



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Tenth periodic report submitted by the Lao People's
Democratic Republic under article 18 of the Convention,
due in 2022*,****

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** The annexes to the present document may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



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Abbreviation

NCAWMC	The National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children
LWU	Lao Women's Union
NSEDP	National Socio-Economic Development Plan
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADWLE	Association for Development of Women and Legal Education
ARV	Antiretroviral Drug
CAT	Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Degrading Treatment
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CO	Concluding Observation
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
ILO	The International Labor Organization
ICCPR	International Convention on Civil and Political Rights
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
GDA	Gender Development Association
GIZ	The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
LAOSIS	Lao Statistic Information Service
LDC	Least Developed Country
MCH	Maternal and Child Health Center
NA	The National Assembly
NCA	Namjai Community Association
PPA	The People's Provincial Assemblies
RMNCAH	Reproductive Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health
SDG	Sustainable Development
SOS	SOS Children's Village
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UNFPA	United Nation Population Fund

Chapter I

Introduction

1. The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1981. In 2017 the Lao PDR submitted the 8th and the 9th Periodic Reports on the implementation under the CEDAW in response to the recommendation in the Concluding Observations of the CEDAW Committee. The Lao PDR has successfully submitted three additional sub-reports namely: Women's Education Paragraph 36 (B), Women's Health 40 (E) and Rural Women 46 (A).

2. The 10th Periodic Report follows the recommendations in the Concluding Observations to the 8th and 9th Periodic National Reports, including information on the implementation of policies to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women by focusing on the promotion of women's advancement, gender equality, and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in all aspects and the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Action Plan, including the implementation of the SDGs.

3. In the process of drafting this report, the National Commission for the Advancement of Women and Mothers and Child (NCAWMC) has mandated to help the government in disseminating the CEDAW and the Concluding Observations (COs) of the CEDAW Committee on the 8th and 9th Periodic Reports on the implementation of the Convention in the Lao PDR such as the Prime Minister's Office has issued Notice No. 475/PMO/2019 regarding the guidelines for the implementation of the COs of the CEDAW Committee on the 8th and 9th Periodic Reports on the implementation of the CEDAW in the Lao PDR; the NCAWMC published a book on the COs to the 8th and 9th Periodic National Reports in both Lao and English and distributed it to all stakeholders at the central and local levels such as the National Assembly, the Judiciary, the Mass Organizations, the Development Partners, and Social Organizations to increase understanding in the implementation of obligations under the CEDAW to ensure that it is incorporated into various policies, strategies and work plans of the sectors, as well as the determination of measures for actual implementation. Sharing the lessons learnt on implementing's the COs together with development partners and civil society organizations. The NCAWMC organized consultation meetings with the sub-Commission for the Advancement of Women and Mothers and Child (sub-CAWMC) at the central and local levels to gather information on the implementation of the CEDAW. During year 2019-2020, the NCAWMC organized meetings to review and assess the implementation of the COs to collect actual data for 14 villages in Vientiane Capital and 7 provinces namely: Oudomxay, Luang Prabang, Huaphan, Xiengkhouang, Savannakhet, Champasak, and Attapeu. In addition, the NCAWMC conducted the 6-monthly and annual meetings were held to review the implementation of the COs of the CEDAW Committee in coordination with government sector at the central and local levels, including mass organizations.

4. The report includes information and statistics provided by all stakeholders from the central to local levels, as well as, public and private sectors, development partners, civil society organizations throughout the consultation process to the report.

5. The 10th Periodic Report covers the period year 2019-2022 and was submitted together with the Common Core Document to the CEDAW Committee.

6. The report includes 03 chapters as follows:

- Chapter I: Introduction.

- Chapter II: Implementation of the Concluding Observations of the CEDAW Committee on the combination of the 8th and 9th Periodic Report of the Lao PDR.
- Chapter III: Conclusion.

7. The report on the implementation of the COs of the CEDAW Committee on the 8th and 9th Periodic Report on the implementation of the CEDAW in the Lao PDR.

Chapter II

Implementation of the concluding observations of the CEDAW committee on the combination of the 8th and 9th periodic reports

Article 1 Non-discrimination against women (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, paragraph 7, 8,9,10)

8. The Lao PDR implemented the policy of promoting gender equality and combating discrimination against women as one of the government's priorities. Provisions on non-discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, politic, economic and social status, education level, and family that defined in the Constitution of the Lao PDR, especially Article 35 and Article 37.¹ By the content of these articles have been elaborated in domestic laws, such as the Law on the Development and Protection of Women in 2004, the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children in 2006, the Law on the Family in 2008. The Law on Women's Union in 2013, the Law on Combating and Preventing Violence against Women and Children in 2015 and the Law on Gender Equality in 2019 that identifies equality between Women and Men in various aspects.² In addition, discrimination actions against gender equality are considered as criminal offenses according to the Penal Code Article 224 stipulated that "Any person who discriminates, divides, blocks, restricts women in political, economic, scientific, cultural, social and family activities due to gender reasons shall be criticized or modified without deprivation of liberty or punished with deprivation of liberty from one to three years and shall be fined from 3.000.000 kip to 10.000.000 kip".

9. The implementation of promoting gender equality and combat all forms of discrimination against women has been carried out in parallel with the implementation of the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) in each period, especially the 9th NSED (2021-2025); the NCAWMC's Vision 2030, the Ten-Year Strategic Plan on Gender Equality, and the 3rd-4th Five-years Action Plan on Gender Equality; the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially the SDG-5, which the government has linked gender equality and capacity building for women in any field, this goal aimed at enabling women to play an equal rights and opportunities in terms of politic, economic and social aspects. The promulgation of domestic laws related to the granting of rights, empowerment of women and equality between men and women, such as the Penal Code No. 26/NA/2017, the Law on Gender Equality No. 32/NA/2019 and the Civil Code in 2020 has become an important legal basis for ensuring the protection of women's interests and the promotion of gender equality. Currently, the government has created and adopted various strategies and plans to create conditions for the promotion of strong gender roles, such as the LWU's Vision 2035, the Strategic Development Plan for Lao women to 2030 and Lao Women's Development Plan (2021-2025); the NCAWMC's Vision 2030, National Strategy on Gender Equality (2016-2025), the National Action Plan on Mothers and Children

¹ The Constitution of Lao PDR, 2015.

² Law on Gender Equality, 2019.

(2021-2025), the National Action Plan on gender Equality (2021-2025), the National Action Plan on Preventing and Elimination of Violence against Women and Children (2021-2025). These plans have been set targets to protect the rights and create more opportunities for women in accordance with the 8th and 9th NESDPs and various international commitments.

10. In the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for SDGs, the Lao PDR has also incorporated sustainable development indicators related to the promotion of gender equality into the 8th and 9th NESDPs; In addition, the National Steering Committee on Implementation of the SDGs adopted the National Action Plan on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for SDGs in 2019. This plan determined to carry out communication, advertising and dissemination of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for SDGs in the Lao PDR to achieve 04 objectives, namely: 1). Integrating SDGs into the national education curriculum along with the creation of appropriate educational materials and lessons for the relevant parties; 2). Raising awareness in society about SDGs for all stakeholders in accordance with the principle of “we move forward together”; 3). Creating a platform to encourage public consultation (women, men, girls and boys) in the implementation process of the 2030 Agenda for SDGs and; 4). Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of communication, advertising and dissemination plans.³

11. The National Assembly (NA) is a representative of the rights and interests of the Lao people, as the highest body of state power and the legislative body has an important role in considering and adopting the Constitution and laws, also play an important role in protecting the rights of women and gender equality. In order to elaborate the COs of the CEDAW Committee proposed to the NA and the People’s Provincial Assemblies (PPAs) to pay attention in dissemination of laws related to the rights and interests of women in various ways to widely raise awareness among employees, people and students. In 2019-2022, the NA and PPAs organized 455 dissemination workshops with the aim to promote gender equality and all forms of discrimination against women across the country with the total participants of 55.588 people and 24.591 women.

12. The Lao PDR attached importance to the implementation of the obligations under international human rights conventions to which the Lao PDR is party, especially the CEDAW and other conventions that define the rights and protection of women’s rights and interests, such as CRC, ICCPR, ICERD, CAT, ICESCR, CRPD and 2 additional protocols to the CRC. In order to ensure the implementation of the Conventions, the NA approved and promulgated the Law on Treaty and International Agreements in 2017. This law defines the principles, rules and measures related to the management, observance and inspection of the conclusion and implementation of treaty and international agreements aimed at pursuing of the Lao PDR’ foreign policy and policy on regional and international integration contributing to the protection and development of the country. Article 83 stipulates the publication of the content of the treaties that are effective for the Lao PDR, as well as the translation into Lao language and published to the Lao official gazette’s website of Ministry of Justice, the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other related websites of line Ministries.

13. In order to create general legal awareness, specifically the provisions on non-discrimination and gender equality, the Lao PDR has adopted advertising as a tool to create a correct understanding of the Lao multi-ethnic people regarding guidelines, policies and laws, in which the Ministry of Justice has created the content of 720 topics on providing legal knowledge related to the rights and interests of

³ Official Application for SDGs Advocacy in the Lao PDR/SDG-Roafmap-LA_ENG-as-of-Oct-2020.

women; radio programs in the Lao language which have been broadcast 432 times and 144 times in the ethnic language (Hmong); television advertisements of the Ministry of Public Security in programs for “Justice Society” broadcasted 288 times; organized commemoration of the International Day of Violence Against Women and Girls; Advertised legal knowledge for 10.837 villages, 1.264 groups of villages, 2.830 times in schools, and 1.009 times in other places, which has a total of 2.832.763 participants, 930.963 women and 1.901.963 men. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has mandated to conduct disseminating workshops on human rights treaties which Lao PDR is party and the third cycle of UPR recommendations that Lao PDR adopted to central and local authorities including human rights focal points, educational institutions, especially the Faculty of Law and Political Science of the National University, the National Institute of Justice throughout the country, as well as members of the NA and the PPAs from 2018 to 2022.

14. The LWU Leaders in all levels attached importance of raising awareness on rights and interests of women under the CEDAW and focused on disseminating the constitution, laws, international conventions, rules, regulations and three-good competitions in consistent with each target group for 113.818 times, with a total of 9.596.276 participants of whom 2.144.479 were women.⁴

**Article 2 Legal frameworks on protection and promotion of women
(CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, paragraph 11, 12)**

15. The Lao PDR has continued to implement the Legal Sector Master Plan (2009-2020), the government has focused on improving the justice sector, governance and public administration, as well as strengthening in the prevention and anti-corruption. In the development and improvement of justice, the government has focused on improving domestic laws system, strengthening organizations in the justice sector, law students and legal professionals, and promoting the dissemination of related laws and access to the justice system. In the implementation, the government has priorities to protect people’s rights and interests, especially vulnerable people. To date, the Lao PDR has adopted more than 158 laws, including laws related to the protection of women’s rights. These laws related to the protection of women’s rights have been approved and continuously developed, such as Law on State Budget, Penal Code, Civil Code, Law on Gender Equality. Since the Lao PDR has completed the combination the 8th and the 9th Periodic Report on the implementation of the CEDAW, the Lao PDR has adopted the Law on Gender Equality, which is an important law that defines gender equality and guarantees the protection of women’s rights. In addition, the resolution of the NA, No. 19/NA/2021, has defined the Law Creation and Amendment Plan (2021-2025). Many laws in the field of protection and promotion of women’s rights will be amended, such as the Law on Women’s Union, the Law on the Development and Protection of Women, the Law on Civil Servants, the Law on Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises, the Law on Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases, the Law on Labor Safety and Health, the Law on Skill Development, Law on Employment, Law on Primary Health Care, Law on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control, Law on Health Insurance, Law on Social Security, Law on Education, Law on Vocational Education, Law on Higher Education, and Law on Sport.

16. The Lao PDR priorities to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women. As a party to the International Convention on Human Rights, the Lao PDR elaborates the content of the conventions into the domestic laws. The principles and provision on non-discrimination between men and women have been taken into consideration and stipulated in laws, for example Article 10 of the Civil Code stipulated equality

⁴ Report of the Lao Women’s Union, the VIIIth Term, 2021.

before the law without discrimination;⁵ Article 2 of the Law on Gender Equality stipulated that “Gender equality is equal rights, benefits, responsibilities, decision making and development opportunities in the field of social and family life”.

Access to justice (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, paragraph 13, 14)

17. The Lao PDR has attached importance to disseminate the laws and promote access to justice and laws for the people that everyone can exercise the equal rights of citizens before the laws, created the conditions and facilitated Lao citizens’ access to justice by continuously improving mechanisms, laws, rules and regulation in order to guarantee access to justice of all Lao multi-ethnic groups in case of their rights and interests are violated. The judiciary system have been fully established and improved so that those who have been violated receive a proper and fair trial. At the same time, the government has also focused on providing legal aid for free to the disadvantaged people, the poor people, the persons with disabilities, all Lao multi-ethnic groups as defined in the Law on lawyers and the government’s decree on legal aid, in Article 2 of the decree determined that “the provision of legal services without charge, the disadvantaged, the persons with disabilities, the poor, and the vulnerable people, the children under special circumstance, Criminals who are allowed by law to seek assistance from the lawyer, women and children who are victims of violence, victims of human trafficking through legal aid organizations. In addition, this decree also defines the principle of legal assistance by providing free services and maintaining confidentiality in assistance. In order to ensure that the people have more access to justice in 2018, the government issued Decree No.77/GOV/2018, giving the Ministry of Justice, the Provincial Justice Department, the Capital Justice Department, the District Justice Office, the Legal Aid Office of the Bar Association to be the provider of free legal aid, which the Ministry of Justice issued Recommendation No. 1077/MoJ/2018. From 2018 until June 2022, there are mobile legal consultation desks in 1.565 villages.⁶ The government issued a decree on village mediation, which now established in total 8.649 village mediation units and established legal aid offices with a total of 43 offices in 17 provinces, including 8 legal aid offices under the Lao Bar Association to ensure that all Lao multi-ethnic groups have access to justice more quickly response.

18. At present, the NA is updating the Law on Handling Petitions which stipulated receiving justice requests, petitions for justice, and claim which facilitated people, especially women who have their rights and interests violated to be able to access to the Handling Petition Mechanism.

19. The Ministry of Justice has considered the importance of capacity building for officials to provide public legal counseling services. Currently, it has completed the development of case studies in 03 courses, namely: 1). 30 cases of court judgement implementation courses, 2). 30 cases of court registration professional development courses and 3). 40 cases of judges, prosecutors and lawyers professional development courses; and developed work plan and budget plan for 6 pilot training courses, namely: 1). Course on the implementation of court decisions for 20 participants (6 women); 2). Course to build court registration profession for 20 participants (7 women); 3). Course for judges, prosecutors and legal professionals for 20 participants (6 women); 4). Course on legislative skills for 20 participants (11 women); 5). Course on law promotion skills for 20 participants (11 women) and 6). Course on economic conflict resolution skills for 20 participants (11 women). In addition, a 45-day basic training workshops on legislative skills have been organized for the village authorities all over the country and provided certificates for 6.867 people (1.638 women). This

⁵ The Civil Code, 2019.

⁶ Ministry of Justice, 2022.

training course was also organized for key government officers, and successors at the district, municipality, city, provincial and Vientiane Capital levels for 1.353 participants (344 women); Lower-level training on legislative skills have been organized and certificates have been printed out and handed over to 45 people (18 women). Certificates have been printed out and handed over to 3 batches of the trainers of judges, prosecutors and lawyers professions such as 4th, 5th and 6th batches with the total of 190 trainers (67 women). Currently, the 7th batch of training of trainers on the development of professional judges, prosecutors and lawyers is ongoing with the total number of 38 participants (15 women). In 2021, a mobile legal consultation desk was organized 5 times. There were 22 cases of legal consultation, including 12 criminal cases, 22 people, and 11 women. Five visits have been organized to monitor the work of the district-level committee responsible for the implementation of the activities on free juridical and social services support program for women and children with a total of 23 participants (4 women), 4 training have been organized to upgrade the capacity of civil servants in the justice sector and in other concerned sectors at both central and local levels with a total of 329 participants (63 women). In addition, 7.376 village mediation units have been strengthened and a total of 20.462 people (3.256 women) who have used the services of the village mediation unit. There are 15.000 copies of the Decree on Village Mediation. The Ministry of Public Security is an important part of helping victims of violence by providing legal assistance, counselling, advice and legal guidance, together with lawyers or other defenders to represent the victims in filling cases to protect their rights and interests, in case of the victim does not know the Lao language, she/he can get assistance for an interpreter, including the translation of the necessary legal documents.

20. The People's Court has improved its organization and personnel to strengthen it by appointing a committee in charge of surveying, researching the conditions for the expansion of the establishment of 06 District People's Courts, focusing on creating staff to have the skills and carry out their duties. Since 2019, 472 Judges were nominated (112 women) and 20 Judges were promoted (7 women), there were 48 people (10 women) completed examination for Judges level IV and 23 people were selected (3 women); the examination to select Judges level I were organised in two times; First, 132 people participated (46 women) and 123 people were passed the exam (46 women), Second, organised in mid-year of 2022, there were 150 participants (46 women). Currently, there are 1.919 people's court employees (725 women), 565 judges (155 women), 516 judges' assistants (174 women), 156 court clerks (72 women), and 682 technical staff (324 women) and the most important thing is that the president of the court is a woman.⁷ Furthermore, the People's Court also pays attention to training and upgrading the knowledge and skills of judges and court staffs, such as improving the theory of politics and administration, organizing training on how to judge a case with a single judge, training in writing judgments for judges and sending judges of the People's Supreme Court to training and study visits within the country and abroad periodically. The People's Supreme Court has the total of 214 officers (84 women). Until present, more female staffs have been appointed to leader positions such as 14 Director General (3 women), 19 Deputy Director General (5 women), 20 Heads of Divisions (3 women), 39 Deputy Head of Divisions (14 women), 32 Heads of Unit (16 women), 2 court clerks (1 woman). Since 2019 to 2022, the People's Court was able to investigate a total of 101 petitions and proposals of citizens of which 45 cases have been resolved and 56 cases are being investigated. The Court of the first instance had the total of 33.281 disputes of which 23.636 have

⁷ Personnel Department of Lao People's Supreme Court, 2022.

been resolved and of which 2.462 cases were related to family disputes and 1.233 cases were related to divorce.⁸

21. The Office of the Supreme People's Prosecutor actively develops its human resources at all levels in the system of office of the Supreme People's Prosecutor. There are training and capacity building in political theory, in professional skills by using the state budget and grants from international organizations with short-term training and long-term (Table 1 and Table 2). In 2022, there are a total of 1.661 civil servants (613 women), 249 assistant prosecutors (64 women); level III is 373 (94 women); level II is 47 (11 women); Level I is 93 (11 women). From 2019-2022, the Office of Supreme People's Prosecutor received requests from the public and proposals from various organizations to investigate 1.279 cases in-laws implementation and legislation by organizations, which 1.244 cases have been solved and 35 cases are being investigated. Most of the requests are on monitoring juridical procedures and the implementation of the judgement of the court; In addition, the Office of the Supreme People's Prosecutor has developed a handbook for monitoring human trafficking cases, a handbook for the deportation of the perpetrator; a handbook on evidence in criminal cases, a handbook on economic dispute resolution and a basic knowledge book on contractual obligations.

22. In order to ensure that the female victims of violence have access to affective assistance, the LWU as a representative for the protection of the rights of women and children and an organization that has been active in helping the women who have been the victims, from the period of 2019 to June 2022 the Counseling and Protection Center for Women and Children of LWU received 19 letter of notifications seeking counseling support for those who have been affected by violence and provided 90.837 counseling services to those who have been abuse by both family and society of which 14.055 were face to face counseling services and 76.782 were telephone counseling services for the total number of 56.474 people (14.996 women). In addition, the Center had coordinated 2.630 times with the concerned parties in the protection of the legitimate rights an interests of the women and children; assisted 388 victims (344 women); during the 2018 disaster in Attapeu Province training was provided on prevention of violence against women and children and anti-human trafficking for village level organizations, officers of LWU and other concerned parties at the provincial and district levels with the total number of 41 participants (37 women), as well as providing equipment to each of the 2 temporary shelters for flood victims in Had Yao and Pindong.

23. In addition, the civil society organizations have also been involved in the provision of access to justice for instance the Association for Women and Law Education has set up counseling centers in 2 villages of Xaythany and Xaysettha districts for the women and children who have been the victims of gender-based violence. Both centers have the total of 7 staffs (5 women) (04 lawyers and 03 lawyer's assistances). The association has provided training in counseling and provision of assistance to 15 lawyers (8 women) at the counseling centers. Training in mediation methods and techniques have also been provided for the village mediation committees in 15 villages of Xaythani district with the number of 75 participants (15 women); 10 villages of Xaysettha district with the total number of 50 participants (10 women). In 2019-2022 through the counseling offices, the Association for Women and Legal Education could provide legal counselling services to women who have been victims of violence and assist the women in a total of 246 cases, of which 229 cases were cases of women seeking counseling (118 cases of Hmong ethnic).

⁸ Lao People's Supreme Court, 2019-2022.

**Article 3 National machinery for advancement of women
(CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, paragraph 15, 16)**

24. The policy of promoting gender equality and combating discrimination against women is considered one of the government's priorities in the development and empowerment of women in all fields. The government has continued to implement the Lao Women's Development Plan (2016-2020), the National Plan of Action on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Women and Violence Against Children (2014-2020), continue to implement the MDGs in the field of women that have not yet been implemented and the 2030 Agenda for SDGs. Especially since the completion of the combination the 8th and the 9th Periodic Report in the implementation of CEDAW, the government has also continuously adopted a number of additional legislations and strategies as measures and references for the promotion of women's and children's rights, such as: adopting the 8th Women's Development Plan (2021-2025), the 3rd National Plan of Action for Mothers and Children (2021-2025), the 2nd National Plan of Action on Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Women and Violence Against Children (2021-2025); integrate women's and children's rights into the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021-2025) which has clearly defined indicators and outputs; adopt the 4th National Plan of Action for Gender Equality (2021-2025) with the target of more than 30% of women's participation in politics; encouraging, promoting and facilitating in various aspects for the women can access to the education, healthcare services, technical trainings and employment as well as economic empowerment, especially for poor and disadvantaged women to develop and generate income for themselves and their families to overcome poverty; adopting the National Plan of Action for Mothers and Children (2021-2025) that has set targets to reduce the shortage of children especially in nutrition and healthcare services, child protection, clean water, safe hygiene, adequate shelter, development of preschool children, in access to education and information to 30% in each province; determined mechanisms to help women and children who are victims of violence to have access free health services, justice process and social assistance to increase to 20%; at the same time, the draft version of Vision for the Development of the Lao Generation towards 2030 has been completed; the National Plan of Action for Strengthening of Child Protection System (2021-2025) and the National Plan of Action for Eradicating Child Labor and Promote Decent Work for the Youth of the Lao PDR have been drafted. Mainstreaming women's rights and children's rights into the National Strategy for Social Protection and the National Strategy for Employment in rural areas; the Law on Gender Equality has been promulgated, this law stipulates the promotion of gender equality in politics-governance, economic, social and cultural equality and it has been disseminated to the central and local leaders, civil servants including community leaders, village chiefs, the media, employers and the general public that everyone is generally aware of and understands these rights. In addition, the Decision of the Minister of Health on the management of surrogacy and abortion has been adopted for the amendment of some related articles of the Penal Code and endorsement of the commitment of the government together with local government agencies, development partners and private business sector to advance children's rights under the slogan "Unleash the unlimited potential of Lao people in 2030".

25. The Lao PDR has made progress on promotion of gender equality by 3 pillars of women's empowerment namely the NCAWMC, LWU and the National Assembly Women's Caucus expressed as the index of gender equality from 0.713 in 2015 to 0.731 in 2020 from 52nd to 43rd in the world⁹ and is still the 2nd in ASEAN which shows that the development of gender equality in the Lao PDR is gradually

⁹ The Global Gender Gap Report 2020.

progressing. The government has improved the organisation of NCAWMC by combining the National Commission for the Advancement of Women and National Commission for Mothers and Children together as National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children and this commission play an important mechanism to promote the advancement of women, gender equality and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and children, and also considered as responsibility of implementation of CEDAW and CRC and its optional protocol. Currently, the network of NCAWMC, there are from central to grassroot level; 3.460 personnel working for the advancement of women and mothers and children in the whole country, 1.133 of whom are women. The Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children at all levels has coordinated with the government, business, development partners, international organizations, social organizations and non-governmental organizations both domestically and abroad, including international friendly countries in the region and in the world in the performance of their duties, especially in the implementation of various programs.

26. The National Assembly has issued the resolution, No 264/NA/ 2022 on the assign the National Assembly Women's Caucus, in the NA's IX Legislature (2021-2025),¹⁰ to continue on mainstreaming gender equality into Law making process, the exercising oversight over the implementation of the Constitution, laws and policies in order to achieve SDGs, treaties and other obligations that relevant to gender equality, advancement of women and protection the rights of women and children.

27. During this same time they also make gender equality work widely implemented. The Lao Women's Union Center and the Women's Union Committee at each level have given importance to the task of educating the members of the Women's Union, Lao women of all ethnic groups in many ways in accordance with the target groups held by the party committee, governing bodies and organizing research, integration and development of laws and legislations related to the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of women and children, which have achieved many successes, such as: completion of the Lao Women's Development Plan (2020-2025) and the Vision for the Development of Lao Women 2030; to mobilize and encourage women to access information through the media of the Lao Women's Union and other media, with 12.807.897 visitors and improve the news network covering the country; Organized vocational training for poor and disadvantaged women 525 times, with 5.071 participants, 460 men, 4.661 women; 05 professional training centers have been expanded, namely in: Provinces of Sekong, Champasak, Khammouan, Savannakhet and Saravan; Create 06 vocational training centers and training rooms at the district level: 03 in the districts (Ta-oi, Toumlan and Sa-muoy) of Saravan province; 02 Districts (Hua District and Son District) of Houaphanh Province and Hom District of Xaysomboun Province; Microfinance institutions that receive deposits for the development of women and families have 15 service units; they have 15.984 members, has given credit to 3.772 members and won the ASEAN award for rural development and poverty eradication.

28. The government has paid attention to the work of promoting the advancement of women, gender equality and elimination of all forms of discrimination against women by allocating personnel and budget for support the activities of promoting women advancement and rights and interests of women and children. In addition, the government has also issued the Law on state budget by assign all ministries, agencies and localities a budget allocation that takes into account the role of gender in all state investment projects. However, the personnel and those budgets have not been able to meet the requirements of the actual tasks and there is also the use of budgets from

¹⁰ The resolution, No 264/NA/2022 on Women Parliament Caucus in the NA's IX Legislature.

international organizations to combine with the government's budget to implement the said work.

National Human Rights Institution (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, paragraph 17, 18)

29. The Lao PDR is not yet ready to build a human rights institution according to the Paris Principles because it is not consistent and appropriate to the reality in the Lao PDR. In the past, the Lao PDR has conducted a research study on the establishment of mechanisms to promote and to protect human rights in consistent with the reality, environment and conditions of the country to monitor the implementation of the rights of citizens as well as various obligations that occur under international conventions to which the Lao PDR is party. This includes the exchange of lessons and experiences with some countries that have national human rights institutions based on the Paris principles. Currently, the Lao PDR is continuing to improve and strengthen its existing internal mechanisms effectively and efficiently, instead of creating any new mechanisms, such as the National Committee on Human Rights, the NCAWMC, the National Committee for People with Disabilities and the National Steering Committee against Human Trafficking.

Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, paragraph 19, 20).

30. The government noted the importance of civil society organizations as partners and contributors to national socio-economic development. Therefore, the government has developed the legal framework and environmental development in order to encourage and facilitate the establishment and operational activities of associations and foundations according to their roles, goals, rights and duties. Currently, there are 202 associations and 44 foundations operating around the country.

31. In order to manage the operation of the associations and the foundations in Lao PDR, the government has adopted the Decree on the Associations, No. 238/Gov/2017 and the Decree on the Foundations, No. 149/PM/2011, providing the Ministry of Home Affairs is the primary responsibility for the approval and management of associations and foundations. Additionally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has issued the Additional Instruction on the implementation of the Decree on Associations, No. 4289/MoFA.DIO/2018 regarding the approval of associations and foundations to receive funds, assets, and experts from abroad as well as a guideline on the association's work and various forms to serve the public sector and the people regarding the establishment of the association has been developed.

32. Furthermore, the Ministry of Home Affairs has issued the Decision on certifying the result of the election of the Coordination Committee of Lao Civil Society Organizations, No 12/MoHA.DoPAD/2021, the Coordination Committee serve as the focal point for coordinating, sharing information, creating opportunities, and promoting the ability of civil society organizations to have the potential to contribute to the implementation of the NSEDP and SDG; with the establishment of various plans and projects to facilitate the work of the committee in regular coordination with the Department of State Administration Development of the Ministry of Home Affairs and relevant sectors; raising of domestic and foreign funds to contribute to the functioning of the committee as well as to encourage and promote civil society organizations based on the principle of equality, transparency, and in accordance with the laws and regulations of the state. The Lao Civil Society Organization Coordinating Committee consists of 11 men and 05 women and has a term for 04 years.

33. The government has opened the opportunity for many associations to participate in the implementation of activities related to the promotion of women's rights based

on Decree No.238/Gov/2017. There is no restriction on the areas of activities implementation or operation of the associations and foundations which can operate independently under the conditions of the rules and laws of the Lao PDR and they can operate according to their roles, rights, duties and scope which have expressed their intention to establish or activate the activities of associations and foundations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the role of approving and managing the receipt of foreign funds and approval of foreign experts according to Instruction No. 4289/MoFA.DIO/2018, from 2018 until now, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has approved three foreign funding projects, namely: Women and Youth Empowerment Program supported by the Gender Development Association (GDA), the Legal Education Program for Women Development, Women Development Program supported by: Association for Development of Women and Legal Education (ADWLE) and Quality Education Program for Sustainable Development focusing on ethnic children, especially girls, to access quality education supported by: Namjai Community Association (NCA); in addition, those civil society organizations that receive funding of less than US\$50,000 in funding can directly sign memorandums of agreement with relevant sectors at the district, provincial or central level without the approval of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In term of international non-governmental organizations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has approved many aid projects of international non-governmental organizations related to women's empowerment, and international non-governmental organizations have collaborated with the government organizations to implement these projects, such as the Empowerment Project for Ethnic Women to Sustainable Adaptation to Climate Change in Phongsaly province of CARE International implemented together with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry which will be implemented from 2022-2024 and the Today Justice Project (project on dissemination the law and empower women) in Champasak province of HELVETAS implemented together with Champasak Women's Union in 2021-2024.

Article 4 Temporary special measures (CEDAW/LAO/CO, Paragraphs 21, 22)

34. To ensure gender equality in the appointment of women in decision-making positions at different levels of all fields, the Government provides the NCAWMC, and the LWU to coordinate with the Party Committees, administrative authorities, and relevant organisations to create enabling conditions for female staff and members of LWU to have opportunities to enhance their political and administration skills, expertise, profession, foreign languages; participate in short and long-term training in domestic and overseas. The Government also provides sectors to mainstream gender equality into their five-year development plans to cover 80% of their sector's work plan and 60% of the specific work plan; local administrations to mainstream gender equality into their five-year socio-economic development plan to cover 40% of the plan and 60% of the specific plan. There should be concrete achievement after the formulation of the plans.

35. The Government has developed policies as measures for the promotion of gender equality, which includes a national strategy and action plan to increase the number of women in decision-making at different levels, including the 9th NSEDP (2021-2025), the National Action Plan on Gender Equality (2021-2025) and the Guidance of LWU going forwards (2021-2025), defining targets for promotion and creation of enabling conditions for the allocation of women into decision-making positions at all levels appropriately, such as Members of the National Assembly and Provincial People's Assemblies to cover over 30%; central level to cover over 30%; provincial level to cover over 20%; district level to cover over 20%, and village level to cover over 10%.

36. Due to Government's great efforts in promoting women's advancement, and gender equality, it has managed to allocate women into leadership-management positions. The NCAWMC, in collaboration with LWU in monitoring the Government's leadership-management position plan by defining a succession plan for leadership-management plan in order to increase the number of women as well as encourage sectors to appoint more women in the decision-making positions at different levels to represent women in combating all forms of discrimination against women and to be engaged in the national development. Although, in the past, the government of the Lao PDR has made efforts to implement programs and measures for the promotion of women, and it has been able to allocate women into the leadership and decision-making positions at different levels, but the number of women is limited in many sectors due to the environment in those sectors, as well as some inherent aspects of women such as capability and experience in leadership, including the required qualification.

37. Table 3: The number of women in 8 levels of decision-making positions in 2020.

38. The LWU, as a representative of Lao women from all ethnic groups, fulfills two main mandates, namely: take ownership in defining plans, create opportunities to build capacity, appointment of women in decision-making positions in the LWU; take the lead in collaboration with Party Committee, senior management of line ministries, organizations and local administrations to ensure women have more and more opportunities to participate in planning and allocating of staff as well as ensure quality and quantity.

39. The Ministry of Public Security (MOPS) has developed the 2nd Ten-Year Strategic Plan for women's advancement (2016-2025) that defined action plans, goals and implementation and set targets of have at least 15% of women in different positions in the public security sector by 2025. In 2021, there were 6,83% women who are director general, 9,19% women who are deputy director general, 16% women who are head of divisions, and 17,07% women who are deputy head of divisions in the MOPS.

40. The Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT) also pays attention to women's role in their sector by considering women's advancement strategy, particularly focusing on gender equality to access to resources and benefits from their own sector; In addition, in order to strengthen gender mainstreaming of civil service of the sector and mainstream gender into all projects under the MPWT and increase women in decision making positions, the MPWT has set the Five-Year targets (2016-2020) to have 13% of the positions occupied by women, and the result is that 31,7% of the positions are occupied by women, which exceeded the targets. In addition, there are also efforts to expand and raise the role of women targets to enhance gender equality, equal opportunities by developing human resource, capacity building, and strengthening the sector in the Five-Year Development Plan (2021-2025).

41. In order to create an enabling environment for women to achieve the targets, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) has considered a gender-equality promotion strategy for civil servants toward 2030, defining the promotion of gender equality and rights of women civil servant in participation in all fields such as political, economic, social and cultural and family life by emphasizing the participation of women in training and development. In addition, in order to build the capacity of women civil servants from the beginning. The MOHA incorporated gender equality into the training curriculum for the new civil servant (4 hours); curriculum for middle managerial level (7 hours) and curriculum for management at senior, middle and junior levels, which is included in the sub-topic of civil service management course for the decision-making positions, especially in the civil servant management field.

The 2nd Five-Year Plan of the civil servant management (2021-2025) has 9 programs that also contain aspects of gender-equality and disadvantaged groups.

42. Ministry of Health (MOH) has developed a strategy on gender equality and mothers and children in the sector (2021-2025) that aims at promotion of women's advancement by empowering women to have opportunities to develop their knowledge to be appointed in the decision-making, research and issue policies, strategies, legislations, and plans in order to ensure gender equality, the elimination of discrimination against women and ensure their involvement in all fields of work. This strategy also stipulates that 50% of women, 35% of ethnic groups and 1% of disabled employees of the leadership-management staff in the health sector.

43. The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) has formulated the vision and goal for gender equality in the education and sports sector towards 2030, the Ten-Year National Strategy Plan on Gender Equality and Mother and Child (2016-2025) and has defined the 4th -Five Year Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Mother and Child in the Education and Sports Sector (2021-2025) in order to strengthen the administrative staff, teachers, professors, pupils and students in the fields of education, sciences and sports in gender mainstreaming, in the elimination of violence against women and children into the curriculum for all levels and gender balance targets have been set for the promotion of women in leadership-management positions and in capacity development as follows:

- 30% or more female representation in the leadership position at the departmental and departmental equivalent levels, division and division equivalent levels;
- 30% or more female representation in various levels of political ideology advancement;
- 40% or more female civil servant representation in short-term technical training in the country and abroad;
- 30% or more female representation in higher education in the country and abroad;
- 30% or more female coaches and referees in various sports;
- Implementation of legislation to increase the promotion of women and more opportunities for leadership-management positions at various levels.

Stereotypes and harmful practices (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraphs 23, 24).

44. The current population of Lao PDR is 7,2 million, consisting of 50 ethnic groups as approved by the Resolution of the National Assembly,¹¹ there are no ethnic minorities and indigenous groups in Lao PDR. The government attached its efforts to keep unity among ethnic groups and promote gender equality for all Lao multi-ethnic people in the Lao PDR; on 20 March 2020, the government issued Decree No. 207/GOL on Ethnic Group Affairs sets out the principles, regulations and measures on the ethnic groups' management to be effectively implemented in order to ensure ethnic groups unity, equality, mutual respect, assistance, and participation. This Decree No. 207/GOL/2020 states that the Ethnic Group Affairs Management Organisation consists of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Provincial Departments of Home Affairs and District/Municipality/City Offices of Home Affairs. In addition, the Government issued Instructions No. 047/NA/2020 on the Celebration of Many Events and Traditions of ethnic groups defining in Paragraph 3 that all beliefs are good but

¹¹ The Resolution of National Assembly, No.108/NA/2018, the 6th ordinary session of the VIII elect of National Assembly's, dated 2 July 2018.

to practice, only those unarmful beliefs and not in conflict with the guidance, policies, Constitution, laws and regulations, scientific and no negative impact on livelihoods of ethnic groups; Instructions No. 835/NA.SC/2021 on Celebration of Customs and Traditions Festivals of Hmong Group in Bolikhamxay Province; Handbook of the Doctrines and Rituals of Various Religions in Lao PDR No. 385/NA.SC/2021; Handbook on Ethnic Groups Affairs, Religious Affairs, and Advocacy Affairs. In addition, there was also training for senior members in Nakai District, Khammoune Province, and Bolikhamxay Province, with a total of 192 participants (40 women), consisting of ethnic groups; training for staff responsible ethnic group affairs at the provincial and district level on the protection of rights and interests of ethnic groups, including the practice of traditions of ethnic groups, which have to be in accordance with characteristics of each group; for 13 districts, and 6 provinces, with 1.756 participants (837 women); organized the recognition ceremony of harmony families and villages of 26 districts, 1.430 villages covering 128.700 families in 6 provinces. On average, 38,48% of all districts in the country; organized 3 visits to meet with ethnic groups along the Lao-Chinese border as Luangnamtha, Phongsaly, and Oudomxay provinces, with 178 participants (56 women); at the end of 2021, an advocacy campaign through the media of Lao Front for National Development, 3 articles in Pasaxon Newspaper per week, Magazine of Lao Front for National Development, radio news from 1 pm to 1.30 pm every Sunday (299 news spots), 174 TV new spots, 376 Facebook posts, 376 advocacy messages on websites and WhatsApp and 37 videos on Youtube. All advocacy activities mentioned are to promote solidarity and gender equality, peaceful mediation to solve problems such as conflicts in the marriage, step-parents, and children, divorce, trafficking in persons, early marriage, limited access to information due to illiteracy and the Lao language barrier of ethnic women; in the cases of the female child, women, divorced women, and widowed women are not entitled to inheritance and to be legal successors, are not protected and receive no care from the family, siblings, relatives, and others.

45. The Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) incorporated basic knowledge of human rights, gender perspectives, and reproductive health into the curriculum of primary and secondary teachers' training for the subjects of qualities and science. Additionally, the MOES created the Handbook and organised trainings on gender equality, as well as training for teachers and students in 8 teacher colleges; improvement of curriculum and contents for supplementary primary and secondary education to incorporate gender and human rights as 20% of the total contents and development of textbooks to promote reading at least two set; developed a program to promote and develop on gender for informal education; strengthened and trained teachers or professors at four universities such as on elimination of all forms of discrimination and awareness raising, especially ethnic students' access to higher education. At the same time, the fundamental human rights information was incorporated into the curriculum of the Faculty of Law and Political Science, at the National University of Laos.

46. The LWU attach and lead their members at each level as well as women of all ethnic groups to participate in all aspects of development, especially the LWU in Vientiane Capital attached its effort to conduct the advocacy campaign with cultural content, promoting good national traditions based on gender equality in order that women have the knowledge and understanding useful information for their advancement and to eradicate backward perceptions and traditional norms that discriminate against women, especially through seminars and celebration of important events. There were 1.255 advocacy campaign events with 374.372 headcounts; advocacy via various media, such as newspapers, magazines, news articles of LWU, Vientiane Mai Newspaper, Public Security Newspaper, and National Televisions distributed 7.500 copies of its women's newspapers and distributed 1.350 copies of its Sao Lao magazines.

Article 5: Gender-based violence (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraphs 25, 26)

47. The NCAWMC makes efforts to oversee the enforcement of laws, the implementation of plans, programs as well as the issuing of regulations and rules to ensure the suppression of violence especially the National Action Plan on Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Women and Violence Against Children in each period. There are also measures to assist female victims of violence and those injured by the use of violence to access justice and get support and assistance in various aspects. The government issued the Decree on Village Mediation, No. 626/GOL/2021, defined the position, role, rights, and duties of Village Mediation Units to conflicts resolution at the village level under the supervision, oversight and technical advice of the District Justice Office, in order to ensure that victims, particularly women and children, can access this mediation process, this Decree, No. 626/GOL/2021 also defines principles for mediation based on equality and voluntariness of conflict parties.¹² In addition, the Government issued Instruction No. 943/MoJ/2022 on Mediation at the District/Municipality/City Justice Office by defining the types of conflicts to mediation at the district level.¹³ For minor conflicts with low value and not sophisticated, the District Mediation Unit shall advise the parties to submit the case to Village Mediation Units first. In addition, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) also provides legal assistance and legal references, especially the Law on Violence Against Women and Children; the establishment of Legal Clinics for Victims Office, and on 2019-2022, there were 1.658 petitions, and 1.351 conflicts were solved with 177 pending cases and 130 cases were referred to other authorities as well as coordinated with police, prosecutors and courts to consider legal proceedings in accordance with laws and regulations. The MOJ also makes efforts to improve legislation and train on the mediation of conflicts at the village level for the justice sector at the provincial and district level to deepen the understanding of work, especially Provincial Justice Departments and District Justice Offices across the country to improve and strengthen role, rights and duties of the Village Mediation Units for them to have a better understanding and see the adverse impacts of violence in the society; at the same time, to provide access for women to health care support when violence occurs. The Ministry of Health (MOH) established victim support units at 7 central hospitals, namely, Mahosot hospital, Mitthaphab hospital, Setthathirath hospital, Mother and Child hospital, 103 hospital and Hamesa hospital; in each hospital, from the central to the local level, there is a team to assist victims of violence, including psychological and mental healing; victims of trafficking in persons, if they are poor, hospitals can refer them to the Law and regulations on medical treatment, the Health Insurance Fund and the Health Equity Fund in the discharge of their duty and mandate. There were 50 victims (47 women), of which 34 were victims of gender-based violence, 16 victims of trafficking in persons and mental violence (13 women).

48. In addition, the Association for Women's Development and Legal Education is a civil-society organisation that supports the training of 53 Village Mediation Units, which are the project's target group in Xaythani and Xaysettha Districts of Vientiane Capital, Peak District in Xiengkouang Province, Phongsaly District of Phongsaly Province and Bolikhan of Bolikhamxay Province, with 265 participants (53 women). In addition, there was also training for 60 law enforcement officers (45 women) such as People's Court, Prosecutors, Public Security, Justice, Health and the LWU of Xaythani and Xaysettha Districts of Vientiane Capital and Sanxay District of Attapue

¹² Article 7, Decree on Mediation at the village level, No. 626/GOL, dated 22 October 2021, retrieved from <https://laofficialgazette.gov.la>.

¹³ Instruction No. 943/MoJ, dated 2 July 2022 on Mediation at the District/Municipality/City Justice Office/, retrieved from <https://laofficialgazette.gov.la>.

Province with the aim to have a unified understanding of gender equality, gender-based violence, and common practice.

49. In the collection of data about cases on the use of violence, the MOJ has created a program for collection on the court's verdicts by separating the type of cases, such as cases with female offenders and female victims, for example, in 2019-2020, there were 759 cases, where victims were women, of which, 41 cases are violence related (6 trafficking in persons cases, 35 adultery cases). In addition, 17 cases of violence involved child victims, and there were 1.008 cases, where women were offenders. Out of 1.008 cases, 74 cases are violence related (11 trafficking in persons cases, 58 adultery cases, and 5 prostitution cases). The relationship between offenders and victims is mostly close friends, people from the same village or family and relatives.

50. The Lao PDR has focused on raising public awareness of gender-based violence in order to behaviour change in terms of the use of all forms of violence, which are violations of human rights and the fundamental freedom of women, as well as criminal offenses. The sectors also conducted advocacy campaigns through methods, such as:

- At the academic establishment level: development of the Manual on Prevention and Resolution of Conflicts at Secondary Schools; the Manual on Trainers for prioritization, analysis, and request for assistance; the Manual on Reproductive Health; training of trainers for gender equality for the youth in secondary schools, training for heads of faculties, heads of units and students from 5 provinces, such as Luang Prabang, Xiengkhuang, Oudomxay, Xayabury, and Houaphan.
- At the community level: development of a manual on community participation in the prevention and combating of violence against women and children, as well as training for women and men, who are village representatives to recognize and understand these issues to conduct campaigns on prevention and assistance of vulnerable groups and victims of violence.
- Strengthening of members of the press association on knowledge and news writing to advocate for and raise public awareness of violence against women, with 60 participants from national TV, national radio, and newspapers. Training on knowledge of gender equality and prevention of violence against women and children for staff of Departments of Information and Tourism, especially for those engaged in community events of 3 Southern provinces such as Sekong, Salavanh and Attapeu.
- Dissemination of the Law on Preventing and Combating of Violence Against Women and Children for justice officers, police officers, prosecutors and officers at courts to a deep understanding enforcement of the law in village-level mediation, investigation and adjudication of cases related to violence against women and children.

**Article 6: Anti-trafficking and exploitation of prostitution
(CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraphs 27, 28, 29, 30).**

51. The Lao Government attaches its efforts to anti-trafficking in persons (TIP). Among the measures taken to anti-TIP was the dissemination of anti-TIP information and continual advocacy and strengthening of anti-TIP officers. The National Committee for Anti-Trafficking in Persons conducted research and issued policies to prevent and combat TIP in various forms, such as:

- Formulating the National Plan on TIP combating and prevention phase III (2021-2025), constructing shelters for TIP victims in Luangnamtha Province, publishing of 6.000 Guidelines books on prosecution of preparing and

attempting for TIP offenses; issuing Decree No. 548/PM/2021 on the Nomination of Chair for the National Committee for TIP; Decision No. 102/PM/2021 on the Establishment of the National Committee for TIP.

- MOJ completed training on Website using for online legal assistance for the staffs of Legal Aid Clinics in 4 provinces: Xiengkouang, Salavanh, Sekong and Attapeu, with 28 participants (5 women), completed approvals of 24 law firms establishment, published 500 brochures on legal aid advocacy, provided information on TIP to 891 requests, drafted 1 prosecution document, disseminated Decree on Legal Aid for 10.855 times.

52. In order to reduce risks of becoming TIP victims in forms of labour exploitation and deceived marriage, the Lao PDR has created mechanisms for the protection and management of Lao workforce abroad to be legal in consistent with bilateral MOUs and to have legal foreign workers in the Lao PDR. In addition, it is attentive for job creation to reduce labour migration by providing vocational training for vulnerable groups becoming TIP victims and disadvantaged youth with 340 participants (258 women).

53. The Centre for Counselling and Protection of Women and Children of LWU provides 5 necessary assistances for victims, such as: temporary safe shelters, legal aid, medical aid, education and vocational training, and reintegration into family, society and economic support. From 2019 to June 2022, the Centre provided rehabilitation supports for 326 TIP victims and vulnerable groups (289 women); The Centre supported for medical screening and treatment in hospitals for 17 victims (12 times), provided first aid for 55 people; provided mental rehabilitation for victims by doing activities such as: teaching them to read and write, drawing, making flowers using lotus fabric, making dolls and study tours outside the centre; followed up living conditions of 57 victims (46 women) after reintegration back to the family and society. The centre collaborated with stakeholders in helping 14 TIP victims of surrogacy to help them reintegrating back to society; sent 15 notices to Provincial Women's Unions and Anti-Trafficking Department for repatriation of victims back to their families; drafted 15 victim hand-over memorandum upon reintegration back to the family and community; collaborated with MOH for health screening of victims, issuance of birth certificates, health check certificate and follow-up vaccination books for 31 child victims; both the centre and hospitals are guarded for 24 hours (306 times and 485 headcounts). Furthermore, the centre also provides free legal advice, and free mental and physical health care for mothers and children who are related to TIP by deception to work or deceived marriage abroad; for those victims staying at the shelter (Centre), counselling is provided in two forms such as face to face (at the centre) and by phone (hotline 1362). In 2021, the Centre arranged hand-over documents of 14 surrogated babies and 1 baby from an offender (mother) to stay at SOS homes (orphanage) in Vientiane Capital and Luang Prabang Province; handed over one surrogated baby (girl) to her father.

54. To ensure TIP victim identification from the early stage, the Secretariat of the National Committee for TIP, Ministry of Public Security (MOPS) developed TIP Identification Manual and Victim Support and Referral Manual as well as trained these Manuals for concerned authorities such as village administrations, police officers, immigration officers, border soldiers, mass organisations, officers from Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and other authorities concerned on interview and initial data collection, which are crucial for timely assist people suspected to be TIP victims and TIP victims.

55. In the investigation, prosecution and punishment of TIP offenders from 2019 to 2021 had 57 cases with 100 suspects (61 female), 113 victims (110 women) in which 60 victims among them were under 18 (57 women).

56. The MOH also plays an important role in identifying suspect victims of violence and TIP by screening and certifying, and providing medical treatment. In order to ensure the proper and accurate identification, the MOH organised 2 capacity building workshops for interview techniques to collect data, observation of victims at health facilities, TIP Law and TIP Victim Identification Manual related to the health sector, with 97 participants (39 women).

57. In the management of illegal surrogacy and abortion, the MOH issued Decision on the Management of Surrogacy and Abortion No. 2077/MOH, 2021, the objective is to prescribe principles, regulations, methods and measures related to monitoring, an inspection of pregnancy, surrogacy, abortion and abortion of others in the Lao PDR, in order to implement this task in line scientific principles, medical ethics, moral principles and justice for citizens.

**Article 7 and 8. Participation in political and public life
(CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraphs 31, 32).**

58. The Government of Lao PDR has clear policy on the promotion of women's participation and contribution in national development process by creating conditions and opportunities for women in each sector for enhancing their capability and developing themselves in the overall process, especially promoting women in enhancing their foreign languages capacity and other expertise fields to meet the qualifications of selection for high-level leadership positions. At present, there are 176.151 civil servants (83.102 or 47,1% are women) country-wide; seeing the importance to appoint women in higher positions, based on statistics in 2020, the number of women in administrative positions increased, reflecting in the fact that 43 women (23,26%) occupied the position of ministers or equivalent, 105 women (20,95%) occupied the position of vice-ministers or equivalent, 105 women (18,09%) occupied the position of deputy provincial governors or equivalent, 430 women (20,23%) occupied the position of director generals, 1.232 women (25,16%) occupied the position of deputy director generals, 144 women (1,39%) occupied the position of district/city governors, and 99 women governors out of 765 governors (12,94%) occupied the position of deputy district/city governors. For the election of the 9th National Assembly of Lao PDR, there are 36 female parliamentarians out of 164 parliamentarians (21,95%).

Article 9. Nationality (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraphs 33, 34).

59. In order to implement birth registration country-wide, the Government of Lao PDR adopted the Strategy for Citizen Registration and Statistics 2016-2025; amended Family Law, No. 44/NA/2018, Instructions No. 02/MoHA/2019 on the Implementation of the Family Law, issued Guidelines for Registration Procedure, such as birth registration (SOP), developed SBCC such as SMS, Facebook, talk show on TV, radio, village loudspeakers; completed the dissemination on legislations related to registrations for concerned authorities in provinces and districts country-wide. In addition, the budget for provincial levels were allocated in raising awareness and understanding of the importance of birth registration; and issued notices to provincial home affairs departments to collect statistics of family registration on an annual basis.

60. The government acknowledges the importance of birth registration for citizenship as well as the protection of legitimate rights and interests of women and children, such as the right to select nationality, name and family relationship, with prevention of child marriage, child labour, trafficking in persons, abduction and illegal child adoption, access to education, public services and the right to inheritance, by acknowledging importance of birth certificate. MOHA takes lead in the process of mobile registration by conducting birth registration on important events such as

International Children's Day (1st of June), International Women's Day (8th March) and LWU Foundation Day (20th July) of each year. In order to facilitate for the birth registration and management of citizens, 166 motorcycles were given to the officers of the province and district.

Article 10. Education (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraphs 35, 36).

61. The Government of Lao PDR considers education as a priority in human resource development. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) creates all conditions and measures to support equal access to school and education for all by extending more opportunities to disadvantaged groups, especially girls and women in accessing to education with mainstreaming of gender perspectives, sex education, living skills, reproductive health, TIP in learning curriculums, gender teaching-learning intervention within subjects of science, technology and mathematic (STEM Education) at secondary education and higher education levels in order to enhance knowledge, capacity and perceptions for equal learning between female and male students. In addition, it promotes basic knowledge of gender equality and makes students aware of respecting of rights and elimination of all forms of discrimination against women; in 2020, the Government issued Decree No. 208/GOL/2020 on life-long learning as a measure to ensure that all Lao citizens, regardless of gender, access to all forms of education, stating that "life-long learning is a blended education method between formal and informal education, including voluntarily education to all (women and men) to learn during their lifespan, to create a wisdom society as required by the development. The Decree also reflects the commitments of the Government to support all Lao citizens, disregard of gender, to access education system by providing manpower, budget, infrastructure for life-long learning, providing incentives for teachers and education workers in life-long education according to laws and regulations.

62. For 2021-2022, MOES opened semesters virtually country-wide due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was different from other semesters, resulting the suspension of study in this period in many pandemic areas. It affected the learning outcomes in all level especially the irregular terms of general education led to failure of achieving the expected outcomes which had to submit following the National Assembly's Decision No. 41/NA/2021, including impact on the overall quality of learning outcomes. Currently, the MOE can basically evaluate the implementation of the expected outcomes that were decreased. (Table 4, 5 and 6).

63. Table 4, 5 and 6: The enrolment rate of students in primary education to secondary education.

64. In addition, the quality improvement of the teaching-learning system for all grades in accordance with priorities in the development plan of the education and sports sector (2021-2025), focusing on the quality improvement of all grades, aiming at the enhancement of learning outcomes to be achieving basis of sustainable development goals as well as better education quality. The MOES has various measures such as strategies, projects and programs, emphasizing the COVID-19 prevention and control (during the pandemic) and creating basic enabling factors to adapt to modern forms of education as digitalization. Moreover, the MOES joined the collaboration with development partners in the improvement of education infrastructure, provision of nutrition and sanitation facilities; continuation of school meals programs for pre-school and primary school students in rural and remote areas.

65. In promotion of education in remote areas as well as education for ethnic groups, the Government continues to achieve targets, supporting off-track targets and improving education quality of all levels, focusing on short and long-term work plans as follows:

- Short-term measures: 1). educate political ideology, ethics, morals, expertise, 3 characteristics and 5 fundamental principles related to good teaching-great learning motto for education workers and teachers country-wide, especially during the semester break; 2). work with local administrations, and education development committees at each level to encourage school-aged children to return to school, pay attention to advice on vocational mind set for students of lower and upper secondary education to provide opportunity for them to take part more in vocational education; 3). provide training and strengthen capacity of teachers and principals during school break, by allocating more budget from the central level transferring to districts/cities and local level; 4). provision of textbooks and teaching-learning materials to meet the required standards;
- Long-term measures: 1). improve the legislations related to teacher development and allocation in accordance to current situations, by focusing on management decentralisation to education facilities and local level, providing teacher-replacement system to substitute the loss of teachers in different ways; 2). reform teacher training system, formulate the Law on General Education, defining rights and duties of parents more clearly; 3). build capacity for talented-ethnic schools and special school; 4). collect data on teacher requirement from each locality, vocational colleges and national universities to follow up on graduates; 5). promote private sectors engagement in education development at all fields.

66. Completed the improvement of programs and curriculums to get ready for teaching-learning for children aged 5, focusing on gender perspectives, non-discrimination of women in the curriculum and teaching-learning materials for pre-school education, for example, the publication of experience program of 8 teaching units, Lao language textbooks, mathematic, general knowledge of 8 teaching units and manual on learning preparation for students in various forms by giving opportunities to girls and boys in rural and remote areas accessing to pre-school education.

67. By improving programs to create enabling conditions for girls to access to education, showing that in primary education gender-equality index are at a good level, reflecting in the increase of survivor rate in this level from 1,03 in 2016 to 1,06 in 2020, which is higher than boys, the survivor rate at the primary education level increased from 79,6% (girls 80,7% and boys 78,7%) in 2016 to 82% (girls 84,5% and boys 79,8%) in 2020, fail to reach the target by 3,9%. At the same time, the incorporation of living skills, sex education and reproductive health into the new curriculum was completed for the subject of Good Qualities of grade 1 and grade 2 and strengthened capacity for mainstreaming of gender equality into curriculum and writing of textbooks, the design illustrations in textbooks, focused on gender perspectives, raised awareness of gender perspectives and gender equality for school members of ASP Net (network) in provinces, conducted competitions of student clubs for writing short stories about gender equality.

68. Table 7: Gender equality index at lower and upper secondary education.

69. At the vocational education level, gender equality index at certificate level and higher level is satisfactory. At certificate level, the index increased from 0,37 in 2016 to 1,24 in 2020 (more female students than male students). At higher level, the index increased from 0,99 in 2016 to 1,11 in 2020, reflecting the best level. For diploma level, the gender equality index declined from 0,67 in 2016 to 0,55 in 2020, showing a slight gap at different levels, for example, based on the data of 2020, the number of students at certificate level is 2.181 (1.206 women), at diploma level the number of students is 18.273 (6.513 women) and at higher level the number of students is 42.303 (22.267 women).

70. In order to create conditions for women to study more at the vocational education, MOES introduced 19 courses at level 1 and level 2 for the training of disadvantage youths of 9.615 people; providing scholarship to disadvantage and poor, especially women to study at level 1, 2 and 3 in total of 50% or 1.801 students, 953 women (52,92%) and 857 males (49,08%); provided allowances to poor students in vocational education priority courses such as construction, electric, machinery (10% are women) and basic business (60%); provided training to disadvantage and poor students in remote areas in 2018-2019 at level 1 and level 2 for 563 people (387 women or 68,74% and 176 males or 31,26%, at level 3 for 357 people (132 women or 37,61% and 219 males or 62,39%) in total of 914 people (519 women or 56,78% and 395 males or 43,22%); provided equipment and teaching-learning materials; completed the development and dissemination of the Manual on Prevention and Dealing with Sexual Harassment at vocational education facilities.

71. At high education level, the gender equality index still shows a big gap. At bachelor degree, the index increased 0,84 in 2016 to 1,06 in 2020; at master degree, the index increased from 0,59 in 2016 to 0,67 in 2020; at PhD level, the index declined from 0,65 in 2016 to 0,14 in 2020, showing a significant gap. At the same time, woman education leadership in decision-making positions have been promoted at the university level as well as promoting qualification enhancement and training in different topics and science researches for woman staffs and teachers, encouraging and the rate of accessing to school of woman students in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) to be equal to boy students in achieving the expected targets. (Table 8, 9 and 10).

72. In order to raise awareness and create gender equality promotion movement, and stop of violence against women and children, which are important in helping school aged children to be enrolled without violence environment at school, the MOES produced advocacy materials on gender equality, published 1.000 booklets of Vision to 2030; published 8.000 posters with 7 categories, especially the materials to encourage women and girls to be enrolled and stay at school until the completion for compulsory level of lower secondary education level by producing 1.000 posters about “the light of education”; published 1.000 brochures, 1.000 books of one story to promote reading, 2.000 stickers with 2 types for distribution over the country.

73. In order to solve the drop-out rate of students, the MOES issued the Decision No. 4099/MOES/2020 stating that “agree to take measures to address students’ dropouts such as to assign District/Capital Education and Sports Offices to work in collaboration with Village Education Development Committee to collect data on students who are risks for dropouts and already dropped out to encourage and support them to continue their education until completion of compulsory education; assign school principals to work with Village Education Development Committee follow up and mobilise those who have not been registered to register and continue their education until completion. At the same time, assigning teachers’ pay attention to providing supplementary classes for those students to keep up with their peers. The Decision No. 3802/MOES/2020 of the National Education Administrators’ Conference for 2020-2021 semesters adopted measures to deal with issues and challenges in education and sports sectors for 2020-2021 semesters; assigning Early Childhood Education Department to continue working with local administrations and concerned authorities and focusing on increasing of school enrolment and conduct country-wide teaching for qualified areas in forms of pre-school classes, learning through playing, community-based child development groups which are suitable to each locality to prepare readiness of early childhood education; assign various MOES’ Departments such as: Early Childhood Education, General Education, Informal Education, Teacher Education, Technical and Vocational Education, High Education, Mass Education, Sports and Fine Arts Departments and Cabinet, to work with relevant

authorities to study appropriate forms and methods of teaching-learning during the COVID pandemic to ensure continuity of education, reflecting in the school enrolment statistics of early childhood education until university education for 2021 showing that from pre-school to secondary educations are not much difference between boys and girls, however in vocational education still has gender gaps.

74. To ensure thoroughly access to education, the MOES issued Decision No. 3802/MOES/2021, stating the adoption of measures to solve issues and challenges in education and sports sectors, emphasizing the role of Informal Education Department in continuation of teaching-learning preparation for youths and target groups as well as to ensure education quality, work in collaboration with relevant authorities to elaborate the Decree on Life-Long Education in depth by improving and expanding opportunities to be enrolled in secondary education for poor, ethnic and disadvantage children living in rural and remote areas, especially girls by constructing 30 new school buildings with separate toilets for boys and girls, including 30 separated dormitories for girls and boys; providing allowances to 3.235 lower secondary students (1.730 girls or 53,48% and 1.200 upper secondary students (940 girls); renovating school buildings, classrooms, dormitories, toilets and safe shower rooms for girls, constructing kitchens, vegetable gardens and husbandry in order to support the livelihoods of female and male students, especially those staying at dormitories. In addition, the MOES also issued Regulation on Dormitory Management for secondary education in order to avoid school dropouts as well as to prevent and avoid sexual assaults; providing learning equipment, materials and clothes to 1.334 female students; training for girls on gender perspectives, living skills, decision making, problem solving, introduction to vocational education, supplementary classes, monitoring and support for entrance exams to higher education level, raising awareness and training on gender equality for youths at secondary education level in order to prevent violence against women and training for specialists/units/principals and teachers of secondary education level of 17 provinces and Vientiane Capital.

75. In informal education, eradication of illiteracy is organised for target groups of 5.036 people aged 15-40 (2.671 women and 2.365 men). Provided supplementary classes for 10.071 people (5.299 women and 5.411 men), provided vocational training to 3.161 people (1.649 women and 1.512 men). In addition, there are also teaching-learning methods for illiteracy eradication and vocational training for women in poor areas in order to help with income generation and improve better life quality for families, which implemented in two main programs, namely, program of literacy promotion and program of education promotion for girls.

Article 11: Employment (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraphs 37, 38).

76. The Government gives importance to the employment promotion of Lao citizens, focusing on implementing legislations, laws and duties according to international labour conventions which the Lao PDR is party to. The Government pays attention to enabling necessary environment for exercise of labour rights by adopting periodically policies, regulations and action plans related to labour in compatible with current situation. The Lao PDR adopted Law on Labour in 1994 and amended it in 2014 and become a party to several ILO conventions. In addition, the Government also has a plan to formulate a new law on labour and social welfare (according to the plan for revision and formulation of laws of the National Assembly 2021-2025) such as the draft Law on Labour Hiring, draft Law on Labour Skills Development that will be considered at the National Assembly's Session in 2023, draft revised Law on Social Protection that will be considered the National Assembly's Session in 2024 and the draft Law on Social Services that will be considered the National Assembly's Session in 2025.

77. The Lao Government pays attention to encouragement and finds importance of value-based equality of works to bridge the gap on wages between women and men, reflecting in the Notice No. 829/PMO/2022 on the Guidance for Increase of Minimum Wages, instructing that “to increase minimum wages for workers from 1.100.000 Kips to 1.300.000 Kips”; the Decree on Work Safety and Health No. 1026 of Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in 2019; (revised) Decree on Exporting Lao Labour Working Abroad, No.245/GOL/2020; National Strategy and Action Plan for People with Disability; adopted and promulgated the National Social Safeguards Strategy No. 224/PM/2020 and implements the Agreement on Standardized Skilled Labour as well as the Manual on National Standardized Skilled Labour and the National Strategy for Promotion of Rural Employment in order to provide opportunities for value-based equality of works in the rural areas.

78. The Government pays attention to continuous improvement of access to formal employment for women in various ways such as encouraging public and private technical and vocational collages to train and develop skills in different occupations according to the five-year plan (2016-2020), which trained 419.642 people (184.556 women), where 120,497 people (74,354 women) are trained for agriculture sector; 101.043 people (27.742 women) are trained for industrial sector; and 197.724 people (109.478 women) are trained for service sector. At the same time, there is also promotion of employment in economic sectors by supplying 559.533 labours (243.120 women) into domestic and international markets; In order to develop women capacity for job creation, Lao PDR also implemented National Strategy to promote employment in rural areas by providing opportunity opportunities for value-based equality of works and rural products, implementing in 2 districts of Xekong Province and rolling out to 2 another districts of Savannakhet Province, which trained 296 people (71 women); it also improves recruitment service network at central and provincial level where there are such recruitment service network to become more effective; disseminating and monitoring the Labour Law implementation in labour Units.

79. In order to ensure the labour protection and management, the Government attaches its attention to conduct a labour inspection, legal advocacy and dissemination for 13.417 of business units in many different areas across the country, with total of 422.200 workers (157.376 women); support and approve 1.087 of businesses with more than 50 workers to apply their internal rules in compliance with laws. Furthermore, in order to ensure the protection of the rights and interests of workers and poors, the Lao PDR applies social protection and health insurance schemes which up to the present, the coverage of social protection covered 125.163 persons (48.356 women) in various sectors including in public sector for 12.084 persons (3.894 women); private sector for 100.799 persons (36.578 women), and voluntary for 12.280 persons (7.884 women). At the present, there are 2.949 of labour units has registered and contributed which cover for 339.272 workers out of which 153.166 are women including 178.570 workers from public sector (84.056 women); 142.397 workers (61.442 women) from private sector; and 18.305 workers (7.668 women) voluntary, which offer health care under the social protection scheme for 798.363 people (410.930 women) out of which 491.898 (252.999 women) are in public sector and 306.465 (157.931 women) are in private sector. Since the outbreak of Covid-19 up to the present, there are 1.107 of labour units granted a social welfare payment during the unemployment which is covered of 72.641 headcounts, 49.732 (female headcount).

80. In order to prevent gender discrimination, Lao PDR attaches its effort to implement the ILO Conventions No. 100 and No. 111, which are ratified by the Government, by interpreting their provisions into domestic laws and considering the promotion of women employment and the protection of female workforce as

Government's priorities. Furthermore, The Lao Government also approved the National Rural Employment Promotion Strategy 2021-2025 in 2021 which focusing to create employment for women in rural.

81. For the protection of Lao workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lao PDR has been tracked and provided assistances for Lao workforces back to the country by establishing the taskforce committees and assigned to each checkpoint to provide assistances. In addition, number of consultation meetings also has been put in place where all concerned authorities to discuss for addressing the needs and support for those affected workers for the job opportunities. Furthermore, number of trainings on safe migration and self-protection from COVID-19 also has been conducted for the provincial, district and village administration in 96 villages of 48 districts in 8 provinces which have total of 438 participants (65 women).

Article 12 Health (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/ Paragraphs 8-9, and 39, 40).

82. The Lao Government attaches its importance to improve the access to healthcare services, especially for women during pregnancy by providing maternity benefits and treatment for their child under 5 years of age. The Government approved the Decree No. 273/GOL/ 2014; regarding to the Decree, government initially establish the National Health Insurance Fund supported by the State budget to combined all social protection schemes such as the Community-based Health Insurance, the Health Equity Funds, Civil Servant's Scheme, Enterprise Scheme. Up to the year 2021, the infant mortality rate reduce to 12,8/1.000 which lower than targeted of 26/1.000), the child mortality rate reduce to 14,3/1.000 lower than targeted of 36/1.000, the maternal mortality rate reduce to 60,8/100.000 lower than targeted of 140/100.000), the percentage of Model Healthy villages reach to 83% higher than targeted of 82%; and the Universal Health Coverage insured 94% of the total population which nearly targeted of 94,5%). However, there are some indicators in the area of health promotion of mother and child that need to be achieved as following:

- The prevalence of underweight among children under 5 years of age to decline from 19 to 18%;
- Increasing the percentage of all birth via operative virginal delivery 79% lower than targeted of 81%;
- Penta vaccination 86,6% lower than target of 95%;
- Clean water consumption 90,1% lower than of 92%.

83. In addition, the sexual and reproductive health services and STI treatment have continuously put in place through the National Strategy and Action Plan for Integrated Services on Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) 2016-2025 and its revised version 2020-2025, especially Strategy No. 1 (SO1) on reproductive health, family planning and Adolescent with the target to achieve of 65% in family planning by 2025 and reduce the percentage of unmet needs to decline from 17% in 2020 to 12% in 2025. Therefore, in order to achieve the respective target, the Mother and Child Health Centre, Ministry of Public Health has prioritized to increase family planning services, extend the youth friendly services and provide cervical screening as well as STI treatment by guaranteeing the quality, people's satisfaction, access to information on family planning, and create the environment where people can make their own decision to choose the alternative services especially for women and youth in modern family planning (contraception methods). In addition, the family planning services also helps to reduce the rate of unintended pregnancy and the rate of maternal mortality for 42% which also contributed to prevent an unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion by focusing on health education such as Nang Noi mobile application and brochures, to raise

awareness and understanding of the reproductive health among the youth as well as the STIs prevention. At the present, there is recording and reporting on family planning collected from target young people receiving family planning service, which also includes information from the public and private sector.

84. For the promotion of reproductive health, the Lao Government has implemented its RMNCAH 2016-2025, especially Strategic Objective 1, Specific Objective 1.3 – strengthening capacity for healthcare staffs in cervical screening service, to achieve 15% by 2025. The following tasks have been prioritized to achieve:

- Develop and revise the strategy for cervical screening;
- Refresher training for healthcare staffs on cervical screening;
- Encourage women to check cervical cancer at healthcare centres.
- Recently, the MOH has actively implemented some activities such as:
 - Conducted a training of trainers on detection of early cervical cancer for 18 provinces and some districts;
 - Completed a Manual on Treatment of Early Cervical Cancer and conducted the dissemination workshop on the Manual;
 - Monitored and supported activities related to the early cervical cancer in some provinces and districts.

85. The monitoring and detection of women's health, especially diseases by encouraging women to come and check their health (breast cancer, cervical cancer, menopause) at the facility where the screening and treatment are available.

86. In order to provide neonatal care, childbirth and postpartum care for women, Strategic Objective 2 of the RMNCAH, the neonatal care, childbirth and postpartum care for women has been emphasized, where its manual has been introduced since 2017 and it has been used in countrywide, the screening risks has been carried out among women in pregnancy, number of trainings has been conducted in 148 districts of 18 provinces with 473 (389 women) health workers involved. Since 2020, the Manual for emergency childbirth has been introduced by emphasizing the prevention and transmission of virus from mother to child, especially HIV/AIDS, syphilis, hepatitis B which can help to reduce the number of maternal mortality from 126 in 2020 to 102 in 2021. Furthermore, the manual on unsafe abortion has been developed and used for the prevention and treatment for the unsafe abortion for healthcare workers at all level. Despite number of awareness raisings has been conducted to raise on the impacts and risks of unsafe abortion, however, there are still number of cases of unsafe abortion remaining which can be divided into types: natural abortion, forced abortion and abortion complications during the year 2019 to 2021 at all levels (Table 11).

HIV/AIDS (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraphs 41, 42).

87. The Lao government as well as MOH has concerned and provide a close supervision on the prevention and addressing HIV/AIDS and STIs. At the present, number of laws and policies have been adopted and approved as well as the National Strategy 2021-2030 and Action Plan 2021-2025 on the prevention and addressing HIV/AIDS and STIs. Moreover, the manual for prevention and treatment for the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS and STIs for HIV/AIDS also has been introduced to the teams; there are 191 HIV counseling and blood testing centers in across the country, and 11 treatment units in 8 provinces and 9 points of care in 9 provinces.

88. The Government also has the 5-years National Strategy Plan on HIV which is, provides clearly indicators for each target group to be achieved periodically, especially among women and children:

General population (including women):

- Improving the access to information on prevention and services related to HIV/AIDS and STIs for migrant workers;
- 80% of target groups of 15-24 years of age to understand correctly on HIV prevention.

Pregnant women:

- 95% of pregnant women who receiving prenatal care also receive counseling and screening for HIV at least twice during a pregnancy;
- 100% of pregnant women who infected HIV must receive ARV medicines;
- 100% of infants who were born from HIV infected mothers must receive medication to prevent the transmission;
- 100% of infants who were born from HIV infected mothers must have blood testing for HIV (PCR DNA) during 4-6 weeks after born;
- 50% of husbands of women who receiving prenatal care must have blood testing for HIV and receive a proper treatment.

89. Currently, due to the reduction of budget supports from development partners, the Lao Government has increased its budget for HIV/AIDS and STIs to sustainably respond to the work, Therefore, the MOH has taking the lead in:

- Public and private investment have increased for HIV/AIDS and STIs response;
- HIV prevention that focusing on the target population is sustainable with the support from the Government and donors;
- HIV treatment for the infected people have been put in the national healthcare system;
- Integrating HIV prevention into all health sectors as a common action;
- Integrating HIV prevention into all concerned sectors for shared responsibility;
- Integrating HIV prevention has been integrated into educational curriculum in all levels of education;
- Expanding healthcare facilities for HIV/AIDS in all provinces;
- Conducting activities related to the discrimination against infected people;
- Making the action plans for the prevention on HIV/AIDS and STIs and tools for fund raising.

90. For HIV and AIDS prevention, at the present, in all provinces have its own action plan on HIV and AIDS prevention as well as all relevant sectors also have its own program activities. Therefore, all stakeholders have responsibility for seeking fund to carry out the work of HIV and AIDS prevention, during the transitional period that is having financial difficulties in current work activities; as a basis for raising funds for the Minister of Health, the Chairman of the National AIDS Committee has issued a notice to all parties to raise funds both internally and externally and simultaneously respond to HIV, AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases because the work against AIDS belong to everyone.

91. The MOH puts its effort to respond to AIDS in gender equality manners, which is different from the past that the AIDS responses were based on the prevalence of the disease perspective. Based on the regional and international practice, the higher risk target group has been focused on women and children:

Women in general:

- Providing knowledge and information on AIDS to all groups accordingly to the context and areas of each group (AIDS, STIs, TB and others);
- Capacity building for partners in AIDS responses;
- Providing communication tools and condoms;
- Mobile blood testing, screening and treatment of STIs for target groups in priority areas;
- Development of curriculum on HIV to be integrated in all levels of education as appropriate.

Pregnant women:

- the joint meetings with MCH at all levels to conduct in a regular basis, including planning of HIV, hepatitis B and syphilis prevention;
- Training for relevant staffs, improvement of counselling office and providing necessary equipment;
- Providing PMTCT Kits to child delivery rooms and giving advices for mothers at healthcare facilities where ARV availability;
- Improve manuals and tools on prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV
- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting;
- advocacy to encourage the husbands to bring their wives to receive a prenatal care and blood testing for HIV.

92. The implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan is similar to the previous Plan. The change is that this time Strategy focuses on the integration of HIV/AIDS and STIs into TB, mothers and children and other services, and the collaboration with the projects of National TB, Mother and Child Centre, and other line ministries such as Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, and Ministry of Public Security, which requires a better collaboration and coordination among the concerned parties.

Article 13: Economic and social benefit (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/ Paragraphs 8-9, 43 and, 44).

93. In order to strengthen and promote the women empowerment in economic, especially the access to funding, the Bank of Lao PDR, in collaboration with Rural Micro-Finance Inclusion for the Poor Project, which is supported by GIZ, under the management of the Department of Financial Institution Supervision, has conducted a training on strengthening gender equality for the banking sector. Furthermore, the Department of Financial Institution Supervision also organised meetings to provide a financial knowledge for financial institutions in a regular basis including the village funds for 587 villages with total of 3.859 participants (1.941 women or 50,29%).

94. The Government also attaches its importance to promote and support the expansion of social protection, especially to promote the implementation of its social protection strategy which adopted in 2020. with the implementation of the Strategy,

the project to providing benefits for pregnant women and pre-school aged children in poor districts which supported by the Embassy of Australia and UNICEF, by purchasing of healthy food for pregnant women and newborns nutrition. The project was conducted in Sanamsay and Phouvong districts of Attapeu Province and Nong district of Savannakhet Province.

95. In addition, the laws and regulations dissemination workshops for public, private and all stakeholders have been conducted. From 2016-2020, The coverage rate of social protection is 312.175 people (143.815 women) with the total number of eligible, including their family, is 744.735 people (383.163 women).

96. In order to create an environment for women to benefit from social protection, especially women migrant workers, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, in collaboration with concerned parties, has been raised the awareness and understanding of social protection through many different channels to increase the access rate. Previously, the Government provided its budget to social protection, which covered 3% of the total State budget expenditure, and most of social protection was focus on the vulnerable workforce such as those in agriculture, fishery and labour intensive sectors where as the majority of these workers receive low wages, inappropriate working environment, and the limitation to access to labour representatives and social protection which including migrant workers where cover for 8% of the total workers in the nationwide.

97. The Lao Government attaches its importance to the promotion of women's access to financial services such as leasing to promote women entrepreneurship and reflecting in statistics of registration of different forms of enterprises; from 2019 to May 2022, 46.457 business units have been registered, out of which, 19.896 businesses are registered by women and 26.561 by men; the registration of enterprises and companies is divided into 3 sectors: service sector 5.492 (3.275 women), agriculture sector 2.598 (652 women) and trade sector 33.194 (17.836 women) (Table 12).

Article 14: Rural women (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraphs 45, 46).

98. The Government attaches its importance to the poverty and discrepancy reduction between urban and rural areas, reflected in the reduction of poverty rate from 46% in 1992 to 18% at the present time,¹⁴ however, the poverty rate in the rural areas still remaining for 3 times higher than the urban areas. Therefore, the development of infrastructure in rural areas is necessary for the improvement and uplifting of people livelihood and the equal access to public and private services, especially empowerment of women in the rural areas in decision-making, especially at village level. In addition to the support and creation of enabling conditions for women in decision-making positions as provided in the Lao women's development plan and gender-equality action plan, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) also takes leads in advocacy and awareness raising to encourage women in all fields of work, especially the advocacy campaign for staffs and farmers in many different forms, with covering 3.354.151 headcounts (1.259.769 female headcounts). Out of the total of 10.431 decision-making positions, 3.262 are occupied by women, 1.185 civil servants (180 women), 9.246 farmers (3.082 women). Additionally, the training of trainers on gender planning and trainers on nutrition has been conducted with total of 14.903 trainers, out of which 588 are civil servants (168 women) and 14.150 farmers (10.245 women).

¹⁴ The voluntary national Review on the implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, Lao PDR 2021.

99. The agriculture development is a main task for rural development, the challenges of rural development are degradation of soil, livestock diseases and UXOs which reach to an unsafe land for agriculture. Therefore, the Government attaches its attention to the rural development and poverty eradication, especially in remote areas by organizing seminars, awareness raising/dissemination of the important papers such as SamSang (decentralization) documents, the Law on Resettlement and Sustainable Employment for Ethnic Farmers, other concerned laws, Decree No. 348/GOL, interpretation of Notification No. 475/PMO, Instruction No. 0830/MAF on Standards for graduation from poverty and Standards for development, statements of the Prime Minister, child rights, human rights, child labour, violence against women and children, background of Children's Day, background of the National Tree Planning Day for civil service of line ministries, including the celebration of International Children's Day, National Tree Planning Day and International End of Violence Day (1,12 June) and Fish Releasing and Water and Wildlife Conservation Day (13 July), and those events, which are related to agriculture and forestry sector such as Dry-Season Production Day, World Food-Poverty Eradication Day, Animal Vaccination Day, International Rabies Day, Irrigation Day with the total of 3.354.151 headcounts (1.259.769 female headcounts (38%) and 20.943 male headcounts (62%).

100. In addition, there are also capacity building workshops for agriculture and forestry staffs and farmers in various forms have been conducted such as domestic and international study tours in agriculture and forestry for 18 times with total of 654 staffs (183 female headcounts), farmers participated in 14 study tours in domestically and internationally on plantation, live stocking, fishery, irrigation and others with total of 1.858 participants (736 women), farmers also participated in meetings related to agriculture, forests and rural development with the total of 3.562 participants (1.616 women). In addition, the Government also attaches its attention to increase of responsibility of rural women and raise awareness to protect of their own rights and interests such as the right to access to economic resources and land for cultivation and livestock, ownership of agro-business, funding sources, market access, information, policies and equal pays according to laws. MAF also takes a lead in dissemination and awareness raising to engage women in more fields of work by conducting advocacy with civil servants and farms in various ways such as:

- The access to economic resources for women in rural areas especially the agriculture and livestock land for 23 districts, 211 villages, covered 15.550 families with the total of 311.100 people (166.955 women or 53,66%) and 1.405 female-headed families or 0,45%;
- Farmers in poor areas received loans from Poverty Reduction Fund, concessional credit from banks and government funding facility to be engaged in production, cultivation, livestock and fishery for 115 districts, 1.964 villages, 69.505 families and 139.010 people in total (70.870 women or 50.98%) and 1.365 families are female headed;
- Provided capacity building for 121.260 farmers (89.422 women or 73,74% and 31.838 men or 26%) to become the local experts for cultivation, livestock and fishery for 125 districts, 2.233 villages, 121.260 people (89.422 women);
- There are 3.675 private agro and forestry businesses, in which 505 owned by women;
- SME promotion for farmers such as cultivation, livestock and combined agriculture for 121 districts, 1.217 villages, 3.082 groups and 26.846 families with the total of 36.190 members (18.276 women or 51%) but only 3.03% or 795 women are the owners of agro and forestry business.

101. The Addressing of UXOs, the Lao PDR has been integrated into the 9th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021-2025), especially, in the field of strengthening of information and warning of UXO-land mines system and caring for victims, the National Regulatory Authority for UXO/Mine Action Sector has served as secretariat of the Government in implementation, capacity building for local administrations, information management, survey and clear UXOs. From 1996 to 2022, the awareness raising of risks of UXOs covered 4.015 villages with 4.407.461 participants. In parallel with this, the survey of UXOs clustered munitions covered 17.132 sites in villages. At the present, about 166.4446,23 hectares have been identified as dangerous and more than 77.077,62 hectares have been cleared and more than 1.6 bombs have been demolished.

102. For providing healthcare for rural women, Lao PDR has carried out the following tasks:

- Health workers of health centers, village volunteers and village facilitators reach out to rural communities to provide information, especially the knowledge of how to take care of women's and children's health in the community such as hygiene, sexual health, nutrition, care during pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum care, including care for babies and family planning;
- For rural women to receive a prenatal care and give birth with free of charge at public health facilities;
- In case of treatment at hospitals, women can use Health Insurance Fund;
- For women who not ready to have children, the family planning services shall be provided with free of charge and they can choice with short term, long term or permanent methods;
- Increased the outreach to youth, especially women youth in rural areas to provide knowledge through different means.

Women migrant workers (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraphs 47, 48).

103. Lao PDR protects migrant workers (including women migrant workers) by providing their rights and duties in the Labour Law, to be treated equal before the law as domestic workforces. Currently, Lao PDR has prepared a plan to provide a fund support for migrant workers. For Lao workforce working abroad, the Government has adopted a specific regulation and also assigned labour management officers at its diplomatic missions. Lao PDR signed the Consensus on Protection and Promotion of the Right of Migrant Workers in ASEAN, despite it a non-binding document but it serves as a reference for state members to create conditions for bilateral cooperation in the area of migrant workers protection.

104. The Government of Lao PDR has issued registered cards to foreign workers to meet domestic demand, in the period 2016-2020, there are 134.288 workers (21.195 women), 25.783 have been registered for job seekers (8.559 women), in which, 5.079 (2.462 women) are in agriculture sector, 7.792 (2.354 women) are in industrial sector and 12.912 (3.740 women); 32.742 have been registered unemployment (9.271 women), 6.562 (1.779 women) are in agriculture sector; 17.834 (4.158 women) are in industrial sector; 8.076 (3.334 women) are in service sector; in addition, there is also follow up and assistance of Lao workers, repatriated from abroad during COVID-19 by appointing responsible teams at different checkpoints; organizing consultation meetings with concerned parties on labour demand and supply to assist those affected to be employed again.

105. Female and male migrant workers may face different issues and problems throughout the migration, it is, therefore, important to gender perspectives to be

mainstreamed into all sectors. Women tend to face more discrimination at workplace and risk to become victims of trafficking in persons and forced labour. Regarding to these, the Government of Lao PDR, in collaboration with IOM, is in the process of implementation of a project of reporting on migration workers in Lao PDR and this project will serve as a comprehensive data source of migration for the Government to use in improvement and development of policies related to labour migration in the future; Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare also works with Lao Federation of Trade Unions and ILO to set up information centers for migrant workers in 6 provinces namely: Champasack, Savannakhet, Bolikhamsay, Xayabury, Laungprabang and Bokeo provinces. The establishment of these centers is to advocate, provide information and knowledge to families and workforce who want to work abroad in order for them to understand laws, regulations related to migration through legal and safe channels and get fair pays, avoiding illegal migration, and staff at the center also provide advice to workforce who want to work abroad, providing counselling and information to support migrant workers in case they have problems when working abroad or when do not receive fair treatment by their employers and others. There is 24-hour hotline, which has been operational; from 2018 to mid-2022, there were 216 outreaches to conduct campaigns providing knowledge on legal channels for migration, with 11.424 participants (6.241 women), 3.726 workers received advice (2.115 women), 5.184 workers (3.624 women) received counselling on phone; 216 outreach activities were conducted to advocate legal labour migration, raise awareness of benefits of legal labour migration to other countries in villages and more than 64.000 brochures were contributed.

Article 15: Equality before the law

106. The Lao PDR attaches importance to promote gender equality by formulating and amending constitution and laws as the articles 35 and 37 of the Lao Constitution state that men and women have equal rights and duties before laws. A number of laws and policies to ensure the basis of equal rights of all citizens before laws have been adopting and implementing.

Article 16: Right to marriage and family relations (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraphs 49, 50).

107. The Lao PDR considers important the strict implementation of the Family Law by defining “one husband-one wife” at legal age to be legally marriage and shall follow the one husband-one wife principle only, multiple husbands and multiple wives in one marriage is not allowed (Article 142, Civil Codes). There is also prohibition of under-aged marriage, especially for rural and ethnic girls, and this is enforced together with the prohibition of polygamy marriage as well as implemented as measures to prevent child marriage; In addition, the Penal Codes is also a legal document applied as main measures to prevent child marriage, especially for girls as stated in Article 269 that “any individual gets married with under-aged (under 18 years of age) shall be imprisoned from 3 months to 1 year or penalized without imprisonment and shall pay penalty from 2.000.000 kips to 5.000.000 kips, any individual allowing a child under 18 get marriage will also be punished”.

108. In order to maintain fine culture of the nation and ethnic groups as well as to eradicate cultural and traditional practices that hinder women’ advancement and mothers and children, there initiative to conduct a survey of these practices started in mid-2022 by providing training to numerators on understanding of unified survey conduct. This survey aims at finding factors, situations and co-relations between different factors for child marriage and pregnancy of under-18 children, and it is expected to be completed and disseminated soon. The Government also pays attention to dissemination of laws and regulations, especially the Family Law to protect under-

18 children such as provide knowledge to citizens and children and students in different schools about child marriage and its consequences. The Government established child safety net, which includes a 156-hotline of the National Assembly accessible for citizens and children, 1366-hotline of the Center for Women's and Children's Counseling and Protection, 1300-hotline and 020-2255130 WhatsApp of Anti-Human Trafficking Police and 1554-hotline of Lao Youth Union. These hotline numbers are to provide counseling to victims, support and assistance and counseling for child victims and youth for their all problems.

Disaster and climate change resilience (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraphs 51, 52).

109. The Lao PDR has attempts to support women's engagement in all fields of work, leading to appointment to decision-making positions to be part of solving these problems and handling of climate change by defining in laws and programs of the Government. In addition, members of Lao Women's Union also represent in Village Disaster Management Committee under the Law on Disaster Management No. 71/NA, dated 24 March 2019 and issued Decree on the Organisation and Operations of Disaster Management Committee, No. 511/PM, dated 2 August 2021 and National Strategy on Mitigation of Disaster Risks from 2021 to 2030, defining the empowerment and engagement of groups and communities, who are vulnerable to disasters and vulnerable groups such as women, girls, pregnant women or mothers with babies, members rural community in remote areas and poor people. In 2020, the Disaster Management Fund was established to be used to provide emergency support, repair of necessary infrastructure, locating and seeking and rescue survivors of disasters and restoration of livelihoods to pre-disaster conditions or better situations so they can contribute to the protection and development of the nation; the Disaster Management Committee has been restructured to be more relevant and can be implemented at each level, comprising Central-level Disaster Management Committee, Provincial-Vientiane Capital Disaster Management Committees, District/City Disaster Management Committees and Village Disaster Management Committees; and in order for these committees to be able to function effectively the Government built capacity of disaster management to the provincial, district and village committees of 577 participants (283 women) as well as conducted disaster management simulations at the national and sub-national level with 150 participants (45 women and 105 males).

110. To prepare for the disasters that may occur, Lao PDR pays attentions to communicate this work and review disaster mitigation plan at village level, disseminated the piloting project of warning system through communication network for Village Disaster Prevention and Control Committees with 1.572 participants (485 women), and currently, the Government has promulgated two National Programs to contribute to climate change adaptation (2021-2025) as well as disseminated these programs to all concerned parties and provinces across the country.

Data collection and analysis (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraph 53).

111. The Lao PDR pays attentions to the development of statistics and database, in the past, after the approval of the National Statistic System Development Strategy 2016-2025 and the Vision to 2030 and the revised Law on Statistics No. 24/NA/ 2017, the organisation of statistic work from the central down to local level was improved; in 2018, in order to interpret and implement these legislations, the Prime Ministry issued the Instruction No. 19/PM/2018, on the Implementation of Statistic System, and this Instruction clearly stresses the importance of the improvement of vertical and horizontal organisation of statistic work to make sure the work is smooth and simplified for better quality and able to meet the needs of national socio-economic

development as well as the development of sectors and sustainable development targets, and line ministries and ministry-equivalent organisations appointed statistic focal points and statistic collection and information management units.

112. In order to make information more accessible for people of all ethnic groups, in 2019, the Lao National Statistical Bureau (LSB), Ministry of Planning and Investment opened website for servicing statistic information (LAOSIS), which is the national database, created by LSB as a database for official dissemination of statistics of Lao PDR and LAOSIS also facilitates statistic information through a single window, consisting all information and statistics of main sectors. In addition, LSB also provides statistics that is used widely and most recent. The Government is in the process of LSIS III survey for 2022-2023 to create data for monitoring the progress the implementation of the 9th NSEDP, indicators of sustainable development and provide information for monitoring of welfare of children, mothers and youth in the Lao PDR. The (revised 2017) Law on Statistics also defines principles, regulations and measures for the implementation, monitoring and inspection of statistics work in order to put this work in practical realization and become a developed, modernized, sound and effective, aiming at comprehensiveness, accuracy, timeliness and relevance to actual situations.

113. The NCAWMC in the process of develop the data collection system and website especially data collection with disaggregated data, ethnic, age and basic background in all spheres, these information are essential for progress report such as CEDAW and CRC as well as provide the information for others report under treaties that Lao PDR ratified.

The Optional Protocol and improvement of Article 20(1) of the Convention (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraphs 54).

114. The Lao PDR is not ready to be a party to the Optional Protocol of CEDAW Convention due to the lack of capacity in term of human resource, financial resource and others to fulfil obligations under the Protocol. At the present, Lao PDR continues to improve and strengthen its existing petition/grievance mechanism step by step rather than creating a new mechanism. The petitions of Lao citizens go through a specific mechanism such as 1). A petition that is presented to a State administrative authority is called a request; 2). A petition that is presented to an investigation organisation, the Office of the Public Prosecutor or the People's Courts is called a claim; and 3). A petition that is presented to the Provincial People's Assembly, People's Assembly of Vientiane Capital or National Assembly is called a petition for justice. At the present, the Lao PDR continues to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of these mechanisms in order to provide opportunity to Lao people of all ethnic groups, including children to be able to exercise their rights according to the Constitution and laws, especially the Law on the Handling of Petitions, which provides rights to citizens, legal entities and organisations to be able to send petitions to concerned agencies to address acts by an individual or an organisation, deemed violation of laws, unfair, jeopardy of State's interests or interests of groups or rights and legitimate interests of the petition author.

115. To respond to the proposal to change Article 20, Paragraph 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women at the meeting of CEDAW Committee, Lao PDR agrees with this proposal.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraph 55)

116. In order to promote women's advancement, gender equality and elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, the Lao PDR adopted the National Action

Plan on Gender Equality in order to be guidance for the implementation effectively and periodically, this National Action Plan are based on provisions of CEDAW, concluding observations of CEDAW Committee on each Periodic National Reports, the results of the review of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action implementation, including international conventions and treaties pertaining to rights and interests of women are basis for defining targets, programs and priorities to achieve gender equality.

Dissemination (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraph 56)

117. The Government pays attentions to dissemination of the concluding observations as required by the Notice of the Prime Minister's Office No. 475/PMO/2019 on the implementation of the concluding observations of CEDAW Committee on the combined 8 and 9 National Report by the NCAWMC, line ministries, ministry-equivalent organisations and local administrations by interpreting recommendations of CEDAW Committee, within their respective mandates and responsibilities into concrete work plan, staff plan and budget plan in practice; widely and in-depth disseminating recommendations of CEDAW Committee in sectoral and local levels; training staffs at central and sub-national levels on changing behaviour of society in eliminating violence against women and children, promoting access to education for both women and men for completion of compulsory education, preventing child labour, child marriage and deceived marriage.¹⁵

Technical assistance (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraph 57)

118. The NCAWMC and sub-Committees for AWMC at all levels continue to corporate and collaborate with domestic and international development partners and mobilise financial and technical support to implement their work plan related to women's advancement, gender equality, elimination of discrimination against women and violence against women and children such as UNFPA-financial and technical support for development and dissemination of the National Plan for Gender Equality (2021-2025); development of standardised Manual on assistance of victims of violence, standard operating procedures for coordination, governance of coordination and referral pathway for women and girls subject to violence and others. In addition, there are also cooperation and assistance from other development partners such as UNDP, EU, World Bank, ADB, UNICEF, Gender Development Association, ADWLE, National Association for Assistance of Children with Disability, Helvetas, Village Focus International, Asia Foundation and others.

Ratification of other conventions (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraph 58)

119. The Lao PDR needs to develop knowledge and deep understanding about the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which Lao PDR has signed. At the present, concerned ministries have plan to conduct consultations, study the provisions of the Convention and related domestic legislations, including capacity building for officers for knowledge and deep understanding of the contents of the Convention before accession to the Convention. Although, Lao PDR has not ratified the Convention, Lao PDR is a party to ICCPR that also has provisions prohibiting enforced disappearance. As for the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, Lao PDR is also not ready to ratify, but Lao PDR is a party to 10 ILO Conventions related to the protection of labour, and, recently, Lao PDR accessed to the ILO Convention C155 and Convention C187 related to the occupational safety and health. Nevertheless, Lao PDR is working hard to implement 7 core conventions

¹⁵ The Notice of the Prime Minister's Office No. 475/PMO, dated 18 March 2019.

related to human rights and 2 Optional Protocols of the Convention on Child Rights, which Lao PDR is a party to, where Lao PDR still faces challenges and difficulties in term of specific budget, manpower and reporting under the Convention on Human Rights, which has been delayed and cannot be submitted on time. Therefore, Lao PDR is not ready to access to these conventions in the near future.

Follow up on the concluding observation (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraph 59)

120. The Lao PDR has submitted the report on the implementation of Paragraphs 36(B), 40 (E) and 46(A) to the CEDAW Committee in 2020.

Preparation for the next report (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, Paragraphs 60,61)

121. In preparation for the next report, the NCAWMC as a Government's secretary in the implementation of the CEDAW in the Lao PDR has resorted to various methods for data collection from line ministries, organisations and other concerned sectors, such as:

- Review of the implementation of the CEDAW reports of sub-Committees for the AWMC at the line ministries, organizations, National Assembly, mass organisations, development partners, especially the UNFPA, financial institutions, NGOs and civil society organisations;
- Organise consultation workshops the sub-committees at the line ministry, province levels, district levels, development partners, and other stakeholders; the
- The final draft will be approved by the Government Office before submission to the CEDAW Committee.

Chapter III

Conclusion

122. During the period of 2016 through 2025, the Government of Lao PDR is continually targeted to graduate from the Least Developed Country (LDC) graduation, emphasising the implementation of the NSEDP in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in its efforts of comprehensive development, which incorporates the gender equality realisation and elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. These components aim at the promotion of the women's advancement, gender equality, and elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in the implementation of these development plans, the Lao PDR has achieved in many aspects, such as the creation and amendment of legislations and development plans to promote gender equality, the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, and the promotion of women's advancement.

123. The Lao PDR is one of the countries to mainstream the SDGs into the 8th NSEDP, and the SDGs have contributed to the decline of the poverty rate and the improved living standards of Lao multi-ethnic people, especially the decline of the illiteracy rate, and have improved the family's living standards for women in the poor areas. Furthermore, in terms of health care, the women and girls have access to health information and family planning services to reduce the unintended pregnancy and the maternal mortality rate and understanding self-care interventions for health and reproductive health.

124. In the implementation of the CEDAW, the NCAWMC, and its sub-Committee for AWMC at the central and local levels are main responsibility implementation of the concluding observations of the CEDAW's Commission on the combined 8th and 9th National Periodic Report into their duties, publishing the recommendation both in Lao and English, and disseminating to all parties and sectors concerned at the central and local levels, National Assembly, judiciary bodies, mass organizations, development partners and civil society organizations in order to raise understanding of the fulfillment of the obligation under the CEDAW Convention to ensure the interpretation into policies, strategies and action plans as well as the practical realization.

125. For the advancement and promotion of women, which are focused on equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men, at the present time, the Lao PDR has promulgated domestic laws that the provision of rights, women's empowerment, and gender equality, such as the Penal Code, the Civil Code, and the Law on Gender Equality. There are also national policies, national strategies, action plans, and programs promoting gender equality that are in line with international commitments, such as the Vision for the Development of Lao Women 2035, the Strategic Development Plan for Lao women 2030 and the National Lao Women Development Plan (2021-2025), the Vision to 2030, the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women, Mothers, and Children (2016-2025) and the National Plan of Action on Gender Equality (2021-2025), the National Plan of Action on Mothers and Children (2021-2025); and the National Plan of Action on the Preventing and Elimination of Violence against Women and Children (2021-2025), which are in accordance with the 8th and 9th Five-Year National Socio-Economic development Plans, and contribute to the promotion of women's and children's advancement, including the protection of political, economic, cultural and social rights and interests of them and their families.

126. Along with achievements, challenges are unavoidable, especially the COVID-19 pandemic, which is a global issue and has directly affected all countries, and Laos is not an exception. This results in the loss of opportunities and enabling environment for the implementation of national plans, and negatively impacts the attainment of targets under those plans. It also requires the continuation of attempts to solve such issues as:

- The dissemination of gender equality that does not reach all people in the society, including capacity building for the NCAWMC and its sub-CAWMC at the central and local level, affects their capabilities in supporting the execution of required actions for the women's advancement of the women in the new arena;
- The increase in the number of women in decision-making positions at various levels needs to encourage and provide more opportunities for women to learn and development their capacity as criteria and their ability to access decision-making positions at various levels;
- There are obstacles to strengthening and promoting women's economic empowerment in the rural areas.
- Continue to develop the data collection and reporting systems regarding the implementation of the CEDAW.