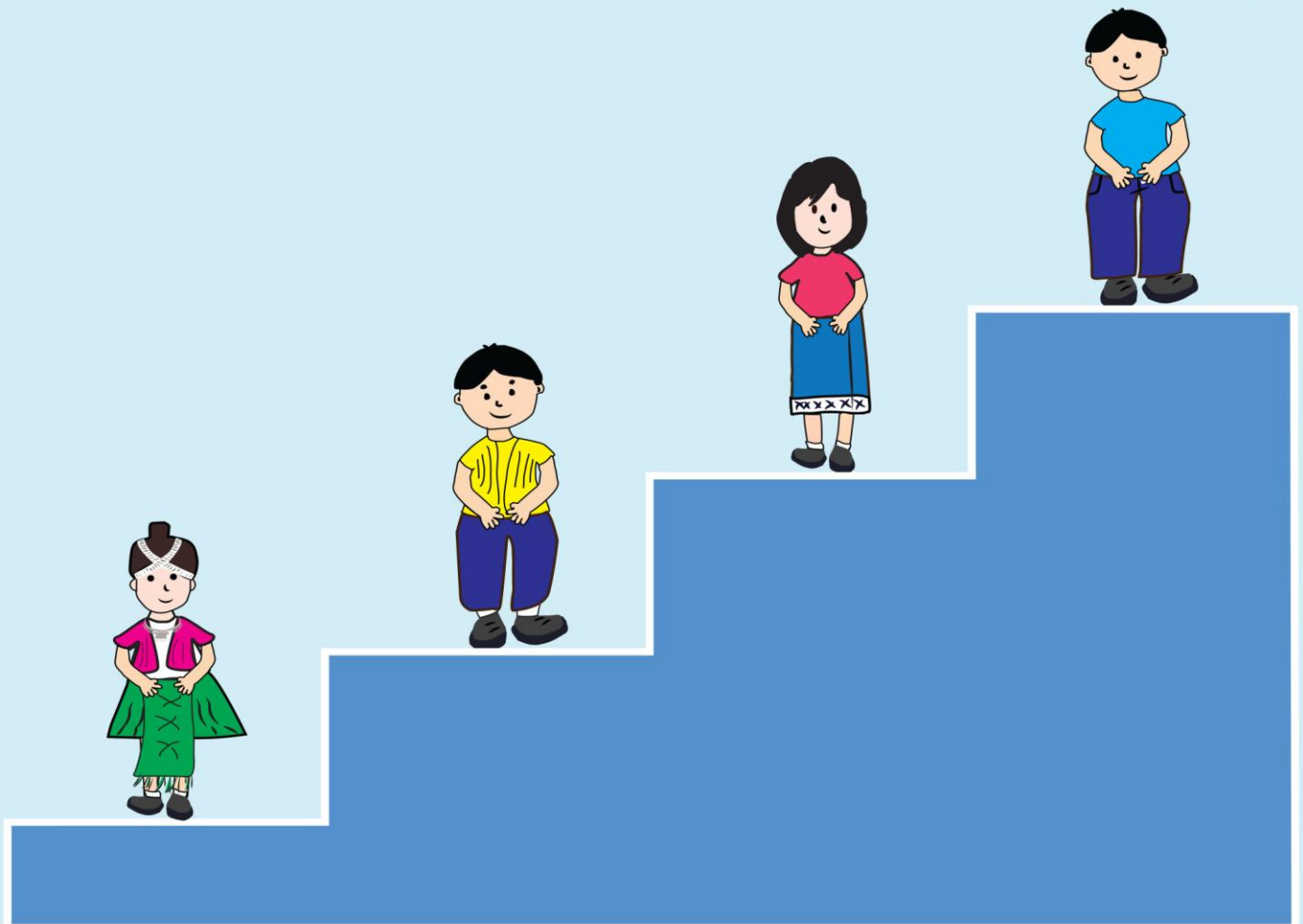




# Research Report

## Capacity Assessment Report CEDAW Implementation in Lao PDR



Association for Development of Women and Legal Education  
(ADWLE)  
Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR

June 2016

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## Acknowledgements

The capacity assessment of the CEDAW implementation in Lao PDR is part of the research programs of the SODA. Our research program has a strategic goal and mandate to promote gender equality and sustainable development as well as to reduce the poverty of Lao women. The main objective of this study is to explore key challenges, opportunities and recommendations for the elimination of all forms of disseminations against Lao women.

The team extends special thanks to Mrs. Inthana Bouphasavanh, Director of the ADWLE, and staff for their good supports throughout the assessment process and provided valuable comments to the draft report.

The assessment team wishes to thank all stakeholders involved in this study, especially INGOs, Non-Profit Associations (NPAs), line ministries and development partners for providing documents and information about CEDAW programs and activities.

We thank the leaders and technical staff of the Commission for the Advancement of Women in Champaack and Luang Prabang province for their coordination and support during the field data collection.

We have to express our appreciation representatives from the Lao Commission for the Advancement of Women, Lao Women's Union, Ministry of Education and Sport, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry for sharing their pearls of wisdom with us during the consultation meeting to present the preliminary research findings. We are also immensely grateful to the participants from the INGOs and Lao NPAs for their comments on an earlier version of the report

Finally we would like to thank the Swiss Government and its people for financial support of this assessment.

SODA team

## Abbreviations

ACSC	:	ASEAN Civil Society Conference
ACWC	:	The ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and the Protection of the Rights of Women and Children
ADB	:	Asian Development Bank
ADWLE	:	Association for Development of Women and Legal Education
APF	:	ASEAN People Forum
ASEAN	:	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CAW	:	Commission for the Advancement of Women
CBO	:	Community-Based Organization
CEDAW	:	Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
CLWU	:	Central Lao Women's Union
CLYU	:	Central Lao Youth Union
CRC	:	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSOs	:	Civil Society Organizations
DCAW	:	District Commission for the Advancement of Women
DPs	:	Development Partners
GDA	:	Gender and Development Association
HIV/AIDS	:	Human immunodeficiency virus / Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
INGOs	:	International Non-Governmental Organization
LNCAW	:	Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women
Lao PDR	:	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LECS	:	Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey
LNN	:	Lao NPA-Network
LSIS	:	Lao Social Indicator Survey
LWU	:	Lao Women's Union
MCAW	:	Ministry-level Commission for the Advancement of Women
MDG	:	Millennium Development Goal
MoES	:	Ministry of Education and Sport
MoLSW	:	Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare
MoJ	:	Ministry of Justice
MoPS	:	Ministry of Public Security
MOU	:	Memorandum of Understanding
NA	:	National Assembly
NCAW	:	National Commission for Advancement of Women
NCWC	:	National Commission for Women and Children
NGOs	:	Non-governmental Organization
NPAs	:	Non Profit Association
NSEDP	:	National Social Economic Development Plan
NTFP	:	Non-timber Forest Product
ODA	:	Official development assistance
OCAW	:	Organization Commission for the Advancement of Women
PCAW	:	Province Commission for the Advancement of Women
RTIM	:	Round Table Implementation Meetings
RTM	:	Round Table Meetings
RTP	:	Round Table Process
SDG	:	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAP	:	Southeast Asia Program

SNV	:	Netherlands Development Organization
SODA	:	Social Development Alliance Association
Sub-CAW	:	Sub-Committees for the Advancement of Women
SWOT	:	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TOT	:	Training of Trainer
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Programme
UNIAP	:	United Nations Inter-Agency Project
UNICEF	:	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
UNIFEM	:	United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
UNFPA	:	United Nations Population Fund
VAP	:	Vientiane Action Program
VAW	:	Violence Against Women
WC	:	Women's Caucus

## Executive Summary

This baseline survey was commissioned by the SODA for the ADWLE in Lao PDR. We interviewed 50 organisations including government agencies, INGOs, and NPAs. The field data collection and initial analysis were conducted in Vientiane Capital, Luang Prabang and Champasack province. The overall objective of this assessment was to review the CEDAW implementation capacity of key stakeholders.

The Government of Lao PDR has made progress in legislative, programmatic and process reforms aimed at fulfilling the Constitutional provisions that actualize the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, the adoption of advanced legislations is not sufficient and enforcement remains a key challenge. The Government also developed a number of strategic plans to promote the advancement of Lao women. After ratifying the CEDAW, many efforts have been made in Lao PDR to improve the situation of women in many sectors. Overall, stakeholders highlighted the fact that while women's active participation in socio economic development is being promoted, and equal access to public service deliveries have improved, barriers to women's full enjoyment of rights in Lao society remain. There is a long way to go before women are effectively able to exercise their rights.

There is low awareness at the grassroots level about CEDAW in Lao PDR. Even leaders of many INGOs and NPAs do not know about CEDAW. The possibility of involving NPAs in preparing the CEDAW report is limited. They have had no or little training on the Convention. There is little awareness of CEDAW at all levels of the government, and training of officials is needed. The gender information and sex disaggregated statistic for the CEDAW reporting process is difficult to access.

CSOs, particularly those working on women's rights or gender equality issues, have been playing an important role in the promotion of gender equality in the country. For example, women's advocacy organisations, especially those based at the national level, have been instrumental actors in advocating for gender mainstreaming initiatives including gender training, facilitation of women to legal services, addressing gender based violence, support income generation activities and conducting of the gender study for gender mainstreaming in the CEDAW frameworks. Although Lao CSOs have some roles to promote gender mainstreaming, they have many challenges. One challenge is about how to gain the recognition of their good reputation from the government, international communities and people. Insufficient human resources, weak governance, and limited technical expertise in CEDAW, are key constraints.

There are more than 100 local CSOs in Lao PDR. Most CSOs are operating their mandates to provide service deliveries to the local people. Very few CSOs are engaged in policy advocacy activities, especially in the CEDAW framework. The CSOs with a key mandate to promote human rights have their limited mandates and scopes to engage in political activities. CSOs generally have very weak relations with policy makers. The CEDAW platforms to coordinate, share information, debate gender issues with the Government is very limited.

The international organizations and development partners should support the Non Profit Associations, especially women's organizations, to strengthen their capacities and to enable Lao civil society to strengthen their advocacy approaches. There is a need to create synergies and strategic planning among key stakeholders and donors working in the CEDAW framework in terms of donor support and requirements, capacity building, and accountability processes.

Lao CSOs, especially NPAs, should ensure that they have professional staff and increase their visibilities to promote women's human rights. NPAs should provide a clear statement about facts and concerns in relation to the women's human rights in the country. More gender issues in the CEDAW framework should be studied. CSOs should further propose concrete and specific recommendations aiming to improve the situation of Lao women. The CSOs interactive dialogue with policy makers should be increased.

Despite having many laws related to gender promotion and the advancement of Lao women, there are inefficient and ineffective mechanisms to make these laws work at the grassroots level for women. There are very little funds available in the key stakeholders including the governmental budget to implement the law. It is necessary to create a comprehensive mechanism, provide adequate resources, and improve human capitals to implement those laws that relate the content of CEDAW at all levels, and to promote the meaningful participations of all stakeholders in policy and practice of the CEDAW work. Capacity building of gender mainstreaming for all stakeholders is very crucial for the successful CEDAW implementation.



## 1. Introduction

The report provides information on the current status of the CEDAW implementation in Lao PDR. It analyzes the roles of the Lao CSO in the CEDAW implementation and identifies the current status of the national machineries in gender mainstreaming and the challenges facing their operations and programming. Building on these challenges, the report provides a number of recommendations for the future interventions and to upgrade all key stakeholders and Lao NPAs to a stronger position to continue its mandate in promoting the rights of Lao women under the framework of CEDAW.

## 2. Objective

The aim of this assessment is originally to review the capacity of CSO, INGOs, DPs, and Government institutions to implement the CEDAW. The specific objectives of this study are:

- 1) To identify the policy, strategy, and programs undertaken by Lao NPAs, INGOs, Development Partners and the Government institutes;
- 2) To assess the capacity gaps and key challenges of these programs and strategies of key stakeholders, with focus on Lao NPAs capacity and opportunities; and
- 3) To find out the capacity needs of these stakeholders.

## 3. Methodology

The study team used a number of data collection methods which include a desk review of the key national legislations and gender policy related to CEDAW issues. The study team reviewed the documents and reports pertaining to CEDAW implementation in the Lao PDR.

For the first hand information, we interviewed 50 key informants from Government agencies, INGOs, NPAs, and development partners who are working on CEDAW and its related issues. The study team collected data and carried the field survey in three provinces in Vientiane Capital, Luang Prabang and Champasack province.

## 4. Current Status of Lao Women

### ***Female headed Household***

A small proportion (9%)<sup>1</sup> of all households in the Lao PDR was headed by women. Widowhood was the main reason for female headship but about a fifth of all female heads of household became de facto heads due to employment related migration of their spouses. Overall, female heads of householders were older and less literate than male heads of households. Female headed households were also smaller and subsequently the household labor force was less than male headed households.

### ***Women in Agriculture Sector***

The gender inequality between male and female headed households in the agricultural sector was evident in the agricultural land use, in both the size of the land plots and the number of plots. Female-headed farm households operated, on average, 700 square meters less agricultural land than male-headed households, a difference of 3.5 percent. For irrigated lands, female-headed farm households operated, on average, 400 square meters less than male-headed farm households, a difference of 5 percent. Consequently, female headed households have less diversified cropping patterns than male headed households. A very important source of gender inequality in the

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<sup>1</sup> LECS 5, 2013

agricultural sector is livelihood diversification and income. National level data shows that female headed households were less able to engage in livestock production as a source of livelihood as compared to male headed households. Female headed households received lower prices when selling livestock, regardless of the type of livestock. Also, substantially fewer female headed households were able to market grains as compared to male headed households. Further, female headed households were less engaged in fishery and forestry as income sources. Another relevant and important finding was that female headed households had less access to loans, especially formal loans to invest in businesses.

### ***Women in Education Sector***

Gender gaps persist at all levels of education and these disparities are worse amongst certain groups. The adult literacy rate for women (76%) remains lower than for men (90.7%) in the Lao PDR overall reflecting a legacy of gender bias in access to education. According to LSIS 2012, 68.7% of young women (age 15 – 24) and 77.4 % of young men were literate in Lao PDR. The literacy rate of young females in the poorest quintile was very low at 28.7% while the richest is the highest at 95.7%. Similarly there is a very large gap of literacy rate of young male between the poorest and the richest quintile at 48.9% and 95.5% respectively. There were also disparities in the literacy rates of females, especially females from ethnic groups, which continued to lag behind male literacy rates.

### ***Women in Employment Sector***

Lao women have one of the highest labor force participation rates in the region, and remarkably, male and female rates are almost equal. Female labor force participation was 76.3%, slightly less than men (78.9%) in 2011. The LECS 5 estimated the female labor force participation rate at 77.6%, slightly higher than men at 73.9% in 2012/2013. The labor market in Lao PDR is highly informal and agriculture-based. Within a total female workforce of 1.5 million, 1.1 million women or 72.3% were engaged in the agriculture and fishery sectors as their main activity and most of this work was in small-holder, family-run agricultural production. It is also interesting to note that the proportion of households participating in waged labor increased from 14% in 2007/08 to 17.8% in 2012/13 (LECS 5, 2014). Generation of employment for Lao labor in domestic positions and for labor export was successful in creating additional employment for 207,611 people, 100,585 of whom were females. In terms of sectoral breakdown, employment generated in agriculture employed 57,109 people, 26,396 who were females; in industry 95,313 people gained employment, 45,731 females; and out of 55,189, 28,458 are females in the services sector. The share of women in wage employment in non-agriculture sectors increased from approximately 20% in 1990 to 34% in 2010, which is still a relatively low representation of females. This may be attributed to the high proportion of women engaged in unpaid family work. Amongst service workers or shop and market sales workers, 63 % are women whilst 37% are men. This is a vulnerable sector, with a significant proportion of the workforce either self-employed or engaged in unpaid work for the family. Clearly a far greater proportion of unpaid family workers (65%) are women as opposed to men (35%). The male workforce is better educated than the female workforce and it can be observed that women are mostly in vulnerable, non-stable employment, self-employed or engaged in unpaid family work (65%) as compared to men (35%). About 33% of the male workforce has completed secondary education, compared to 25% of the female workforce. About 28% of the female workforce is uneducated, compared to 17% of the male workforce. Some 6% and 7% of employed men respectively have tertiary and technical school education, compared to 3% and 5% of employed women (LECS 5, 2013).

### ***Women in Governance Sector***

Lao PDR has amongst the highest proportions of women in national parliaments in the region. About 27.5 % (44) of parliamentarians are females. Therefore, it is clear that some progress has been made on women's participation in central government as of 2016. Out of 84 ministers' and ministerial equivalent positions, 12 or 14 ministers are females. Five females (8 percent) are members of the Central Party Committee. Out of 105 Vice Ministers and equivalent positions, 21 (16.6 percent) are filled by women. In all Government departments at the ministerial level, there are 71 female Director Generals out of 366 Director Generals (19 percent), and of 760 Vice Director Generals, 186 (24 percent) are women. However, these achievements are not mirrored at the sub-national level, where significant gender gaps persist. At the provincial level, there are no female Governors and out of 43 Vice-Governors only 3 are females. At district and village levels, women's representation is very low. For example, according to the

statistics from the Government's Office in 2014, there were only 145 female village chiefs from the total of 8,651 villages (2%), while deputy female village chiefs were 1200 out of 16,786 post holders accounting for only 7.0 % (NCAW, 2015).

### ***Poverty and Gender***

Lao women are poorer than Lao men in term of time poverty and work burden. The Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey (LECS) 5 showed the time use per day and person classified by gender. It points out that women sleep slightly less than men, 8.6 hours for women and 8.8 hours for men. The same situation prevails for eating, drinking and self-care, 2.6 hours for women and 2.7 hours for men. Women used 1.8 hours for household work while men spend only 0.3 hours. The rest of the time is mostly spent on non-household work: 3.9 hours per day for men and 4.7 hours per day for women. The effects of this domestic burden on women's economic opportunities are damaging and predictable but often neglected in policies aimed at increasing female participation in productive paid employment. First, the time burden of rural women's domestic unpaid work and the lack of substitutability of female labor in household work by men serve to limit women's choices with regards to accessing paid employment. Second, female time poverty contributes to unequal education outcomes which, in turn, hinder women from competing with men for more skilled, better paid jobs. In general, there is no big difference between female head of households and male head of household in term of asset ownership. However, male head of households own more tractors, mobile phone, and motor bike than female head of households. On the other hand, female head of households have more television and refrigerator.

### ***Women in Health Sector***

Despite positive trends in maternal and reproductive health service indicators, the country's progress towards this Millennium Goal is not on track. The country still has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the region, although the ratio declined from 405 in 2005 to 357 per 100,000 live births in 2013. From 1990 to 2013 the child mortality rate for children under 1 year of age reduced from 110 per 1,000 live births to 54 per 1,000 live births; during the same period the mortality rate for children under 5 years also declined from 160 to 72 per 1,000 live births. About 38 % of births were delivered in a health facility, the majority in public sector facilities (LSIS, 2012).

Over 90 % of women and men had heard of a modern contraception method. Both women and men were more familiar with modern methods of contraception (94% and 95%, respectively) than with traditional methods (68% and 69%, respectively). About 50 % of currently married women were using a method of contraception. The most popular method was the pill, used by 2 in 10 married women in Lao PDR; 42% of married women were using a modern method of family planning (LSIS, 2012).

The result of the current survey shows that about 10% of the population had suffered from a health problem during the last 4 weeks. The 2012/2013 survey shows that in general, the share of women and men suffering from long term illness is slightly more: women 2.3 % and men 1.9%. Women face particular challenges in accessing care because of restrictions on their mobility due to social norms and domestic duties, as well as costs and difficulties of transportation. About 52 % of the population lived in villages within 10 km of a hospital while 62.5 % were within 10 km of a health center in 2013 (LECS 5, 2013).

## **5. CEDAW reporting situation**

Lao PDR ratified the CEDAW on 14 August 1981 without reservation. It has not ratified the Optional Protocol. Lao PDR failed to submit its initial report to the CEDAW Committee until twelve years after ratification. Lao's initial report was due on 13 September 1982. Subsequently it should have reported in 1986, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, and 2018. The Committee received its initial report on 02 February 2003 and provided concluding comments in 18 August 2003. The Committee examined the combined 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Report in its forty-fourth session in July-August 2009.

During the examination session of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> CEDAW report of Lao PDR, the committee had the following concluding comments:

Table 1: Concluding observations by the CEDAW committee on 6 <sup>th</sup> and 7 <sup>th</sup> CEDAW report and action taken by Lao PDR		
Concluding observations	Action Taken by Lao PDR	Challenges
The Committee requests to include the definition of the term “discrimination against women” in the Constitution or in other laws which encompasses both direct and indirect discrimination and discrimination in public and private spheres, in accordance with article 1 of the Convention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not include the definition of “dissemination against women” in the Constitution, but it was mentioned in the Law on Development and Protection of Women.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dissemination of Law on Development and Protection of Women do not reached all people.</li> </ul>
The Committee urges the State party to take all appropriate measures to ensure that the Convention is sufficiently known and applied by all branches of Government as a framework for all laws, court verdicts and policies on gender equality and the advancement of women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dissemination of the Convention and other related laws were implemented, but mostly among institutions at the central level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of substantial knowledge on CEDAW.</li> <li>Very few CEDAW experts in the country.</li> <li>Limited budget for dissemination.</li> </ul>
The Committee urges the State party to strengthen its legal complaints system to ensure that women, especially women of ethnic groups, have effective access to justice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NA hotline provided during the NA session.</li> <li>LWU established the shelter centers in major provinces.</li> <li>A Lao NPA established a legal clinic to help the VAW victims.</li> <li>Lao Bar Association was established.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only well education of women can access to these services.</li> <li>The complaints system was not function well.</li> <li>Insufficient service for VAW victims.</li> <li>Laos does not have a comprehensive and effective system of receiving complaints, especially from women of ethnic groups.</li> </ul>
The Committee encourages the State party to familiarize all relevant officials with the concept of temporary special measures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not have relevant officials who familiarize with the concept of temporary special measures in Laos.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Misperception of temporary special measures.</li> </ul>
The Committee recommends that the State party expeditiously strengthen its national machinery, including the specific mandates and roles of the National Commission for the Advancement of Women and the Lao Women’s Union.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established LWU and Lao NCAW at the district level.</li> <li>Build new offices at the head office of LWU and training center of LWU.</li> <li>Improved human resources of LWU and Lao NCAW, especially recruitment of new leaders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not adequate human, financial and technical resources in LWU and NCAW to ensure coordinated implementation of gender mainstreaming policies and commitments with regard to its obligations under the Convention.</li> </ul>
The Committee urges the State party to take concrete steps to create and ensure an enabling environment in which civil society and women’s groups focused on gender equality and women’s empowerment can be established and conduct programmes and activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Laos has a decree on Lao NPA in 2009 and ongoing review of NPA decree and ODA decree.</li> <li>There are several NPAs were established which have the mandate to promote gender equality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less participation in CEDAW implementation including report writing process.</li> <li>Do not have focal points among many stakeholders for coordinating with partners to do this job</li> </ul>
It urges the State party to put in place without delay a comprehensive strategy, including review and formulation of legislation, to modify or eliminate traditional practices and stereotypes that discriminate against women, in conformity with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More than 10 laws related to women’s human rights revised and two new laws promulgated.</li> <li>Modified and developed the national strategic plan of LWU and Lao NCAW 2011-2015 and 2016-2020.</li> <li>Endorsed the 7<sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2011-2015 and 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2016-2020.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget and humane resources to implement these national strategic plans are not sufficient.</li> </ul>
The Committee urges the State party to give priority attention to combating violence against women and girls and to adopting comprehensive measures to address all forms of violence against women and girls, in accordance with its general recommendation 19.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Law on Prevention and Elimination of VAW 2014</li> <li>National Action Plan on Elimination of VAW 2014</li> <li>Build family development, village and district development related to gender equality promotion and elimination of women violence in family, especially to women and children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget and humane resources to implement these national strategic plans is not sufficient.</li> <li>Low public awareness on VAW</li> </ul>
The Committee urges the State party to adopt and effectively implement a comprehensive national action plan for combating trafficking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7<sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2011-2015 and 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2016-2020 include measures to address trafficking issues.</li> <li>Set up an inter-ministerial committee on trafficking in persons and labor issues and has recently tasked the MoLSW with negotiating another MOU with Thailand, regarding TIP specifically.</li> </ul>	The Government does not currently have a fully elaborated national action plan for human trafficking.

<p>The Committee recommends that the State party study the extent of prostitution in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and include in its next report sex-disaggregated data and information on the exploitation of prostitution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The research study on the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Lao PDR was commissioned through a joint collaboration between the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, UNICEF Lao PDR, UNIAP, Save the Children and World Vision</li> </ul>	<p>No many specific studies and surveys on prostitutes were implemented.</p>
<p>The Committee recommends that the State party pursue sustained policies aimed at the promotion of women's full and equal participation in decision-making in all areas of public, political and professional life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of female parliamentarians increased to 27.6 percent in the latest NA.</li> <li>• Number of female leaders in party position and government positions increased.</li> <li>• Number of female village leaders increased.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decision making in some sectors are dominant by male staff.</li> <li>• Sometime men do not accept women as capable leaders.</li> <li>• Women have low esteem and cannot express their own ideas and have low capacity to develop themselves.</li> </ul>
<p>It urges the State party to ensure equal access of girls and women to all levels of education, take steps to overcome traditional attitudes that in some rural areas constitute obstacles to girls' and women's education and retain girls in school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given the opportunity for women/girls to access to education as men do.</li> <li>• Promoted women staff for continuing their higher education study and participated in politics training.</li> <li>• Women staff was supported for upgrading their technical knowledge in higher levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literacy gap still persist in rural women and men.</li> <li>• Some husbands do not want his wife to continue in higher education study or do not want his wife to be a leader in their community.</li> </ul>
<p>The Committee requests the State party to ensure equal opportunities for women in the labor market, in accordance with article 11 of the Convention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted vocational training for women with disability and disadvantage people nationwide.</li> <li>• Small and medium enterprise development for the women developed.</li> <li>• Created female business associations and conducted the female entrepreneurship and market festival annually.</li> </ul>	<p>Rural women have less accessed to labor markets.</p>
<p>The Committee urges the State party to pay increased attention to female health throughout the life cycle, including by allocating the necessary resources for the implementation of various projects and programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women have more accessed to health care services</li> <li>• Vaccine drop service or vaccination service for women and children provided.</li> <li>• Provided the health care service for women and poor people in rural area.</li> <li>• Rural water supply system improvement</li> <li>• Expended the health care net works</li> <li>• Improve the quality of health care service for mother and children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maternal molarity rate is still high</li> <li>• Some women in rural area are relied on traditional livelihood system.</li> <li>• Little access to health care services by poor females.</li> </ul>
<p>The Committee urges the State party to adopt a comprehensive gender-sensitive migration policy and to continue to conclude bilateral agreements and memorandums of understanding with countries and regions to which Lao women migrate in search of work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies attempting to regulate the out-migration of Lao laborers to Thailand were developed in 2002.</li> <li>• The Tripartite Action to Protect the Rights of Migrant Workers within and from the Greater Mekong Sub-region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female migrations through an informal channels</li> <li>• Similar contexts of Lao and Thai cultures create enable conditions for migrations.</li> </ul>
<p>The Committee calls upon the State party to take the necessary measures to increase and strengthen the participation of women in designing and implementing local development plans, and pays special attention to the needs of rural women.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operate the Poverty Reduction Fund of the Lao Government</li> <li>• Women members in water user group have been trained.</li> <li>• Saving groups of LWU operated nationwide.</li> <li>• Implemented the Female leadership project of LWU.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government authority have low gender capacity in rural development projects</li> <li>• Ethnic langue barriers</li> <li>• Weak management capacity of saving groups when it becomes bigger and more formal.</li> </ul>
<p>The Committee requests the State party to provide, in its next report, a comprehensive picture of the de facto situation of vulnerable groups of women in all areas covered by the Convention and information on specific programmes and achievements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several small studies on vulnerable groups of women were implemented by local NPAs with supports from the UN and INGOs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Record of the de facto situation of vulnerable groups is not systematic.</li> </ul>
<p>The Committee calls upon the State party to strengthen its system of data collection, including the use of measurable indicators to assess trends in the situation of women and of progress made towards women's de facto equality, and to allocate sufficient budgetary resources for that purpose.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LECS, Population Census, Agriculture Census, and LSIS cover some aspects of gender information and sex-disaggregated statistics.</li> <li>• Gender analysis reports were written by Lao NPAs (SODA).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender indicators are not clearly identified.</li> <li>• Data flow from local to central level is delayed.</li> <li>• Budget allocation for this work is limited.</li> </ul>

## 6. National Policy on Gender

The Government of Lao PDR has made progress in legislative, programmatic and process reforms aimed at fulfilling the Constitutional provisions that actualize the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The female caucus of the NA has played a key role in new law development and amendment. Legislative reforms include the revised constitution in 2015, Revised Education Law in 2015, Revised Labour law in 2014, Law on Development and Protection of Women 2004, Law on Hygiene, Disease and Health Prevention in 2012, Law on Inheritance 2008, Revised Family Law in 2008, Law on Protection of the Rights and Benefits of Children in 2006, Law on Lao Women's Union in 2013, Law on Social Security in 2013, Law on Vocational Education in 2014, Revised Health Care Law in 2014, Law on Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children in 2015, and Law on State Employees in 2015. However, the adoption of advanced legislations is not sufficient and enforcement remains a key challenge.

The Article 12 of the Law on Development and Protection of Women mentions that “Professional and Skills Development focuses on creating conditions for women to receive professional training, to acquire skills and experience, and to have employment discipline so that women can have the same employment [opportunities] in society as men”.

In Lao PDR, the Labour Law stipulates that children under the age of 14 may not be legally employed; in addition to which, elementary school is compulsory. The law indicates that children aged 14 to 18 may be employed as long as work does not exceed 8 hours per day. Work from 22:00 hours to 05:00 hours is prohibited. In 2002, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare issued the regulation No 3824 on prohibition of unskilled labour exports in different type of jobs including domestic working.

The Article 101 of the Labour Law in 2014 states that the children from 14 to 17 years old may be employed, but they do not work overtime. If it is necessary, children of ages 12 and 13 may be employed for “light work” provided they shall not be required to undertake work that is unsafe, interferes with their schooling or vocational training or is dangerous to their body, psychology or mind.

Law on Resistance and Prevention from Violence against Women and Children: The President of Lao PDR has promulgated this law in May 2015. This law ensures that state, all societies and families are responsible to protect all women from the family violence and abuse, rape, sexual assault and other gender-based violence, and all society respect women's integrity and dignity. The law also ensure that victims are protected from labour disputed in the working places including enterprises and individual household.

The Lao PDR has made progress in the promotion and protection of the rights and interests of women and children. This reflects in the adoption and implementation of various strategies and programs relating to mothers and children. The National Commission for Mothers and Children has currently developed the National Strategy on Mothers and Children (2016–2020), the National Action Plan on the Protection and Elimination of Violence against Women and Children (2014–2020).

Besides these laws, the National Assembly continues to improve the Women's Parliamentary Caucus or Women's Caucus (WC) of the National Assembly that includes 44 women members. The WC has been playing an important role in gender mainstreaming. It reviews many laws related to gender issues, monitors laws on women and children, monitors the policy on gender equality towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Article 1 of the Law on Development and Protection of Women (2004) stipulates that “ The Law on Development and Protection of Women was issued to guarantee and promote the roles of women, to define the fundamental contents of, and measures for developing and protecting, the legitimate rights and interests of women, and to define the responsibility of the State, society and family towards women with the [following] aims[:] promoting the knowledge, capability and revolutionary ethic of women, [and] gender equality[:]; eliminating all forms of discrimination against women[:; and] preventing and combating trafficking in women and children and domestic violence against women and children, in order to [create conducive conditions for] women to participate and to be a force in national defense and development.”

The Article 177 of the Revised Penal Law (2005) also indicates that “any person who discriminates against women, or who excludes women, or prevents or restricts the participation of any women in any political, economic, social-cultural, or family activity, on the basis of sex, shall be punished by imprisonment from one year to three years and shall be fined from 1,000,000 Kip to 3,000,000 Kip” (Lao Kip). Article 128 on Sexual violence states that “Any person using force, armed threats, drugs or other substances, or other means to place a woman in a state of helplessness in order to have sexual intercourse with the woman against her will, where such woman is not the offender’s spouse, shall be punished by three to five years of imprisonment and shall be fined from 1,000,000 Kip to 5,000,000 Kip.” Article 129 of Penal Law (Child sexual violence) also states that “any person who has sex with a girl or boy aged less than 15 years old must be jailed from 1 to 5 years and fined from 2.000.000 to 5.000.000 kip.”

Article 2 of the Revised Family Law (2008) provides that “men and women have equal rights in all aspects pertaining to family relationships”; Article 5 indicates, “the state and society protect the interests of mothers and children in family life (when a married couple live together) and when a married couple separated or divorced.”

According to the Article 28 of the State Employee Law (2015), female employees are now entitled to 5 months of maternity leave for childbirth which can be taken after or before giving birth. In cases of multiple (twin) births, the maternity leave will be extended by 2 months. In cases of abortion occur between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy, the maternity leave will be 3 months; in cases of abortion occur after 6 months of pregnancy, the maternal leave will be 5 months; in cases of caesarean section, the maternity leave will be 6 months.

The government has considered that education is the core of human resource development. The Revised Education Law (2007) aims to enable all people to have access to education without any discrimination, ensuring the rights and obligations of the citizens in the field of education. Article 6 indicated that all people of the Lao nation have equal rights to participate in education. There should be no differentiation because of ethnicity, religion, sex, age or socio-economic status.

The Government of Laos developed the 7<sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2011-2015 and 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2016-2020 which include gender elements of several sectors. Table 2 indicates gender targets in the national development plans.

Table 2: Key gender targets in the National Development Strategies <sup>2</sup>	
7 <sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2011-2015	8 <sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2016-2020
Reduce maternal mortality to 260 per 100,000 live births	Maternal mortality rate reduced to 200/100,000 live births
Increase attended birth rate (with nurse assistance) to 50% of all women giving birth	Increase attended birth rate (with nurse assistance) to 60% of all women giving birth.
Increase the number of women receiving training in agricultural technologies, processing, handicraft and services to 20%.	Increase the number of women receiving training in agricultural technologies, processing, handicraft and services to 50%.
Attempt to increase number of women who are high ranking officials to more than 15%.	Women should comprise at least 20% of leadership and decision making position in party-state organizations and mass organization
Increase the number of women who are members of the National Assembly to more than 30%.	Increase the number of women who are members of the National Assembly to at least 30%.
Increase the proportion of women in the paid workforce to 40% – all things being equal, women will be given priority when awarding jobs.	Increase the proportion of women in the paid workforce to 44% – all things being equal, women will be given priority when awarding jobs
<i>Sources: 7<sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2011-2015 and 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2016-2020</i>	

## 7. Government agencies

### 7.1. Key mandate and activities

Established in 2003, The Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women (NCAW) is mandated to define national policies, strategies and programs for the development and promotion of women. NCAW is responsible for formulating and implementing national policy for the advancement of women as well as mainstreaming gender in all sectors. Sub-Committees for the Advancement of Women (Sub-CAW) units have been established throughout the country across ministries, state organizations, and at provincial and district levels, creating a broad network of gender focal points. Currently NCAW is finalizing the next strategic plan 2016-2020. The strategy is aimed at reducing poverty, relying on the important role played by the Lao women in the society. The effective participation of women, especially poor and ethnic women, is thus essential for the country to both reduce poverty and improve living standards. Currently, the Lao NCAW has completed the establishment sub-CAWs at every level such as in 14 ministries, 15 organizations (OCAW), and in 17 Provinces (PCAW), and each Province also has organized the District Commission for the Advancement of Women (DCAW).

The Government has strengthened the organization and human resources of the National Commission for Advancement of Women (NCAW) at all levels to improve the coordination mechanism (in particular in the Secretariat responsible for implementing work plans, coordination, monitoring, assessment and summarizing reports systematically and continuously). NCAW increased advocacy and raising awareness across society. It focused on monitoring and supporting implementation, and collecting information on the situation and requirements at the local level. It also developed policies and ensured the participation and contribution from all people, including women and children, in the development process and implementation and monitoring of legislation and policies related to women and children.

Aside from the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women (Lao NCAW) and the Central Lao Women's Union (CLWU), other organizations that have functions and responsibilities for gender mainstreaming and protection

<sup>2</sup> For detail indicators, please see the annex



of women's and children's right and benefits include the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC), the Central Lao Youth Union (CLYU), and ministries such as the Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES), the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MoLSW), the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Public Security, and the Central Lao Front for National Construction. These organizations operate from the central to local and grassroots levels, in developing and implementing the sectoral national action plan to promote gender equality.

While the CLWU and the Lao NCAW are the core mechanisms, there is coordination with multi-sectors and national organizations - both state and private sectors, nongovernmental and other international organizations, to implement and develop the National Action Plan to prevent violence against women. They are organizing workshops to disseminate the laws on women protection and development of measures to speak out on violence against women. At the same time, they warn women and their families on the effects of violence so that women and youth will understand and apply the law on women and children rights and protection, and be informed about the facts of violence including the statistics and actual cases of children and Lao migrant workers who have been victims of violence.

Previously, the Lao NCAW and LWU worked together in parallel efforts at all levels on the promotion of gender mainstreaming and advancement of women and children rights and protection. These organizations also created a network from the central to the local provinces, districts to village levels and continued the dissemination of the laws and Prime Minister's decrees mandating the implementation of laws, regulations and legislations especially on laws on the development and protection of women, family law, penal law, etc. at both national and rural community levels. These aim at raising awareness and education of Lao women in multi-ethnic communities so that they understand the laws and refrain from violence against women within their family and community.

The LWU is a mass organization equivalent to a ministry. It has an organizational structure that extends from the central to the grass-root levels. It is mandated to protect the interests of women and children by upholding its role in forging solidarity among the Lao multi-ethnic women, to educate women about their rights and national duties. LWU has its own Law, mandate and regulation, Law on protection and development of women. The LWU uses these legal documents to operate and actively contributes to the implementation of national socio-economic development as well as to actively promoting the implementation of policies on gender equality and the advancement of women with an aim to improving the living standard of all Lao people, particularly the Lao multi-ethnic women. Currently LWU is developing the Five Year National Plan 2016-2020, Strategic Plan 2025 and Vision 2030.

After submitting the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> combined periodic report to the UN CEDAW Committee in 2008, Lao PDR has continued to promote and strengthen national and local organizations concerned with the advancement of women. Special efforts were done to strengthen the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women (NCAW) and the Lao Women Union (LWU) to mainstream gender issues into various sectors. To write the CEDAW report, the government has established the national committee to oversee the process which includes the NA member, NCAW, LWU, MoFA, MoJ and other line ministries. The following table highlights key mandates, activities and achievements in the CEDAW implementation in Lao PDR.

Table 3. Key mandates, activities, and achievements of national machineries and government agencies	
Key elements	Mandate and activities
Institutionalization, policy, strategy, and plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developed the National Vision 2030 and strategy for gender equality (2016-2025).</li> <li>2. Endorsed the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (2006-2010), (2011-2015), and 2016-2020.</li> <li>3. Localized the CEDAW contents to become the national policies, strategies, and programs.</li> <li>4. Organized the MDG 2015 and SDG 2030 localization workshop and consultation process.</li> <li>5. Set up and increase the budget for the Commission for the Advancement of Women (CAW) at central, province and district level.</li> <li>6. Coordinated among government agencies and international agencies, NGOs, and NPAs to implement CEDAW work</li> <li>7. Endorsed an inclusive education strategy and ensured gender balance in enrollment in all level of education</li> <li>8. Increased the educational level and improved the literacy rate of women</li> <li>9. Promote the technical and gender equality in the health sector. There is the policy on maternal leave when women give birth, sick leave and health care.</li> <li>10. Considered to upgrading positions for the women, participate in decision process, participate in leading process, and etc.</li> <li>11. Promulgated Lao Women's Union Law, Education Law, Law on Protection and Development of Women , Family Law, and Land Law.</li> <li>12. Supported more staff for participation in the politic and technical training course.</li> <li>13. Gender equality promotion, job/occupation promotion and vocational development</li> <li>14. Developed programs and projects for empowerment of women</li> <li>15. Developed health care policy and social insurance and improved health access for women</li> <li>16. Promoted more girl enrollment in school, more vocational training for women</li> <li>17. Formulated three builds policy with a number of gender elements.</li> <li>18. The Government increased more budgets for gender work of the national machineries and line departments.</li> </ol>
Knowledge, Training, awareness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dissemination of CEDAW, laws and regulations related to promotion of gender equality at the central, province and district level.</li> <li>2. Capacity building/propagate/training and awareness raining activities conducted on CEDAW to CAW members in each levels and society</li> <li>3. Upgraded knowledge on laws/regulations for women.</li> <li>4. Create the activities for CEDAW awareness on the impact of women and children violence for the people on the national stop women violence day celebration.</li> <li>5. Organized awareness rising of children and their parent to go to school as well as provide facility for their study.</li> <li>6. Organized media programs such as magazines, radio, and television broadcasting which deliver gender messages.</li> <li>7. Disseminated the role and responsibility of PCAW, LWU at provincial, district and villages level.</li> <li>8. Organized good health and VAW campaign at all levels</li> <li>9. Training on three builds and four break through which include some gender elements.</li> <li>10. Conducted skill and vocational training for female groups and entrepreneurs.</li> <li>11. Integrated CEDAW contents and other human rights into the curriculum in the Faculty of Law and Political Science in the NOUL.</li> <li>12. Established the student club to debate about CEDAW and gender issues.</li> </ol>
Research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. LWU was responsible for the first to fifth CEDAW report writing and submission. LNCAW is responsible for the sixth to ninth CEDAW report writing and submission. Secretariat office of NCAW Lao is responsible for focal point in coordination for CEDAW report writing</li> <li>2. CAWs at different levels and sectors collected data and information on results of policy implementation for national CEDAW report writing.</li> <li>3. Organized the consultation meeting to present the draft report with stakeholders.</li> <li>4. Published the final CEDAW report and disseminated/ contributed from central level to local levels, propagate in the meeting events, website of LNCAW and link to other relevant website.</li> <li>5. Conducted the research related to CEDAW, such as National VAW survey, LSIS, and LECS.</li> </ol>

Direct assistance to local women in community development projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase a number of female staff and leaders (deputy district governor, head or deputy head of divisions, head or deputy head of sections and etc.).</li> <li>2. Provided the opportunity for women/girls in access to education. Number of qualified staff with bachelor degree, master degree, and PhD degree increased.</li> <li>3. Built family, village and district development with focus on elimination of VAW. This activity is related to competition slogan " Love Nation and Development"</li> <li>4. Village fund establishment, social insurance (free health care service), sick leave, give birth leave, etc...)</li> <li>5. Help female victims from human trafficking and vocational training provided for them.</li> <li>6. Established the microfinance group for women and promote easy access to the loan for their children education.</li> <li>7. Assist rural women in access to health care facility and transportation support, including social insurance and social protection</li> <li>8. Enhanced vaccine service for children. Number of women and children received vaccine is increased.</li> </ol>
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**7.2. Capacity gaps**

The Government of the Lao PDR has committed themselves to participate in and ratify international treaties. They have actively implemented those treaties to promote the progress and to protect the rights and interests of the multi-ethnic Lao women, accordingly with the special features and realities of the Lao PDR. However, due to lack of experience and human resources, the bulk of international treaty obligations have not been transformed into sustainable and effective national legislative and administrative activities. Currently, knowledge of CEDAW is confined mainly to senior government officials or senior members of the mass women’s organization, the Lao Women’s Union (LWU). There is a need for greater public advocacy and training of district officials, to encourage greater awareness of CEDAW and of women’s human rights in general.

Although the mechanisms for gender mainstreaming at national and local level have already been established, it is necessary to continue to build their financial and administrative capacities with a view to increasing their effectiveness and efficiency. The strengthening of institutional mechanisms will be conducted through training and through the coordination of their actions, and especially by encouraging and building the network of gender equality focal points in line ministries, and increase working partnerships with Lao NPAs. Table 4 identified key challenges of the CEDAW implementation by the Government agencies.

Table 4: Key challenge and constraints of national machineries in different activities	
Key elements	Capacity problems
Institutionalization, policy, strategy, and plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Unclear understanding on CEDAW in many organizations at central and local level.</li> <li>2. Confused the difference between the role and responsibilities of NCAW Lao and LWU.</li> <li>3. Unclear coordination between Lao NCAW and LWU line agencies.</li> <li>4. The organizational structure of NCAW is not fully completed, especially at the district line agencies. Some staffs did not understand well on CAW duty, role and responsibility.</li> <li>5. Knowledge and understanding of CEDAW is limited.</li> <li>6. Not enough policies for the poor and unemployed women.</li> <li>7. Limited number of staff who are responsible for gender mainstreaming at provincial and district level.</li> <li>8. Some provincial and district staff have never heard about CEDAW.</li> <li>9. Coordination capacity at national and international levels is poor.</li> <li>10. English language is one of the barriers for communicating with international organizations, especially at local level.</li> </ol>
Training, awareness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Training and workshop on CEDAW include only a basic content and not cover the substantial contents and lack of the continuous learning process.</li> <li>2. Budget use for propaganda and dissemination of CEDAW content at all levels is limited</li> <li>3. Knowledge on CEDAW of decision makers and leaders in some organizations are poor.</li> <li>4. Knowledge on CEDAW of the CAW secretariat staffs is low in general</li> <li>5. Training and awareness raining activities are mainly depending on budget support from international agencies/projects.</li> <li>6. Many CAW offices in line agencies at the district level do not have sufficient knowledge about CEDAW.</li> <li>7. Many villagers do not understand the contents of CEDAW and inconsistency of the CEDAW implementation.</li> <li>8. Do not have a qualified TOT team on CEDAW and lack of CEDAW training experts.</li> </ol>
Research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Capacity for CEDAW report writing of their staffs at different levels and sectors are limited and depending on technical support from outside.</li> <li>2. Lack of data for CEDAW report writing and data transmission from local to national is delayed.</li> <li>3. Limited budget allocated to use for data collection and report writing</li> <li>4. No or little training on data collection, reporting, monitoring and evaluation.</li> <li>5. Lack of research design skills for CEDAW reporting.</li> <li>6. Low participation in CEDAW report writing and consultation at the province and district level.</li> </ol>
Direct assistance to local women in community development projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Some women in rural area do not want to upgrade their knowledge (do not want to continue in higher study)</li> <li>2. Some cases husband do not want his wife to continue in higher education study or do not want his wife to be leader in their community</li> <li>3. Some women are not committed themselves to upgrade their knowledge.</li> <li>4. The gender promotion is not good done enough.</li> <li>5. Gender stereotype and old mind set are still prominent in rural areas.</li> <li>6. Low number of female extension staff in remote areas.</li> <li>7. Lack of budget to support local activities for women.</li> <li>8. Mostly decision making in some sectors are dominant by male staff.</li> <li>9. Lack of knowledge on how to work with ethnic minority women/groups</li> <li>10. Some of women in rural area and community are relied on traditional livelihood style.</li> <li>11. Sometime men do not accept women capacity in some aspects.</li> <li>12. Women do not express their own ideas and low self-esteem</li> </ol>

## 8. Lao Civil Society/Non Profit Associations (NPA)

### 8.1. Key mandate and activities

Lao CSOs are at an early stage of development and very slowly growing. In April 2009, the Prime Minister signed the Decree on Associations, allowing for central registration of local associations for the first time. It requires all organizations to re-register under the new scheme. According to a 2009 study, there were only about 20 experienced NPAs capable of handling small grants funds. There are currently about 100 NPAs operating in Lao PDR. Lao NPAs are almost focused on delivering development programs in sectors such as agriculture and rural development, health, natural resource management, environment, education, and gender. In recent years Lao NPAs have also begun to participate in policy debate, especially through the Round Table national planning mechanism.

Gender and Development Association (GDA), formerly known as Gender and Development Group, is a well-known local network of organizations working on gender issues. It has been operational since 1991 under the umbrella of various hosting organizations. While GDA's main role remains in building networks and capacity of INGO staff on gender issues, it also offers consultancy and training services to other organizations, including government agencies. Other Lao NPAs which involve in CEDAW work are ADWLE and SODA. Based on many interviews with Lao NPAs, table 5 highlighted key activities of the CEDAW implementation by Lao NPAs.

Key elements	Mandate and activities
Institutionalization, policy, strategy, and plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Translated and localized some articles of CEDAW and disseminate it with local laws.</li> <li>2. Mainstreamed the CEDAW provisions with other human right treaties such as integration of the rights of women with disabilities and elimination of violence against women with disabilities.</li> <li>3. Formulated the work plan based on CEDAW contents.</li> <li>4. Participated in the NSEDP 2016-2020 formulation process and raises the gender issues.</li> <li>5. Participated in the roundtable meeting process and raised gender issues in related thematic sectors.</li> <li>6. Created an informal CEDAW promotion group and discussed about CEDAW.</li> </ol>
Knowledge, training and awareness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Some NPAs were aware of the convention which was ratified by government. Gender promotion and anti-violence of women and children and elimination of all forms discrimination against women are important issues which needed more discussions.</li> <li>2. Mainstreamed gender issues and elements into the technical trainings of different sectors such as in agriculture production (cash crop cultivation, tree planting, medicine tree planting, traditional tea and coffee plantation).</li> <li>3. Organized the vocational training for women with disabilities and other disadvantaged people nationwide</li> <li>4. Supported more vocational training and workshops such as tailor workshop for more income generation activities.</li> <li>5. Awareness raising/knowledge on reproductive health and gender.</li> <li>6. Disseminated laws related to CEDAW contents for disadvantaged people in remote areas.</li> <li>7. Disseminated the CEDAW in their organizations.</li> </ol>
Research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participated in the CEDAW report writing process in 2013.</li> <li>2. Participated in training on CEDAW report writing (organized by UNDP in collaboration with GDA).</li> <li>3. Conducted a number of gender studies<sup>3</sup>, such as gender and poverty research, the Baseline Study of the Status of Women and Children in Rural Areas in Lao PDR, gender baseline study in agriculture sector, and gender in mining sector.</li> <li>4. Published the gender profile in the natural resource sector.</li> <li>5. Organized trainings and workshop on gender research.</li> </ol>

<sup>3</sup> Conducted by SODA

Direct assistance to local women in community development projects.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supported organic farming practices, job creation, and income generation activities for females.</li> <li>2. Improved the quality of health care service for mother and children.</li> <li>3. Provided mobile reproductive health care service.</li> <li>4. Expanded the health care networks and supported the health equity fund for elderly and women.</li> <li>5. Enhanced rural water and sanitation for women.</li> <li>6. Implemented the projects to support NTFP female producers.</li> <li>7. Applied a gender sensitive approach during the village development planning and promote women participation at village level.</li> <li>8. Improved women access to information through multimedia channels like ICT materials, booklet, poster, CD, recorder.</li> <li>9. Mediated the VAW conflicts in order to reduce violence against women and children.</li> <li>10. Organized the trainings and workshops on technical and political topics for women in both short term and long term courses.</li> <li>11. Provided the legal assistances for disadvantaged women in remote areas.</li> </ol>
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## 8.2. Capacity gaps

The NPAs have faced many challenges to overcome the weak and vulnerable management and organizational issues. Institutional capacities such as human resources, strategic leadership, financial management, infrastructure, program and process management approaches are all about the ability to use the resources, systems and processes to carry out the work of their mandate. Most of the organizations interviewed have not been long standing, and consequently are not been able to survive all these challenges without the donor supports. There has been often limited funding, staff turnover, lack of institutional memory due to key staff and leadership change, the needs of donors driving some agendas, and lack of their own membership and development ideology.

The NPAs interviewed have been extremely limited resources. They do not have staffs with strong capacity to write the project proposal. Their operational mandate to implement the CEDAW is also restricted and weak. The NPA's participation in policy debate is very limited. Therefore, the NPAs need to be engaged in CEDAW policy dialogues in order to create more political space for their advocacy activities and outcomes. This could be developed by following the current national approaches and mechanisms to increase more women's organizations in the RTM, UN/DP and Government policy meeting. This will allow NPAs an opportunity to seek out strategic entry points such as those undertaken on gender mainstreaming and women advancement support. More systemic advocacy should be undertaken with a long-term strategy rather than participation in CEDAW report writing process. Regarding the improvement of CEDAW knowledge and skills, respondents requested more training on how to localize the CEDAW contents into their own work plans and mandate. Strengthening women's networks and fostering collaboration and cooperation between women's NPAs and other stakeholders is a priority.

Some NPAs consulted requested more expertise and training on how to use the CEDAW contents and concluding observations more effectively, and how to monitor the implementation of CEDAW. A number of respondents are very clear that they want local expertise to be built so that they could become their own CEDAW experts.

Table 6: Key challenge and constraints of Lao Non-Profit Associations	
Key elements	Capacity Problems
Institutionalization, policy, strategy, and plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overall operation of the association is weak and many organizations do not have sufficient capacity to develop the long term strategic plan.</li> <li>2. Do not know how to write the project proposal to implement the CEDAW.</li> <li>3. CEDAW is a sensitive issue and do not involve in this activity.</li> <li>4. Some NPAs do not include CEDAW work in their work</li> <li>5. Do not have plans to engage in CEDAW work and involved in the technical or specific sector only.</li> <li>6. Do not participate in CEDAW strategy planning.</li> <li>7. Only a small number of women's organization involved in CEDAW issues.</li> <li>8. Lack of clear policy and law enforcements, especially land lost due to the impacts from FDI projects.</li> </ol>
Knowledge, training, awareness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Some NPAs staffs don't know about CEDAW , women's human rights and disability.</li> <li>2. Dissemination of CEDAW, gender issues and other human rights issues at grass root level is limited.</li> <li>3. Lack of CEDAW training materials.</li> <li>4. Lack of training and study visit opportunities.</li> <li>5. Lack of gender perspective, gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting.</li> <li>6. Lack of information and challenges in sharing the information needed to support women's organizations to participate in planning activities.</li> <li>7. No regular and active participatory system in CEDAW meeting</li> </ol>
Research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have limited or no knowledge on CEDAW report writing and report dissemination</li> <li>2. Lack of gender analysis skill.</li> <li>3. Lack of CEDAW impact study in their development agendas.</li> <li>4. Could not apply gender sensitive data collection during the field survey.</li> <li>5. Lack of access to sex-disaggregated data.</li> </ol>
Direct assistance to local women in community development projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Women could not express their opinions at the public meeting.</li> <li>2. Limited training on CEDAW for local officers.</li> <li>3. Lack of field operation manual and tools use for CEDAW implementation at the grassroots level.</li> <li>4. Do not have gender focal point for coordinating with partners to promote CEDAW at the village level.</li> <li>5. Poor coordination among project stakeholders to promote gender equality.</li> <li>6. Culture and gender stereotype which prevent women in access to local public access.</li> <li>7. Local authorities and communities do not know how to write the project proposal for supporting of women livelihood activities.</li> <li>8. No time for women to participate in the local community work.</li> <li>9. Gender work was not mainstreamed in community projects.</li> <li>10. Many NPAs are at risk of cancelling their activities because of lack of funding.</li> </ol>

## 9. International Organizations (INGOs and Development Partners)

### 9.1. Key mandate and activities

Currently, there are 18 out of 75 INGOs which are implementing 24 projects relating to gender issues<sup>4</sup>. Their projects involved in family planning, nutrition and food security, primary education, rehabilitation and reintegration of women victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation, natural resource management, land use planning, micro finance and capacity building. International NGOs and DPs have played an important role in strengthening and supporting national organizations and groups focusing on gender issues in Lao PDR. With financial supports from development partners,

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<sup>4</sup> INGO network



many of INGOs have collaborated with local NPAs<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, gender mainstreaming procedures and institutionalization of gender inside the INGOs have implications on organizational development of NPAs. For example, NPAs may use the same gender policy and gender guideline from INGOs.

Many INGOs have adopted the language of gender mainstreaming. However, few studies have documented the impacts of these gender mainstreaming policies in practice. There are 21 projects from 15 NGOs who have organized a number of gender training and workshops. Gender mainstreaming toolkits were also developed by a number of INGO such as SNV, Care International, Oxfam, VFI, and Helvetas. These INGOs have a significant number of years in mainstreaming gender.

The INGO Working Group on gender led by Care International plays an important role in monitoring policy and practice on women and CEDAW. This informal network has created the opportunities for gender discussions among INGO members, NPA decision makers, and international development organizations working on gender initiatives at the national and local levels. However, this network is lacking of the real gender experts to facilitate the consultation process.

INGOs have their own development agendas. These organizations, whether fully or partly concentrate their efforts on promoting women's condition in Lao PDR in different aspects. In some cases, there are duplications of activities. A number of INGOs operating in the field have been implementing donors' gender policies and agendas, which were not necessarily linked to the government policy. Another shortcoming associated with the activities of the INGOs in term of addressing gender issues, is the lack of their own gender capacity and relied on independent consultants. The priorities include continuing cooperation with INGOs, NPAs and Government agencies through targeted projects focused on community development activities with gender sensitive approach, raising gender awareness and educating various special interest stakeholders. It is important to continue work on informing the public about international human right instruments, CEDAW, and other national laws dealing with gender equality.

Table 7: Key mandates, activities and achievements of INGOs and other international organizations	
Key elements	Mandate and activities
Institutionalization, policy, strategy, and plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Localized the content of CEDAW into the organizational strategic plan and vision.</li> <li>2. Provided supports for the CEDAW implementation in some sectors.</li> <li>3. Developed a joined work plan with sectors for information dissemination on gender equality.</li> <li>4. Capacity building of Lao NPAs in gender mainstreaming.</li> <li>5. Advocated for gender issues in land policy dialogues.</li> <li>6. Operated an informal gender network and organized a regular gender discussion.</li> <li>7. Carried out policy advocacy to mainstream gender elements in some sectors such as, water, hydropower, mining, education, health and natural resource management.</li> </ol>
Knowledge, training, awareness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A large number of NGO projects have organized the meetings which include gender elements and discussing topics related to the empowerment of women.</li> <li>2. Twenty one INGOs organized many training workshops in their community development projects which include women as main target groups. The gender session was part of technical workshops such as HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and tuberculosis diseases, drug and smoking control, health care, business, natural resource management, land and income generation activities.</li> <li>3. NGO staff members highlighted a variety of activities that have been used to increase awareness about gender inequality such as attending gender training workshops.</li> <li>4. A number of projects developed media tools and disseminated gender information through a number of media channels such as television, newsletters, radio and newspapers.</li> </ol>

<sup>5</sup> About 85 % of INGO projects have a sub contract with NPAs.



Research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provided comments to CEDAW report, but not participated in writing report process.</li> <li>2. Conducted a number of gender research and surveys on sex-workers, labour migration, human tracking, local governance, and mining.</li> <li>3. Capacity building support to build research capacity of national machinery (LWU)</li> </ol>
Direct assistance to local women in community development projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provided special supports to help victims of VAW and human trafficking</li> <li>2. 24 projects within 18 INGOs have a significant or outstanding project activities related to gender and empowerment of women. Their activities are mother and child health, education, food security, nutrition, UXO, human trafficking, income generation activities, child protection and right based empowerment.</li> <li>3. Facilitated women's access to the new technology for agriculture including organic crops cultivation, livestock rearing technique, animal disease protection/vaccination.</li> <li>4. Supported to establish female network and facilitated to various resources for business development.</li> <li>5. Improved value added in agriculture sector such as coffee production, maize, different kind of food processing.</li> <li>6. Improved access to micro finance by enhancing the female saving groups.</li> <li>7. Facilitation of women in access to legal clinics.</li> </ol>

## 9.2. Capacity gaps

Many INGOs stated that it was often difficult for them to establish dialogue with the government agencies. Most INGOs have a limitation to promote an effective advocacy for women's rights. In some cases, it works only if NGOs have worked closely with government representatives or national women's machinery. All INGOs acknowledged the challenges of accurate data collection for the CEDAW report. Table 8 shows the key challenges of INGOs in CEDAW implementation.

Table 8: Key challenges of INGOs in CEDAW Promotion	
Key elements	Capacity Problems
Institutionalization, policy, strategy, and plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of an effective advocacy for women's rights.</li> <li>2. There is an absence of leaders who are champions in influencing policy making for gender equality.</li> <li>3. Lack of legal framework or affirmative action for women.</li> <li>4. Not work directly with specific CEDAW projects.</li> <li>5. Many INGOs do not have a clear strategy or plan to support the CEDAW implementation.</li> <li>6. Very few ethnic female staffs and few women were hired at senior management level and the majority of NGO staff members were men.</li> <li>7. Not clear gender budgeting in their programme.</li> <li>8. Long process and pending project approval by the Government</li> <li>9. Lack of accountability to women beneficiaries and lack of capacity to design the project activities to the need of women.</li> <li>10. Lack of funding to turn these CEDAW policies into action.</li> <li>11. Low commitment at the organizational and individual levels to address gender inequality.</li> </ol>
Knowledge, training, awareness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do not have capacity to organize CEDAW workshops.</li> <li>2. Little gender information dissemination.</li> <li>3. Ethnic language barriers in dissemination of information and training.</li> <li>4. Weak partnership mutual learning, collaboration, information and resource sharing among NGO, NPA and Government on gender concerns.</li> <li>5. Do not have knowledge and right understanding on CEDAW.</li> <li>6. Deep structures of organizational life which prevent gender mainstreaming; patriarchal culture which marginalizes women and women's interests; as well as organizational ideologies, value systems, structures, and management styles which promote masculine cultures.</li> </ol>
Research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No participation in CEDAW report writing.</li> <li>2. Lack of basic gender-related data.</li> <li>3. Little gender impact study/assessment of the project.</li> <li>4. Sharing information on gender is weak.</li> <li>5. Low capacity to assess the gender implications of the planning, design, development and implementation for any activity, decision or project undertaken. NGOs have to rely on external consultants.</li> </ol>
Direct assistance to local women in community development projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do not have gender specialists to implement the project.</li> <li>2. Budget and human resources is very limited.</li> <li>3. Remoteness and isolated rural areas which is difficult for women to participate in project activities.</li> <li>4. Lack of good female ethnic model in development cooperation.</li> <li>5. Gender stereotype and diversity of ethnic cultures.</li> <li>6. Low education among female ethnic groups</li> </ol>

## 10. National and Regional Network for CEDAW

### 10.1. National Network

In Lao PDR, the Round Table Process (RTP) instrument serves as a national platform for the strengthening development partnerships and accountability of government, INGOs and development partners on development agenda. The RTP brings together all of the development partners, INGOs and the Lao PDR Government and its institutions. The RTP works through the High Level Round Table Meetings (RTM), Round Table Implementation Meetings (RTIM), and ten Sector Working Groups (SWGs). RTIM operates through a number of SWGs, as they promote sectoral work and bring together government line ministries, INGOs, NPAs and DPs. Unfortunately, gender mainstreaming capacity of these working groups are very weak and quite often gender issues were not included in the meeting agenda.

UN Women has been working towards women's empowerment and gender equality in Lao PDR since 1993. UNDP supported the LWU to establish the Gender Resource Information and Development Center and conducted a large number of gender training and workshops for a thousand government staff since 2000. UNFPA has supported the reproductive projects and support the Lao Statistic Bureau to carry out the Reproductive health survey and LSIS. UNICEF supports the girl education, child protection, and water and sanitation projects. UN Women supports NCAW and LWU to write the current CEDAW report. UNIFEM helped to strengthen the capacity of the Lao Women's Union and provided support for the establishment of the national women's machinery.

The INGO Network has 75 members and maintains a comprehensive online directory of INGO members and their projects. The INGO Network promotes the interests of CSOs, coordinates and provides services to its members, to enhance their contribution to the development of Lao PDR. The INGO network website includes a current list of sector working groups and their contact people. Many INGOs operates their mandates based on their thematic focus. Unfortunately, only few INGOs have strong background on gender mainstreaming and women empowerment such as Care International, Oxfam, and Save the Children. INGOs have also operated an informal gender network meeting. However, their scope is still limited.

Civil society's formal relationship with government is evolving. Although some INPOs are officially represented in the formal donor partnership mechanisms, the Round Table Process (RTP), or in the sector working groups associated with the RTP, Lao NPAs are still silent in formal development coordination. Even through, many INGOs have strong technical relationships with line agencies and provincial and district governments, their project approvals and decisions can take a long time due to the fact that the relevant government actors are not sure how to classify INGO assistance.

The Lao NPA-Network (LNN) is an informal network of Non-Profit Associations (NPAs) involved in development work in the Lao PDR. The LNN was set up in early March 2009, with the objective of sharing information and promoting effective and efficient work practices. The LNN maintains a website and an office in Vientiane. The Lao NPA has not fully developed a formal self-governance standards or mechanisms. Still many NPA are operating its mandate without a full registration which limits their program/project implementation. Moreover, the women's organizations have a low CEDAW capacity.

During the study period, information was collected from about 75 non-governmental organizations and 50 NPAs working in the field of community development activities. A majority of the organizations are working in community development projects including education, health care, natural resource management and income generation activities. There were also quite a number of organizations working for women. However, there were few specialized organizations working with gender issues. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis of the gender mainstreaming approach are presented in table below.

Table 9: SWOT Analysis of Lao CEDAW capacity

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Law on Lao Women's Union.</li> <li>2. Law on Development and Protection of Women in 2004</li> <li>3. Law on Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children in 2006</li> <li>4. 10-year Women's Development Strategy (2016-2025).</li> <li>5. Five-year Lao PDR Women's Development Plan (2016-2020)</li> <li>6. Five-year Lao PDR Women's Development Plan (2011-2015)</li> <li>7. National programs on prevention and anti-human trafficking.</li> <li>8. Decree on the organization and functioning of the National Steering Committee against Human Trafficking No.156/PM (8 September 2008).</li> <li>9. Order of the Prime Minister regarding increase in the prevention and solution for social drawbacks No. 27/PM (5 October 2011)</li> <li>10. Criminal Law revised in 2005</li> <li>11. Donor supports to the past NSEDP 2011-2015.</li> <li>12. Several national machineries developed and expended.</li> <li>13. The status of Lao women is getting better, such as, less poverty, higher education, reduction of maternal mortality rate, more employment opportunity, better social welfare, increased female businesses, more access to finance, more female leaders and etc...</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A lack of health services for women, particularly in rural areas, and a frequently inadequate service delivery system (access, coordination, communication, referral, monitoring and evaluation).</li> <li>2. Women's Organization and other Civil Society Organizations (NPAs) have limited opportunity to be involved in the planning of gender mainstreaming, strategic plan and national consultations.</li> <li>3. Donor spending for gender is unclear because donors are more focused on the service delivery level to all people and have gender blind approach.</li> <li>4. No effective monitoring and evaluation systems have been established to assess the impact of service provision;</li> <li>5. There is a weak capacity of line ministries that actively promotes gender equality.</li> <li>6. Few NPAs have a clear understanding of CEDAW which in turn results in the adoption of inappropriate advocacy and campaigning strategies.</li> <li>7. There is limited access to legal service to women in provinces, districts and villages, particularly in remote and poorest areas.</li> <li>8. Manpower in gender mainstreaming is deficient at primary level and there is a lack of in-service training at all levels.</li> <li>9. The sex-disaggregated data and reporting system has not yet been adequately developed to provide quality data for informed policy development.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The 2015 Lao PDR Constitution provides an opportunity for women or women rights to become enshrined;</li> <li>2) The Education Law, Health Care Law, Labor Law and other laws include some provisions for gender mainstreaming.</li> <li>3) The Government will defend the next CEDAW report which will create an opportunity to follow up on the Committee's concluding comments.</li> <li>4) The CSO Networking and collaborating with the ASEAN countries will help to develop the better CEDAW capacity.</li> <li>5) The CSO are keen to establish effective partnerships with relevant ministries to advance to promote gender issues.</li> <li>6) The Lao government is finalizing the National Strategic plan 2016-2020 and key strategic plans of line ministries can include gender elements.</li> <li>7) SDG localization creates more debate on gender issues.</li> <li>8) The key strategic plans of line ministries can include gender issues, such as inclusive education, health equity fund, poverty reduction fund have included some activities for the persons with disabilities.</li> <li>9) Lao NPA is growing and can be an option for capacity buildings.</li> <li>10) There are more private sectors engaged in charity work, especially donations for the disadvantaged female groups compared to the past decades.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Many agencies and Lao society at large perceive gender issues in terms of social issue and not in terms of human rights.</li> <li>2) There is still high level of discrimination against women.</li> <li>3) Cultural beliefs and stereotype about gender still have deep roots in Lao PDR.</li> <li>4) The current inefficient administrative infrastructure will frustrate the implementation of effective disability policy and service.</li> <li>5) The government has very limited budget for gender work.</li> <li>6) Unclear measures and inadequate promotion of women advancement.</li> <li>7) Weak enforcement of laws and regulations in the real situation.</li> <li>8) The functioning of the labor market including: lack of jobs for women, low employment, and low levels of vocational guidance.</li> <li>9) The unavailability and lack of skilled/trained staff in many rural areas.</li> <li>10) Lack of correct understanding of gender issues in different cultural system of 49 ethnic groups.</li> <li>11) Basic infrastructure and transport barriers - such as difficult road access due to mountainous and remoteness of Lao rural society.</li> </ol>

## 10.2. Regional Network

**The CEDAW SEAP program:** The CEDAW SEAP program is a platform to support CEDAW capacity development in the ASEAN region. It is to institutionalize commitments and capacities that would strengthen CEDAW/gender-sensitive in planning, policy and law making, and service delivery, including access to justice, particularly of the most marginalized women. This is a CEDAW regional dialogue among policy makers on the implementation of CEDAW in conjunction with Beijing Platform for Action. The program covers eight countries including Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Myanmar, Timor Leste and Viet Nam. The Regional Program "Improving Women's Human Rights in Southeast Asia" focuses on knowledge generation and exchange, stock taking, and priority setting for advancing the implementation of CEDAW in the region.

In Lao PDR, CEDAW Southeast Asia Program (SEAP) has been active in building the government's capacity to implement CEDAW, both through the NCAW and by encouraging CEDAW implementation throughout governmental structures. CEDAW SEAP provided crucial support to the government in submitting its first state report in 2005.

However, CSO's participation in CEDAW SEAP activities are still limited. It is recommended that more involvement of CSOs into a process of reviewing CEDAW and its integration into national machinery.

**ASEAN Commission on the Rights of Women and Children:** The ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and the Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) is an ASEAN regional human rights institution established in 2010. It is an intergovernmental commission comprising 20 representatives, two from each of the ASEAN ten Member States. ASEAN first called for the establishment of a commission on the rights of women and children in the 2004 Vientiane Action Program (VAP). In 2009, this Commission was included as part of ASEAN's community-building plan - the "Roadmap for the ASEAN Community (2009-2015)". ACWC's TOR defines ACWC's purpose, mandate and functions. ACWC's primary purpose is to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and children in ASEAN. ACWC is tasked with upholding rights contained in the Convention on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which all ten ASEAN Member States have ratified.

**ASEAN Civil Society Conference (ACSC) / ASEAN People's Forum (APF):** The Regional Consultation on ASEAN and Human Rights was established in response to ASEAN's decision to establish a human rights body. The Regional Consultation on ASEAN and Human Rights was designed as a parallel forum to the regular ASEAN meeting on the establishment of an ASEAN Human Rights Body (now AICHR). Today, this forum is organized as a parallel to the AICHR or ACWC meetings. ACSC/APF is an annual/ regular forum of CSOs in ASEAN Member States, which is held as a parallel meeting to the ASEAN Summit of Heads of State. The meeting is hosted by civil society in the country that holds the ASEAN Chairmanship. Participants of this forum come from civil society organizations, NGOs, people's organizations, and people's movements. In this meeting, CSOs bring up broad issues from different sectors and concerns, such as human rights, development, trade, environment, youth, and culture, affecting many countries in the region. The ACSC/APF also features a forum through which participants can better understand the host country from the perspective of civil society. Although, a small number of Lao NPAs participated in this forum annually, their participation has to be approved by the Government.

## 11. Key challenges of the CEDAW implementation

During the consultation process with key stakeholders, key informants were asked about key challenge of the CEDAW implementation. Lack of knowledge and no training on CEDAW are the most challenges as cited by 68 % and 66 % of the respondents respectively. Many respondents said that they do not participate in CEDAW report process accounting for 64%. About 64% of them do not know how to promote the CEDAW and 62% said that they do not have the CEDAW tools and guidelines. Lack of policy debate on CEDAW and gender issue was cited by 30 respondents or 60 %, especially key informants from Lao NPAs. There is a low awareness of CEDAW. For examples, about 54% of participants said that CEDAW is a sensitive issue and therefore they do not want to engage in this work. In addition, about 38% said that CEDAW is not important for their activities.

Table 10. Key challenges of the CEDAW implementation in Laos (N=50)		
	Count	%
Do understand about CEDAW	34	68
No opportunity for CEDAW training	33	66
No participation in CEDAW report	32	64
Do not know how to promote the CEDAW	32	64
Do not have the CEDAW tools and guidelines	31	62
Lack of policy debate on CEDAW and gender issue	30	60
No gender training	29	58
Weak machinery to promote the CEDAW	29	58
Lack of gender mainstreaming manual	28	56
CEDAW is a sensitive issue	27	54
Lack of sex disaggregated statistics	26	52
Do not have a clear policy on gender mainstreaming	25	50
Culture and gender stereotype	24	48
Not enough budget and resources	23	46
Weak coordination among stakeholders	22	44
CEDAW is not important issue	19	38

Source: Interviewed with 50 organizations (Multiple responses)

## 12. Capacity needs of key stakeholders

Based on interviews and meetings with key stakeholders, budgets and resources needed are the most important issue for 66% of the respondents. Secondly the majorities of key informants (58%) are interested in policy debates on CEDAW and gender mainstreaming. A large number of them needed more gender trainings (56%). Demand for gender manual, more research on CEDAW are very crucial for CEDAW work as cited 54% and 50% of respondents respectively. About 13 participants or 26% are not interested in CERAW activities and do not want to engaged in any activities related to CEDAW.

Ongoing capacity building and technical assistance of INGOs and civil society was requested by many interviewees. This assistance however should not just focus on CEDAW. At the other human rights treaties and conventions could be used as a framework and a tool for intervention. Many INGOs have limited gender mainstreaming capacity in their own community development project. Technical assistance and capacity building is urgently needed to address this gap so that their staff can integrate gender elements in the project cycle management including baseline survey, project design, implementation and gender impact assessment.

Table 11. Capacity needs for key stakeholders

	Count	%
Budgets and resources	33	66
CEDAW tool and guideline	31	62
Involvement in policy debate and planning	29	58
More gender training	28	56
Gender mainstreaming manual	27	54
More research on CEDAW and gender	25	50
More CEDAW training	24	48
Raise social awareness on gender equality	24	48
Improve the national laws	23	46
Enhance coordination among stakeholders	22	44
Need gender consultants	18	36
Need an opportunity for CEDAW report	15	30
More sex disaggregated data	14	28
Improve policy on gender mainstreaming	13	26
Do not need any engagements	13	26

*Source: Interviewed with 50 organizations (Multiple*

## 13. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 13.1. Conclusions

The Government of Lao PDR has made more working progress to achieve its obligations under the CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and others. There are indications that the Government is doing relatively well on the legal and policy framework aimed at ensuring equality between women and men. However, there still remain significant challenges towards achieving equality in the various spheres of women's lives. Of significance is the lack of implementation of the different policies and laws to enhance women's lives in the actual situation. In addition, CEDAW implementation was heavily depended on the shoulder of LWU and NCAW.

Implementation of the CEDAW programs aimed at achieving gender equality in Lao PDR are affected by the lack of coordination between key stakeholders including line ministries, INGOs, NPAs, and DPs. Most stakeholders lack of gender skills and tools to promote CEDAW activities. Gendered stereotypes and roles are a contributing factor to the inequalities of women and men which obstructs the promotion of CEDAW. Insufficient CEDAW expertise and gender capacities are visible in most INGOs and NPAs.

## 13.2. Recommendations

- 1) Make legislation regarding NPA registration progressive and approve more women's organizations.
- 2) Establish a network of all stakeholders including government, NPAs, INGO, private sector, and DP representatives, to develop indicators to monitor implementation of the national action plan and to prepare a monitoring CEDAW report.
- 3) Making more strategic use of 2030 Sustainable Development Goal's localization processes to mainstream gender perspectives.
- 4) Provide policy support for CSOs to raise funds and mobilize local and international resources for women's rights and gender equality.
- 5) Due to the capacity limitation of Lao NPAs, it is recommended that women's organizations develop partnerships with other stakeholders, especially with UN agencies to monitor women's human rights issues and to ensure that women's rights are included in the national development agenda and reports.
- 6) Develop clear programs and projects aim at capacity building of CEDAW implementation for various key stakeholders including NPAs, INGOs, and Government agencies.
- 7) Carry out more comprehensive studies on impacts of law enforcement on female life in order to take additional measures to remove all forms of discriminations against women.
- 8) Increase the involvement of Lao NPAs in NSEDP development and policy debate on gender and women issues.
- 9) Increase budgetary allocation for the implementation of gender related programs, projects, and activities.
- 10) Fast tracking the operationalization and implementation of the National Gender Policy which should inform government planning and programs.
- 11) Increase awareness amongst government officials that gender is not a women's issue only and that it is a cross cutting issue in development planning.
- 12) There is an urgent need to have more feminist lawyers (women and men) in the country. In addition to increasing the numbers of female lawyers, it is critically important that male lawyers and other judicial actors in the system – judges, prosecutors, legislators – receive gender training and training on women's human rights, including CEDAW.
- 13) Both NGOs and government needs to strengthen the system of data collection, including use of measurable indicators, budget allocation, and the use of sex segregated data in all sectors. Data also needs to be disaggregated by sex and ethnic group, rural and urban areas, state and division level. More information is required on the situation of Lao women and men in all sectors.
- 14) Increase legal access for disadvantaged females.

## **Annex: Gender Indicators in the framework of the NSEDP 2016-2020**

1. Ensure the proportion of women leadership and decision-making level positions in the party, Government and mass organizations is 20 percent or above.
2. Increase the number of female members of the VIII the National Assembly by 30 percent.
3. Increase the number of women in leadership positions in the Party-Government organizations and mass organizations by at least 30 percent.
4. Implement 50 percent of recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
5. Implement 70 percent of the national action plan for prevention and elimination of violence against women and children by 2020.
6. Fertility rate of young women between 15-19 years reduced to 90 percent.
7. Increase the proportion of villages that apply gender equality policy and are violence free at the household level, particularly violence against women and children, to 80 percent
8. Increase the number of female farmers who receive vocational and technical trainings and training on new technologies to 45 percent of all trainees.
9. Ensure gender equality in opportunities for business for their livelihood including land, capital, technical upgrading on new technology and infrastructure (electricity, roads and markets).
10. Reduce discrimination and violence against women.
11. Ensure women participation in decision making at family and community.
12. Increase the proportion of women who receive political training to 80 percent.
13. Increase the proportion of LWU members who are educated in political theory, constitutions, laws, treaties, international agreements relating to the development and protection of women, gender equality, and national traditions and culture to 80 percent;
14. Increase LWU membership to 70 percent of women of 15 years old and older.
15. Establish LWU committee in 20 percent of the total business units – private sector.
16. Promote women to management level positions .at village (10 percent), district (15 percent), provincial (15-20 percent) and central Government department (30 percent) levels.
17. In sectors where women account for more than half, promote women position to account for 40 percent or more in the leadership - management level;
18. Increase the proportion of female students graduating from secondary school to 85 percent.
19. Encourage poor women to access health services to reduce maternal and child mortality rates.
20. Increase the proportion of poor women with vocational education, skills and stable employment to generate income.
21. Establish LWU Fund in 25 percent of total LWUs at each level to improve the livelihood of women and families.
22. 90 percent of LWU establishments to conduct activities related to patriotism and development.
23. Reduce early marriage in women.
24. Achieve gender equality in services such as education, health and social welfare, with at least 40 percent of the total number of service providers being women.
25. Increase awareness of all people in society, especially women and children, at risk from the negative impacts and effects of human trafficking.
26. Legally punish perpetrators and protect victims of human trafficking. Improve cooperation to reduce and eradicate human trafficking across the country.
27. Reduce maternal mortality rates to 200/100,000 per live births.
28. Employment generation 4.47 million (Female: 1,982,831)
29. The numerator is the percentage of women of reproductive age (15-49 years old) who are currently using, or whose sexual partner is currently using, at least one modern contraceptive method. The denominator is the total demand for family planning (60%).



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