

Joint SDG Fund
PORTOFLIO ON INTEGRATED POLICY AND LNOB
Joint Programme 2021 Annual Progress Report

Cover page

Country: Lao PDR

Joint Programme title: Leaving no one behind: Establishing the basis for social protection floors in Lao PDR

Short title: Social Protection Floors in Lao PDR

Start date (day/month/year): 01 January 2020

End date (day/month/year): 30 June 2022

RC (name): Ms. Sara Sekkenes

Government Joint Programme Focal Point (name and ministry/agency): Mr. Leepao Yang, Vice Minister of Labour and Social Welfare of Lao PDR

Representative of Lead PUNO (name and agency): Mr. Graeme Buckley, ILO Country Office Director for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR

List of PUNOs: ILO, UNCDF, UNICEF

RCO Main JP Focal Point (name): Mr. Matthew Johnson-Idan **E-mail:** matthew.johnson-idan@un.org

Lead Agency Main JP Focal Point (name): Ms. Loveleen De **E-mail:** del@ilo.org

Contact person for Joint Communications (name): Ms. Lien Le Thi Huong **E-mail:** lien.le@one.un.org

Budget (Joint SDG Fund contribution): USD 2,000,000

Overall budget (with co-funding): USD 2,912,532

Total estimated expenditure (in USD, for the whole JP by 31 Dec 2021): USD 1,030,562¹

Total estimated commitments (in USD, for the whole JP by 31 Dec 2021): USD 1,474,817²

Short description of the Joint Programme (max 1 paragraph):

The UN Joint Programme (UNJP or JP) primarily aims to support the Government of Lao PDR to implement the new National Social Protection Strategy, through a 'systems development' approach. The UNJP has two interconnected components: (1) institutional capacity development to plan, coordinate, manage, finance, implement and monitor the Strategy, and (2) design and pilot of the Mother and Early Childhood Grant (MECG) and related welfare services reaching at least 2,000 pregnant women and children aged 0-12 months in 3 districts. The first component can strengthen national capacities to 'own' the pilot and implementation of the MECG, while the lessons from the MECG pilot can in turn inform the future implementation of the Strategy, especially for other vulnerable groups such as the elderly and people with disabilities. The JP has strong national and institutional buy-in and follows a coordinated, integrated approach in supporting the government to implement the Strategy and accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

¹ This is for the Joint SDG Fund contribution, and excludes the Australian and PUNO co-funding.

² This is for the Joint SDG Fund contribution, and excludes the Australian and PUNO co-funding.

Executive summary

The UNJP in Lao PDR achieved many of the key results planned for 2021. Most notably, the JP provided continuous support to the Government of Lao PDR as it developed and adopted PM's Decree No.655 on 9 December 2021 that established a high-level National Social Protection Commission (NSPC)—at the Central and Provincial levels—and determined its roles, responsibilities, structure, principles and working approach, which would aid the NSPC in its primary responsibility of implementing the National Social Protection Strategy. The JP also finalised key documents which will support the NSPC in fulfilling its duties, such as the Strategy's implementation roadmap, monitoring tool for the Strategy harmonised with SDG Target 1.3 reporting, cost projections of the Strategy's 'social welfare' pillar, a business plan for social protection financing in Lao PDR, recommendations to improve the Chart of Accounts for disaggregated social protection reporting, among others. Some of these documents were officially submitted to the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MOLSW) in their capacity as the NSPC's Technical Secretariat, while other documents are expected to be submitted before the end of the JP.

The JP also adapted its original workplan and activities in order to deal with COVID-19 related circumstances and delays. A remote implementation strategy was put in place to kickstart the MECG pilot in Attapeu province in the face of recurrent lockdowns. 1,472 beneficiaries, consisting of 633 children aged 0-12 months and 839 pregnant women, with 1,100 belonging to Sanamxay district and 372 to Phouvong district, Attapeu province, were registered and enrolled into the MIS. 1,078 beneficiaries in Sanamxay district have received two cash transfers. 72 provincial and district officers were trained on the programme operations and MIS. The JP also successfully launched the MECG in Savannakhet province virtually and is preparing to roll out the training and beneficiary registration in early 2022. This was the first time in Lao PDR that a social protection programme started its implementation remotely. In addition, capacity building workshops and regular JP secretarial meetings were held using a hybrid approach, with some participants present physically and others online all the while ensuring adherence to government regulations and UN guidelines. Communication activities of two types, those publicising social protection in Lao PDR and those informing intended MECG beneficiaries about the programme, were held via social media in the form of interviews, quizzes, competitions, videos, jingles and posters.

The JP was officially extended to 30 June 2022 to allow more time to complete the planned activities as well as to devise a strategy to continue to support the Government of Lao PDR in the social protection sphere, beyond the end date of the JP. The Australian Government-supported part of the JP was further extended to 31 October 2022 to allow for a longer MECG pilot, that will allow us to collect more and better data to improve the pilot and to generate lessons for the implementation of other social protection programmes in future.

Result 1: By the end of the JP, enhance government planning, managerial and implementation capacities (including leadership and co-ordination) to implement the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS).

Estimated rate of completion as of 31 Dec 2021: 80%

Result 2: By the end of the JP, contribute to ensuring that social protection funding is on-budget and designing a mechanism whereby additional sources of finance are mobilized and blended with public sector budget allocations to ensure sustainability of the NSPS.

Estimated rate of completion as of 31 Dec 2021: 85%

Result 3: By the end of the JP, 2,000 pregnant women and children aged 0-12 months are benefiting from a new integrated welfare package consisting of the MECG, early childhood wellbeing services and support for birth registration.

Estimated rate of completion as of 31 Dec 2021: 80%

I. Overall progress and priority, cross-cutting issues

I.1 Context and the overall approach

Ensuring an adaptive and strategic JP

- At the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, the UNCT in Lao PDR—under the RCO’s leadership—responded by preparing a joint policy note entitled, “Developing a shock-responsive national social protection system to respond to the COVID-19 crisis” and submitted it to the Government. The note promotes a system-building approach and its recommendations were aligned with the National Social Protection Strategy and the JP.
- Additional funding of AUD 1.1 million for the JP was secured from the Government of Australia, which reduced its bilateral interventions and opted to go for a joint and integrated approach. This allowed the JP to expand the scope of its Outcome 2 from delivering the MECG to 1,400 beneficiaries in 2 pilot districts to delivering it to at least 2,000 beneficiaries in 3 districts.
- Following the adoption of the National Social Protection Strategy through PM’s Decree No.224 on 1 April 2020 and its public inauguration in September 2020, the government requested for a stronger orientation of some JP activities towards the implementation of the Strategy. For example, capacity building workshops on ‘basic social protection concepts’ were redesigned to include a ‘how to implement the Strategy at the local level’ objective.

Link with UNDAF/UNSD Cooperation Framework

- The JP is strongly aligned with and in support of the Lao PDR–UN Partnership Framework (UNPF) 2017-21. Through the MECG pilot, the JP contributes to the UNPF’s results on “more people have access to social protection benefits, in particular vulnerable groups” (UNPF outcome 2) as well as “people enjoy improved access to quality health services, and water, sanitation and hygiene” (UNPF outcome 5) and “most vulnerable people benefit from improved food security and nutrition” (UNPF outcome 6). Moreover, through its strong support to the government to implement its National Social Protection Strategy, the JP partially contributes to the UNPF’s aspiration to support the government in “institutions and policies at national and local level support the delivery of quality services that better respond to people’s needs” (UNPF outcome 7).
- The JP is also aligned with the newly established Lao PDR–UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-26. Through support to the government to strengthen institutional capacities and to design and pilot the MECG in the poorest districts, the JP contributes towards achieving “by 2026, people, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised, will benefit from more inclusive, and resilient, transformative, and sustainable socio-economic opportunities to reduce poverty and inequalities” (UNSDCF Strategic Priority 2—Inclusive Prosperity) and especially “Output 2.3—Social Protection”.
- The JP contributed to the UNCT’s development of the Joint Work Plan (JWP) and Output Indicators for UNSDCF “Output 2.3–Social Protection”. The sub-outputs are strategically classified according to the National Social Protection Strategy’s pillars, ensuring that future interventions by UN agencies will continue the work done so far to implement the Strategy. Furthermore, one of the key actions of the JWP is the development of a UN position paper on social protection, defining the short, medium and long-term joint recommendations/areas of work in developing the national social protection system. The (ongoing) preparation of the UN position paper is informed by the work done as part of/experiences of this JP.

COVID-19 impact

- As mentioned above, the UNCT in Lao PDR—under the RCO’s leadership—responded to the onset of the COVID-19 crisis by preparing a joint policy note entitled, “Developing a shock-responsive national social protection system to respond to the COVID-19 crisis” and submitted it to the Government. The

note promotes a system-building approach and its recommendations were aligned with the National Social Protection Strategy and the JP. In the Lao context of limited financial and institutional resources, this approach is expected to build and solidify a shock-responsive system in the long run (by building the system around the MECG programme), rather than divert resources for temporary and ad hoc measures.

- During Q3-2020, the UNCT—including the JP—prepared the “UN Lao PDR Socio-Economic Response Framework to COVID-19” (SERF), which proposed critical social protection actions to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 and corresponding prevention policies. The implementation of the MECG will establish the operational nucleus to at least partially ease the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 (prevention measure) on the most vulnerable in the poorest districts of Lao PDR.

I.2 Update on priority cross-cutting issues

UN Development System reform - UN coherence at the country level

- Under the leadership of the RCO, the UNCT in Lao PDR came together to prepare a joint policy note for the Government entitled, “Developing a shock-responsive national social protection system to respond to the COVID-19 crisis.” The JP provided technical and financial assistance to the note development process. Specifically, the note promotes a system-building approach, in keeping with the National Social Protection Strategy 2021-2025 and the JP. It proposes a ‘leave no one behind’ approach and nine recommendations to respond to the health and socioeconomic crises. One of the main recommendations is to reach poor and affected households through an expansion of the MECG programme, the latter being an integral part of the UNJP and the 2025 Strategy. The UNCT policy note and its recommendations are expected to be used by the Government to expand social protection, thereby contributing to the establishment of long-term response measures to COVID-19 and other future crises.
- Furthermore, the JP contributed to the development of the Joint Work Plan and Output Indicators on social protection under the new Lao PDR–UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022–26. Specifically, the system-building approach of the JP as well as the principal objective of supporting the implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy were reflected in the development of the sub-outputs, activities and indicators. These two activities allowed the JP to extend its strategy and approach beyond the PUNOs and to the UNCT in Lao PDR.
- While each of the 3 PUNOs is responsible for different outputs under the JP, the agencies collaborated in several areas to produce joint outputs, thus bringing together their comparative advantages and specific areas of expertise on social protection design, institutional and implementation structures, financing and investments. ILO and UNCDF collaborated to support the government through discussions and the eventual preparation of 2 reports; on a business plan for social protection financing in Lao PDR (ongoing) and improvement of the Chart of Accounts for disaggregated social protection reporting. ILO, UNICEF and UNCDF are presently collaborating on a new activity; to assess the fiduciary risks and ‘value for money’ of various payment mechanisms for the MECG and other social cash transfers.

Going beyond “business as usual” to produce catalytic results at scale

- The UNJP in Lao PDR provided continuous support to the Government of Lao PDR as it developed and adopted PM’s Decree No.655 on 9 December 2021 that established a high-level National Social Protection Commission—at the Central and Provincial levels—and determined its roles, responsibilities, structure, principles and working approach, which would aid the NSPC in its primary responsibility of implementing the National Social Protection Strategy. The JP finalised key documents which will support the NSPC in fulfilling its duties, some of which were officially submitted to its Technical Secretariat, while others are expected to be submitted before the end of the JP. This was done through continuous discussion and by maintaining a good working relationship with the government, especially the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. It will help to ensure that the work done/outputs produced under the JP will play a crucial role in the national policymaking process.

- The inauguration, dissemination and (ongoing) training of national stakeholders on the National Social Protection Strategy as well as the preparation and (ongoing) submission to MOLSW of key supporting documents to the Strategy are essential steps towards building a national social protection system under the auspices of a single ministry that carries the unique mandate for social protection in Lao PDR. This kind of nationally-owned, system-building process takes time but has the potential to be far more sustainable, thereby accelerating progress towards Target 1.3.
- The MECG aims to establish links between a cash transfer and related services like early childhood wellbeing services, nutrition support, and support for birth registration. In this way, it can help to shift mindsets and beliefs from the idea of social welfare as a simple handout to an integrated welfare programme that “invests” in children and therefore, in nation-building. In the absence of any large-scale, nationally-owned social welfare programme in Lao PDR, the MECG is setting up all the building blocks for its operation, including the MIS, monitoring and payment systems. It is expected to provide lessons and replicable experiences for the roll-out of other social protection programmes in future.
- Furthermore, many of the MECG operations and systems are harmonised with the cash transfer scheme for mothers and children being simultaneously piloted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and World Bank, but with a key difference in the beneficiary identification process. While the World Bank supported programme uses a means test to identify the poor, the MECG uses a categorial approach as it covers all pregnant women and new-born children in 3 of the poorest districts of Lao PDR. In a context of high rural poverty, the latter approach is expected to be more efficient in reaching the poor. Nevertheless, this will allow the Government of Lao PDR to study the pilot mechanisms and consolidate the findings in order to identify the most suitable way forward.

SDG acceleration

- The adoption of the PM’s Decree No.655 on the establishment of a high-level National Social Protection Commission, dissemination and (ongoing) training on the newly launched National Social Protection Strategy, as well as the preparation of supporting documents to implement the Strategy (such as the implementation roadmap, monitoring tool for the Strategy harmonised with SDG Target 1.3 reporting, cost projections of the Strategy’s ‘social welfare’ pillar, and a national social protection financing strategy for Lao PDR) are essential steps towards building a consolidated social protection system under the auspices of a single ministry—MOLSW—that carries the unique mandate for social protection in Lao PDR. The activities done/outputs produced under the JP primarily aim to ensure the effective and sustainable implementation of the Strategy. This accelerates the country’s progress towards SDG Target 1.3.
- The MECG pilot aims to establish links between a cash transfer and related services like early childhood wellbeing services, nutrition support, and support for birth registration. The programme has been set up and is delivering benefits in two districts, while it is expected to start operating in the third district in early 2022. In this way, it accelerates progress towards SDG Targets 1.3, 2.2 and 16.9.
- The technical and policy advisory papers on “A business plan for social protection financing in Lao PDR” and “Recommendations to improve the Chart of Accounts for disaggregated social protection reporting” are key building blocks towards ensuring that social protection funding is on-budget and that additional traditional and non-traditional sources of finance are mobilized and blended with public sector budget allocations. This can help to ensure the sustainability of implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy, thereby accelerating progress towards SDG Target 17.3.

Policy integration and systems change

- The establishment of the high-level NSPC formally brings together the different ministries and institutions normally implementing social protection programmes but with no formal or regular means to coordinate or share information. In the immediate term, this is expected to facilitate the process of monitoring and reporting in the overall social protection field in Lao PDR. While different ministries and agencies collect data at the national, provincial and district levels, the data remains segregated with no consolidated picture emerging. The NSPC consists of members from the Ministries of Labour and Social Welfare, Health, Education and Sports, Agriculture and Forestry, Finance—which are all implementing social protection measures in the country, as well as members from the Ministries of

Planning and Investment, Industry and Commerce, Home Affairs, and employer and worker organisations—which play a key role in the design and implementation of social protection. The NSPC will have the mandate and responsibility on overall social protection reporting. In the long term, as the social protection system gradually develops in Lao PDR, the NSPC structure is expected to lead to greater coordination and collaboration in planning, design and implementation of social protection programmes, thereby reducing duplication and increasing overall effectiveness and efficiency.

Contribution to improvement of the situation of vulnerable groups

- 1,472 pregnant women and children were enrolled into the MECG programme MIS. Of this number, 1,078 pregnant women and children aged 0-12 months in Sanamxay district, Attapeu province received a cash benefit of LAK 300,000 for two months (approx. USD 28), while the remaining 22 in hard-to-reach areas of Sanamxay and 372 beneficiaries in Phouvong district, Attapeu province will receive their first cash transfer and related welfare services in the coming month. In the long run, if/once the scheme reaches national saturation, almost 0.5 million mothers and children are expected to benefit from it.
- Although the MECG's eligibility criteria limit the coverage of the programme to pregnant women and children below 1 year of age, the Government of Lao PDR plans to use the pilot to provide an essential learning exercise to extend social welfare programmes to other vulnerable groups in future, especially people with disabilities, the elderly and victims of disasters.
- The programme eligibility group includes and prioritises children with disabilities.
- Estimated number of individuals that were reached through JP efforts in 2020-2021:
 - o Total number: 1,472 (women and children)
 - o Percentage of women and girls: 78% (1,143 women and girls, consisting of 839 pregnant women and 304 girls aged 0-12 months)

Mainstreaming gender equality and women empowerment

- The MECG programme identifies pregnant women and children aged 0-12 months as the target group. Under the scheme, expectant and new mothers are the primary recipients of the cash grant and improved access to healthcare, nutrition and other services including child protection, psychosocial support and birth registration. By combining the cash grant with access to welfare services, the scheme's design explicitly aims at improving the position of women during this vulnerable period in their lifecycle and at improving poverty, health and nutrition outcomes. In this way, it supports women empowerment and gender equality.
- Given the MECG's focus on maternal and child health, maternal and child mortality are expected to be reduced by the programme.
- Estimated % of overall disbursed funds spent on Gender equality and Women empowerment by the end of 2021: 40%

Human rights

- The JP integrated recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) for Lao PDR into core MECG design elements and thereby ensured sustainable implementation of these recommendations throughout the MECG. These include facilitating timely birth registrations of children especially in rural and remote areas, improving access to healthcare and promoting efforts to reduce the incidence of maternal and child mortality and malnutrition. In the long run, the MECG is expected to enhance service providers' (in social welfare, health, nutrition, etc.) abilities to provide adequate services to rightsholders.

Partnerships

- The UNJP in Lao PDR leveraged and/or implemented a range of partnerships with the government, development partners and other JPs in the region. It supported the Government of Lao PDR as it

discussed and adopted PM’s Decree No.655 on 9 December 2021 that established a high-level National Social Protection Commission, with a dual Central and Provincial level structure. The NSPC’s Technical Secretariat is based in MOLSW, while the members belong to various ministries and social partners. The JP maintained a close and effective working relationship with MOLSW and ultimately the NSPC, which will allow the UN system to support the government’s plans of implementing the Strategy not just during the JP but also beyond it.

- A precursor to the NSPC was the UNJP Advisory Committee, established on 30 September 2020 and consisting of a similar organisational structure. It has been playing an active leadership role in key discussions and decision-making processes.
- The MECG Programme Implementation Unit (PIU) ensured that district and provincial government entities and social and health workers at the grassroots level participated in consultations, meetings and trainings related to the MECG design and pilot.
- In collaboration with other JPs in the region, the UNJP in Lao PDR organised three south-south exchange/peer-learning sessions with officials from the Government of Cambodia, Government of Thailand and UNICEF Myanmar on implementation and financing of their respective cash transfer programmes for mothers and children.
- The JP collaborated with the UNCT in Lao PDR on several occasions, such as the preparation of the joint COVID-19 response policy note, preparation of the SERF particularly the UNFPA-ILO led pillar on “Protecting People and Social Cohesion and Community Resilience (including Food Security, Social Protection)”, as well as social protection research and policy analysis conducted by UNDP and other agencies.
- The Government of Australia provided co-financing for the up-scaling of the MECG pilot, thereby integrating its own work in this area with that of the UN.
- The JP coordinates with the World Bank, which is pilot testing a scheme similar to the MECG in the northern part of the country, to leverage on synergies in the implementation process where possible and to ensure sustainability, scalability and ownership as well as to provide a range of experiences and lessons for the government.
- The JP collaborates with the World Bank and IMF in developing a dedicated Chart of Accounts for social protection which can ensure that all social protection expenditures in Lao PDR are on-budget, therefore increasing transparency and accountability.
- The JP had a first cooperation meeting with UNDP (a non-PUNO) on the JP activity related to research into the potential impacts of social protection. It plans to collaborate further on the validation of the research findings and joint recommendations.

Mobilizing additional funding and/or financing

- Additional funding of AUD 1.1 million (approx. USD 800,000) for the JP was secured from the Government of Australia, which reduced its bilateral interventions stating that it would be more effective and efficient to go for a joint and integrated approach. This allowed the JP to expand the scope of its Outcome 2 from delivering the MECG cash benefit and welfare services to 1,400 beneficiaries in 2 pilot districts to delivering it to at least 2,000 beneficiaries in 3 districts. It is also expected to allow the Government of Lao PDR and the JP to collect more data from the longer, expanded pilot to inform the MECG and other social welfare programmes in future.
- The JP’s contribution to the UNSDCF “Output 2.3–Social Protection” Joint Work Plan and Output Indicators, especially their alignment with the National Social Protection Strategy and the JP’s system-building approach, is expected to continue the JP’s work done so far to implement the Strategy.

Strategic meetings

Type of event	Yes	No	Description/Comments
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Annual JP development partners'/donors' event*	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>- The official launch event of the UNJP, held on 30 September 2020, saw the participation of the government, national partners as well as development partners. It was chaired by the Vice Minister of Labour and Social Welfare and the UN Resident Coordinator, and attended by Joint SDG Fund partners with a presence in Lao PDR—Germany, Switzerland and Luxembourg—as well as the Embassy of Australia. The event provided an opportunity to officially inaugurate Lao PDR's National Social Protection Strategy—Vision 2030, Goal 2025.</p>
Other strategic events	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>- The establishment and first meeting of the UNJP Advisory Committee was held on 30 September 2020 following the launch. The meeting included a presentation of the Strategy and the UNJP outcomes and work plan as well as how the latter help to implement the Strategy. It also included technical sessions to discuss the role of social protection in economic growth and recovery, MECG's role for Lao PDR, and financing of social protection. The meeting ended with an experience-sharing session on the implementation and financing of similar social protection measures in Cambodia.</p> <p>- The second meeting of the UNJP Advisory Committee was held on 5 November 2021 to review the UNJP's achievements till date, present the strategic documents produced under the JP (such as the Strategy's implementation roadmap and monitoring tool), and decide on what remains to be done under the JP and what needs to be done going forward.</p>

Innovation, learning and sharing

- The JP is designing a financing strategy for the National Social Protection Strategy, which will assess various options to mobilise financing for social protection both domestically and from external sources. The options include a National Social Protection Fund—as a first for the region—which integrates/blends different traditional and innovative financing sources and explores maximising the return on investment (ROI) through capital markets. The options also consider increasing contributory revenues through making social security benefits more reliable and attractive, harmonisation of social security and tax payments for informal workers through a *monotax* mechanism, integrating diverse and ad hoc donor interventions through a basket funding/pooled funding mechanism, among others. These options are in research and testing stage, and have the potential to eventually generate lessons beyond the Lao context.
- The MECG pilot is a novelty for Lao PDR which does not have any large-scale, nationally-owned, non-contributory cash transfers in place. The programme integrates an unconditional, geographically targeted approach reaching all eligible people in poor regions under the assumption that there is not much difference in poverty levels among households in rural areas and households often and easily move into and out of poverty. Behaviour Change Communication integrated into the programme is expected to gradually influence a shift in mindsets from 'social protection as a handout for the poor' to a 'rights-based' approach, both within the government as well as among the people.

II. Annual Results

Overall progress

- On track (expected annual results achieved)
 Satisfactory (majority of expected annual results achieved)
 Not-satisfactory (majority of expected annual results not yet achieved)

Please, explain briefly:

The majority of planned annual results were achieved with some delays due to the national elections in 2021, continuous lockdowns and tightening of inter-provincial travel particularly affecting the organisation of workshops and implementation of the MECG pilot, as well as the (system-building) nature of JP activities intrinsically meaning that more time is needed for their implementation. However, the JP team plans to complete all activities by June 2022, with the MECG pilot continuing until October 2022 using the Australian government's funding.

Contribution to Fund's global results

⇒ **Contribution to Joint SDG Fund Outcome 1 (as per annual targets set by the JP)**

- ⇒ Integrated multi-sectoral policies to accelerate SDG achievement implemented with greater scope and scale

In terms of Indicator 1.1: integrated multi-sectoral policies that have accelerated SDG progress in scope, the JP piloted the MECG programme—an integrated cash benefit with welfare services including healthcare referrals, nutrition support, child registration support and counselling—in three districts of Lao PDR in 2021. The MECG Design Document, Operations Manual, MIS User Manual, Programme User Manual, Cost Projections and Remote Support Strategy for Registration were all finalised, to guide the roll-out of trainings and field implementation in 2021. Cash transfers were delivered to 1,078 beneficiaries in Sanamxay district through a digital payment app/cash. The MECG scheme engendered ownership and commitment of the government by working with them in all technical decisions related to the pilot and conducting regional, peer-learning events from Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar, where child grants are being implemented. The child grant and associated welfare services addresses several issues related to the 2030 Agenda such as social protection, gender, nutrition and health.

⇒ **Contribution to Joint SDG Fund Output 3 (as per annual targets set by the JP)**

- ⇒ Integrated policy solutions for accelerating SDG progress implemented

In terms of Indicator 3.1: innovative solutions that were tested, the MECG programme, comprising a cash benefit and related welfare services, was started and continues to be expanded. In terms of Indicator 3.2: integrated policy solutions that have been implemented with the national partners in lead, the integrated MECG programme was rolled out under the leadership of the Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. In terms of Indicator 3.3: countries where national capacities to implement integrated, cross-sectoral SDG accelerators has been strengthened, the MECG rollout plan as well as the capacity building activities under the JP have contributed to strengthening national capacities. The JP will continue to expand the work done so far with a view to fully achieving the indicators by June 2022.

JP Outputs and Outcomes

⇒ **Achievement of expected JP outputs**

Output 1.1. Members of the NSP Committee and other relevant national stakeholders better understand social protection-related topics and how programmes are designed

- The high-level National Social Protection Commission was set up on 9 December 2021 through PM's Decree No.655.
- The Roadmap for the National Social Protection Strategy was finalised as a "living document".

- Two capacity building workshops on basic social protection and the National Social Protection Strategy and three regional, peer-learning sessions on child grant implementation in Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar were conducted.
- Following a request from the Government of Lao PDR, future capacity building workshops were redesigned to focus on the implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy at the provincial and district levels.
- Due to the challenge of organising online trainings in Lao PDR resulting from the local context and hesitancy, the workplan was modified to develop a Training of Trainers (TOT) that will build a community of around 25 trainers from the government and civil society who can then conduct the trainings on the National Social Protection Strategy at the provincial and district levels in future.
- The UNJP was officially launched on 30 September 2020 with the participation of government agencies, various development partners and donors in Lao PDR.
- Periodic JP review and planning meetings were held, both online and in-person.

Output 1.2. Awareness and understanding of Government officials on the impact of social protection and domestic resource allocation is enhanced:

- The Cost Plan of the National Social Protection Strategy's "Social Welfare" pillar was almost finalised as a "living document" i.e., all reviews have been concluded and the report is being updated.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the organisation of public events such as fairs and marathons was completely redesigned to an online Facebook and radio campaign consisting of live talk shows, broadcasting of key information and messages through posters and videos, quiz competitions and slogan contests.
- Research on the potential impacts of social protection was initiated, with the data collection taking place in 2021 and the initial findings expected to be available soon.

Output 1.3. NSPS M&E Framework developed and aligned with SDG 1.3 global measurement methodology

- The M&E Tool for the National Social Protection Strategy, integrated with global reporting for SDG Target 1.3, was finalised as a "living document".
- An initial review of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare's existing database of indicators was conducted. The JP is now working on expanding or modifying the indicators to include the newly designed M&E Tool.

Output 1.4. Mechanisms for predictable public sector budget allocations and on-budget conduits for ODA earmarked budget support and IDA associated grants or loans are developed within the public financial management reform framework and introduction of the new public financial management information system

- An assessment of budgetary expenditures on social protection was completed, highlighting the narrowness of public funding on social protection and near to no financial support for social welfare. It also highlighted the limited number of Chart of Accounts (COA) codes in the public finance system to correctly allocate and report on social protection.
- New COA codes and nomenclature for social protection expenditures were developed and discussed with the COA Committee.
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare selected 13 COA line item descriptions and submitted them to Ministry of Finance for consideration.
- A joint ILO-UNCDF report on recommendations to improve the COA for disaggregated social protection reporting is being finalised.

Output 1.5. National Social Protection Fund (NSPF) proof of concept, development frameworks and implementation pathways formulated incusing NSPF capitalization plan to provide viability funding for the implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy

- Initial data mapping of social protection financing was done and a Business plan for a National Social Protection Fund to maximise the ROI for social security and health insurance was prepared.
- A capital markets assessment and a government issued securities study were completed to ascertain the financial landscape to capitalise a potential social protection fund.
- A financing strategy for the National Social Protection Strategy is being conceptualised.

Output 2.1. Roadmap for the design and implementation of the MECG concluded

- The feasibility study and design document for piloting the MECG were finalised.
- The MECG Operations User Manual was finalised.
- The cost plan for the MECG implementation was developed.
- The institutional arrangement for the MECG implementation was completed; the Programme Management Unit (PMU) and Programme Implementation Unit (PIU) at the national, provincial and district levels were set up.
- A fiduciary risk assessment and “value for money” study on the different payment modalities and their suitability to the future implementation of the MECG as well as other social welfare cash transfers has been initiated.

Output 2.2. Management Information System (MIS) for the MECG designed

- The programme MIS was validated and tested.

Output 2.3. Institutions and different agents prepared for the MECG implementation

- Training on the MECG Operations Manual and the programme MIS were conducted in two districts.
- Laptops, tablets, printers and PPE were procured and distributed in two districts.
- A communication strategy and activities (such as information brochures, key messages on the MECG registration card, radio jingle) were developed for greater outreach.

Output 2.4. MECG piloted in at least one of the poorest districts

- 1,100 mothers and children were registered and enrolled into the programme MIS in Sanamxay district, Attapeu province.
- 372 mothers and children were registered and enrolled into the programme MIS in Phouvong district, Attapeu province.
- Since late 2021, monthly cash transfers have been provided to 1,078 mothers and children in Sanamxay district using a digital payment app or cash. 372 beneficiaries in Phouvong district are expected to receive their first transfer in February 2022.
- Regular visits of Social Welfare Workers to families, using a “case management” approach, are being promoted so that linkages with healthcare, nutrition, early childhood development and referral services can be established.

Output 2.5. MECG M&E framework developed and being implemented

- An initial M&E framework for the MECG pilot test has been developed.

⇒ **Achievement of expected JP outcomes**

Outcome 1. Government planning, managerial and implementation capacity (including leadership and coordination) to implement the NSPS is enhanced.

- This is achieved to a significant extent through the participation of government officials in the development of key National Social Protection Strategy related documents and in training and experience-sharing events.

Outcome 2. At least 2,000 pregnant women and children under 12 months are benefiting from a new integrated package of welfare services, including the new MECG, early childhood wellbeing services and support for birth registration.

- This is achieved to a considerable extent as 1,472 pregnant women and children under 12 months in two districts of Lao PDR have benefitted from the MECG programme and efforts are ongoing to extend the coverage to more beneficiaries as well as to expand the linkages with welfare services.

⇒ **Monitoring and data collection**

- The JP organised annual meetings of its Advisory Committee and regular (monthly or ad hoc based on need) meetings of its Secretariat. The Secretariat then briefed the Advisory Committee. The results

framework was updated and shared with the Secretariat prior to every meeting as well as presented in the form of a PPT.

- On the UN side, ILO as the lead agency coordinated the data collection and update of the results framework with UNCDF and UNICEF prior to every meeting and at the time of quarterly/annual JP reporting. These were checked and validated by RCO and MOLSW as the Committee chairs.

Lessons learned and sustainability of results

- It is important to institute a committee/body—involving the government and UN—that has the responsibility to deliver the JP outputs and is mandated to meet regularly. In Lao PDR, this was achieved through the JP Advisory Committee and its Secretariat.
- A lesson from the Lao JP is that a more systematic and coordinated process is needed for the delivery of technical outputs by the PUNOs. Also, more clarity is needed on communication/branding of JP outputs and activities.
- For sustainability of results in the Lao context, it is important to continue the support to the government in the long term as policy changes by their nature take time. It is particularly useful to have additional funding from other donors—in this case Australian government—to expand the scope and duration of the support.

III. Plan for the final phase of implementation

Towards the end of JP implementation

- The JP will technically and financially support the meetings of the National Social Protection Commission, including the discussion of the JP outputs—such as the Strategy roadmap, M&E tool, recommendations to improve the COA, and others—at these meetings. This will contribute to the sustainability of the JP activities and outputs in the long term and their gradual take-over/ownership by the Government of Lao PDR.
- A business plan for a National Social Protection Fund that increases the ROI for social security and health insurance was developed. Furthermore, a financing strategy to sustainably implement the National Social Protection Strategy is being prepared—from domestic and external sources in the short term gradually moving to full domestic financing in the long term. The JP will continue to advocate increased investments in social protection, on the basis of this financing strategy, to the government, donors and development partners.
- A report with recommendations on improving the existing COA for better and disaggregated reporting of social protection expenditures, with the ultimate objective of increasing transparency and accountability in tracking spending on social protection, is being finalised. This is planned to be submitted to first, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and then, Ministry of Finance for consideration of adoption.
- It is planned to support the NSPC on capacity building activities till June 2022 in two main ways: first, by developing a TOT curriculum and conducting a TOT to build a network of trainers from the government and civil society who can conduct social protection trainings at the national and local levels in future, and second, by facilitating 3 initial trainings at the provincial level to “kick-start” the process.
- The M&E tool for the National Social Protection Strategy and SDG 1.3 global reporting is currently being integrated into the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare’s existing database. Ministry staff at the national, provincial and district levels are planned to be trained on its use.
- The MECG pilot will be expanded to the third district of Nong in Savannakhet province using the additional Australian funding. This includes conducting the registration and enrolment of beneficiaries into the programme database, setting up the programme MIS and training the staff on its use, training government officials and social workers on case management and referral services, as well as providing the cash transfer using the digital payment app. The pilot will continue to be supported by UNICEF beyond June 2022 and until October 2022 under the Australian component of the JP.
- The MECG’s M&E framework will be validated and the JP will provide training/facilitation to ensure its use as well as drawing lessons from it. The longer duration of the pilot will also allow the collection of better M&E data, ultimately providing more lessons to the government and allowing for more informed decision making.
- The JP will prepare MECG related documents/briefs for the Ministry to continue the implementation of the pilot and for the NSPC to prepare the (future) scale-up to more regions. In particular, the JP has initiated a fiduciary risk assessment and ‘value for money’ study of last-mile payment mechanisms for the MECG. The results of the study are expected to enhance the government’s understanding and facilitate decision making on suitable payment modalities, not only for the MECG but also for other social welfare and social security transfers in future.
- The JP is conducting research into the potential impacts of social protection on the Lao economy, in collaboration with a national academician and research institution under the Ministry of Planning and Investment. The draft findings are expected to be available soon. Once validated and finalised, the results from the study can be used to advocate for social protection in the country. The leadership and involvement of national experts and institutions are expected to contribute to the advocacy efforts even beyond the duration of the JP.

Risks and mitigation measures

- The risk of the government not earmarking sufficient public budget for social protection due to limited fiscal space in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, particularly for the continuation of the MECG cash transfer, remains high. The JP plans to mitigate this risk and its impact by leveraging additional sources of funding for the MECG—this will be explored through the work on the financing strategy. It is expected to aid national efforts in the short term with a view to gradually transferring the MECG’s implementation to national ownership.
- The risk of lockdowns and other actions by the government to limit transmission of the virus remains high and has considerably limited aspects of the JP’s workplan that depend on face-to-face interactions. This has particularly affected meetings and workshops at the provincial and district levels in Lao PDR, where online modalities are not popular. The JP has adapted by organising virtual activities when possible, repurposing or redesigning certain activities, and using locally-based government staff and UN volunteers.
- The risks of low capacities to implement the cash transfer and to provide social worker visits is high, in terms of number and capacities of existing staff especially at the local level. The JP has made efforts to mitigate this risk by developing training material and providing trainings.
- The risk of the project period being insufficient to implement all activities—especially due to the national elections in 2021, which delayed several activities, and the pandemic—was mitigated by requesting for a no-cost extension till June 2022. However, due to the system-building nature of the JP, it is necessary to continue the support to the government for the coming years. The government has also requested support to the newly-established NSPC to continue the work on implementing the National Social Protection Strategy. The PUNOs are planning to address this by mobilising additional sources of funding in the short to medium term.

Annex 1: Consolidated Annual Results

1. JP contribution to global Fund's programmatic results

Global Impact: Progress towards SDGs

Select up to 3 SDG *indicators* that your Joint Programme primarily contributed to (in relation to SDG targets listed in your JP ProDoc)

SDG 1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable

SDG 2.2 By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons

SDG 17.3 Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources

Global Outcome 1: Integrated multi-sectoral policies to accelerate SDG achievement implemented with greater scope and scale

Outcome indicators	Expected 2021 target	2021 result	Reasons for variance from planned target (if any)	Expected final target
1.1: Number of integrated multi-sectoral policies that accelerated SDG progress in terms of scope ³	0	1	As explained below*	1
<p><i>List the policies:</i></p> <p>* The Mother and Early Childhood Grant programme provides a monthly cash transfer and welfare services such as health referrals, nutrition support, birth registration support, and counselling on parenting and child care. The programme addresses several policy areas including social protection, gender, health and nutrition. It promotes greater scope of integrated multi-sectoral policies, rather than greater scale, in the pilot districts, which is expected to be scaled up to other provinces of the country in the years to come.</p>				
1.2: Number of integrated multi-sectoral policies that accelerated SDG progress in terms of scale ⁴	1	0	As explained above*	0

Global Output 3: Integrated policy solutions for accelerating SDG progress implemented

Output indicators	Expected 2021 target	2021 result	Reasons for variance from planned target (if any)	Expected final target

³Scope=substantive expansion: additional thematic areas/components added or mechanisms/systems replicated.

⁴Scale=geographical expansion: local solutions adopted at the regional and national level or a national solution adopted in one or more countries.

3.1 Number of innovative solutions that were tested (disaggregated by % successful-unsuccessful)	1	1		1
3.2: Number of integrated policy solutions that have been implemented with the national partners in lead	1	1		1

Did your Joint Programme contribute to strengthening of national capacities to implement integrated, cross-sectoral SDG accelerators in 2020-2021?

Yes

No

Explain briefly: The rollout of the MECG pilot included trainings at the national, provincial and district levels on the MECG operations as well as on Behaviour Change Communication, which contributed to implementing the integrated, cross-sectoral welfare package.

2. Results as per JP Programmatic Results Framework

Result / Indicators	Baseline	Expected 2021 target	2021 Result	Reasons for variance from planned target (if any)	Expected final target
Outcome 1: Government planning, managerial and implementation capacity (including leadership and coordination) to implement the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) is enhanced					
Outcome indicator 1.1: Fully operational NSPC	No	Yes	Yes		Yes
Output 1.1: Members of the NSP Committee and other relevant national stakeholders better understand social protection-related topics and how programs are designed					
Output indicator 1.1.1: No. of capacity building events organized	0	4	2	Operational delays due to COVID-19 restrictions and national elections	4
Output indicator 1.1.2: No. of participants in capacity building events (broken down by gender)	0	75 (at least 40 women)	37 (12 women)	Fewer trainings were held than initially planned due to COVID-19 restrictions and national elections.	75 (at least 40 women)
Output indicator 1.1.3: Adoption of a Roadmap on implementation of the NSPS	0	Roadmap to implement the NSPS is adopted	Roadmap to implement the NSPS is finalised	The NSPC was set up only recently, on 9 December 2021, and is expected to start its technical activities soon.	Roadmap to implement the NSPS is

					submitted to NSPC adoption
Output 1.2: Awareness and understanding of Government officials on the impact of social protection and domestic resource allocation is enhanced					
Output indicator 1.2.1: Research on the role of SP in Lao PDR completed	0	1	0	Due to the no-cost extension approval, the research will be completed by June 2022 to allow more time for better data collection.	1
Output indicator 1.2.2: Gender-issues addressed in research	N/A	1	0	Will be addressed	1
Output indicator 1.2.3: Costed plan for the NSPS prepared	0	Costed plan for the NSPS published	Costed plan for the NSPS finally reviewed	The technical review process took slightly longer than planned.	Costed plan for the NSPS published
Output indicator 1.2.4: Gender-issues addressed in the costed plan	N/A	1	1		1
Output indicator 1.2.5: No. of public events organised	0	2	7	Due to the necessity of shifting all public events online, it was feasible (cheaper and realistic) to organise a greater number of events i.e., 4 live talk shows, 3 quiz competitions, 1 ongoing slogan competition.	8
Output 1.3: NSPS M&E Framework developed and aligned with SDG 1.3 global measurement methodology					
Output indicator 1.3.1: Adoption of the NSPS M&E Framework	0	1	1		1
Output 1.4: Mechanisms for predictable public sector budget allocations and on-budget conduits for ODA earmarked budget support and IDA associated grants or loans are developed within the PFMR framework and introduction of the new PFMIS					
Output indicator 1.4.1: No. of expenditure assignment codes adopted for social protection	0	3	13 COA line item codes officially submitted to Ministry of Finance	13 IPSAS-compliant COA line item codes have been agreed upon and submitted by MOLSW to Ministry of Finance for approval. The remaining codes	COA line item codes officially submitted to Ministry of Finance

				will be developed as the social protection system expands.	
Output indicator 1.4.2: Medium-term expenditure forecast for NSPS	0	1	0	The analysis will be completed based on results of the NSPS cost plan.	1
Output indicator 1.4.3: Budget allocation for NSPS	N/A	Initial annual tranche (x% of GDP) to be determined 2020		Due to unavailability of latest budget reports from Ministry of Finance, the assessment based on 2019 budget expenditures has been completed and new COAs developed.	New COA codes developed for any potential, additional budget allocations.
Output 1.5: National Social Protection Fund (NSPF) proof of concept, development frameworks and implementation pathways formulated including NSPF capitalization plan to provide viability funding for the implementation of the NSPS					
Output indicator 1.5.1: Adoption of a Business Plan for NSPF	N/A	Business Plan	Business plan developed	The business plan is being discussed and reviewed for MOLSW, supported by UNCDF and ILO.	Officially submitted
Output indicator 1.5.2: Adoption of a pathways report for NSPF establishment	N/A	n/a	Integrated into business plan	Demand driven package generated for Technical Working Group	Integrated into business plan and officially submitted
Output indicator 1.5.3: Completion of debt financing study for NSPF	N/A	Report issued	2 nd report completed in 2021	Demand driven as impacts of COVID are reducing fiscal space	Officially submitted
Output indicator 1.5.4: Availability of draft legal documents for NSPF capitalization	N/A	Document set issued	0	This indicator is being revised, as further technical discussions and agreements are needed within the government before the legal documents are drawn up.	0
Output indicator 1.5.5: Launch of NSPF prospectus	N/A	Document set issued and event organized and implemented	Prospectus drafted	Prospectus drafted for the government's consideration, will be further developed only after internal government discussions and agreements.	Officially submitted

Output indicator 1.5.6: Availability of the agreed Business Plan for NSPF	N/A	Business Plan agreed	In process	Business plan drafted for the government's consideration, will be further developed only after internal government discussions and agreements.	Officially submitted
Outcome 2: At least 2,000 pregnant women and children under 12 months are benefiting from a new integrated package of welfare services, including the new Mother and Early Childhood Grant, early childhood wellbeing services and support for birth registration					
Outcome indicator 2.1: No. of children receiving cash grant in the targeted districts	0	2,000 children and/or pregnant women under 12 months received cash grant	1,078	Delays experienced due to COVID related restrictions. 22 hard-to-reach beneficiaries in Sanamxay, 372 registered beneficiaries in Phouvong, and soon-to-be-enrolled members in Nong will be covered in 2022.	2,000
Outcome indicator 2.2: No. of children with access to related social services	0	2,000 children and/or pregnant women under 12 months access related social services (cumulatively)	800	Delays experienced in registration and outreach due to COVID related restrictions.	2,000
Output 2.1: Roadmap for the design and implementation of the MECG concluded					
Output indicator 2.1.1 MECG Modality assessment	No	Assessment is undertaken in 2020	Assessment is undertaken in 2020		Assessment is undertaken in 2020
Output 2.2: Management Information System (MIS) for the MECG designed					
Output indicator 2.2.1: Operations Manual for the MECG available and approved	No	Yes	Yes		Yes
Indicator 2.2.2: Proposal for the definition of the model of integration finalized	No	Yes	Yes		Yes
Output 2.3: Institutions and different agents prepared for the implementation					

Output indicator 2.3.1: No. of staff trained at central and local level	0	100	72	Delays experienced due to COVID related travel restrictions.	100
Output 2.4: MECG piloted in at least one of the poorest districts					
Output indicator 2.4.1: No. of children registered	0	2,000	1,472	Delays experienced due to COVID related restrictions, therefore additional time is needed to extend coverage to Nong district.	2,000
Output indicator 2.4.2: No. of children assessed for social welfare needs	0%	100%	74%	Delays experienced due to COVID related restrictions, therefore additional time is needed to extend coverage to Nong district.	2,000
Output 2.5: MECG M&E framework developed and being implemented					
Output indicator 2.5.1: M&E Framework for the MECG adopted and being implemented	No	Yes	No	M&E Framework for the MECG has been drafted and will be adopted and implemented in 2022.	Yes
Output indicator 2.5.2: MECG evaluation	No	MECG evaluation is undertaken	No	Evaluation will be undertaken towards the end of the project period.	MECG evaluation is undertaken

Annex 2: Strategic documents

2.1. Contribution to social protection strategies, policies and legal frameworks

Strategic documents developed or adapted by JP

Title of the document	Date when finalized (MM/YY)	Focus on extending social protection coverage (Yes/No)	Focus on improved comprehensiveness of social protection benefits (Yes/No)	Focus on enhancing adequacy of social protection benefits (Yes/No)	Focus on improving governance, administration and/or implementation of social protection system (Yes/No)	Focus on cross-sectoral integration with healthcare, childcare, education, employment, food security, etc. (Yes/No)	<i>If published, provide the hyperlink</i>
Roadmap for implementing the National Social Protection Strategy	Dec 2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Report on Costing of the National Social Protection Strategy’s Pillar 3: “Social Welfare”	Dec 2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Monitoring Tool for the National Social Protection Strategy and SDG 1.3	Dec 2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Brochure on the National Social Protection Strategy – Vision 2030, Goal 2025	Sep 2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Link
A business plan to finance the implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy	Oct 2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	

Strategic documents for which JP provided contribution (but did not produce or lead in producing)

Title of the document	Date when finalized (MM/YY)	Focus on extending social protection coverage (Yes/No)	Focus on improved comprehensiveness of social protection benefits (Yes/No)	Focus on enhancing adequacy of social protection benefits (Yes/No)	Focus on improving governance, administration and/or implementation of social protection system (Yes/No)	Focus on cross-sectoral integration with healthcare, childcare, education, employment, food security, etc. (Yes/No)	<i>If published, provide the hyperlink</i>
National Social Protection Strategy – Vision 2030, Goal 2025 * Finalised before the start of the JP, the JP contributed to its launch and dissemination	1 April 2020 (adopted)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Link
Prime Minister Decree No. 655 on Organization and Functions of Social Protection Commission	9 Dec 2021 (adopted)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Link

2.2. Focus on vulnerable populations

Strategic documents developed or adapted by JP

Title of the document	Date when finalized (MM/YY)	Focus on gender equality and women empowerment (Yes/No)	Focus on children (Yes/No)	Focus on youth (Yes/No)	Focus on older persons (Yes/No)	Focus on other groups (List the group/s)	Focus on PwDs (Yes/No)	Included disaggregated data by disability - and whenever possible by age, gender and/or type of disability (Yes/No)
MECG Programme Design in Lao PDR	June 2021	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
MECG Operation Manual	June 2021	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
MECG User Manual	March 2021 (validated)	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No

Cost Projection of MECG	Aug 2020	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
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Strategic documents for which JP provided contribution (but did not produce or lead in producing)

Title of the document	Date when finalized (MM/YY)	Focus on gender equality and women empowerment (Yes/No)	Focus on children (Yes/No)	Focus on youth (Yes/No)	Focus on older persons (Yes/No)	Focus on other group/s (List the group/s)	Focus on PwDs (Yes/No)	Included disaggregated data by disability - and whenever possible by age, gender and/or type of disability (Yes/No)
N.A.								

Annex 3: Updated JP Risk Management Matrix

Risks	Risk Level (Likelihood x Impact)	Likelihood Certain - 5 Likely - 4 Possible - 3 Unlikely - 2 Rare - 1	Impact Essential - 5 Major - 4 Moderate - 3 Minor - 2 Insignificant - 1	Mitigating measures	Responsible Org./Person
Contextual risks (e.g. social, environmental, security and safety risks)					
Government does not earmark sufficient public budget for predictable financing of social protection programmes, particularly for the continuation of the MECG	15 (high)	5	3	- JP develops innovative financing solutions for implementing the Strategy.	ILO, UNICEF, UNCDF, RCO
Geographical remoteness of some areas and underdevelopment of communications and infrastructure in rural areas	8 (moderate)	4	2	- Pilot areas selected according to suitability for a social welfare pilot. - MECG operations, payments and communications designed accordingly.	UNICEF, MOLSW
Limited fiscal space available for expanding coverage and building the national social protection system in the aftermath of the COVID-19 induced economic crisis	15 (high)	5	3	- JP leverages additional sources of funding through the National Social Protection Fund, to aid national efforts in the short term with a view to gradually transferring the MECG implementation to national ownership.	ILO, UNICEF, UNCDF, RCO
COVID-19 lockdowns and government actions to limit the virus transmission affect aspects of JP workplan that	15 (high)	5	3	- Organise online/virtual activities when possible. - Repurpose or redesign certain activities e.g., from	ILO, UNICEF, UNCDF

require face-to-face interactions, especially at the local level				offline to online communications. - Use locally-based government staff and UN volunteers.	
Programmatic/Operational risks					
Government decides not to proceed with the MECG or delays implementation	4 (low)	2	2	- Government has shown its commitment to the MECG pilot and overall social protection. - The establishment of the MECG Technical Working Group, JP Advisory Committee and Secretariat, as well as close working relationships with the government have facilitated this.	UNICEF, MOLSW, ILO
Limited capacity to implement the MECG cash grant, in terms of number and capacities of existing staff especially at the local level	12 (high)	4	3	- JP develops training material and provides trainings. - JP hires UN Volunteers to support the MECG rollout processes.	UNICEF, MOLSW
Limited capacity to provide the MECG linked social worker visits and services, in terms of number and capacities of existing staff especially at the local level	9 (moderate)	3	3	- JP conducts capacity building and training activities. - JP hires UN Volunteers to support the MECG rollout processes.	UNICEF, MOLSW
Government does not endorse or adopt innovative financing solutions	6 (low)	5	3	- Provide evidence base and sound research. - Share experiences from other countries.	UNCDF, ILO

Government does not endorse or adopt developed budget classifications	9 (moderate)	3	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct evidence-based advocacy. - Engage with different ministries, especially Ministry of Finance, constantly. 	UNCDF, ILO
Government agencies delay in engaging with the project	6 (low)	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishment of the JP Advisory Committee and Secretariat and the adoption of the National Social Protection Strategy in April 2020 showed the full commitment of the government. - Delays were encountered due to elections or bureaucracy, and are planned to be addressed through continuous engagement. 	ILO, UNICEF, UNCDF
Capacity building activities not translated into concrete actions	8 (moderate)	2	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuously engage with the government, through the JP Advisory Committee and Secretariat. - Mobilise additional funding for social protection and explore innovative financing solutions, as the lack of concrete results is primarily due to limited fiscal space in Lao PDR. 	ILO, UNICEF, UNCDF
Lack of cooperation amongst PUNOs, continuing to work in silos	8 (moderate)	4	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RC plays a lead role in coordinating the JP and establishes clear procedures on coordination of technical outputs and 	RCO

				branding/communication activities.	
Project period is insufficient to implement all activities	15 (high)	5	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A no-cost extension was provided till June 2022 to ensure all activities can be implemented and the government can use the JP's results. - PUNOs will continue to support the government, especially the NSPC (based on their request), to continue implementing the Strategy and building the national system. This is expected to be done by mobilising additional resources in the short to medium term. 	ILO, UNICEF, UNCDF, RCO
Institutional risks (e.g. political, regulatory risks)					
NSPC is not fully operational or has limited influence	6 (low)	3	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NSPC has been officially set up and is mandated to fulfil its responsibilities. - JP will financially and technically support the NSPC in its work where possible. 	ILO, RCO
Fiduciary risks (financial risks, fraud & corruption risks)					
Error, fraud and corruption (EF&C) in MECG last-mile payment mechanism	16 (high)	4	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fiduciary risk assessment study is being undertaken to identify least EF&C prone payment mechanism. - Payments are being distributed primarily via the "U-money" digital payment app and via cash only for hard-to-reach beneficiaries 	ILO, UNICEF, UNCDF

				and those with no phones to be registered for U-money.	
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Annex 4: Results questionnaire