Lao PDR in Glance
Needs and potential for rural youth development in Lao PDR

Lao People’s Democratic Republic
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Mr. Soudchay Nhouyvanisvong
Director of the Division of International Cooperation
Department of Planning and Cooperation
LAO PDR IN GLANCE

- **Geographic Profile**
  - Total Land Area: 236,800 sq Km (23 million Ha)
  - Agric. Land: 2.35 million Ha (10.2%)
  - Arable: 58%
  - Permanent Crop: 4.6%
  - Pastures-Meadows: 37.4%
  - Forestry: 9.3 million Ha (40.3%)

- **Demographic Profile**
  - Total Population: 6.6 million (with annual growth rate of 1.4%)
  - Population Density: 27 prs/sq Km
  - Share of Population: Rural: 65.8%
  - Urban: 34.2%
  - Agriculture Pop.: 74.9%
  - Age Composition of total population:
    - < 14 years: 33.7%
    - > 65 years: 3.9%
    - Labour force (15-64 years): 60% (2015)
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Key Economic Indicators
- GDP current US$ (billion): 8 billion (2011)
  (Change per year : 12.2 %)

Sectoral Share in GDP (2010):
- Agric.: 32.9 %
- Industry: 31.8 %
- Service: 35.5 %

Labour Force Participation (LFP):
- Female: 79 % of total female
- Male: 79.4 % of total male

Agric. Labour Force: 74.7 % (of 15-64 year old people)
Child workers: 18.6 % (of people aged 7-14 year old)
✓ Presentation context and background
✓ Education
✓ Access to finance
✓ Migration from rural to urban areas
✓ Limits in addressing the problem
✓ Recommendations and action
Accurate data on rural youth are lacking in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). Where reference to youth occurs, it does not reflect the differences between rural and urban youth situations. So there is a great need to develop a strategy to benefit rural youth.

FAO collaborated with local partners, in particular the Lao Youth Union and the FAO Office in Lao PDR to address this gap.

Two complementary activities were implemented:

1. National workshop on rural youth in the Lao PDR and
2. Case study on needs and potential for rural youth development in the Lao PDR.
Education

- Lack of or limited education remains one of the primary obstacles to the development of rural youth. This includes lack of options or access to vocational training.
- Considerable potential to use agriculture to improve rural youth’s livelihoods if they are taught new techniques, mainly how to grow new crops and how to sell them locally.

**Need to:**

- Improve access to basic education and to vocational training is critically needed;
- Improve the knowledge and skills of agricultural extension staff;
- Improve access to vocational training centres with a curriculum that includes agriculture subjects and even providing alternative training options, such as farmer-to-farmer approaches.
Access to finance

- Rural youth are open-minded and have ideas on how to improve the current situation – if financial aid and transfer of knowledge were provided. But they need basic support and improved knowledge and skills to begin their development.

- The lack of access to credit and markets discourages youth farmers from intensifying their production; the further lack of knowledge regarding production intensification and the lack of extension services consequently hamper general development in the rural areas.

Need to:

- Promote and improve rural youth’s access to funds and microfinance for investment in agricultural production, either through bank loans or revolving funds in villages;

- Improve female farmers’ access to credit and other financial services.
Migration from rural to urban areas

- Given their exposure to modern life through the media and the limited employment opportunities in the countryside, more and more rural youth are opting to migrate to urban areas for work and a better life.

**However,**

- Due to their limited education, they often end up in low-paid jobs, such as in the construction sector, in garment factories *(or in prostitution)*.

- Human trafficking is also a problem in Lao PDR, with more and more youths ending up as victims. Young girls, especially those from rural ethnic groups, are most vulnerable to human traffickers.
Limits in addressing the problem

- Different government and international organizations in Lao PDR do not adequately address the needs and situations of youth, especially rural youth, in their policies, programs and projects.
- There are agencies implementing specifically targeted programs to address some of the critical concerns challenging rural youth. These programs offer valuable opportunities but are not comprehensive.

Need to:
- Have a more explicit focus on rural youth in development;
- Implement agricultural and rural development projects with rural youth as a specific target group across the country.
Recommendations and actions

- Rural youth have considerable potential as a workforce and a willingness to help develop their rural communities. But they need good income-generating opportunities to remain in the rural areas. **This requires that government, institutions and agencies respond with specific policies & programs directed at rural youth.**
- More institutions and international organizations should look specifically at rural youth and target their needs and development. **This includes policies aimed at keeping youth in their rural communities.**
- Youth should be included in international organizations’ development activities in the early phases of projects when they can express their needs and thus develop ownership of the activities.
- Creating youth interest and management groups with specific emphasis on animal rearing, crop production, fishponds, handicrafts, etc., would greatly benefit the implementation of development activities.
Thank you