

Joint Programme Document and Fund Transfer Request

Development Emergency Modality – Response to the Global Crisis on Food, Energy, Finance

Eligibility Check

Does the proposal address one or more of the following sectors affected by the global crisis? Select all relevant sectors.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Food	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Energy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Finance
What are the areas of intervention that will be implemented by this proposal? Select all relevant intervention areas.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data collection/analytics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Analysis and forecasting	<input type="checkbox"/> Help devise comprehensive preventative package of response measures
	<input type="checkbox"/> Testing / catalysing new integrated policies, financing solutions, programmes		
Is the proposal developed under the RC leadership to mobilize the UNCT to effectively and efficiency respond to the crisis?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
Does the proposal contribute to results in the UNSDCFs?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
Is the proposal building on and topping up an existing joint programme supported by the Joint SDG Fund?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	

Cover-page

MPTFO Project Reference Number	<i>{Leave blank, for automatic population in Atlas}</i>
Country	Lao PDR
Region	Asia Pacific
Joint programme title:	High-frequency data collection, monitoring, and analysis of socioeconomic data to support evidence-based policymaking in a volatile time period

Outcomes(s): <verbatim from CF>	<p>By 2026, people, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised, will have <i>more</i> equitable and inclusive access to and will benefit from better quality health, nutrition, food, shelter, protection, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), and education and learning, including during emergencies.</p> <p>By 2026, people, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised, will benefit from <i>more</i> inclusive, resilient, transformative, and sustainable socio-economic and demographic opportunities to reduce poverty and inequalities.</p>
Duration:	6 Months
Anticipated start and end dates:	06/2022 to 12/2022
Short description	As Lao PDR is hit by rising inflation, a rapidly depreciating value of the national currency, in the context of exacerbated financial and socioeconomic vulnerabilities by the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of the global Food, Energy, and Financing Crisis, the UNCT in Lao PDR will establish a “high frequency data Joint Programme” led by UNICEF as chair of the UNSDCF Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Group (MELG) and UNESCAP’s Statistics Division, funded by the SDG Fund Emergency modality. This JP will support, from June 2022 to the end of the year, the Lao Academy of Social and Economic Sciences (LASES) which is the research institute to support government and Central Party, to collect, produce, and analyse selected socioeconomic data and animate a multistakeholder space to exchange on policy directions and activities that can mitigate the immediate impacts and respond to the drivers of this crisis.
Resident Coordinator	Ms. Sara Sekkenes, sara.tollefsen@un.org
UN Joint Program RCO focal point	Mr. Matthew Johnson-Idan, matthew.johnson-idan@un.org , Senior Economist, +856 20 5551 4578
PUNO Lead agency JP Focal point	UNICEF (UNCT MELG Chairperson), Ms. Beate Dastel, Deputy Representative, bdastel@unicef.org
Other PUNOs JP focal point	UNDP; Ms. Catherine Phuong, Deputy Resident Representative catherine.phuong@undp.org WFP; Ms. Jacqueline DeGroot, Deputy Country Director, jacqueline.degroot@wfp.org FAO; Mr. Nasar Hayat, Representative, Nasar.Hayat@fao.org
Total budget:	
Source of funds:	
• UN Joint SDG Fund	\$243,960
SDG Targets directly addressed by the Joint Programme	- 1.1: By 2030, reduce at least by half the population of men, women, and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

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- 1.5: By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure to vulnerability and climate-related extreme events and other economic, social, and environmental shocks and disasters.
 - 2.1: By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people to, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.
 - 3.d: Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks.
 - 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere.
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Gender Marker

Select only one from the options below

- GEN3: Have gender equality/women empowerment as the primary or principal objective.
 - GEN2: Make a significant contribution to gender equality/women empowerment.
 - GEN1: Make a limited contribution to gender equality/women empowerment
 - GEN0: Make no contribution to gender equality/women empowerment
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JOINT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Situation Analysis

Lao PDR's macroeconomic situation was challenging prior to COVID-19 but was impacted further by the pandemic and by the global Food, Energy, and Financing Crisis. The 2019 IMF Article IV report already identified the country as being at high risk of debt distress.¹

In early 2022, the situation escalated substantially. The inflation rate accelerated from 5.27% in December 2021 to 9.86% in April. Over the same period, the national currency (Lao Kip - LAK) depreciated by 14.5% against official USD exchange rate. The LAK depreciated much faster in parallel markets, with the gap between official and parallel rates reaching 15%.²

Laos relies on imports for key commodities, including fuel, foods and agricultural inputs, and medicines. Rising global prices and the rapidly depreciating currency are making these increasingly unaffordable. Fuel prices are regulated, but despite increases, retailers have still been unable to import sufficient supplies. In May, many fuel stations closed and queues of several hours were observed at those with limited fuel available.³ Addressing foreign currency shortage, the Governor of the Lao central bank has stated that only 33%⁴ of the country's export value re-enters the economy through the banking system, depriving the government of revenue possibilities.⁵

These challenges are acknowledged by the Government and the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, with the 11th Party Central Committee in May adopting a resolution to urgently address economic difficulties, including fluctuating currency and inflation rates. On 6 June, the Prime Minister formed a Task Force to address the fuel crisis, spiralling price of consumer goods, and dwindling foreign currency reserves.⁶

This takes place against the backdrop of the pandemic and global climate crisis with weakened resilience and commensurate increased vulnerability and cost-of-living squeeze for the poorest. The focus now is on addressing challenges facing nearly all sectors of society: schools were closed for an extended period and learning loss may never be recovered with exacerbated inequities including the gender divide;¹ lockdowns and public health measures severely affected the informal economy, where most of the working poor are employed, with women representing the majority.

In short, the reverberating effects of the global Food, Energy, and Financing Crisis, and a rapidly depreciating LAK combined with foreign currency shortages have: impacted the supply and prices of food, energy, and much needed fertilizers for the upcoming planting season; further depleted the limited volume of available development finance; and threaten to increase food insecurity, unemployment, heighten inequalities, and retard economic progress. The rapid unfolding of the situation,

¹ IMF, Lao PDR 2019 Article IV Consultation- Staff Report, 2019

² World Bank, Lao Economic Monitor, April 2022

³ Vientiane Times

⁴ ADB estimate at 26%

⁵ :: KPL :: Lao News Agency

⁶ Vientiane Times

when reliable data remains scarce in Lao PDR, requires urgent monitoring for more real-time evidence to support policy decisions and programming.

A rapid deployment of a high-frequency monitoring process emerged as a priority during an ad-hoc UNCT meeting to discuss these developments.

Programme Strategy

The JP will support the planning, coordination, and implementation of the collection and analysis of data to better understand the impact of recent developments, develop policy and programming recommendations, and provide these to key decision makers, implementing and oversight institutions, including the Prime-minister's office, ministries, and National Assembly committees.

Data collection and analysis will focus on better understanding how wellbeing, especially of the most vulnerable, is being affected by rapidly changing dynamics - providing targeted, disaggregated, and timely data to inform efficient design of course corrections and new responses.

The JP utilizes structures under the Lao PDR-UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (CF). It will be led by UNICEF as chair of the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Group, which coordinates all agencies' M&E focal points, with convening and secretariat support from the RCO, and ESCAP's Statistics Division's quality assurance.

The UN's main government counterpart will be the the Lao Academy of Economic and Social Sciences (LASES), which will coordinate relevant ministries and Lao Statistics Bureau through dissemination and policy dialogues.

1. Rationale and Relevance

To provide more effective advice to protect the most vulnerable, there is a need for more up-to-date and detailed information on how the consequences of the volatile situation are playing out. Regular data monitoring systems provide information only with a lag, and often in an aggregated form. In a context where substantial shifts have occurred within days and weeks, there is a need for higher frequency information. Monitoring the situation to guide response decisions over the coming months will be critical.

To lay the foundations for appropriate response to the crisis, there is also a need for integrated analysis that can consider synergies and trade-offs and support prioritisation.

The decision to collaborate with LASES is founded on its role in socioeconomic research and its position as a trusted advisor on evidence-based policymaking.

2. Expected Outputs

i. Data

The JP will first work with LASES and relevant national counterparts to pool existing relevant data sources, especially disaggregated data. This includes the datasets on inflation generated by LSB, prices bulletin of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, and World Bank household survey 2021, and monitoring of the parallel exchange rate.

The JP will support LASES to increase the frequency and reach of existing survey missions of businesses and households in key provinces, from biannually to every 2 months until the end of 2022 (3 missions), covering the following data points:

- **Consumption, business and other livelihoods dynamics:** changes in consumption that could indicate deteriorating livelihoods (e.g. amount of rice consumed, delayed school fees payment, rising household debt) and the potential rise in symptoms of dramatic changes (e.g. petty crime and social cohesion). This could include the Consumption Sentiment Index, Business Tendency Index, and crime statistics and media monitoring.
- **Policy implementation monitoring:** the impacts of policies to alleviate the burden of rising inflation on livelihoods (e.g. tax cuts on fuel prices' impact on people's ability to farm).

The JP will mobilise UN expertise (e.g. WHO on medicine, WFP/FAO on food security, UNDP on vulnerable populations, UNFPA on Gender and SRH) to develop a single, light, integrated, and replicable questionnaire.

ii. Analysis

The JP will support analysis of information to develop clear, concise, and policy-relevant findings. This research will take place on an ongoing basis as more information becomes available. Deliverables include:

- Monthly bulletins;
- Regular policy briefs with recommendations;
- Ad-hoc short publications and communication.

Data will be disseminated through workshops with government and development partners convened by LASES supported by the RCO. Information collected by an initiative by WFP, FAO, and IFAD focussing on food insecurity specifically through pre- and post-harvest surveys will also be fed into analytical efforts.

iii. Policy dialogue

The JP will produce documents to guide government policymaking and UN programming. The JP expects to create a space for policy discussions with relevant parts of government, development partners, and CSOs, convened by LASES.

Regular consultations will take place with LASES to oversee and review research findings. This would provide an ongoing channel for the findings to pass, through national systems, to decision makers. Towards the end of the JP, a policy dialogue will provide space for a strategic discussion between the government and development partners. This will inform the mid-

term review and possible adjustment of the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan in 2023. In turn, this will also provide the impetus for relevant course corrections of UN programming as well as identify any need for more crisis-oriented support.

3. Translation to Medium-Term Policy Solutions

Under the CF, discussions are underway to design integrated cross-UN support to the full policy and planning cycle. This anticipated new programme will build on the existing INFF JP, and support the development of efficient, structured processes for research and information to feed into decision-making.

The expected outputs of this JP in response to the development emergency have been structured to align with and feed into this policy cycle. In particular, rapidly implemented activities will feed into the first phase of the cycle (Agenda setting and research)- providing critical information and analysis currently lacking. This will then feed into the subsequent phase (policy formulation).

4. Focus on Vulnerable Groups

There is limited information currently available that disaggregates the impact of the current situation on vulnerable groups. Development partners, including the World Bank, ADB, IMF and bilateral partners have also emphasized the need for more disaggregated and real-time data to monitor the risk of increased fragility, noting the growing risk of social unrest being seen across the region. The particular emphasis placed on disaggregated information in data collection and analysis under this JP will play a valuable role in addressing this gap.

5. Role of wider UNCT and other Stakeholders

The full UNCT will be regularly updated on progress and findings through regular UNCT and MELG meetings. This will provide an opportunity for additional inputs, advice, and insights from beyond the core technical team. UNESCAP's Statistics Division will be having a supporting quality assurance role in this Joint Programme.

Governance and implementation arrangements

The JP will be led by the RC, with the RCO responsible for strategic and technical coordination.

Within the UN structures established under the CF, the work would be organised and planned through the MELG, chaired by UNICEF, with convening and secretariat support from the RCO. This group includes representation by all 25 AFPs that are part of the CF.

Decisions on project management will be led by UNICEF as the nominated lead of the MELG, in close consultation with the other agencies, the RCO, and LASES. In event of diverging views and analytics, issues will be referred to the Programme Oversight Group for advice and to the UNCT for final course and decision. A standing agenda item updating on the evolving

socio-economic situation and implementation of the JP will be added to regular monthly UNCT meetings and potential *ad hoc* CMTs.

The ESCAP Division on Statistics, while not formally part of the UNSDCF, will support this initiative. Through its regional experience in national statistical systems and monitoring and evaluation of progress in SDG attainment, the division will provide appropriate theoretical foundations to the data production and analytics, and regular quality assurance. This first interaction with national-level work in Lao PDR could pave the way for greater engagement across the work of the UNSDCF.

Given the rapidly evolving situation, the JP is built around developing a fast mechanism to secure on-the-ground information on how things are playing out across the country within the 6-month timeframe of the Development Emergency window. Over time, the expectation is that regular monitoring processes, in particular through the LSB, would take over this role.

Legal context

Agency name: UNICEF
Agreement title: Basic Cooperation Agreement
Agreement date: 23 August 1995

Agency name: UNDP
Agreement title: Standard Basic Assistance Agreement
Agreement date: 10 October 1988

Agency name: FAO
Agreement title: Agreement for the Opening of a Representative Office
Agreement date: 29 August 1978

Agency name: WFP
Agreement title: Basic Agreement
Agreement date: 23 August 2005

Workplan Template														
Outcome 1		More updated and disaggregated information is available to the government and development partners (including the UN) to inform policy and programming responses.												
Output	Target/s	List of activities	Time frame						Overall budget description	PLANNED BUDGET			PUNO/s involved	Implementing partner/s involved
			July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec		Joint SDG Fund (USD)	PUNO Contributions (USD)	Total Cost (USD)		
Output 1.1 Data collection and synthesis	Regular survey missions and collection of existing data	Methodology and research design	X						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hiring of staff (e.g. statisticians to accompany research design development, project coordinator) Resources for survey mission (logistics, DSA) Set up of light digital monitoring systems (tentative) 	160,000	0	160,000	UNICEF (as lead of the MELG), and in particular, UNDP, WHO (health data), WFP and FAO (food data), UNFPA (gender data), coordinated by the UNRCO	LASES, which will convene relevant parts of government
		Information collation	X	X	X	X	X	X						
		Survey missions	X		X		X							
Output 1.2 Analysis, rapid research, and dissemination		Monthly analytical bulletin		X	X	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printing Graphic designer Not expected at this stage as analytics should use in-house capacity, but additional 	60,000	0	60,000		
		Policy dialogue background documents					X							

		Circulation of analytics					X		consultants to undertake analytics					
Outcome 2	<i>More consultative, multistakeholder, and evidence-based policy discussions take place to mitigate the impacts of the crisis, especially on the most vulnerable, and prioritise sustainable reforms.</i>													
	Target/s		Time frame							PLANNED BUDGET				
Output	List of activities	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Overall budget description	Joint SDG Fund (USD)	PUNO Contributions (USD)	Total Cost (USD)	PUNO/s involved	Implementing partner/s involved	
Output 2.1 Policy advice	Research group	X	X	X	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisation of meetings for the technical working group 	23,960	0	23,960	UNICEF (as lead of the MELG), and in particular, UNDP, WHO (health data), WFP and FAO (food data), UNFPA (gender data), coordinated by the UNRCO	LASES, which will convene relevant parts of government	
	Consultative policy dialogue						X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisation of regular policy dialogues 						

Monitoring, accountability, financial management, and public disclosure

Reporting on the Joint SDG Fund will be results-oriented, and evidence based. **The Convening/Lead Agent will develop a simple final narrative report and submit it to the Joint SDG Fund Secretariat, through the Resident Coordinator no later than two (2) months after the operational closure of the programme activities.**

The Resident Coordinator will be required to monitor the implementation of the joint programme, with the involvement of Joint SDG Fund Secretariat to which it must submit data and information when requested. Additional insights (such as policy papers, value for money analysis, case studies, infographics, blogs) might need to be provided, per request of the Joint SDG Fund Secretariat.

PUNOs will be required to include information on complementary funding received from other sources (both UN cost sharing, and external sources of funding) for the activities supported by the Fund, including in kind contributions and/or South-South Cooperation initiatives, in the reporting.

PUNOs at Headquarters level shall provide the Administrative Agent with the following statements and reports prepared in accordance with its accounting and reporting procedures, consolidate the financial reports, as follows:

- Annual financial reports as of 31st December each year with respect to the funds disbursed to it from the Joint SDG Fund Account, to be provided no later than four months after the end of the applicable reporting period; and
- A final financial report, after the completion of the activities financed by the Joint SDG Fund and including the final year of the activities, to be provided no later than 30 April of the year following the operational closing of the project activities.

The Project will be using a pass-through fund management modality where UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office will act as the Administrative Agent. The programmatic UN entity of the Facility shall assume full programmatic and financial accountability for the funds disbursed to it by the Administrative Agent of the Joint SDG Fund (Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office). Such funds will be administered by each UN Agency, Fund, and Project in accordance with its own regulations, rules, directives and procedures. The entity shall establish a separate ledger account for the receipt and administration of the funds disbursed to it by the Administrative Agent. Indirect costs of the Participating Organizations recovered through project support costs will be 7%. All other costs incurred by each PUNO in carrying out the activities for which it is responsible under the Fund will be recovered as direct costs. Procedures on financial transfers, extensions, financial and operational closure, and related administrative issues are stipulated in the Operational Guidance of the Joint SDG Fund. PUNOs and partners must comply with Joint SDG Fund brand guidelines, which includes information on donor visibility requirements.

Risk Management

Risks	Risk Level:	Likelihood:	Impact:	Mitigating measures	Responsible Org./Person
Contextual risks					
Interruptions in ability to travel (e.g. fuel availability) restricts ability to collect information.	High	4	3	PUNOs will focus on digital tools for data collection that are less reliant on physical travel.	UNICEF, RCO
Data collected under the initiative is considered politically sensitive and is not transferred to relevant decision makers.	High	3	5	Working closely with LASES as the advisory body to government in all elements of design and data collection.	UNICEF, RCO
Programmatic risks					

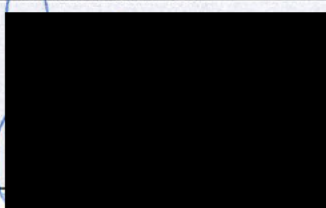
JP activities overlap with initiatives launched by other stakeholders.	High	4	3	JP activities will be actively communicated to all stakeholders, with the opportunity for additional partners to join the shared process.	RCO
Difficulty accessing existing disaggregated data sets.	High	3	3	The JP will consult closely with key national authorities as part of the shared monitoring effort.	UNICEF, RCO
Inability to rapidly establish reliable high-frequency indicator series.	High	3	5	PUNOs will deploy in	UNICEF, ESCAP
Government counterparts do not use the evidence generated to inform policy decisions	High	3	5	UN and LASES will work closely together to organise regular policy consultations and generate necessary buy-in	LASES, RCO, UNICEF
Institutional risks					
Insufficient coordination amongst UNCT to engage through a consolidated data collation channel.	High	4	4	RCO will assume responsibility for coordination of UNCT inputs. The MELG as an existing coordination structure will be engaged in implementation.	RCO
Fiduciary risks					
Funds delivered not used for intended purpose or not properly accounted for.	Medium	2	2	UNICEF procurement and fiduciary management rules and processes will be fully applied.	UNICEF




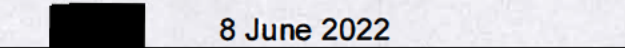
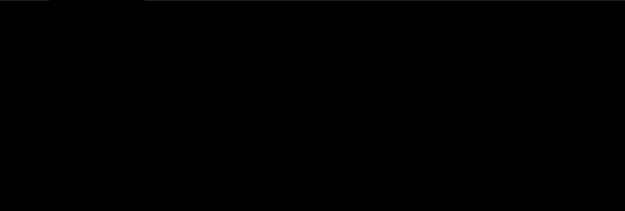
Budget per UNSDG Categories

UNSDG BUDGET CATEGORIES	UNICEF						
	Joint SDG Fund (USD)	PUNO Contribution (USD)					
1. Staff and other personnel	0						
2. Supplies, Commodities, Materials	8,000						
3. Equipment, Vehicles, and Furniture (including Depreciation)	0						
4. Contractual services	100,000						
5. Travel	30,000						
6. Transfers and Grants to Counterparts	80,000						
7. General Operating and other Direct Costs	10,000						
Total Direct Costs	228,000						
8. Indirect Support Costs (Max. 7%)	15,960						
TOTAL Costs	243,960						

Signature of Joint Programme document and Fund Transfer Request as per UNSDG budget categories.

I hereby confirm that the funds requested are in accordance with the approved Work Plan & Joint Programme Document. * I also certify that the copy transmitted to the MPTF Office is a true copy of the original which is secured by the RC Office. I have received documentation from Participating Organizations demonstrating Committed amounts where applicable. I also confirm that the PUNOs' indirect cost does not exceed 7%.

RESIDENT COORDINATOR SIGNATURE	<p>Ms. Sara Sekkenes Date and Signature</p> <p>8/6-22</p> 
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UNICEF	<p>Ms. Beate Dastel, Deputy Representative (Representative a.i): Date and Signature  Digitally signed by Beate Dastel Date: 2022.06.09 00:34:03 +07'00'</p>
UNDP	<p>Ms. Catherine Phuong, Deputy Resident Representative (Resident Representative a.i.): Date and Signature  8 June 2022</p>
WFP	<p>Ms. Jacqueline de Groot, Deputy Country Director (Country Director, a.i.): Date   8 June 2022</p>
FAO	

¹ *The State of the Global Education Crisis – a path to recovery?* by World Bank, UNICEF and UNESCO, 2021