

# Nairobi Summit Commitments

## Lao PDR



Lao PDR made 7 Commitments pursuant to the Nairobi Summit



Lao PDR is experiencing a youth bulge and investing in youth now will be critical for reaping the benefits of the demographic dividend



Lao PDR's Noi Framework highlights the importance of investing in youth in the next phase of the country's development



## Investing in Youth

Lao PDR is about to experience a "youth bulge", a unique time in the population growth curve in which a higher number of young, working-age individuals will be able to make unique economic and social contributions to the development of the country.

Investing in youth education, wellbeing, and employment at this critical moment in the country's development will be critical for Lao PDR to make the most of the demographic dividend. Lao PDR will adopt a new Youth Law and Youth Policy to support its commitment to invest in youth.



## Importance of adolescent girls

Almost 40% of young women in Lao PDR report being married before they reach 18 years of age, and the adolescent fertility rate is 65 per 1,000 live births. Both rates are the highest in Southeast Asia.

These data reflect the challenges faced by adolescent girls in Lao PDR, and the reasons for the development of the Noi Framework, a comprehensive, holistic development framework focused on the importance of adolescent girls' health and wellbeing to the development of the whole society.



## Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) ensures that youth understand their bodies and their rights and have the skills and knowledge to protect their own health and wellbeing.

While many laws and policies in Lao PDR support the implementation of age-appropriate CSE in school curriculum, lack of sufficient teacher training and a comprehensive curriculum have hindered the success of the program. Lao PDR's commitment to fully implement CSE by 2030 shows renewed political commitment to this important aspect of adolescent health and wellbeing.



## Ending GBV and harmful practices

At least half of all women in Lao PDR have experienced inter-personal violence, and many women believe that men have a right to beat their wives.

The Noi Ecosystem identifies the elimination of VAW and harmful practices as a priority area, highlighting the importance of adopting an essential service package for eliminating VAW, engaging men and boys in eliminating VAW, and promoting safe spaces for women and girls.



## Adolescent family planning

Lao PDR has the highest adolescent fertility rates in the Southeast Asia region, and at the same time only 26% of married adolescents are using contraceptives (while about 54% of all women use contraceptives).

The Noi Framework supports increasing adolescents' access to and knowledge of family planning resources, especially through the development of adolescent-friendly health services and comprehensive sexuality education.



## Ending Maternal Mortality by 2030

Although maternal mortality has been falling in Lao PDR, the main causes of continued maternal mortality are post-partum hemorrhage, eclampsia, sepsis, and unsafe abortions.

In addressing these causes of continued maternal mortality, Lao PDR has committed to promoting births in the presence of skilled attendants, increased ante-natal care, increased use of contraceptives, and increased immunization rates. Health sector reform and increased access to and quality of care will facilitate these needed changes.



## Data for population development and planning

In anticipation of the development and adoption of the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan, Lao PDR has launched the Lao 2030 Survey.

Transformational population laws and policies depend on high-quality disaggregated data. The National Socio-Economic Development Plan is the key national policy document driving development in all sectors. Lao PDR's commitment to collecting and using data in developing the new Socio-Economic Development Plan will ensure policy alignment and effectiveness across all sectors.

## Best Practices and Recommendations

### 1. Making youth a cross-cutting policy theme

Lao PDR has prioritized youth in its commitments under the Nairobi Summit at this critical time in the country's development. The commitments also show the understanding that adolescent girls face unique challenges that require specific responses through law and policy. Adopting the Noi Framework has made investing in youth and adolescent girls a cross-cutting theme that can drive policy and development in many sectors.

### 2. Youth laws and policies set priorities for youth development and well-being

Lao PDR has taken several years to develop a Youth Law and Youth Policy through a country-wide participatory process. This process shows that Lao PDR recognizes the importance an updated Youth Law and Youth Policy, developed through youth participation, can play in setting the direction for all policies and interventions related to youth, and for reaping the benefits of the demographic dividend.

### 3. CSE, AFHS, and family planning for adolescent health

Lao PDR's commitments show the country believes in comprehensive sexuality education, adolescent-friendly health services, and access to contraceptives for young people. The Noi Framework reaffirms these interventions and approaches as essential to any efforts to benefit the health and well-being of adolescents. While the evidence supports all of these approaches, and policies are shifting in recognition of the evidence, strong political will is necessary to implement many of the policies and programs related to adolescent sexual and reproductive health.

### 4. Recognizing the impact of harmful practices on adolescent girls

Lao PDR has recognized that many young women in the country still face threats of violence through harmful practices such as GBV and early marriage. In response, it has committed to ensuring that early marriage and other harmful practices are addressed in the new National Action Plan for Prevention and Elimination of VAW. Other policy documents recognize the importance of providing a budget to fight VAW and harmful practices at sub-national levels, where enforcement and implementation of these policies will be most relevant.

### 5. Strengthening health systems and addressing causes of maternal mortality

In addition to specific goals like strengthening the Maternal Death Review System, increasing births in the presence of skilled attendants and at health facilities, and decreasing the unmet need for family planning, Lao PDR has recognized the importance of overall health system strengthening to end preventable maternal deaths. Improving access to care, quality of care, health workforce resources and skills, health sector governance, and health information systems, as well as achieving universal coverage, will all be part of its approach to ending maternal deaths.

### 6. Prioritizing high-quality data in the development of population policies

Effective laws and policies are based on accurate, high-quality, disaggregated data. Looking ahead to its 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan, Lao PDR has committed to collecting, analyzing, and using high-quality population data. Because this Plan is one of the foundational policy documents for the country, aligning it with accurate, high-quality data will also ensure that other national policies, strategies, and plans are aligned with data and can be more effective in achieving Lao PDR's ambitious development goals.