who are working age (age 15–64 years) versus non-working age (i.e. children aged 0–14 years and older people aged 65 and above). See the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) for more information <https://www.unfpa.org/demographic-dividend>.



Supporting women's empowerment and gender equality in Lao PDR

Lao PDR ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1981, committing to equal pay for equal work for women, social protection, and balancing women's productive and reproductive roles through maternity leave, family-friendly work environments, and child-care facilities. Since then, the country has been establishing an enabling environment for gender equality in paid and unpaid work through national strategies and mechanisms that support women's economic empowerment (Table 1).

Table 1: Enabling environment for gender equality in paid and unpaid work

Strategy or mechanism	Description
Constitution of Lao PDR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First developed in 1991, most recently amended in 2015. Article 34 provides that the State recognizes, respects, protects, and guarantees human rights and fundamental rights of the citizens in accordance with the law. Article 35 and Article 37 define that all Lao citizens are equal before the law irrespective of their gender, social status, education, beliefs and ethnicity, and Lao citizens of both genders enjoy equal rights in the political, economic, cultural, and social fields and in family affairs.
National Socio-economic Development Plan (8th NSEDP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers the period 2016–2020. Leading national strategy for women's advancement and gender equality (NSAW).
National Strategy for the Advancement of Women (NSAW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First national strategy covered the period 2006–2010.^{vi} Second NSAW for period of 2011–2015.^{vii} National Strategy for Women's Advancement in 2016–2020 was mainstreamed into the eighth National Socio-economic Development Plan (8th NSEDP).
Law on Development and Protection of Women ^{viii}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted by National Assembly in 2004. Article 15 and 19: Women have equal rights to choose their professions, to be employed, to be remunerated, and to receive other benefits from their work.
Lao Labour Law ^{ix}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amended in 2013 to be more inclusive for female workers. Promotes occupational freedom, working from home, and the hiring of women. International Women's Day, March 8, to be an official holiday for women workers.

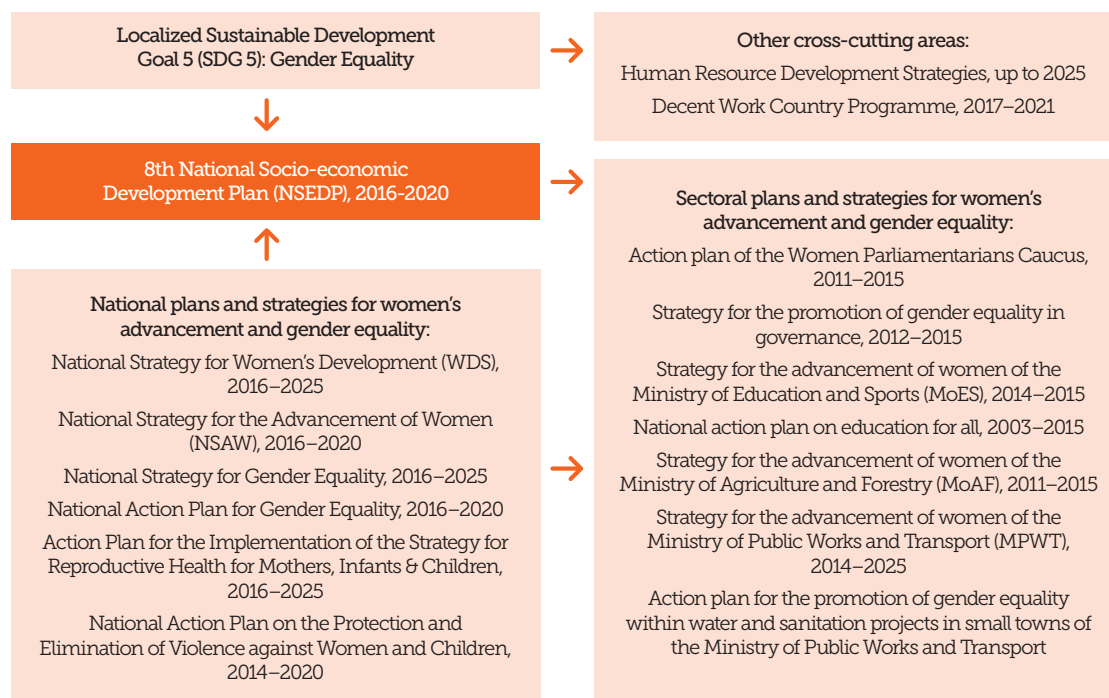


Lao Women's Union (LWU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First established in 1955 as the Lao Patriotic Women Association. Mandated under the Law on Lao Women's Union 2013 to be the national strategic authority for women's development and to protect women's rights and interests.^x 1.2 million members covering 65 percent of women aged 15 and above.
National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inter-ministerial committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, vice chair is President of LWU. Established in 2003 as the National Commission for the Advancement of Women. Expanded to cover children's development and protection in 2017. Formulates and implements national policy for the advancement of women.
Women Parliamentarians Caucus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established by the National Assembly in 2010. Key mechanism for mainstreaming gender in lawmaking.

The Lao Women's Union and the National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children are the lead agencies promoting gender integration and the advancement of women. The caucus of women parliamentarians provides an entry point for ensuring gender is mainstreamed in national law making.

The National Strategy for Women's Advancement in 2016–2020 was integrated into the eighth National Socio-economic Development Plan (8th NSEDP) (Figure 1).^{xi} Priorities focus on women's representation in politics, economics, sociocultural affairs, and family decision-making, and reducing discrimination and violence against women. The country

Figure 1. National Socio-economic Development Plan in connection with strategic plans for women's advancement and gender equality



Source: Various sources, compiled by author

has committed to achieve quantitative targets by 2020 on women in leadership and decision-making positions, implementing CEDAW Committee recommendations and those in the National Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children, reducing adolescent fertility, and increasing land use rights for women.

There are various laws supporting gender equality and women's empowerment. The law on the development and protection of women adopted in 2004 ensures women have equal rights to choose their professions, to be employed, to be remunerated, and to receive other benefits from their work. The labor law was amended in 2013 and includes an article on the employment of women with provisions for achieving gender equality in the workplace, the employment of pregnant women or women caring for newborns, maternity leave, maternity support, and prohibited actions against female employees.

The law restricts employers from obstructing employment or using direct or indirect force to make an employee stop work due to marital status, gender discrimination, or HIV status. It prohibits violation of the personal rights of employees and sexual harassment and abuse. To support enforcement of the law, employers are required to report and provide information on labor protection to the Labour Administration Agency every three months. The reporting includes sex-disaggregated data on other potential gender issues such as proportion of foreign employees, and on the number of employees that have fallen victim to accidents or occupational diseases.

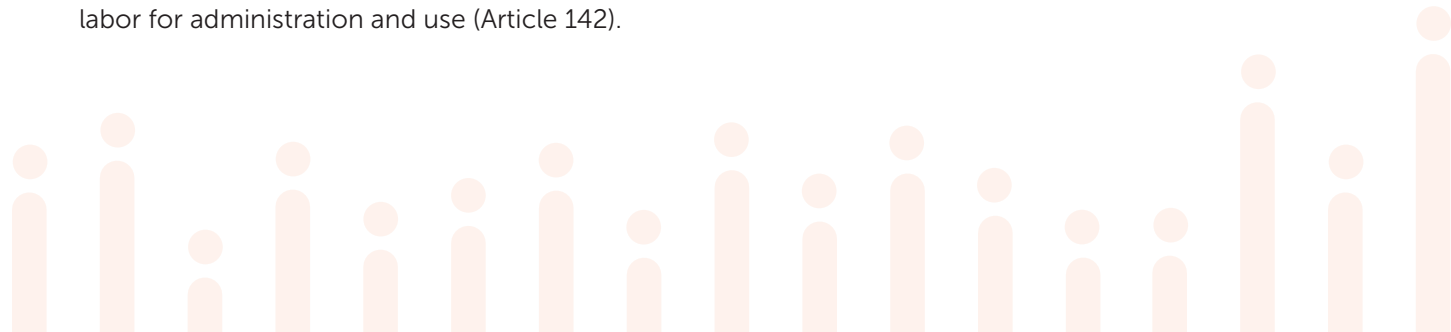
Gender is clearly integrated in the regulation and administration of government and in the sectoral plans on education, health, agriculture, and infrastructure. However, it does not seem to be sufficient for facilitating women's access to decent work and employment.

Data sources for labor statistics in Lao PDR

The Laos Statistics Bureau is the central official statistics agency mandated under the Statistics Law 2017.^{xiii} It is responsible for organizing censuses, sample surveys, and rapid surveys as defined in the Strategy on Development of National Statistics System.

The amended Statistics Law (2017) officially defined Gender Statistics as data for indicating differences and inequality between men and women in all aspects of living, for example: differences on access to something, having opportunities, and being valued and prioritized in various aspects (Para. 29 in Article 3). The law categorizes work statistics and gender statistics as social statistics (Article 8 and 10).

The labor law defines the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW) as responsible for coordinating labor concerns. MoLSW cooperates with Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) on career advice and labor skills development course, with Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) on Laotians working abroad. MoLSW together with other actors, such as the Lao Statistics Bureau, conducts surveys of the workforce, surveys of labor units, and registers labor for administration and use (Article 142).



Lao PDR recently introduced Labour Force Survey (LFS) and have conducted two so far (Table 2). The first survey was organized together with the Child Labour Survey in 2010, followed by the second LFS in 2017 when the 19th ICLS definitions of work were introduced. The LFS was conducted by the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) through the Laos Statistics Bureau (LSB) and with the cooperation of MoLSW. The International Labour Organization (ILO) provided support for questionnaire design, training of enumerators, data analysis, and reporting.

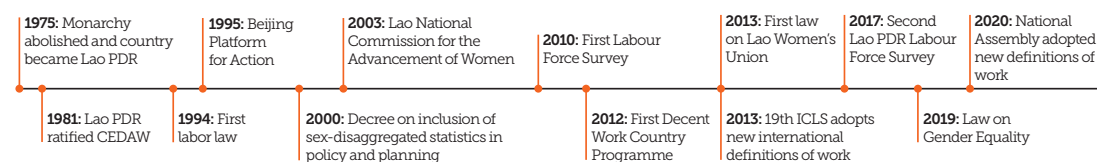
Table 2: Labour Force Surveys in Lao PDR

Names	Year	Sample Size	Representation	Concept of work	Responsible agencies	Technical support
Labour Force Survey and Child Labour Survey	2010	10,800 households	National	13th ICLS	LSB/MPI and MoLSW	ILO
Lao Labour Force Survey	2017	10,800 households	National	19th ICLS	LSB/MPI and MoLSW	ILO

Sources: (LSB, Report on Labour Force Survey and Child Labour Survey 2010, 2012)^{xiii} and (LSB, Report on Lao Labour Force Survey, 2018) compiled by author

Figure 2 illustrates the milestones related to measuring women’s work in Lao PDR from the ratification of CEDAW in 1981 through to the introduction of a law on gender equality in 2019 and national adoption of new definitions of work in 2020.

Figure 2. Timeline of milestones in Lao PDR relevant to measuring women’s work



The 2017 LFS is the first survey in Lao PDR that officially introduced the new concept of work, employment, and labor underutilization. The data provided a new perspective on the labor market of the country. The employed population now refers to those of working age who engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit during the last seven days. The difference from the previous definition is that those who worked solely or mainly for own final use are no longer considered employed but are now outside the labor force.^{xv} Table 3 illustrates the differences between the old and new definitions.



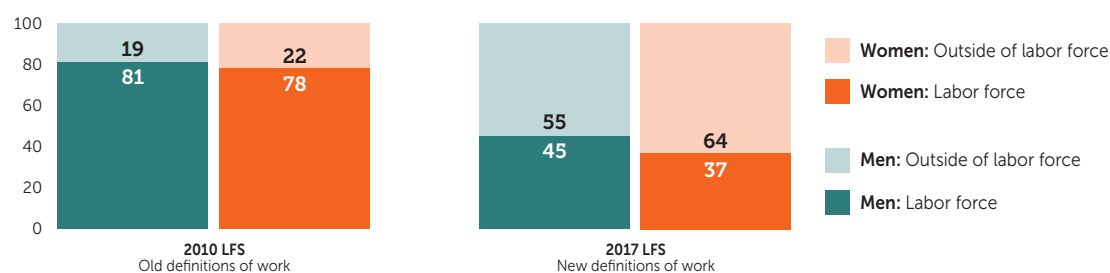
Table 3: Concept of work and employment used in LFS 2010 and 2017

I Old definition (13th ICLS) used for LFS 2010		New definition (19th ICLS) used for LFS 2017	
Employed = Economically active persons at age 15+		Employed = Those at age 15+ who work for pay or profit	
II Status of the currently employed (both for paid & unpaid)		Status of employment (only for pay or profit) ²	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paid employees 2. Employers 3. Self-employed 4. Unpaid work for family 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wage and salaried employees 2. Employers 3. Own account workers 4. Contributing family workers (no regular pay) 	
III Paid work	Unpaid work	Paid work	Unpaid work
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paid employee 2. Employer 3. Self-employed 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unpaid family worker 2. Economically inactive 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wage and salaried employees 2. Employers 3. Own account workers 4. Contributing family workers (no regular pay) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Own-use production of goods and services 2. Other works for use by others 3. Volunteer work

Sources: (LSB, Report on Labour Force Survey and Child Labour Survey 2010, 2012)^{xiii} and (LSB, Report on Lao Labour Force Survey, 2018) compiled by author

The new definitions prompted dramatic decreases in the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) and an increase in the unemployment rate, despite a growing number of people in the working age population. Labor force participation (employment and unemployment) fell from around 81 percent of men and 78 percent of women, to 45 percent and 37 percent respectively. The impact on women's participation was far greater than for men. The unemployment rate went up from 1.9 percent in 2010 to 9.4 percent in 2017, reflecting the proportion of people in the labor force who are not in paid employment but aim to be.

Figure 3. Distribution of population in the labor force and outside the labor force before and after the new definitions of employment were introduced in Lao PDR



2. (1) Wage and salaried employee: a person who works in government department, private business enterprises or organizations, including family business, and receives regular pay; (2) Employer: a person who runs a business on his own or in partnership and engages at least one paid employee on a continuous basis in operating the business; (3) Own account worker: a person who runs a business on his own or in partnership but does not engages any paid employee; (4) Contributing family worker: a person who works in his/her family business without receiving any regular pay.

With these new definitions of work and employment, Lao PDR has a different and more nuanced profile of men and women who are doing paid and unpaid work. Other key findings from the new data include:

- 83 percent of employed persons in Lao PDR are informally employed and do not have access to social security; the rate of informality among rural female workers is 91 percent.
- Women's participation in paid employment is only 37 percent, which is 9 percent less than men's.
- One of the most frequently reported reasons for not entering the labor market was because of the needs of or the views by other family members that women should stay home (29 percent).
- On average, women employees earn 20 percent less than men.
- Of the women in employment, 46 percent are unpaid workers in a family-owned business compared to 32 percent of men in employment.
- More than half of working age (59 percent) are not participating in paid employment and the majority of those are women.
- Despite the fact that 68 percent of the working age population reside in rural areas, only 30 percent of them are in paid employment.
- About 60 out of 100 rural female workers do not complete primary school, which implies the inability to read or write.

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Changing rates of employment and unemployment reflect a combination of actual changes in the labor market and procedural changes from applying the new definitions, but the extent each has affected the results is impossible to gauge. This could be overcome if the questionnaire is designed to produce statistics based on the old measures as well as the new ones.

The change to these indicators caused anxiety for policymakers in concerned agencies. After disseminating survey results, LSB and MoLSW had to prepare and organize several reports and meetings to explain that the changes in the key labor market indicators do not necessarily reflect the performance of the labor market and employment policies.



Impact of new data on advocacy, policies, and decisions

The government has encouraged the use of sex-disaggregated statistics in policy and planning. The Prime Minister's Decree on Inclusive Sex-disaggregated Statistics in Policy and Planning was issued in 2000 and amended in 2005. Improving sex-disaggregated statistics become the first priority for NSAW since 2011.

The findings of the 2017 LFS have been extremely useful for policy makers at MoLSW, especially those in the Department of Planning. Time-related underemployment and the size of the potential labor force have highlighted significant needs for job creation. Policymakers regularly refer to and use sex-disaggregated data from the 2017 LFS in their comments and presentations, highlighting rates of labor underutilization, especially in relation to own-use production workers, youth unemployment, informality, social protection, rural employment, and labor migration. However, data is not analyzed in-depth with a gender lens and the specific implications for women workers are not emphasized.

Data from different official sources is used to monitor the national strategic development plan. Table 4 shows how MoLSW and relevant ministries are responsible for monitoring outputs on women's empowerment and gender equality in the eighth NSEDP's logical framework. Notes on the current availability and use of sex-disaggregated data suggest gender data is underutilized in national monitoring and reporting.

Table 4: Outputs on women's empowerment & gender equality in 8th NSEDP's logical framework

	Cross-cutting Output 3 on women's empowerment & gender equality	Notes	Means of verification	Responsible Ministry/Agency
1	Percentage of women in decision making positions/leadership positions	Available for 2015	Administrative data	Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) & Central Party Bureau
2	Percentage of women in National Assembly	Available for 2015	Administrative data	National Assembly (NA)
3	Share of women among owners of businesses/enterprises	Not reported	Surveys	Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MoIC), Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW)



4	Gender equality in education			
4.1	Gender parity indices in primary/ lower secondary/ upper secondary/ tertiary education calculated with gross enrollment ratios/completion rates	Not reported (despite sex-disaggregated data being available in the MoES information system)	Mostly admin data	Ministry of Education (MoES)
4.2	Literacy	Two indicators, aggregated data is reported		
4.3	Vocational education	Three indicators, aggregated data is reported		
4.4	Access TO ECE	One indicator, aggregated data is reported		
4.5	Education access	Five indicators, aggregated data is reported		
4.6	Education completion	Three indicators, aggregated data is reported		
4.7	Learning outcomes	Not available		
5	Gender equality in employment			
5.1	Labor Productivity, especially in agriculture & tourism	Two indicators, not reported	Mostly data from survey/ census	Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI)/ Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW)
5.2	Employment	Two indicators, aggregated data is reported		
5.3	Vulnerable work	One indicator, sex-disaggregated data is reported		
5.4	Workforce capacity	One indicator, sex-disaggregated data is reported		
5.5	Employment opportunities	Two indicators, aggregated data is reported		
5.6	Professional certification for labor market	Two indicators, sex-disaggregated data is reported		
6	Percentage of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work by sex, age group and location	Not reported	Periodic Surveys	Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB)
7	Adolescent pregnancy, as a percentage of total	Not reported	Administrative data	Ministry of Health (MoH)

Source: Author summarized from logical framework of the 8th Five-Year National Socioeconomic Development Plan (2016–2020), 2016

Findings from the data are used to inform rural employment policies in various areas of work, both paid and unpaid. Among these are a pilot project to promote rural employment, which led to the formulation of the National Rural Employment Strategy. The new measures produced from LFS data have also been used in the promotion of youth employment, advocacy for safe labor migration, promotion of vocational education, expansion of social security services to increase more access to the informal workers, and adoption of a National Social Protection Strategy.

Another remarkable change was the decision of the National Assembly to adopt a national employment structure and targets for the size of each major sector based on the new definition of work. The new employment structure no longer includes own-use production workers. As a result, the distribution of employment by sectors is set to change considerably with agriculture to fall from 64 percent to 39 percent, and with increases from 12 percent to 17 percent for industry and construction, and from 24 percent to 44 percent for the services sector (Table 5).

This new employment structure is intended to better reflect the contribution of paid employment to each economic sector to the GDP.

Previously, the majority of workers were engaged in the agriculture sector, which contributes little to the GDP (15.2 percent in 2019), reflecting low productivity of agriculture sector. New data shows more people working in the services sector, which contributes the largest share to the GDP (41.3 percent in 2019).^{xvi} However, this policy represents a big shift in characterizing the country's employment structure, and is controversial to many. In these early stages, many are still unsure how to apply it.

Table 5: Change to the target for the national employment structure in 2020 NSEDP

Sector	Target of national employment structure in 2020 NSEDP		
	Before 25 June 2020 A	After 25 June 2020 B	Changes B-A
1. Agriculture	64%	39%	-25%
2. Industry and Construction	12%	17%	+5%
3. Services	24%	44%	+20%

Sources: (NA, Decree No. 01/NA dated 25 June 2020, 2020) section 1.4 page 2



Key Highlights and Lessons Learned

1. Need to improve the quality of labor statistics

Feedback suggests the Labour Force Survey needs to be conducted regularly, at least on an annual basis, and the reporting and dissemination revised to be suitable for the needs of users. Administrative data from relevant ministries and the Lao Women's Union can also be strengthened to provide cost-effective solutions to fill data gaps.

Other censuses and surveys include questions about employment such as 2015 population census, the 2017 LFS and the 2018/2019 Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey (LECS6). The new concepts of work have been introduced here too, but there are some technical differences such as the reference period for measuring work that need to be aligned with international standards.

2. New definitions of work are only just starting to have an impact

Consultations revealed that the new measures of work have taken about three years (from 2017 to 2020) to be accepted. This case study is capturing only the starting point of the changes.

Stakeholders, except for those in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the International Labour Organization, are largely unaware of the new definitions of work and the impact on labor market statistics. There has been limited gender analysis of the new labor force survey results.

The 2017 LFS has not yet contributed into women's advancement and gender policies but has had a remarkable impact on the targets of the national strategic development plan.

3. Capacity development in the production and use of gender statistics is needed

Establishing a well-functioning system of gender statistics remains a work in progress. In 2018, the CEDAW Committee still had concerns on uses of these statistics in policymaking and recommended to:

"Enhance the collection, analysis and dissemination of comprehensive data, disaggregated by sex, age, disability, ethnicity, location and socio-economic status, and the use of measurable indicators to assess trends in the situation of women and progress towards the realization of substantive equality between women and men in all areas covered by the Convention." ^{xvii}

Consultations with data producers and users revealed confusion between "sex-disaggregated data" and "gender statistics." Key informant interviews in July 2020 found that sex-disaggregated data is available for all interviewed agencies at a sufficient level for reporting, however only few make regular use of it for generating gender statistics and analysis. There seems to be an ongoing tension between data producers and users.



Agencies leading on gender policy should conduct data analysis but lack the capacity to do so. Data producing agencies have the skills but lack resources and see it as the role of policymakers to address the capacity gap. Roles and responsibilities are unclear and as a result, there is a lack of action.

Many organizations understand that gender statistics means data disaggregated by sex rather than its broader definition. There is a need to continually develop the capacity of data producers to be sensitive to gender and eliminate any gender bias in the production of statistics, as well as to strengthen the capacity of data users to access, understand, and use gender data effectively. This is needed at both national and local levels.

There are opportunities to work with other data producers to strengthen gender statistics. Data produced and collated by the Lao Women's Union and National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children is still limited and insufficient for supporting the formulation and monitoring of policies on women's empowerment and gender equality at the macro level. The NCAWMC has a plan to develop their own database, but currently relies on data published by the national statistical office, civil society organizations, and development partners (such as ADB's gender profile) for monitoring implementation of NSAW's activities.

The Lao Women's Union regularly compiles data and information from several sources: their own administrative data for indicators on violence and trafficking, leadership data from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), and sex-disaggregated data from LSB's national survey/census. LWU's Department of Women in Development is now implementing a pilot project for evaluating LWU members in 54 districts. The evaluation form includes the employment status of members' households.

At this stage, the Lao Statistics Bureau plans to conduct an LFS every three to four years, depending on resource constraints. As more surveys are conducted and data availability improves, gender and development actors have an opportunity to position themselves to access and use data effectively. This calls for strong and sustained action on both sides. Data producers and users must work together to improve mechanisms and build skills to fill gender data gaps. As 2030 approaches—the goal date for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals—there is no time to waste.

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- ⁱⁱⁱ The World Bank: World Bank Country and Lending Groups. <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>
- ^{iv} LAOSIS Lao Statistical Information Service. <https://laosis.lsb.gov.la/tblInfo/TblInfoList.do>
- ^v Human Development Index (HDI): A composite index measuring average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development—a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living. See Technical note 1 at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2019_technical_notes.pdf for details on how the HDI is calculated.
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