LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Peace – Independence – Democracy – Unity – Prosperity

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project (P178883)

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Version 5
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Prepared by

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

List of Tables

Abbreviations

CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CVS	Compliance Verification System
CM	Community Mobilizer
DAFO	District Agriculture and Forestry Office
DHC	District Health Center
DIO	District Implementation Office
GMP	Growth Monitoring and Promotion
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
MIS	Management Information System
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MOH	Ministry of Health
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
PAFO	Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office
PMT	Proxy Means Test
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPCO	Provincial Project Coordination Office
PSP	Payment Service Provider
RRPM	Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition
SBCC	Social Behavior Change Communication
VDC	Village Development Committee
VPCC	Village Project Coordinating Committee

Definitions

Disadvantaged individuals/ households

Refers to individuals or groups who, due to certain own circumstances such as their age, gender, disabilities, health, economic and ethnic status, and so forth, are more likely affected adversely by the project impacts and/or more limited in their ability to take advantage of project benefits. Disadvantaged individuals/groups are more likely excluded from, or unable to participate fully in the mainstream consultation process, and may require specific assistance to promote inclusion. In this project, disadvantaged individuals/ groups are defined as those who have the following characteristics: i) from an ethnic minority group, (ii) landless/ limited productive land, (iii) female headed household with dependents, (iv) frequent lack of male labor at home (e.g. migrant workers); (v) jobless, or limited economic opportunities; (vi) family member(s) with chronic illness, or disabilities; (vii) elderlies who live on their own; (viii) youth, particularly very young couple with children (early marriage), (ix) live in an especially difficult circumstance, and (x) don't meet above criteria but are concurred by local community as vulnerable to poverty and need project's support to reduce their vulnerability. Disadvantaged individuals are usually from a poor, or a near poor household.

Inclusion

inclusion means empowering all people to participate in, and benefit from, the development process. Inclusion encompasses policies to promote equality and nondiscrimination by improving the access of all people, including the poor and disadvantaged, to services and benefits such as education, health, social protection, infrastructure, affordable energy, employment, financial services and productive assets. It also embraces action to remove barriers against those who are often excluded from the development process, such as women, children, persons with disabilities, youth and minorities, and to ensure that the voice of all can be heard.

Information disclosure

The process of disseminating project information to stakeholders to allow them to understand the risks and impacts of the project, and potential opportunities. Information disclosure should be in line with the project's Stakeholder Engagement Plan which is in line with the requirements of ESS10. It is required that the disclosure of project information include: (a) purpose, nature and scale of the project; (b) duration of proposed project activities; (c) environmental and social risks and potential impacts of the project on local communities, particularly the vulnerable/disadvantaged groups and proposed mitigation measures; (d) proposed stakeholder engagement process highlighting approach that will be taken to promote meaningful participation of project affected persons; (e) time and venue of proposed public consultation meetings, and the process by which meetings will be notified, meeting results summarized, and reported back to project stakeholders; and (f) process and means by which grievances can be received and addressed timely.

Indigenous Peoples

According to the World Bank's Environment and Social Framework, the term "Indigenous Peoples/ Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities" is used in a generic sense to refer exclusively to a distinct social and cultural group possessing all the following characteristics – in varying degrees:

- Self-identification as members of a distinct indigenous social and cultural group and recognition of this identity by others; and

- Collective attachment[1] to geographically distinct habitats, ancestral territories, or areas of seasonal use or occupation, as well as to the natural resources in these areas; and

- Customary cultural, economic, social, or political institutions that are distinct or separate from those of the mainstream society or culture, and

- A distinct language or dialect, often different from the official language or languages of the country or region in which they reside.

Meaningful consultation

Two-way process that (a) begins early in project planning process to gather initial views on project proposal and inform project design; (b) encourages stakeholder feedback, particularly as a way of informing project design and engagement by stakeholders in the identification and mitigation of environmental and social risks and impacts; (c) continues on an ongoing basis, as risks and impacts arise; (d) is based on prior disclosure and dissemination of relevant, transparent, objective, meaningful and easily accessible information in a timeframe that enables meaningful consultation with project stakeholders in a format culturally appropriate, and in relevant local language(s) and is understandable to stakeholders; (e) considers and responds to feedback; (f) supports active and inclusive engagement with project-affected parties; (g) is free of external manipulation, interference, coercion, discrimination, and intimidation; and (h) is documented and disclosed by the Government.

Poor individuals/ households

Households who live below the national poverty line – as established by the Government of Laos; or as referenced to the poverty line established by the World Bank for Laos PDR using at 2019 prices (which is 280,910 LAK per month per person). During project life, if the national poverty line is updated by the Government and/or the World Bank, the latest poverty line should be used. Where poverty line for rural area is available, such poverty line should be used.

Vulnerable individuals/ households

In this project, vulnerable individuals/ households are defined as those who live just above the national poverty line, including 1) the near-poor[2], and 2) those whose income is marginally above the near-poor line. People who are from Disadvantaged Groups (as defined in this project) are considered as vulnerable group (See definition for Disadvantaged individuals/groups). For Laos PDR, the WB proposes defining the near-poor as those whose daily per capita consumption lies between poverty line and 1.5 times the poverty line.

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[1] Collective attachment means that for generations there has been a physical presence in and economic ties to land and territories traditionally owned, or customarily used or occupied, by the group concerned, including areas that hold special significance for it, such as sacred sites.

[2] In Lao PDR, the WB proposed near-poor are those whose daily per capita consumption lies between poverty line and 1.5 times the poverty line (WB 2022, Cambodia Poverty Assessment – Toward A More Inclusive and Resilient Cambodia).

Executive Summary

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) was prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) for the Laos Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project II (RRPM II - P178883). The SEP will apply to all investments under the RRPM II which will be financed by the World Bank (WB) and the Government of Laos PDR. The SEP has been prepared in line with the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework (ESF). This document is a living document and could be updated in line with the changing project situation, or adjusted scope of the activities.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

The proposed project development objective is to (i) expand access to the Conditional Cash Transfer Program to improve selected nutrition behaviors, and (ii) to enhance the interventions in priority target areas, and (iii) in case of an Eligible Crisis or Emergency, respond promptly and effectively to it.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) seeks to ensure that Project beneficiaries, as well as other Project stakeholders, are informed and involved in all the stages of Project preparation and implementation. The Project recognizes the need to seek representative and inclusive feedback of different groups of disadvantaged/vulnerable groups, and the SEP looks to promote the role of women and disadvantaged/vulnerable in project planning and implementation. The Project also recognizes the importance of ensuring affected people are consulted on mitigation measures, as well as continuing monitoring of project activities.

The SEP outlines affected stakeholders: those directly affected by project investment, and interested stakeholders: those with an interest or concern in the project. The SEP describes these different stakeholders and outlines specific methods and timelines to engage them at different stages of the project. The SEP also describes the type of information that will be disclosed, when consultations activities will take place, how stakeholders views will be taken into account and the process for grievance redress.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

The main purpose of the stakeholder engagement program is to ensure that relevant project stakeholders are engaged by the project and participate fully in consultations during project design and implementation, particularly during stages stakeholders' feedbacks on project's anticipated environmental and social risks and impacts, including mitigation measures, are critical to informing project's intervention strategy. The project will consult various project stakeholders at different stages of project cycles.

CONSULTATION AND INFORMATION DISCLOSURE

During project preparation, consultation sessions were organized in November 2022 at commune level and national level. The purpose of consultation was to consult with potentially affected and interested stakeholders on environmental and social instruments that were prepared for the project.

Draft ESF instruments, including the SEP, was disclosed on 10 May 2023 on RRMP II's website (https://www.) for public consultation. Based on feedback of the consulted people, the draft documents will be updated and re-disclosed in its final version on the same channel to keep project stakeholder informed of the updated versions.

RESOURCES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The PMU will be in charge of implementation of stakeholder engagement activities. The contact information of key environmental and social PMU members that can be reached to provide comments, feedback, or raise questions about the project. In case there is change to the following personnel, this SEP will be updated to reflect new staff arrangements and will be disclosed through the same channel to keep project stakeholders informed. Changes will also be updated accordingly in materials distributed for consultation.

GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM

The objective of the GRM is to provide affected persons with redress procedures that can be conveniently used to raise a project related concern or grievance. The GRM guides how a complaint, e.g. complain about exclusion, can be lodged, including forms and channels through which a complaint can be submitted. To facilitate the grievance resolution process, grievances received will be acknowledged in writing and solved within a specified timeframe. During the resolution process, where necessary, dialogue will be hold with aggrieved person for mutual understanding and effective resolution.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

The objective of internal monitoring of SEP implementation is to ensure activities set out in SEP is carried out timely and appropriately. Under the overall guidance of the Project Manager, the Communication and Inclusion Specialist (CIS) of Project Management Unit is responsible for monitoring activities described in this SEP. During project implementation, the CIS will prepare monthly internal monitoring reports for SEP activities.

COSTS AND BUDGET

Indicative costs for SEP implementation are estimated during project preparation for the purpose of budget planning. The actual costs of SEP implementation depend on scope and activities to be carried out, during project preparation and implementation. The cost may be updated once the list of subprojects is finalized. Costs incurred as disclosure materials and public consultations are covered by counterpart funding and are estimated in the project' SEP.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Rationale

1. The Government of Lao PDR (GOL) has accessed $25 million of the International Development Association (IDA) to implement the Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project phase 2 (RRPM II, hereinafter referred to as Project). Building on key outputs and lessons-learned from the on-going WB financed project "Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project", the Project aims to improve selected nutrition behaviors, enhance GOL capacity to deliver integrated multi-sectoral nutrition interventions in priority target areas. Activities and locations of the Project will be identified during the advance stage of the Project preparation and implementation. It is also expected that a WB project related to nutrition convergence will also be prepared and implemented in similar project provinces, and cover two additional provinces.

2. The Project will be implemented through the Department of Rural Development and Cooperatives (DRDC) of Ministry of Agriculture and Forest (MAF) and the Department of International Cooperation (DIC) and the Development Research Institute (DIC) of the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI). The Project activities will be carried out in Xiengkhuang, Huaphanh, Oudomxay, Phongsaly, Sekong, and Savannakhet provinces through the subnational offices responsible for agriculture and forestry (PAFO/DAFO) and those responsible for planning and investment.

1.2 Project Development Objective and Project Components

The Project Development Objective (PDO) is: (i) to increase utilization and adaptability of the Social Protection Delivery System, (ii) consolidate the Conditional Cash Transfers to improve nutrition behaviors, (iii) enhance the convergence of multisectoral nutrition interventions in priority target areas, (iv) and in case of an eligible crisis or emergency, respond promptly and effectively to it:

- Number of programs and/or projects using information from social registry
- Number of CCT beneficiaries (gender disaggregated)
- Percentage of children 6 – 23 months from cash transfer beneficiary households consuming foods from at least 5 out of 8 food groups recommended food groups.
- Percentage of first 1,000-day households access to a package of priority nutrition interventions

The project will comprise five components that will continue to support the implementation of the nutrition-sensitive conditional cash transfer (built on phase 1) to contribute to reducing poverty and malnutrition, improve and enhance social protection systems, and promote the planning, coordination, and monitoring of the multisector nutritional convergence approach.

Component 1. Strengthening Social Protection Building Blocks. This component aims to strengthen the key building blocks of the social protection system in Lao PDR. Specifically, it supports: i) the enhancement of the social registry, ii) enhancement of beneficiary management and payment; and iii) establishing the building blocks of an adaptive social protection (ASP) system.

Component 2: Support to the Helping Hand Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program. The objective of this component is to support the continuous delivery of the Helping Hand CCT program to poor and vulnerable pregnant women and children under two years of age in convergence villages. Currently, the program targets the bottom 60 percent of households covering in some villages as many as 90 percent of all households. To align the poverty line in decree 348, the Government has decided to set it at the 50th percentile for the implementation of the RRPM II. Pregnant women and mothers are designated as primary recipient of benefits or grantees. Eligible beneficiaries of the program will continue to be selected using the National Social Registry, which adopts a proxy means testing mechanism to estimate household.

Component 3: Implementation Management Support and Institutional Strengthening. This component will support project management costs related to operations, capacity building and training, including financial audits, service fees for financial service providers, and implementation of ESF activities. This includes the financing of a dedicated PMU to execute the project and manage Components 1, 2 and 3. Key activities that will be financed under this component include: a) Project management , b) Monitoring of the Helping Hand CCT, c) Establishing capacity for expansion, d) Complementary Social and Behavioral Change Communication delivery.

Component 4: Enhancing the Nutrition Convergence Oversight and Coordination. The objective of this component is to support the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) for the overall oversight and coordination of nutrition convergence program. The component will finance the operational costs to coordinate the program at central, district and village levels, undertake a series of monitoring data collection and impact evaluation surveys, project-related financial management (FM), procurement, support and coordinate the nutrition convergence approach, and carry out monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

Component 5: Contingency Emergency Response. The objective of the contingent emergency response component (CERC), with a provisional zero allocation, is to allow for the reallocation of financing to provide an immediate response to an eligible crisis or emergency, as needed. The Government can request the WB to urgently activate CERC and reallocate the undisbursed balance to support the implementation of the government's emergency plan. Additional financing can also be mobilized to fully or partially replenish the funds reallocated to the CERC in accordance with the WB's requirements. Detailed procedures and rules on activation and implementation of CERC will be summarized in the CERC Emergency Response Manual (ERM) which will be prepared by the government and to be approved by the WB as an appendix of the Project Operations Manual.

1.3 WB's requirements on Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure

The World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework (ESF)'s Environmental and Social Standard (ESS) 10, "Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure", recognizes "the importance of open and transparent engagement between the Borrower and project stakeholders as an essential element of good international practice" (World Bank, 2017: 97). Specifically, the requirements set out by ESS10 are as follows:

- *"Borrowers will engage with stakeholders throughout the project life cycle, commencing such engagement as early as possible in the project development process and in a timeframe that enables meaningful consultations with stakeholders on project design. The nature, scope and frequency of stakeholder engagement will be proportionate to the nature and scale of the project and its potential risks and impacts.*
- *Borrowers will engage in meaningful consultations with all stakeholders. Borrowers will provide stakeholders with timely, relevant, understandable and accessible information, and consult with them in a culturally appropriate manner, which is free of manipulation, interference, coercion, discrimination and intimidation.*
- *The process of stakeholder engagement will involve the following, as set out in further detail in this ESS: (i) stakeholder identification and analysis; (ii) planning how the engagement with stakeholders will take place; (iii) disclosure of information; (iv) consultation with stakeholders; (v) addressing and responding to grievances; and (vi) reporting to stakeholders.*
- *The Borrower will maintain and disclose as part of the environmental and social assessment, a*

documented record of stakeholder engagement, including a description of the stakeholders consulted, a summary of the feedback received and a brief explanation of how the feedback was taken into account, or the reasons why it was not." (World Bank, 2017: 98).

A Stakeholder Engagement Plan proportionate to the nature and scale of the project and its potential risks and impacts needs to be developed by the Borrower. It has to be disclosed as early as possible, and before project appraisal, and the Borrower needs to seek the views of stakeholders on the SEP, including on the identification of stakeholders and the proposals for future engagement. If significant changes are made to the SEP, the Borrower has to disclose the updated SEP (World Bank, 2017: 99). According to ESS10, the Borrower should also propose and implement a grievance mechanism to receive and facilitate the resolution of concerns and grievances of project-affected parties related to the environmental and social performance of the project in a timely manner (World Bank, 2017: 100).

1.4 Purpose of SEP

The purpose of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) is to set forth a plan to ensure project stakeholders, particularly those who are affected (including project beneficiaries), are identified and engaged reiteratively throughout the project cycle. During Implementation of this SEP, project stakeholders, particularly the affected parties, will be engaged in meaningful consultation to understand the project purpose, nature, scale, duration of its activities, its potential environmental and social risks and impacts, proposed mitigation measures, grievance redress mechanism, and provide feedback based on such information to help the project avoid, minimize and mitigate potential risks and impacts during project design and implementation.

The SEP also sets out institutional arrangements to ensure effective engagement of project's stakeholder during project implementation. The project recognizes that the voice of the disadvantaged/ vulnerable groups, such as women, ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities, are important to ensure these groups are not adversely affected disproportionately during project implementation. The SEP sets out plans to enhance inclusion of, and appropriate interventions for, vulnerable groups/ people, including ensuring that meaningful feedback of vulnerable/disadvantaged people are solicited, considered, and incorporated into project design and implementation. It also ensures project stakeholders, especially the affected ones, can participate in monitoring the project's risks and impacts management process and through such participatory monitoring activities provide timely feedback to enable the project to effectively manage risks and potential environmental and social impacts.

To achieve the above purpose, this SEP will:

- Identify all potential project stakeholders, including affected parties and interested parties;
- Consult with a) project beneficiaries, including also those who are disadvantaged/vulnerable, to understand their concerns, development needs, priorities, and b) those who might be excluded from project benefit because of exclusion error;
- Understand the power dynamics among identified project stakeholders, particularly their interests in project activities, their influences on project design/implementation, and the impacts the project may have on them;
- Identify strategies to notify and disclose project information to identified stakeholders, particularly those who are negatively affected groups to collect their meaningful feedback;
- Specify methods for consulting with project stakeholders, collect opinions, and incorporate feedback into project design;
- Ensure grievance redress mechanisms are in place – for potential grievances. GRM will be designed

to be accessible, responsive and culturally appropriate to potentially affected people, particularly to indigenous peoples present in the project area;

- Ensure appropriate human and financial resources are arranged to ensure timely and effective implementation of SEP; and
- Ensure project stakeholders, both affected and interested parties, have chance to monitor project's environmental and social risks and impacts during project implementation.

The SEP is a living document and may be updated, as needed, during project implementation.

2. BRIEF SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

This section summarizes the key findings of the consultations during November 2022 with representatives of project beneficiaries, project staff, and relevant project stakeholders from relevant Ministries. Despite of overall success of the CTT program, and supporting activities, that promote behavior change in nutrition, and nutrition practices, among the target group, some key challenges still exists. Key issues are described below. These issues are highlighted based on the consultation with project beneficiaries, village facilitators, and project staff from three project provinces. Findings from the field were validated with representatives of PMU, MPI, and other relevant ministries at national-level workshop. Underscore text indicate such findings are shared by people consulted at village level and national level.

Learning Knowledge

- Generally, nutritional knowledge are very helpful but needs to be provided also to those who are not receiving CCT, and those who are potential beneficiaries of the project in the future;
- More specifically, nutritional knowledge should be provided to families with children over two years old as well because the parents may need to learn about good nutritional practices;
- Demonstration should be given on how CTT money is used, food is selected (for a meal), etc. to provide participants with hands-on experience;
- Training should be given to people living in flood prone area (e.g. flash flood) to enable them to know how to feed their children in the event of flash flood.

Organization & Coordination

- Invited participants could not show up at nutrition events because of short notice. Notification should be more in advance to allow farmers to arrange their work properly;
- Village loud speakers could be used for announcement;
- Local people are sometimes confused, and/or unable to participate because of various nutrition activities are conducted in different days in the same village (e.g. nutrition activities under RRPM, PRF, HANSA, AFN, etc.);
- Local people are confused about the criteria for beneficiary households, particularly between RRPM and HANSA, and are thus reluctant to participate in nutrition activities.

Access to local healthcare service

- Long distance[3] between home and nearest health station (exacerbated by bad road condition and unavailability of man at home to assist) prevent mothers from taking their children to local health station for timely medical check;
- In relation to the above, mothers have limited access to medicine due to reliance to local medicine dealer;
- Lack of timely access to appropriate health care service may worsen their children's health status, which necessitate them to spend more CTT money on healthcare rather than nutrition.

Access to market

- Unavailability of local markets[4] in many remote areas prevents mothers from accessing the right food they want for their children's nutrient meals;
- The above is worsened in a longer time particularly for families that have no, or limited access to home garden, or food that could be grown from their field
- PMT method is new and not consistent yet;
- Verification of information should be accurate and clearer (during the PMT processing, more appropriate interviewees or informants must be selected…

CTT payment and eligibility

- Late CCT payment is common across project villages. It should be released on time or should not exceed four months;
- CCT amount becomes devalued over time due to inflation. Should be increased from LAK200,000 to LAK300,000 to compensate inflation;
- CTT should be considered for children from 2-5 years of age;
- Community members who are not eligible for CCT try to block other community members from joining project activity;
- If mother of children under 2 years got pregnant, project should cover both;

Grievance Redress Mechanism

- An online GRM has been established under phase 1 of the project. However, resolution of grievance needs to be improved. Particular focus should be on a) reduce the risk of exclusion, and time spent for resolving exclusion error and complaints related to exclusion, b) About 55% of grievances received since project start (454 complains) were classified as "other reason" in project's grievance record. These 454 complains should be classified by the types of complaints to enable PMU to engage the right parties to timely resolve the grievances.

Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC)

- Need more village loud speaker.
- SBCC between convergence program should be closely aligned and consistent (to avoid confusion in communication messages)
- SBCC should target all community members, not just only the target beneficiaries.

Village Facilitators

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[4] Many households in remote, mountainous area live 20-30 km far from a nearest market.

- Current allowance is very low compared to actual expense to meet work requirement (LAK90,000 share among 4 people per month. Phone card: 20,000/month, and LAK90,000 for meeting on nutrition (1-2 times a month, petty cash to purchase water, snacks, pen, books).
- Some Village facilitators lose motivation
- The project should provide training to VF on the cooking demonstration

Participation of local mass organization

- There should be more participation from mass organizations such as Lao Women's Union and Youth Union.
- District partners from other projects still lack understanding about RRPM project;
- Lao WU and YU should join hands with Village Facilitator and Community Mobilizers

3. STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Affected Parties

Under this Project, affected parties refer to two key groups who are impacted by the project: 1) positively affected parties (which include individuals and groups who will benefit from project investment) and 2) adversely affected parties, such as those who are excluded from the CTT program.

Under this project, some social risks are anticipated. Since the project targets the poorest segment of the poor population, some individuals from vulnerable/disadvantaged groups, including those from some individual households from ethnic minority groups such as Khmou, Akha, Phong, H'mong are potentially excluded (due to exclusion errors). Among these, there may be individuals/households who may be from female-headed households, family with people with disabilities, and households in especially difficult circumstances, such as those who experience difficult life due to economic shocks or due to natural disasters.

3.2 Other Interested Parties

Interested Stakeholders include those who are interested in project activities, and/or have certain level of influence on project design and implementation process but are not affected by the Project. These may be government officials, community leaders, and civil society organizations, particularly those who work in, or work with the affected communities under their own project/program. These interested parties are identified below by different levels: village, district, provincial and central levels.

Village level

- Local people (who are not targeted as project beneficiaries)
- Local village leaders
- Local opinion leaders
- Local ethnic minority spiritual leaders

District level

- NGOs which have project teams based at district level
- Governmental official such as those from DAFO, Lao Women's Union, Lao Youth Union
- Local commercial banks

Provincial level

- NGOs which has offices based at provincial level

- Governmental official such as those from PAFO, Lao Women's Union, Lao Youth Union, Department of Health, Department of Public Works and Transport, Department of Education
- Local commercial banks

Central level

- Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI)
- Ministry of Health (MOH)
- Ministry of Finance (MOF)
- Bank of Lao PDR
- Lao Women's Union
- Lao Youth's Union
- NGOs and civil society groups with an interest in Indigenous Peoples' issues.
- PMU and the World Bank Project Teams for the following WB financed nutrition convergence program:
  - ❖ Health and Nutrition Services Access (HANSA II);
  - ❖ Community Livelihood Enhancement and Resilience (CLEAR);
  - ❖ Scaling-Up Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene;
  - ❖ Early Childhood Education; and the Learning and Equity Acceleration.
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
- United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).

3.3 Disadvantaged/ Vulnerable Individuals and Groups

In this section, the categories of disadvantaged people and vulnerable people are defined, and the relationships that exists between the disadvantaged conditions of individual/household and their vulnerability to poverty, and to project impacts, are highlighted.

3.3.1. Definitions

Vulnerable individuals/households. The term "vulnerability" refer to different types of risks that an individual/ household may face. For certain people, these risks may be inherent, such as age, education, economic status. For others, these risks are external, such as the geographical location where they live expose them to certain risks, such as flash flood, crop failure, limited income generation opportunities, etc. In a nutshell, vulnerability of an individual/household refers to the likelihood of that individual/household falling below (or deeper below) a predefined welfare threshold, such as the poverty line, if they experience a shock[5].

In line with the above, in this project, vulnerable individuals/ households are defined as those who live above the national poverty line, including: 1) the near-poor[6], and 2) those whose income is marginally above the near-poor line.

Disadvantaged individuals/households. The terms "disadvantage" refer to an intrinsic condition of an individuals/households who, due to their age, gender, disabilities, health, economic and ethnic status, and so forth, are more likely affected adversely by the project impacts and/or more limited in their ability to take advantage of project benefits. Disadvantaged individuals/groups are more likely excluded from,

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[5] Canagarajah, P. Sudharshan & Siegel, Paul B. & Heitzmann, Karin, 2002. "Guidelines for assessing the sources of risk and vulnerability," Social Protection Discussion Papers and Notes 31372, The World Bank (See also Jia Gao & Katja Vinha & Emmanuel Skoufias, 2020. "World Bank Equity Policy Lab Vulnerability Tool to Measure Poverty Risk," World Bank Publications - Reports 35190, The World Bank Group).

[6] In Lao PDR, the WB proposed near-poor are those whose daily per capita consumption lies between poverty line and 1.5 times the poverty line (WB 2022, Cambodia Poverty Assessment – Toward A More Inclusive and Resilient Cambodia).

or unable to participate fully in the mainstream consultation process, and may require specific assistance to promote inclusion.

Relationship between disadvantage and vulnerability. People who have certain disadvantaged conditions, such as age, limited land asset, or from certain ethnic minority groups, etc., are more likely vulnerable to poverty. Therefore, the more disadvantaged an individuals/household are, the more vulnerable they are to poverty because of the disadvantaged conditions. **Individuals/households** are classified as poor, or a near-poor individuals/households have certain level of disadvantages.

Type of vulnerability. In this project, people who have the following characteristics are considered disadvantaged individuals/households:

i) from an ethnic minority groups;
ii) landless/ limited productive land;
iii) female headed household with dependents;
iv) frequent lack of male labor at home (e.g. migrant workers);
v) jobless, or limited economic opportunities;
vi) family member(s) with chronic illness, or disabilities;
vii) elderlies who live on their own;
viii) youth, particularly very young couple with children (early marriage);
ix) live in an especially difficult circumstance;
x) groups who live in are prone to natural disaster (e.g. flash flood); and
xi) don't meet above criteria but are concurred by local community as vulnerable to poverty and need project's support to reduce their vulnerability.

Even though the above groups are generally considered vulnerable (in a broad sense), they may have the same level of interest in project benefit (e.g. receiving CTT). However, they may vulnerable, in a different manner, to the project impacts. For instance, groups who receive CTT payment timely may take the advantage of timely payment to benefit their child where group receiving late CTT payment may lose the opportunity to feed the children properly because of the lack of money to buy food. Similarly, groups who have good access to food (thanks to market access) may better feed their child compared to groups who also receive timely payment but cannot access food they need to nourish their child.

Since the project targets rural, remote villages where most of the inhabitant are from ethnic minority groups, this project-targeted group are normally vulnerable to poverty but they may be vulnerable differently to project impact. The relationship between vulnerability and disadvantage is illustrated by the diagram below.
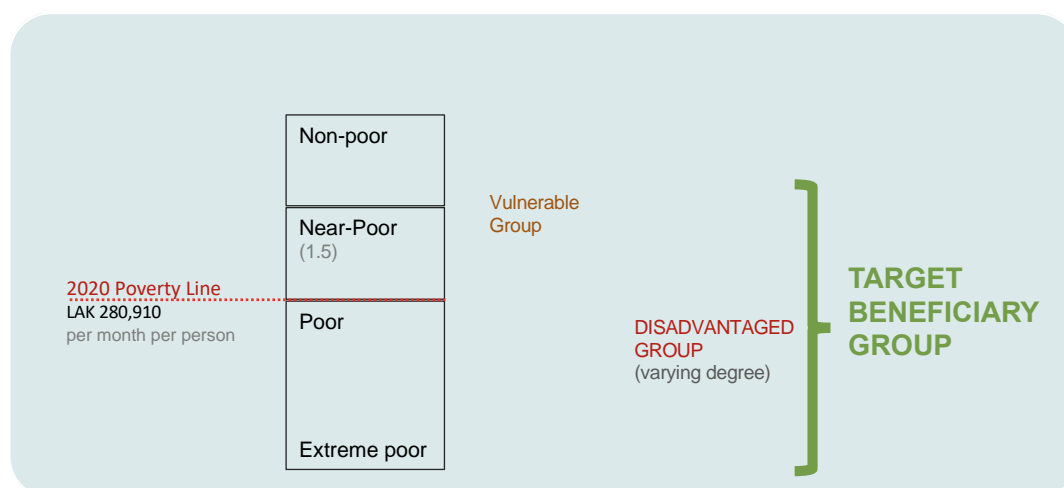
3.3.2 Target group

For the purpose of targeting, the project will target a range of households who are below eligibility threshold which is the 60th percentile based on the Proxy Mean Test[7] (PMT) scores. With this eligibility cutoff point, the target group includes households who are defined as "poor", as well as "vulnerable"– as described under 3.3.1.

It is noted that household with PMT score lower below eligibility threshold comprises of 1) **poor households** (who have an average income of LAK 280,910 per month per person or lower) and 2) **vulnerable household** (whose average income per month per person are between of LAK 280,910 and LAK 556,699. It noted that the current eligibility cutoff of LAK 556,699 is about two times higher than the 2019 poverty threshold (which is LAK280,910 per month per person at 2019 prices)[8].

3.3.3 Beneficiary group

Within the target group (Section 3.3.2), a subgroup will be identified as project' direct beneficiary group. This group include pregnant women and mothers, or caregivers[9] of children below two years old[10] living in poor and near-poor households whose Proxy Mean Test[11] (PMT) scores are below the 60th percentile.

Given the above, in this project, individuals are considered vulnerable to poverty when their income a) is close to the poverty line, b) has high variability of income, c) live in geographical area prone to shocks, d) or all three together.

3.3.4 Potential disproportionate impacts on vulnerable group

Disproportionate impacts on vulnerable (including poor) groups is also dependent up on whether the

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7   Proxy Means Test is used to estimate the income or consumption when information on the family or household's socioeconomic condition needs to be estimated/predicted based on (mostly) observable sociodemographic characteristics and economic assets because verification of socioeconomic status cannot be performed.

8   World Bank. 2019. "Lao People's Democratic Republic Poverty Assessment 2020: Catching Up and Falling Behind." World Bank, Washington, DC.).

9   If biological mother is absent, main caregiver of children under two years is eligible for program enrollment (when possible, women caregivers are encouraged).

10 Children aged less than 22 months at the time of enrolment are.

11 Proxy Means Test is used to estimate the income or consumption when information on the family or household's socioeconomic condition needs to be estimated/predicted based on (mostly) observable sociodemographic characteristics and economic assets because verification of socioeconomic status cannot be performed.

project has effective measures in place to assist vulnerable groups, including those who are vulnerable/disadvantaged but are excluded because of exclusion error, to cope with such project's environmental and social risks, and impacts due to their distinctive characteristics such as their sociocultural disadvantages: a) ethnicity minority (e.g. custom and habits), b) household status (e.g. female-headed), c) household with people with disability, d) households in especially difficult circumstances.

It is anticipated that individuals from vulnerable /disadvantaged group may be left out of mainstream consultation process, particularly those who are vulnerable and are just above the eligibility threshold. Even when they are included in consultation, they may not be able to provide meaningful feedback clear information are not provided, taking into account their language and culture which may affect/shape their understanding and view as to project interventions, and more importantly, their awareness of development activities under World Bank's convergence program that they may approach for their own benefits.

If vulnerable groups in each project district are not fully identified and specific measures and/or assistance are not in place to enable them to participate fully and effectively in consultation during project design and project implementation. This is particularly true to project targeted groups such as those of Akha, H'Mong, Khmou, Phong, etc. in project's target villages.

To address this, the project will take into account potential differences in terms of access to project information, and communication needs of vulnerable individuals, especially those who are from indigenous groups who may have different cultural practices and belief in terms of nutrition, CTT, etc. The project will take into account challenges vulnerable group may face in accessing project's information, and the limited mobility of local elderlies, people with disabilities, and women with children under two years of age. To incorporate the opinions of vulnerable groups into project design, meanwhile addressing inherent obstacles that may affect their full participation, strategy has been prepared to promote full participation of the disadvantaged/vulnerable group in Section 4.4 (Proposed Strategy to Incorporate the Views of Vulnerable Groups).

3.4 Analysis of Stakeholders

Different project stakeholders will have different levels of interest in project activities. They may also have different level of influence on project design and implementation, and are affected differently by project activities. Target beneficiary groups from different cultural backgrounds may also have different level of interest in project activities and level of participation during project implementation. Therefore, it is important to understand a) the level of interest of each stakeholder as to project's investments, b) the magnitude of impact that the project may have on them, particularly those who are affected adversely, and c) level of influence that each stakeholder may have on project design, project implementation process, and project outcomes.

In the Stakeholder Analysis Matrix below (Table 1), based on the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders as to project design and implementation, Table 1 summarizes estimated static levels of interest, impact, and influence of each project stakeholder – as identified during project design. As shown in the Stakeholder Analysis Matrix (Table 1), stakeholders that are highly influential to project design and project implementation process include a) central governmental agencies (particularly during project design and implementation), b) provincial and district governmental agencies (particularly during project implementation). It is noted that while project affected groups have high level of interest in project activities (because of the impact level that the project have on them), they seems to be less influential to project design, particularly for vulnerable groups, because of the role they play in project implementation.

This analysis informs the design of overall consultation strategy of the project, particularly how the views of vulnerable groups are solicited, processed and incorporated into project design and implementation process (See Section 4.4 – Proposed Strategy to Incorporate the View of Vulnerable Groups), including how feedback from project stakeholder are maintained continuously during project implementation to consider timely feedback from all project stakeholders (See Section 4.2 – Proposed Strategy for Information Disclosure, and Section 4.3 –Consultation Strategy).

Table 1 – Levels of Interest, Impact, and Influence of Key Stakeholders

Parties	Key stakeholders	Potential involvements related to project	Interest	Impact	Influence
			High/ Medium / Low		
	COMMUNITY/GROUP LEVELS				
	Positively affected (Beneficiaries)				
	DIRECT BENEFICIARIES				
	▪ Mothers with children under 2 yrs (60th percentile)	▪ Participate in project's consultation/ meetings ▪ Provide questions/comments/suggestions	H	H	L
	▪ Pregnant women	▪ Participate in household survey/ beneficiary satisfaction survey	H	H	L
	▪ Children under 2 years of age of mothers (60th percentile)		H	H	L
Affected parties (Communities)	*INDIRECT BENEFICIARIES*	▪ Participate in project's consultation/ meetings ▪ Provide questions/comments/suggestions	H	M	L
	▪ Village Facilitators (incentives) 80,000 kip /month/village)	▪ Participate in project's consultation/ meetings ▪ Provide questions/comments/suggestions ▪	H	M	L
	▪ Family member of direct beneficiary	▪ Participate in project's consultation/ meetings ▪ Provide questions/comments/suggestions	H	H	L
	▪ Member of households from vulnerable groups as mentioned under Section 3.3 Vulnerable Group	▪ Participate in activities under convergence projects			
	▪ Members of village coordination committee (3-4 person)	▪ Participate in project's consultation/ meetings ▪ Provide questions/comments/suggestions	H	M	L
	Adversely affected				
	▪ Family members who misuse the cash	▪ Participate in project's consultation/ meetings ▪ Provide questions/comments/suggestions	H	M	M
	▪ Those are excluded because of exclusion error and inclusion error		H	H	L
Interested Parties	PUBLIC SECTOR				
	Central-level authorities				
	▪ Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	▪ Provide comments/suggestions on project content, budget	H	L	M

Parties	Key stakeholders	Potential involvements related to project	Interest	Impact	Influence
			High/ Medium / Low		
		allocation, capacity assessment and development, arrange short-term and annual budget plans ▪ Submit to Prime Minister for approval of project proposal, project operational procedures for loan agreements			
	▪ Ministry of Health ▪ National Nutrition Committee	▪ Provide comments/suggestions on project content, budget allocation, capacity assessment and development, arrange short-term and annual budget plans ▪	H	L	M
	▪ Ministry of Public Works and Transportation	▪ Provide comments/suggestions on project content	H	L	M
	▪ Ministry of Education and Sport	▪ Provide comments/suggestions on project content	H	L	M
	▪ Ministry of Finance	▪ Provide comments/suggestions on project content	H	L	M
	▪ Ministry of Planning and Investment	▪ Provide comments/suggestions on project content, budget allocation, capacity assessment and development, arrange short-term and annual budget plans ▪	H	M	M
	▪ Lao Women's Union	▪ Provide comments/suggestions on project content	H	L	L
	Project Steering Committee (Central level)	▪ Provide comments/suggestions on project content, budget allocation, capacity assessment and development, arrange short-term and annual budget plans ▪	H	M	M
	Local authorities (provincial, district, commune)				
	▪ Provincial People's Committee	▪ Provide comments/suggestions on project content	H	M	M
	▪ Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO)	▪ Provide comments/suggestions on project content, budget allocation, capacity assessment and development, arrange short-term and annual budget plans ▪	H	M	M
	▪ District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO)	▪ Provide comments/suggestions on project content, budget allocation, capacity assessment and development, arrange short-term and annual budget plans ▪	H	M	M
	▪ Lao Women's Union (Provincial and district level)	▪ Provide comments/suggestions on project content	H	L	L

Parties	Key stakeholders	Potential involvements related to project	Interest	Impact	Influence
			High/ **Medium** / **Low**		
	▪ Project Steering Committee (Provincial level)	▪ Provide comments/suggestions on project content, budget allocation, capacity assessment and development, arrange short-term and annual budget plans ▪	H	M	M
		▪			
	PRIVATE SECTOR/ NON—GOVERNMENTAL				
	▪ Non-governmental organizations	▪ Provide comments/advice on community engagement/ participation/development support for vulnerable groups	H	L	M
	▪ Private sector (companies, corporations)	▪ Provide project-related information to the public	H	L	L
	▪ Academia (universities, research centers, etc.)	▪ Do research, advise on technical issues related to environment, social, technical designs, surveys	M	L	L
	▪ Mass media	▪ Disseminate project related information to the general public	M	L	L
	▪ GBV service providers	▪ Advise the project on specific GBV situation, GBV related services (counselling, shelters, first-aid…) available at provincial level on GBV issues ▪ Provide GBV support in emergencies for GBV survivors	M	L	L
	▪ Religious groups	▪ Attend public consultation, advise good practice for consultation with religious affected individuals/ households	H	M	L
	▪ Local residents	▪ Participate in community consultation, project planning, implementation, project survey, participatory monitoring	M	M	L

3.5 Summary of Project Stakeholder Needs

Different groups of stakeholders prefer different ways of communication with them – to notify them of project's consultation schedule and how consultation is organized. For instance, for local governments, use of electronic mails, telephone, online and face-to-face meetings, etc. could be used when consulting with them because these channels are used daily in their day-to-day work. For community people, however, communication is typically through home visit, public loudspeakers, or sometime phone calls. For vulnerable individual and households who may not have phone access and may not be at home all the time, home visit in the evening may be more feasible. In the situation of COVID-19, gatherings in big group for face-to-face consultation may not be encouraged. Face-to-face consultation in small group will be adopted during project design, and project implementation, to reach out to project's target groups, particularly vulnerable group identified during project design. The table below summarizes communication methods that can be applied during project implementation to ensure communication and consultation with project stakeholders are effectively maintained during project implementation, particularly with identified vulnerable groups who face the risk of exclusion (due to exclusion errors).

Table 2 – Communication Needs of Key Stakeholder Groups

Key Groups of Stakeholders	Key characteristics	Language needs	Preferred notification means	Specific Needs (accessibility, audio-visual aid, meeting time, venue)
AFFECTED GROUPS				
1.1 BENEFICIARY GROUP				
Direct beneficiary group ▪ Mothers with children under 2 years of age (60th percentile) ▪ Pregnant women from cash transfer beneficiary households ▪ Children under 2 of mothers from 60th percentile	▪ Poor households (as defined by Proxy Mean Test method) ▪ Live in remote areas ▪ Ethnic minority	▪ Local indigenous language for EM peoples ▪ Lao for Lao group	▪ Home visit ▪ Community meeting	▪ Community meetings organized at places conveniently accessible (e.g., village-level meeting hall.). ▪ Meeting time convenient for consulted participants, particularly mothers. Avoid peak season (e.g., crop establishment, harvest time).
Indirect beneficiary group ▪ Mothers with children under two years of age (above 60th percentile)	▪ Living near beneficiary households (in the same village) ▪ Non-poor households (as defined by Proxy Mean Test method) ▪ Live in remote areas ▪ Ethnic minority	▪ Local indigenous language for EM peoples ▪ Lao for Lao group	▪ Home visit ▪ Community meeting	▪ Community meeting, or other local places conveniently accessible ▪ Consultation to be conducted at convenient time (e.g., evening) for those who are busy during daytime, or work far away from home
1.2 POTENTIAL AFFECTED GROUP				
▪ Poor households who are not considered poor based on PMT results.	▪ EM households ▪ Poor/vulnerable ▪ Limited mobility	o Local indigenous language for EM peoples o Lao for Lao group	▪ Home visit ▪ Community meeting ▪ Written letter (in case of grievance)	▪ Meeting at their home. ▪ Where needed, further assistance should be sought (such as from caregiver, use of visual aids…) for affected people to understand and provide meaningful feedback
INTERESTED GROUPS				

Key Groups of Stakeholders	Key characteristics	Language needs	Preferred notification means	Specific Needs (accessibility, audio-visual aid, meeting time, venue)
▪ Government at central levels	o Have well established communication and correspondence system in place	o Lao language	o Postal mail, emails o Meetings	o Provision of relevant technical information, documents on proposed project investments/ plans/ proposals
▪ Government at provincial and district levels ▪ Services providers ▪ SEA/SH service providers ▪ NGOs	o Have well established communication and correspondence system in place	o Lao language	o Postal mail, emails o Meetings	

4. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

4.1 Purpose and Timing of Stakeholder Engagement Program

The main purpose of the stakeholder engagement program is to ensure that project stakeholders are engaged in and participate in meaningful consultations during project design and implementation. Consultation will particularly focus on stakeholders who may be adversely affected as a result of the project. In this case, the project will consult affected people to solicit their feedback on the environmental and social risks and impacts that may associate the activities that affect them, including mitigation measures for such risks and impacts, as well as grievance redress procedure. The project will consult various project stakeholders at different stages of project cycle, particularly during project design. While both affected and interested stakeholders are invited to consultations, emphasis would be on people who are potentially adversely affected as a result of project activities, particularly vulnerable groups, including EM. The SEP should be read in conjunction with project's ESMF, particularly Chapter 4 (Environmental & Social Risks, Impacts and Mitigation).

4.2 Proposed Strategy for Information Disclosure

Under this project, different consultation methods will be used to consult with each of the stakeholder groups. Depending on the purpose of consultation, and data to be collected, key consultation methods include focus group discussion, key information interview, community meeting, and household survey. Depending on each group, such as EM group vs Lao group, appropriate language will be used to ensure consulted people understand fully the purpose and content of the consultation and provide feedback that are meaningful.

Under the project, all affected stakeholders, particularly mothers with children under 2 will be notified when certain project information is disclosed. This is to ensure affected and interested people know and can timely access such information for their perusal and for providing their feedback on the disclosed information which may be about project activities that affect them.

4.3 Proposed Consultation Strategy

Different consultation methods will be used to consult with each of the stakeholder groups. Depending on the purpose of consultation, and data to be collected, key consultation methods include focus group discussion, key information interview, community meeting, and household survey. Depending on each group, such as EM group vs Lao group, appropriate language will be used to ensure consulted people understand fully the purpose and content of the consultation and provide feedback that are meaningful.

No.	Vulnerable Groups	Characteristics	Proposed Consultation Strategy
1	Ethnic Minority Peoples	▪ Most speak only their own language ▪ Have no/very limited spoken Lao language ▪ Shy and reluctant to speak in public meetings	▪ Engaging EM community members. ▪ Engaging EM communities' representative bodies and organizations and other community members where appropriate. ▪ Use of audio-visual when consulting with EM and translation into local EM language; Use also written language of EM where possible; ▪ Provision of sufficient time for internal decision-making

			process; and.
		▪ Limited mobility because of unfavorable road conditions	▪ Promote their effective participation during project design, particularly at subproject level to solicit their feedback for proposed mitigation measures to site-specific risks and impacts.
2	Women, especially mothers with children under 2	▪ Shy, not confident to express their idea, expectation in public ▪ Busy with household chore and could not attend all trainings	▪ Having small, focused, and short meetings where women will be comfortable asking questions or raising concerns. ▪ Meeting schedules that do not to interfere with domestic activities. ▪ Venues should be located close to their homes. ▪ Translation into local language. ▪ Meetings with female participants are facilitated by female facilitators.
3	Elderlies	▪ Slow and have difficulties traveling on their own ▪ Hard of hearing. ▪ Speak their native language only ▪ Not familiar with new project concepts	▪ Providing transportation to the meeting venue. ▪ Time and duration of meetings based on the input of potential participants. ▪ Translation into local language. ▪ Separate meetings for males and females. ▪ Option of one-on-one interviews
4	People with disability	▪ Could not travel to meeting places without support from their family members ▪ Hard of hearing ▪ Poor eye visuality/ blindness ▪ Speak native ethnic language only	▪ Use of sign language and other assistive tools, as required. ▪ Translation into local language if they are from EM groups. ▪ Providing transportation to the meeting venues; where possible, visit them at the home for planned consultation. ▪ Provision of sufficient time for internal decision-making process. ▪ Meeting timing and duration based are suitable to participants

▪ **Method for conducting meaningful consultation with ethnic minority peoples**

To ensure consultation with project's target group (most are ethnic minority groups), it is important that the following aspects need to be considered for diligent preparation to ensure consultation with a particular group of ethnic people are meaningful:

❖ **Issues to Be Consulted need to be clearly identified and articulated** in the materials prepared for the consultation.
❖ **Characteristics of Groups to be consulted be well understood** to pave the way for preparation of overall consultation plan
❖ **Key topics/issues that will be subject to consultation should be make known to the group prior to consultation**
❖ **Methods of Consultation is well prepared,** including techniques to be used (e.g. focus group, key informant interview, public hearings…) and list of questions/issues that guide the

consultation process

❖ **Grievance Redress Procedure needs to be explained** to the project's target groups during early stage of project consultation (prior to implementation) at village level. Existing grievance procedure that each ethnic minority group may prefer should be prioritized and used (based on principles set forth in Section 6.3 of this document).

❖ **Stakeholder Concerns and Recommendations** should be taken seriously and be considered for incorporation into design/adjustment of implementation approach

❖ **Timely Report Back to Consulted Group** on how Project process their feedback from previous consultation.

❖ **Maintain transparency in sharing project information, and how project process consultation feedback and decision made as to such feedback**

❖ **Maintain consultation with target group in a manner that is iterative.**

4.4 Proposed Strategy to Incorporate the View of Vulnerable Groups

Since all beneficiary households who are eligible for the CTT are poor households, and most are from ethnic minority groups, they are considered vulnerable households. This section describe how the views and concerns of vulnerable or disadvantaged groups will be sought during the project design and implementation, and measures to be taken to address potential barriers to the full participation of vulnerable individuals/households in project consultation. It also describes separate mechanisms for consultation, grievances redress, and measures that allow vulnerable group to minimize potential adverse impact and receive project benefits. As mentioned in Section 3.3, the vulnerable group identified under the project may include Lao, ethnic minority individual/households, female-headed households, family with people with disabilities, and households in especially difficult circumstances, such as those who experience difficult life due to economic shocks or due to natural disasters.

Special effort to reach out to the vulnerable group during consultation process is important to ensure their full participation in – either they are adversely affected, or are project beneficiaries. Tailoring engagement interventions – through methods, time schedule, format, including financial assistance, etc., to accommodate the characteristics of target vulnerable group, is essential to ensuring their full participation. In addition, due consideration need to be given to issues related to gender, language, local culture, traits of their day-to-day living activities, etc. to promote their participation and actively engage to raise up their concerns, questions, or asking for clarification as well as support that they may need. Without this due attention, their full participation to project consultation cannot be ensured, which may affect the way they are affected by the project, and/or receive intended project benefits. To ensure view of vulnerable groups are incorporated into project design, it is important the entire process of consultation be well planned and carried out. This process include a) notification, b) consultation organization, and c) incorporation of feedback into project design and implementation.

- *NOTIFICATION*

Identified individuals and households (both negatively affected group and potential beneficiaries) should be visited at their home to deliver invitation to attend consultation sessions. Home visits help consultation organizing unit understand the living conditions of the affected vulnerable, assess the likelihood of their participation, and explore how the invitation letter can be arranged to reach planned target households. In cases household members are not at home at the time of home visit, effort should be made to visit them again at another time, or visit in the evening. Leaving a sealed invitation letter to their neighbor who is willing to pass onto them in case various attempts to contact them fail could be an option.

- *ORGANIZATION OF CONSULTATION*

For general feedback, public hearings or community meetings can be used. However, for specific issues that are specific to certain groups, particularly vulnerable groups, focus group discussion should be used. When focus group discussion is planned, depending on the topics, individuals with homogenous characteristics should be invited to one group. For example, ethnic minority should be invited to one group. This should not be mixed with Lao participants because of language issue at least. For people who are affected by type of impact (loss of land for instance), these households should be invited to one group discussion. Similarly, women who are expected to share the gender-sensitive information, such as labor division within their family, issues such as GBV, etc., should be invited to group with women only. Female facilitators should be arranged in these cases.

When consultation is done face-to-face, vulnerable people will be guided by community mobilizers and village facilitator to read/ comprehend the consultation contents that was delivered to them prior to consultation, or through village radio, public loudspeakers. A simple form (included in the letter of consultation invitation) can be used by households preferring writing back. These households can drop their written feedback, including their phone number (if any), at the one-stop shop at commune hall who will gather and send back to PMU for review, process, and report back to consulted people at a later stage.

- *INCORPORATION OF FEEDBACKS*

Incorporating feedback from vulnerable group, particularly from mothers with children under 2, into project design and implementation is important in many ways. Without incorporating vulnerable group's feedback into respective project design and implementation measures and process, the consultation with vulnerable groups does not make sense.

Grievance Redress Procedures will be disclosed to vulnerable groups that are consulted. This aims to make sure that vulnerable group know how to raise their concerns and/or feedback on any project activity that they think affect them. Since vulnerable groups have been identified during project preparation and have been consulted on a representative basis, they will be consulted again during project implementation at district level where vulnerable groups are identified.

All feedback of consulted vulnerable groups will be recorded, consolidated by project staff who do the consultation, and will be shared with PMU at Central, Provincial and District level regularly (monthly as a minimum) for their information and for consideration into project design and implementation.

5. RESOURCES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

5.1 Resources

PMU will be in charge of overall implementation of stakeholder engagement activities – both project, provincial, district and village levels, throughout project life. PMU will ensure adequate budget will be allocated toward stakeholder engagement (See Section 8 – Costs and Budgets), and engage Community Mobilizers and Village Facilitators at village level in carrying out consultative activities with a) community members who are invited to take part in PMT survey, b) beneficiary households (including mothers with children under 2 and pregnant mothers, and other members of beneficiary households, and c) other relevant community members. Meaningful consultation should be done timely and appropriately using the stakeholder engagement approach set forth in this document.

The table below provides contact information of key environmental and social members of PMU that can be reached to provide comments, feedback, or raise questions about the project. In case there is change

to the following personnel, this SEP will be updated to reflect new staff arrangements and will be disclosed through the same channel to keep project stakeholders informed. Changes will also be updated accordingly in material distributed for consultation.

Contact information	Deputy Project Coordinator	Social Officer	GRM Focal Point
Name	Mr. Khamphet Sengchanoudom	Mr. Outhikone Souphome In	Mr. Outhikone Souphome In
Email	khamphet.scod@gmail.com	outhikone@gmail.com	outhikone@gmail.com
Phone number	+85 62022224508	+85620 5920 7908	+85620 5920 7908

5.2 Management Functions and Responsibilities

The Deputy Project Coordinator, Social Officer of PMU, will be directly responsible for leading and overseeing the implementation of the SEP during project implementation. The Social Officer will be responsible for overseeing the SEP implementation on behalf of PMU. The Social Officer will be responsible for implementing certain part of the SEP under the supervision of PMU's Deputy Project Coordinator. Under the guidance of the Deputy Project Coordinator, the SO will be responsible for:

- Leading and supervising the disclosure of information as per SEP;
- Leading and supervising organization of consultations as described in SEP;
- Oversee Project Grievance Logbook;
- Reviewing monthly monitoring reports provided by project contractors and consultants;
- Reporting regularly to the Deputy Project Coordinator.

6. GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM

6.1 Objectives of the Project GRM

The objective of the project's GRM is to provide affected persons with redress procedures that they can conveniently use to raise a project related concern, or grievance. The GRM specifies how a project related complaint can be made, including forms and channels through which a complaint can be lodged. To facilitate the grievance resolution process, grievances received will be acknowledged in writing and solved within a specified timeframe. During the resolution process, where necessary, dialogue will be hold between Community Mobilizers/Village Facilitator and aggrieved persons for effective resolution. Once a complaint is resolved, the aggrieved person will be notified of the resolution results. The GRM has sequential steps that aggrieved person can use. If the aggrieved person is not satisfied with the grievance resolution result, or if their complaint is not resolved within a timeframe specified for a particular step, aggrieved person can move on to the next step in the GRM hierarchy. The project has an appeal process that complainant can resort to if they are not satisfied with a resolution decision at a particular step, or their complaints are not resolved within a specified timeframe.

6.2 Summary of national legislation related to grievance and complaint Description of the Project GRMs

The Government of Laos PDR has various laws and sub-decrees that have been active to guide the

implementation of complaint resolution process. These documents specify the right of the complainants as well as the responsibilities of concerned governmental agencies as to complaint resolution. Relevant legal documents include:

- Law on Complaint (amended version), No. 05/NA dated: 9/11/2016

6.3 Principles of the Project GRMs

Under this project, the following principles are applied:
- **Channels.** Different channels are established to enable affected person to submit their grievances, including submission to village committee, as well as district and provincial levels. Grievance can also be submitted to:
    i. **Project offices** at district and provincial levels;
    ii. **Project staff** during meetings or during site visit;
    iii. **Regular meetings** (hosted monthly by Community Mobilizers, Village Facilitators, Village Project Coordinating Committee)

- **Forms.** Grievances can be submitted in writing and verbally, and either directly by the affected households, or by a person delegated by the complainant, etc.

- **Complainant can delegate a representative who act on their behalf.** Person lodging a grievance can ask assistance from their family or from individual that they trust to transcribe their complaint, and act as their representative to submit their complaint.

- **Disclosure.** GRM procedures are disclosed in public domain (e.g. websites of PMU, at public notice board located at village hall). GRM procedure will be explained to people attending consultation meetings.

- **Documentation.** A grievance logbook will be maintained at village hall (subproject level) and at PMU level (through PMU GRM focal point). A grievance logbook will be established and regularly updated/maintained at village hall and PMU level.

- **Transparency.** The grievance procedures include steps, expected time frame grievance resolution for each step, notification to affected person, how decision is made, decision makers, mediation options, and

- **Complaint will be acknowledged within 15 days from the date of complaint receipt.** The unit in charge of complaint resolution will notify complainant upon complaint receipt and will initiate the complaint resolution process.

- **Appeal.** If the agency in charge does not resolve a grievance in a manner that is satisfactory to the affected person, a multistakeholder committee will be established (ad-hoc) to resolve the dismissed grievance – as an alternative for affected person going to court. If the grievance could not be resolved satisfactorily by the multistakeholder committee, the affected person may resort to the court of law.

- **Monitoring.** All grievances received are recorded by PMU and are processed/resolved in a given timeframe, and are monitored by GRM focal point.

- **Time-limit for grievance resolution is specified for each step.**

- **Complainants bear no costs associated with the entire complaint resolution process**. Costs incurred as a result of grievance resolution will be borne by the project. However, if the complaints bring their case to the court of law as they wish, they will bear the costs associated with their

lawsuit.

6.4 Project's Redress Procedures

6.4.1 Redress Procedure for Complaints related to Conditional Cash Transfer

Under the Project, the following types of grievances are anticipated:

Below are potential grievance cases throughout the CCT implementation cycle and activities/approaches, including:

- **Poverty Assessment Registration**
  "The information is incorrect" which leads to misclassification of the household consumption (exclusion/inclusion error).
- **Enrollment**
  "We weren't told what documents to bring.", "target beneficiary is not enrolled" (process)
- **Payment delivery**
  "amount of received cash is not correct", "Complied with conditionalities, but payment is not made" (data update failure?)
- **Availability of Services**
  "SBCC has not been held", "health services are not available"
- **Beneficiary's behaviors**
  Misuse of grants

The GRM consists of seven steps, including:

- **Step 1 -** Submission of grievance: the beneficiaries and/or general public will submit their grievance through various channels, including in-person communication with the VF, VPC, or CM, a phone call to a call center (hotline), social medias, and grievance form.
- **Step 2 -** Recording and distribution: CM will categorize and record all grievance cases through the GRM application system onto the web-based system. The system will distribute cases to the appropriate level or office.
- **Step 3 -** Fact-finding: Concerned office will collect information related to the grievance case.
- **Step 4 -** Resolution: Resolution of the grievance will be based on the fact obtained in Step 3.
- **Step 5 -** Feedback: Concerned office will inform the grievance applicants of the resolution outcome.
- **Step 6 -** Appeal: Beneficiaries or the general public (applicant) can submit an appeal if they are not satisfied with the resolution outcome.
- **Step 7 -** Final feedback: Concerned office or higher level will provide final feedback after reaching a consensus, and a final decision is made relative to an appeal.

The online grievance data collection form was developed in the web-based MIS system. The online form will accelerate the data collection process by grievance in the communities and provide real-time information to the district CCT team and Provincial Project Coordination Office (PPCO) to review and approve the collected data

6.4.2 Redress Procedure for Complaints related to labor and working conditions

Project workers can lodge their grievance/complaint as follows:

- **Step 1 – Employer Level.** Affected person (AP) can submit their grievance to their Employer who serves as the first focal point for receiving and resolving grievance. Grievance can be lodged verbally or in writing, in person or by phone, text message, mail or email (anonymous complaint is accepted).

The Employer involved will resolve the case no later than 15 days. Once resolved and the AP is satisfactory, the Employer will report the case, including resolution process and results, to the PMU for information and record. If the AP is not satisfied with the resolution of their Employer, the Employer will refer the AP to the GRM focal point of PMU, and PMU if needed, and inform the AP of this referral. It is noted that if a complaint is concerned of the safety and health of one or several individuals, such complaint shall be resolved as soon as possible – depending on the nature and urgency of the grievance.

- **Step 2 – PMU level.** PMU will resolve the complaint referred by the Employer and acknowledge the receipt of the AP's complaints within two weeks from the date of complaint receipt. If the GRM of PMU cannot resolve the complaint, the GRM focal point of PMU will consult with the Project Manager for resolution. The GRM focal point of PMU will inform the AP of the PMU's resolution result in writing within 30 days from the date of complaint receipt. If the AP is not satisfied with the resolution outcome proposed by PMU, PMU will refer the case to the PMU for resolving and inform the AP of this referral in writing.

- **Step 3 – Court of Law.** If the AP is not satisfied with the resolution proposed above, a multistakeholder committee will be established (ad-hoc) to resolve the dismissed grievance – as an alternative for affected person going to court. If the grievance could not be resolved satisfactorily by the multistakeholder committee, the affected person may resort to the court of law. The cost associated to the lawsuit shall be borne by the AP. The decision of the Court will be final.

6.4.3 Redress Procedure for Complaints related to SEA/SH

Under this Project, GRM for SH/SEA mainly serves in: (i) referring the complainants to local Gender-Based Violence service provider; and (ii) recording resolution of the complaint. The following principles, which will be applied under the Project, recognize victim as principal decision makers in their own care, and treat them with agency, dignity and respect for their needs and wishes.

- Multiple channels are in place for easy access and lodge complaints.
- SH/SEA victims will be referred to local SEA/SH service provider for immediate support if they make a complaint directly to PMU.
- Confidentiality of victims are protected. GM operator of Focal Point of PMU will keep SH/SEA allegation report confidential.
- No identifiable information on the victim shall be collected and stored in subproject Grievance Logbook.
- Costs of operating the SH/SEA GRM will be financed by the subproject.

Channels for lodging SH/SEA complaints:

- Channel 1 – AP can submit a complaint, verbally or in writing, to the PMU
- Channel 2 –Alternatively, AP can lodge their complaint, verbally or in writing, GRM Focal Point of PIU.
- Channel 2 – AP can submit a complaint to Women's Union, if relevant.

All SH/SEA related grievance will be addressed directly by the Lao Women Union (LWU) who will be engaged by PMU to assist in addressing potential grievances on SEA/SH.

The Project and organizations resolving PAP complaint and appeal process will not charge any fees. Any expenses incurred due to submission of complaints and/or appeals and phone calls should be classified as unexpected expenses and covered by the Project.

6.4.4 Redress Procedure for General Complaints from Village Facilitator

In case Village Facilitator (VF) are concerned or affected by during project implementation, particularly affected as a result of working as a Fillage Facilitator, VF could logde their questions/complaints through the following channel:

- PMU GRM focal point's telephone;
- Village leaders;
- Timelines for complaint resolution is witin two weeks.

7. MONITORING AND REPORTING

7.1 Involvement of Stakeholders in Monitoring Activities

The objective of internal monitoring of SEP implementation is to ensure activities set out in SEP is carried out timely and appropriately. Under the overall guidance of the Deputy Project Coordinator, the SO of PMU is responsible for monitoring activities described in this SEP. During project implementation, the SO will prepare monthly internal monitoring reports for SEP activities.

Internal monitoring by PMU will focus on:

- Level of understanding of the project and project objectives;
- Community feedback incorporated into project design and planning;
- Adequacy and success of implementation of mitigation measures;
- Main grievances and efficacy of GRM;
- Overall community satisfaction;
- Type of information disclosed;
- Methods used for stakeholder engagement;
- Minutes of consultation meetings;
- Number of staff working on Stakeholder Engagement.

7.2 Reporting Back to Stakeholders

PMU will ensure feedback from affected and interested parties, including grievances submitted by affected persons will be processed/resolved adequately and reported timely to affected parties. The method of reporting back to stakeholders will depend on the stakeholder itself. There are essentially two main methods:

- For national-level stakeholders, an email and/or official letter will be sent after workshops on how comments/suggestions were taken into account;
- For local stakeholders, follow-up meetings/consultations will be conducted to let stakeholders know on how comments/suggestions were taken into account;
- For Indigenous Peoples, ongoing consultations will be conducted in line with this SEP and will ensure that EM's view/concerns/suggestions are incorporated into project implementation, and are informed of how project responds to their feedback.

8. COSTS AND BUDGET

8.1 Costs
Indicative costs for SEP implementation are estimated during project preparation (see Table below) for

the purpose of budget planning. The actual costs of SEP implementation depend on scope and activities to be carried out, during project preparation and implementation. The estimated cost below may be updated once the list of subprojects is finalized. Costs incurred as disclosure materials and public consultations are covered by counterpart funding and are estimated in the project's SEP.

8.2 Budget

The budget for implementing SEP will be allocated from source of counterpart funding. Budget sources are indicated for each anticipated activity – as indicated in below.

ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Summary of Consultation Results During Project Preparation

A. Consultation at community level

From 27th November to 7th December 2022, the ESF consultants conducted the consultation and focus group discussions in Hoaphanh, Xiengkhouang, and Oudomxay provinces to draw lessons from RRPM. Consultation was made with project beneficiaries, Village Facilitators, Community Mobilizer, and project staff at provincial and district levels. The consultation collected feedback from project stakeholder on RRPM outcomes with an aim to draw lessons learned and make recommendations for the new RRPM II. The results from the consultation are summarized below.

The consultation were conducted with project beneficiaries of ethnic minority groups such as Hmong, Akha, Khmu, Phong, and Lao lum. During meetings, project beneficiaries expressed their positive view and strong support for project activities. Beneficiaries below the project plays an important role in assisting pregnant woman and mother with children under two in improving nutrition of children under two, pregnant woman, children in community. Nevertheless, project beneficiaries found the frequent delayed payment of CCT remain a challenge for them to practice and maintain good nutritional practice that are recommended under the project. Stakeholders in different provinces have different views, as follows:

For the Hmong ethnic (Houykhiling village, Xiengkhuang province)

- CCT payment should be made on time or should not exceed four months;
- The project should train VF on cooking demonstration and home gardening so that they could retrain project beneficiaries;
- A nutrition fund should be set for each village to facilitate practicing and maintenance of new nutritional practices, and make project activities sustainable;
- Nutritional knowledge should be shared also with those who are CCT beneficiaries such as families who have children over two years old since nutrition knowledge are useful to mothers of children above two years of age also.

For Akha ethnic (Lao vang village, Oudomxay province)

- Pregnant woman wish to have a health center located near the village because the existing health center is far away from their residence and road condition is very difficult. Thus, when their husband are away from home, it is difficult for pregnant women to go to the health center because women on their own. They have to seek assistance from other community member in case of urgent need.
- Project beneficiaries should be trained on how to use CTT money, buy food, and cook health meals for their children
- Children above 2 to 5 should also be supported.

For Khmu ethnic (Houayla village, Oudomxay province)

- It would be good if CCT could be increased from LAK200,000 to LAK300,000 given high inflation;

- It would be good if project could provide dry food and clothing to people affected by recent flash flood.

For Phong ethnic (Lanxieng village, Huaphanh province)

- It would be good if the project could help improve road condition of the village to facilitate travel from their home to the health center which is 28km away;
- Village health center don't have equipment such as oxygen tank, and other medical equipment, etc;
- More loudspeakers are needed to support SBCC works;
- Project should be continued for several years to continue providing support to project beneficiaries.

For Lao lum (Viengkham village, Oudomxay province)

- Children above 2 to 5 should be supported by the project
- CCT should be increased from LAK200,000 to LAK300,000;
- Verification of beneficiary information should be clearer and accurate during PMT process.
- More beneficiaries should be selected

For Village Facilitators (VF)

Consultation with Village Facilitators were conducted in Khouykhiling village, Nonghaed district, Xiengkhouang province on 29th November 2022. During the consultation. Below are key feedback from VF:

- The payment process is delayed and take a long time;
- If information is incorrect or incomplete, it takes time for the district update the information before updated data can be submitted to province for verification;
- When the VF and CM receive certificate from the village, they will coordinate with the district to re-check and submit it to the province to update the information. But, If the information is correct, it needs a reasonable explanation to the person who made the complaint;
- Some people who do not come to receive the CCT payment have to come to receive money in the next installment. Some of them need to be made aware of this
- SBCC tool is helpful because people can understand the Lao language. Videos are also available in ethnic languages;
- Awareness campaigns currently conducted monthly is considered appropriate;
- The elderlies in the village and the village head support nutrition practice.

 # Could you name three key challenges that you often face when you convince/ encourage families to invest in their children's health and nutrition? How do you overcome these challenges?

Some people who go to the farm cannot gather for the meeting, or the notice may be too short. Therefore, there is a notification in advance for the people in the village to be aware, and it is announced through the village loudspeakers.

 #   Do you think there are any constraints/inconsistence between the communication messages developed under the Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project and those developed under other Convergence Projects (Poverty Reduction Fund III, Water Supply, Sanitation, Hygiene, Early Childhood Education, Health & Nutrition Services Access).

There are still plans that do not agree with many projects by the planning office (Agriculture for Nutrition (AFN), RRPM, PRF, HANSA, etc.) which may sometimes make people confused or unable to participate in activities (too many activities) because the activities are conducted in different days.

 #   How do you find the other convergence projects compliment the Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project

Technical assistance, advertising information on nutrition (food flag), health, women, education, agriculture, and public works (water and sanitation) and AFN

 # Do you need any capacity building support from the project?

Accounts-Finance Management, PRF

 #   From your years' experience as VF, please share your feedback/suggestion to the RRPM and RRPM II

The project should consider supporting children up to 3 years old.

Please increase the allowance for VFs because there is a lot of work compared to the incentive received. Currently, we receive LAK90,000/4 people/month (Telephone card: 20,000/month), LAK90,000 for meeting on nutrition (1-2 times a month, the money to purchase water, snacks, pen, books....), which is relatively low, and insufficient compared to actual expense (Huaykhiling village, Xienkhuang province)

If a young mother is pregnant with a second child, would she want both children to receive the CCT because both children need nutrition?

Is it possible to increase the CCT from 200,000 to 300,000 because people face inflation harm?

Request the project to establish a nutrition fund in the community, which will help sustain the project's activities even after the end of the project.

The consultation with District and Provincial relevant stakeholders, was conducted virtually with District Health , Education and Planning and Cooperation offices and Lao Women's Union in Hoamuang district , Huaphanh province, this consultation is aimed to understand the role of district partners, their challenges supporting the project activities and the capacity building required based on their experienced as well as to collect the information about the RRPM impact and seek for their recommendation for RRPM II which is briefly summarized as below:

- The payment of CCT to the beneficiaries should be improved faster.

- Disseminate the role of the project to other district sectors to understand the project and involve relevant district sectors to support the project activities, such as Lao women union, Education and Sports offices.
- The other relevant district office identified should participate in project activities implementation since the beginning of the project. This is to ensure that the project is running efficiently and effectively.
- Request the project to consider allocating the budget to government officials who work for the project
- Build strength for government officials in terms of administration and project management;
- Consider increasing the age of children from 2 years to 5 years to receive the CCT;

B. Consultation at national level

The consultation at the national level was mainly organized through face-to-face approach which was participated by the representatives from MAF, MOH, MPI and WB at national level, 17 people was participated. Nevertheless, the virtual option was also available for local GOL stakeholders which was joined by Project Coordination Office of PAFO from Xiengkhuang, Hoaphanh, Oudomxay and Phongsaly provinces which there were 8 people joined. The meeting was held for a haft day to present about the finding of FGD consultations with the project beneficiaries and stakeholders at provincial level, following by feedback and recommendation of participants to improve the implementation of the project. The detail of the result of the consultation can be described as below:

- **Location:** Meeting room of Department of Rural Development, MAF.
- **Date:** 09 Dec 2022.
- **Taken note by:** Mr. Outhikone, Communication and Inclusion Specialist, PMU/MAF
- **Purpose:**
  - WB present the key findings of Focus Group Discussion.
  - Stakeholder Engagement Discussion.
- **Participant:**
  - o National level: 17 participants.
  - o Provincial level: 4 participants.
- **Methodology:**
  - o Step1: Meeting was organized two options; one is face-to-face meeting from the national stakeholders and second is online attending from provincial partners and PMU Invited local stakeholders from central and provinces.
  - o Step2: Participant's registration.
  - o Step3: Chairman (Mr. Inson) had opened speech to welcome all participants and informed the purposes of the meeting.
  - o Step4: Mr. Phommachak (E&S consultant, World Bank), together with Mr. Thuan presented the key findings of FGDs from four Provinces.
  - o Step5: All participants contributed the comments and feedbacks after finished the presentation from the World Bank consultant.
  - o Step6: Take note and recap
  - o Step7: Chairman closed the meeting.

- **Output of meeting:**
  - o 17 Participants had joined the meeting from the national level at face-to-face meeting;
  - o N/A Participants had joined the meeting from the provincial level through online call;
  - o The keys findings of FGDs were shared to the different stakeholders, please see the PPT of WB consultant;
  - o All participants contributed some comments as below:
    1. Other community members who do not get the CCT try to block other community members not to join the project activity;
    2. District partners from other projects still lack understanding RRPM project;
    3. Long distancing from community to the health care center;
    4. No market in some communities;
    5. CCT payment is delayed;
    6. Village facilitators lack of motivation and turn over, due to lack of motivation scheme;
    7. Organize too many activities in one village in each month from different project, cause time consumption from the community;
    8. Having target beneficiaries' issue between RRPM project and HANSA project, due to both having different beneficiary's selection criteria;
    9. PMT method is new and not consistence yet;
    10. HANSA project has difficulty to gathering participants in the community due to community always compare with the CCT;
    11. NPC, MPI developed the M&E system such as village score card, spot check;

- **Recommendation from the FGDs:**
  - o Demonstrate the cash payment to the target beneficiaries;
  - o Training the nutrition topic to other women who do not belong to the target beneficially group;
  - o Create the microfinance or village bank or village fund for the nutrition;
  - o Increase the CCT from 180,000 LAK up to 300,000 LAK;
  - o Continue supporting children until 05 years old;
  - o Want to have a health care center located near the villages;
  - o Major visited communities lacked latrines, particularly the sample sites of the focus group discussion;
  - o Support the village loudspeaker to the community to receive enough information;
  - o Make clear process and condition or criteria of beneficially group Assessment and verification;
  - o To support the villages impacted by the disaster;
  - o Support quickly or solve the problem from the Grievance Redress Mechanism, Especially the group that stop supporting CCT from the project;
  - o SBCC convergence should link together;
  - o SBCC should involve all community members not only the target beneficially;
  - o Coordinate with households should be clear and effective;
  - o If mother of children under 2 years old but got new pregnant, project should cover both;
  - o Should have Lao Women union joined the CM and VF;

1. Introduction

This guide provides a brief introduction and first-hand guidance to individuals who are tasked to directly facilitate a meeting with ethnic minority group, or are involved in a team whose task is to moderate a meeting with an individual or a group of people who are from ethnic minority groups. By ethnic minority group, it refers to those who has a spoken language other than Lao language, such as languages of the Khmou, H'mong, Akha, Phong, and so forth.

2. Principles

This guide is grounded on the following key principles of the World Bank's ESS7 (Indigenous People). It is required that under the WB financed project, projects are expected to make every effort to:

- **Ensure that development process fosters full respect** for the human rights, dignity, aspirations, identity, culture, and natural resource-based livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples.
- **Avoid adverse impacts** of projects on Indigenous Peoples, or when avoidance is not possible, to **minimize, mitigate and/or compensate** for such adverse impacts.
- **Promote sustainable development benefits and opportunities** for Indigenous Peoples in a manner that is accessible, culturally appropriate and inclusive.
- **Improve project design and promote local support** by establishing and maintaining an ongoing relationship based on meaningful consultation with the Indigenous
- **Recognize, respect and preserve the culture, knowledge, and practices** of Indigenous Peoples, and to provide them with an opportunity to adapt to changing conditions in a manner and in a timeframe acceptable to them.

3. Steps to Engaging a Meaningful Consultation with Ethnic Groups

- **Step 1 – Get to know about EG**
    - Study about EG to be consulted with
    - Meet with local village chief, EG opinion leaders to learn about local practices, taboos
    - Conduct field observation/ Exchange with experienced colleagues
- **Step 2 – Prepare before fielding for consultation**
    - Prepare IEC materials (booklet, manuals, guidance note…)
    - Prepare meeting outline, key topics, and agenda for consultation, question guide, meeting template
    - Share meeting agenda and key information with EG peoples with whom the meeting will be conducted ("prior, and "informed")[12]
    - Make interpretation arrangement
- **Step 3 – Meeting with target EG group/individuals**

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[12] "Free" refers to a consent given voluntarily and absent of coercion, intimidation or manipulation. "Prior": consent is sought sufficiently in advance of any authorization or commencement of activities. "Informed" refers mainly to the nature of the engagement and type of information that should be provided prior to seeking consent and also as part of the ongoing consent process.

- Build rapport
- Conduct consultation (based on meeting agenda in Step 2)
- Manage and maintain a "free" conversation.
- Take notes
- Share/validate key consultation results with participants by the end of meeting
- Inform participants of possible next consultation to follow up on issues raised

- **Step 4 – Review and Process Consultation Feedback**
  - Peruse and process consultation feedback
  - Prepare meeting minutes/ documentation
  - Share meeting minutes with relevant stakeholder (e.g. management)
- **Step 5 – Incorporate consultation feedback into project design/implementation**
  - Conduct meeting with relevant stakeholder to discuss consultation feedback
  - Incorporate feedback into project design/implementation
  - Report back to consulted people on decision/progress made as to concerns, issues, expectation raised by consultation participants.

4. Commonly used consultation techniques

- **Focus Group Discussion:**
  - A focus group discussion (FGD) is a way to gather together people from similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss a specific topic of interest.
  - The group of participants (8-10 persons) is guided by a moderator (facilitator) who introduces topics for discussion and helps the group to participate in a lively and natural discussion amongst themselves.
  - Allow participants to agree or disagree with each other to obtain an insight into how a group thinks about an issue, about the range of opinion and ideas, and the inconsistencies and variation that exists in a particular community in terms of beliefs, experiences and practices.

- **Key Informant Interview:**
  - To get information about a pressing issue or problem in the community from a limited number of well-connected and informed community experts.
  - To understand the motivation and beliefs of community residents on a particular issue.
  - To get information from people with diverse backgrounds and opinions and be able to ask in-depth and probing questions.
  - To discuss sensitive topics, get respondents' candid discussion of the topic, or to get the depth of information you need.

- **Tips for Facilitators**

  Preparing the room
  - Arrive at least half an hour early to set up the room
  - Check your laptop, papers, pens

  Opening the session
  - Introduce yourself, your assistant
  - Introduce purpose of the focus group.
  - Explain to participants that they have been invited to share their opinions and that you will guide the discussion by asking the group to reflect on specific questions.
  - Tell them what time the session will conclude.

Explain the ground rules for the focus group discussion
- These will set the tone and expectations for behavior so that everyone will feel safe and willing to participate.
- Participation in the focus group is voluntary.
- It's all right to abstain from discussing specific topics if you are not comfortable.
- All responses are welcome – are no right or wrong answers.
- Please respect the opinions of others even if you don't agree.
- Try to stay on topic; we may need to interrupt so that we can cover all the material.
- Speak as openly as you feel comfortable.
- Avoid revealing very detailed information about your personal health.
- Help protect others' privacy by not discussing details outside the group.

Closing the session
- End the discussion by summarizing the main points. If there is time, invite participants to reflect on the main ideas
- Ask if they have any additional thoughts to share.
- Thank the group for participating; let them know how the discussion results will be used.
- Collect and save all notes (save the file if you type in on laptop)
- Their ideas/suggestion will be used to a) design the project, b) prepare documents that help ensure avoid/minimize the adverse impact on local people while enhancing project's positive impacts.

5. **List of Do and Don't Do**
- ✓ Show respect to consulted people who are the poor, vulnerable, disadvantaged people
- ✓ Being on time,
- ✓ Speaking slowly and clearly. Repeat as necessary. Check if people understand. Explain as necessary.
- ✓ Using local ethnic spoken language if possible, or through the assistance of native interpreter
- ➢ Do not use slang
- ➢ Avoid talking about issues that should not be spoken/discussed (based on initial information gathered from Step 1.

Annex 3 – Facilitator's Guide for Conducting Meaningful Consultation with Ethnic Groups

1. Introduction

This guide provides a brief introduction and first-hand guidance to individuals who are tasked to directly facilitate a meeting with ethnic minority group, or are involved in a team whose task is to moderate a meeting with an individual or a group of people who are from ethnic minority groups. By ethnic minority group, it refers to those who has a spoken language other than Lao language, such as languages of the Khmou, H'mong, Akha, Phong, and so forth.

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