



Lao PDR

Lao PDR is expected to [graduate](#) from Least Developed Country (LDC) status in 2026. The economy continues to expand, with GDP growth [projected between 5-6%](#) in 2026. However, it is still an economy driven by consumption rather than productivity. For instance, agriculture employs 70% of the [workforce](#) but contributes only 16.8% to the [GDP](#). Similarly, while 97% of [households](#) have access to electricity, its use in production and enterprise is minimal.

Human development outcomes reflect these structural gaps. Rural poverty affects 18.3% of households, 33% of [children](#) are stunted, and maternal mortality stands at 112 per 100,000 [births](#). Only 61.8% continue into [lower education](#), and just 37.1% reach [upper secondary](#), with many turning to migration in search of work. Health risks compound these socioeconomic pressures. Although most households have access to improved water sources, 72.3% of [drinking water](#) is contaminated with E. coli, revealing a gap between infrastructure coverage and service quality.

SNV has worked in Lao PDR since 1993, collaborating with partners to develop and tailor approaches that promote sustainable and equitable development. Today, SNV contributes to advancing equitable livelihoods and resilient agri-food, water, and energy systems, particularly in areas with high rural poverty, limited employment opportunities, and health vulnerabilities—in alignment with the government's 10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) and Vision 2030.



More than 230K people gained access to climate-resilient WASH services in the Savannakhet Province (2023-2025)



25 percentage points drop in households without toilets from 38% to 13% (2011-2023)



7.7 percentage points reduction in stunting among children under five (2016-2024)



3,000 jobs created in the improved cook stove supply chain spanning production, distribution, and retail (2023-2025)

Responding to the climate crisis

Lao PDR faces intensifying climate hazards, with one in four households affected by floods, droughts, or post-harvest losses. In 2024, 360,000 hectares of forest were lost, roughly equal to 180 million tonnes of CO₂. Over 90% of [households](#) still rely on solid biomass for cooking, driving up indoor and outdoor air pollution, causing 6,000 [premature deaths](#) annually. Rice yields remain below targets due to land degradation.

The Government of Lao PDR is scaling CO₂ reduction solutions that align with national climate goals and attract results-based finance. Recent policies, including the Climate Change Decree, National Green Growth Strategy 2030, and REDD+, create opportunities for climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy, resilient water systems, and biodiversity protection. SNV works with the government to enhance water access and use for households and agriculture, promote clean cooking, and strengthen irrigation and clean energy solutions. By linking systems with better water management, fostering carbon markets, and improving adaptive behaviours, SNV's integrated approach advances biodiversity conservation while supporting sustainable, low-emission livelihoods.

CRRWASH | Savannakhet Province | 2023-25 | €1.1M

The Towards Climate Resilient Inclusive Rural WASH Services (CRRWASH) programme raised the climate resilience of WASH services for 230,035 people. It targeted key rural challenges such as open defaecation, unsafe water, and poor hygiene practices to increase the resilience of communities to climate risks.

Investment in climate-resilient and safely managed WASH services was critical as intensifying droughts and floods threaten to contaminate water sources and damage sanitation facilities. Working with partners, the programme introduced flood-resistant toilets and reinforced containment systems to prevent faecal sludge from leaking and polluting groundwater and agricultural land vital for food security and income. Building local capacity to anticipate and respond to climate shocks, CRRWASH ensured that essential WASH infrastructure remains functional during floods and droughts, securing the long-term health of rural communities.

Partners: DFAT (Australia), Ministry of Health – National Centre for Environmental Health and Water Supply, SNV, and Lao Women's Union



Clean Cooking Promotion | Vientiane and Savannakhet | 2023-25 | €1.8M

Since 2016, the Improved and Clean Cooking Promotion initiative has promoted nationwide adoption of smoke-free cooking technologies. Some early initiatives included a result-based financing scheme that enabled households to purchase advanced biomass cookstoves, reducing costs and saving firewood.

The 2023 phase of the programme disseminated 373,000 cookstoves, particularly targeting approximately 6,000 low-income households in two provinces, under the government's leave-no-one-behind framework. The programme piloted the smoke-free village concept in ten communities and introduced electric stoves wherever possible. It strengthened supply chains, supported institutional stoves in schools, and built local capacity for clean cooking technologies. Through its activities, this initiative reduced emissions and saved trees, contributing to improved health and broader sustainable socio-economic development.

Partners: Endev, Ministry of Energy and Mines, SNV, and ARMI

Clean Cooking Promotion highlights, 2023-25



25 villages in Savannakhet, Vientiane, and Luang Prabang piloted the SFV concept and created jobs



+2K households adopted clean cooking solutions



20 suppliers onboarded into SNV's eCooking promotional campaigns



300K improved cookstoves distributed through a market-based approach

Accelerating inclusive development

While progress has been made in aligning national priorities with inclusive and climate-resilient development, ethnic minorities, women, and rural communities continue to face limited access to basic services, markets, and decision-making. Human capital remains low, with a [national index](#) of 0.46, affecting competitiveness and economic participation. Fragmented service delivery, inadequate infrastructure, and weak coordination further widen the gap.

To this end, national priorities now increasingly emphasise locally led approaches, SME support, and equitable resource access. More inclusive reforms in land use planning, decentralised governance, and nutrition-sensitive agriculture are gaining traction, supported by increased donor interest and alignment with SDG targets.

SNV is responding to these challenges by deepening focus on gender and inclusion outcomes while offering support to develop better land use policies, advocate for improved extension services, and influence value chain strategies. Through collaboration with national and local institutions, SNV also helps strengthen coordination, promote regulatory standards, and enable affordable private sector service delivery.

Transboundary River Basin Management

| Lao PDR and Vietnam | 2025-26 | €1M

Fragmented governance, limited local participation, and climate vulnerability hinder the development of climate-resilient management strategies for transboundary river basins, which in turn impact water quality, availability, and the health of ecosystems. This initiative promotes capacity building, joint planning, and inclusive approaches to enhance coordination between national and local actors across two river basins.

Key activities include stakeholder mapping, institutional assessments, capacity development, and the development of transboundary diagnostic river-basin assessments. Women, youth, and ethnic minorities are actively engaged in data collection and the use of participatory tools.

In doing so, this approach ensures that climate adaptation planning and decision-making are evidence-based, locally tailored, and rights-based—aligned with national policies on climate change and water resource management.

Partners: EEI, IUCN, and SNV

BLF | Khammouane and Attapeu | 2023-25 | €1.3M

The Biodiverse Landscapes Fund (BLF)—Lower Mekong programme supports sustainable economic opportunities in landscapes that are vulnerable to degradation. Operating in two provinces known for their biodiversity value, BLF promotes environmental stewardship and inclusive opportunities in land ownership and resource rights to advance long-term biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, and the sustainable management of natural resources.

Over 400 households in Khammouane participated in BLF's free, prior, and informed consent consultations, which were adapted to local languages and cultural norms—achieving 99% community consent and 39% participation by women. Through the initiative, more women were empowered to secure joint land titles, and several people living with disabilities demanded tailored support to engage in broom-making and rattan craft-making. These initiatives, which enable more equitable resource-sharing and decision-making, are contributing to a shift in the status of groups who have historically been marginalised.

Partners: DEFRA, FFI, IUCN, and SNV

"Through the training on fodder cultivation and the exchange visit to Phoukout District in Xiengkhouang Province, I learned new ways to improve animal raising and better manage feed for my cattle."

Mrs. Thongma Phomphanan
Farmer working on a plot in Soppeng Village



Strengthening governance and institutions

Momentum is building in Lao PDR to localise gender equality and climate governance initiatives. National strategies increasingly prioritise land use planning, decentralised service delivery, and consumer protection. These present opportunities to strengthen institutional accountability, inter-agency coordination, and enabling environments that facilitate alignment between national and local governments.

However, at the subnational level, resource and capacity constraints, along with fragmented inter-ministerial coordination, slow policy implementation in sectors such as water, SME development, and land use. At the same time, enabling opportunities are emerging, with donors increasingly supporting locally led solutions, gender equality and social inclusion, and climate governance.

SNV leverages these opportunities and fosters trust and collaboration across stakeholders. It also works with private sector actors to increase their involvement in advancing the country's development agenda.

National eCooking Strategy | Nationwide | 2025 | €140K

While grid electrification in Lao PDR exceeds 95%, most households rely on biomass for cooking. This causes [severe indoor air pollution](#), leading to approximately 7,000 premature deaths annually and an economic loss equivalent to 3.5% of GDP.

Together with SNV and funding from Modern Energy Cooking Services (MECS), the Government of Lao PDR is developing a National Electric Cooking Strategy to set a clear policy direction, mobilise stakeholders, and outline a roadmap for scaling electric cooking solutions. By promoting electric cooking, the strategy aims to reduce health risks, lower emissions, ease the burden on women and children, and contribute to SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy for All.

Partners: EnDev, Ministry of Energy and Mines, Provincial Departments of Energy and Mines, MECS, and SNV

ENUFF | Oudomxay and Huaphan | 2016-24 | €8.2M

The Enhancing Nutrition of Upland Farming Families (ENUFF) project contributed to reversing malnutrition and poor health outcomes in remote upland communities across 60 villages, where governance systems were fragmented and access to services was limited. The programme placed subnational governance at the centre of its strategy—embedding District Nutrition Committees and Village Nutrition Teams in policy dialogue on issues such as water fee collection, livestock vaccination, and sanitation promotion.

ENUFF also catalysed lasting governance reforms by strengthening multisectoral coordination and planning. Similar models have since been replicated in 120 villages under an Asian Development Bank-funded initiative. However, sustaining these governance mechanisms remains a challenge, as over 90% of their operational budget still depends on donor funding. Continued domestic resource mobilisation and government commitment are essential to maintain momentum and ensure long-term impact.

Partners: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Ministry of Health – National Nutrition Centre, SNV, and Lao Women's Union

ENUFF highlights, 2016-24



60% of households met minimum dietary diversity in 2024, up from 44% in 2020



49 out of 56 gravity-fed water systems equipped with household metered connections



96% of households in target villages gained access to pour-flush toilets



96% of interviewed mothers adhered to exclusive breastfeeding practices

SNV is a global development partner deeply rooted in the African and Asian countries where we operate. With 60 years of experience and a team of approximately 1,600 people, we strengthen capacities and catalyse partnerships that transform agri-food, energy and water systems. Working on the core themes of gender equality and social inclusion, climate adaptation and mitigation, and strong institutions and effective governance, we tailor our approaches to different contexts to achieve large-scale impact and create sustainable and more equitable lives for all.

Contact SNV in Lao PDR

Alex Grumbley | Country Director | laos@snv.org

Visit the SNV website for an overview of our projects in Lao PDR.

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