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Department of
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Capacity Development Workshop Promoting the Presence and Leadership of Women Within Public Institutions at the National and Local Levels

REPORT



24-27 October 2023, S Vang Vieng Boutique, Vang Vieng,

Lao PDR

Contents

Acknowledgements.....3

Overview of the Workshop.....4

Structure and Methodology5

Proceedings of the Workshop.....6

Deliberations and Conclusions.....20

Action Points for Implementation.....22

Annex 1. Inputs for a National Action Plan on Gender Equality in Public Administration24

Annex 2. Participant Evaluation Report.....28

Acknowledgements

This report documents the proceedings of the Capacity Development Workshop on Promoting the Presence and Leadership of Women Within Public Institutions at the National and Local Levels in Lao PDR, convened at the S Vang Vieng Boutique, Vang Vieng, Lao PDR from 24 to 27 October 2023. The four-day workshop unfolded under the auspices of the project [“Building capacities for promoting the presence and leadership of women within public institutions at national and local levels”](#). The successful organization of this workshop was made possible through the collaboration of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) and the UNDP Lao PDR Country Office. Ms. Valentina Resta, Senior Governance and Public Administration Officer, attended as a resource person in her capacity as UN DESA focal point for the implementation of the project.

Special thanks go to Mme Vilaythone Sounthone Xaymongkhounh, Head of Cabinet Office, Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), who delivered opening remarks on behalf of the Government of Lao PDR.

Ms. Martine Thérér, Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Office in Lao PDR, delivered opening remarks and ensured UNDP’s commitment to the seamless organisation of the workshop. Ms. Jenny Douglas, Governance and Participation Analyst, UNDP Governance Unit, oversaw organizational, administrative and logistics arrangements with the support of Ms. Chantoula Phonvisai of UNDP, who also ensured the translation of documentation into Lao during the workshop. Ms. Koh Miyaoi, Gender Advisor and Gender Team Leader at the UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau in Bangkok, Thailand, led the facilitation of the workshop and shared technical knowledge on gender equality strategies.

Ms. Chansouk Insouvanh, the national consultant for the Project, discussed the findings of the national review and facilitated sessions addressing policy, institutional frameworks, data gaps and interventions to promote and strengthen gender equality in Lao PDR’s public institutions.

Overview of the Workshop

The Capacity Development Workshop in Lao PDR was organized under the project [“Building capacities for promoting the presence and leadership of women within public institutions at national and local levels”](#). The project is funded by the Government of Italy and is implemented in Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The project intends to contribute to the call by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls (Goal 5) based on the importance of “women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.” Commitments to the equal participation of women and men in public life, decision-making and policy development are also included in many international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), and in many regional and national documents such as Constitutions and legislation.

Since the inception of the project in 2022, key activities have included the completion of a global review of laws, policies and good practices on gender equality in the public sector; the development and utilization of self-paced capacity-building modules; and the initiation of an online “Moodle” platform designed to ease access to global and national resources while creating a community of practice among peers with opportunities for cross-country learning. At the country level, the project has supported a national review of the measures for promoting the presence and leadership of women in public administration at the national and local levels in each of the four participating countries (Bhutan, Lao PDR, Mauritius, and Senegal), which is followed by national capacity development workshops. The capacity development workshop in Lao PDR is an important project milestone.

The overall goal of the workshop was to continue to provide guidance to government officials and public servants on their efforts to enhance women’s leadership within public institutions. The event contributed to the development of a draft gender action plan that targets gaps identified in the national review and promotes gender equality and women’s career progression toward leadership positions in the public sector at the national and local levels in Lao PDR.

The four-day workshop took place from 24 to 27 October 2023, at the S Vang Vieng Boutique, Vang Vieng, Lao PDR, and brought together 24 government officials in senior decision-making and mid-level positions across different sectors at the national and local levels, including the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Lao Women Union and National Commission for Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Ministry of Technology and Communication, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The Gender Development Association, a civil society organization, also participated in the event. Furthermore, participants included two officials from the UNDP Country Office and the UNDP RBAP Gender Team Leader, who along with the national consultant co-facilitated workshop sessions. Officials from UN DESA

and UNDP served as resource persons. The workshop was conducted in English with interpretation in Lao. At the end of the workshop, participants received training completion certificates.

Structure and Methodology

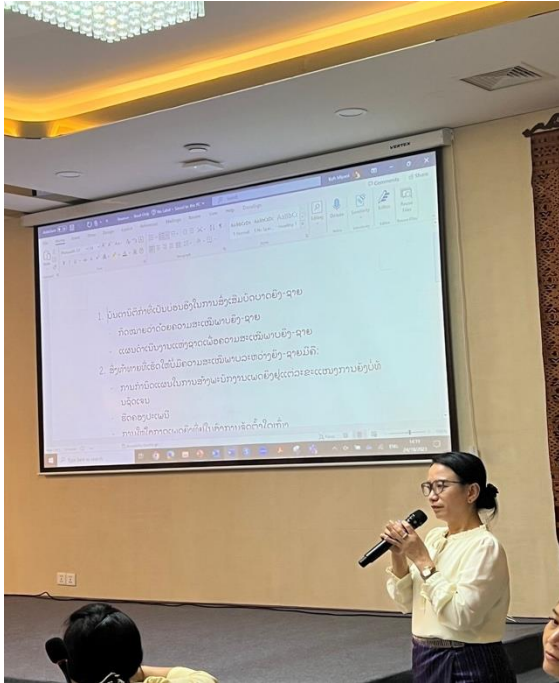
The workshop was designed to increase both the participants' awareness of existing gaps in gender equality in public administration in Lao PDR and their capacities to prioritize actions to advance gender equality in public administration.



The event was structured around key plenary sessions and working group discussions which:

- i. Reviewed the status of gender equality within the civil service at both national and local levels in Lao PDR;
- ii. Assessed gender equality policies, strategies and implementation mechanisms in public administration;

- iii. Examined the gaps identified in the national review;
- iv. Explored ways to enhance policies, practices and initiatives that address those gaps and foster women’s career advancement toward leadership roles in the public sector; and
- v. Elicited inputs for the drafting of a national action plan (Annex 1).



The workshop progressed through sessions that cumulatively built the capacities of participants around the essential elements to design and implement a gender equality action plan for public institutions in Lao PDR. Each day of the workshop included expert presentations that introduced and discussed concepts essential to gender equality in public institutions supported by global examples for visualization and cross-country learning opportunities. The expert presentations were interactive and offered opportunities for questions and answers.

Following expert presentations, each day included sessions dedicated to small group discussions. The participants were divided into groups to ensure a breadth of expertise and experiences related to the specific workshop themes within each group. With the guidance of facilitators, the groups discussed topics presented by experts and reflected on their potential applications in Lao PDR’s public institutions. The groups presented the findings of their discussions in the plenary.

Workshop documentation and presentations are available on the [Moodle platform](#).

Proceedings of the Workshop

The workshop commenced with the opening remarks delivered by Mme Vilaythone Sounthone Xaymongkhounh, Head of Cabinet Office, Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), who spoke on behalf of the Government of Lao PDR, followed by opening statements by Ms. Martine Th  rer, Resident Representative, UNDP Lao PDR Country Office and Ms. Valentina Resta, Senior Governance and Public Administration Officer, UN DESA.



Before the commencement of the technical sessions, Ms. Resta provided an overview of the project [Promoting the presence and leadership of women within public institutions at the national and local levels](#) and briefed participants on its timeline and expected outcomes. She emphasized the project’s twin goals: 1. To enhance government capacity to develop and implement an action plan to prioritize gender equality in public administration at the national and local levels and promote women’s career progression to leadership positions in the public sector; 2. To stimulate knowledge transfer to enhance awareness across governments. Her presentation underscored the importance of a carefully designed and implemented gender equality action plan to achieve gender equality in public institutions and encouraged all participants to actively engage in the sessions in order to help draft a list of action points for Lao PDR at the end of the workshop. In the follow-up presentation, Ms. Resta introduced the “[Moodle Platform](#),” an online platform created to support the implementation of the project that provides access to relevant resources.



The **first day** of the workshop continued with the presentation of Ms. Koh Miyaoi, Gender Advisor and Gender Team Leader, UNDP, on the significance of gender equality in public institutions. Ms. Miyaoi reviewed key concepts and terminologies on gender equality to enhance the technical understanding of the participants on the application of these concepts in public institutions at the national and subnational levels. In her next presentation, Ms. Miyaoi underlined the contributions of gender equality in public institutions to public policymaking through references to the [Global Report on Gender Equality in Public Administration 2021](#).

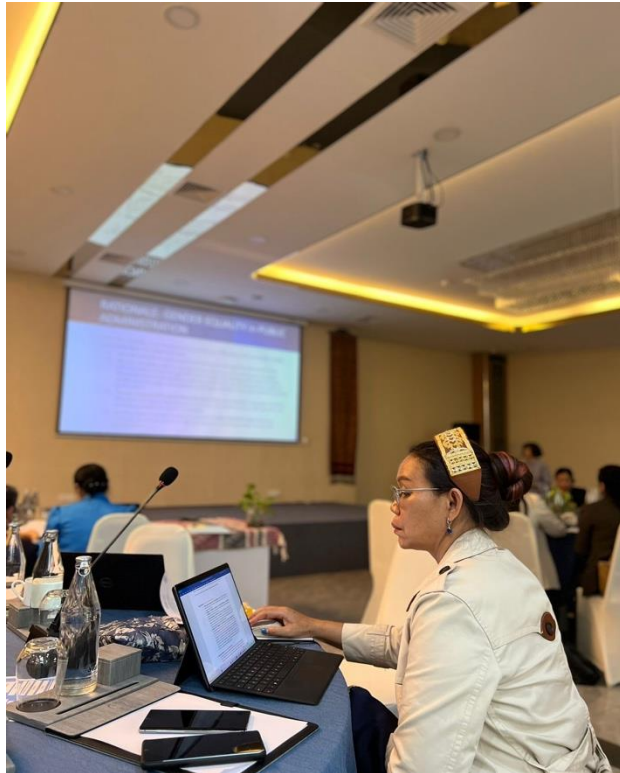
At the end of her presentation, Ms. Miyaoi referred to three categories of barriers to women’s participation and leadership in public administration globally: 1. legislation, policies and processes; 2. institutional culture and gender stereotypes; and 3. access to leadership training and capacity building.

She then presented global examples of legislative and policy frameworks as well as national gender action plans with their specific target areas to inspire reflective discussion among participants (Table 1).

Table 1: Excerpt from Ms. Koh Miyaoi’s presentation of global examples

National Action Plans & Gender Equality Strategies	Australia Delivering for Tomorrow: Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2026
	Cambodia Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Public Administration: Cambodia Case Study
	Malaysia National Women’s Policy and Women’s Development Action Plan
Action Lines and E-Government	UK Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025
	Canada School of Public Service Digital Academy
Priorities and Objectives at the Subnational Level	The City of Graz, Austria
	The Seoul Metropolitan Government, Republic of Korea
Implementation Framework and Resource Allocation	Canada Public Service Commission
	Cambodia Ministry of Civil Service (MCS) and National Programme for Public Administrative Reform
Measurable Targets for Gender Equality in Public Administration	Namibia Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare of Namibia Strategic Plan Matrix 2020/21 – 2024/25
	Colombia Quota Law of 2000
Outcome Transparency and Accountability	Indonesia National Civil Service Recruitment System
	Canada Secretariat Treasury Board

Complementing Ms. Koh's presentation, Ms. Chansouk Insouvanh, the national consultant, facilitated discussions around national policies, strategies, and policy frameworks for promoting gender equality in public administration in Lao PDR. Participants referred to the challenges of acquiring leadership skills and recruiting women from minority groups. They outlined their expectations for the workshop, particularly on exchanging lessons learned on gender equality in public administration (GEPA), learning about tools to promote gender equality, understanding the challenges in line ministries, and bringing the theory into practice through improved policies and regulations.



The first day concluded with the first group work session, in which the participants discussed challenges and opportunities for gender equality in public institutions at the national and subnational levels. Specifically, participants responded to two questions:

- 1. In which ways does gender equality in public administration (or lack of) affect the quality of governance in Lao PDR?*
- 2. How has enhancing policies and processes for gender equality improved or could improve outcomes in Lao PDR?*

Groups then reported their discussions back in plenary.

The second day of the workshop focused on improving participants' understanding of challenges to advancing gender equality in public administration while addressing national and subnational differences in practices and gender equality outcomes. Chairperson Mme Vilaythone reflected upon day one discussions and reiterated the fact that social perceptions, beliefs, and stereotypes prevent women from actively participating as leaders in public institutions. She noted that while there is currently a national strategy, there is no gender action plan for the public administration. She also commented that while the Lao Women Union (LWU) and the National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children (NCAWMC) are tasked specifically to promote gender equality, each line ministry, through its human resources department, is responsible for developing strategies to improve gender equality and collecting gender statistics. The collection of data on women in leadership positions should be a priority as statistics are not available at the national and subnational levels, especially given the fact that there are few women from ethnic minorities in leadership positions.



Ms. Insouvanh led an interactive activity with participants, assigning each one a persona; 1. Lao Majority ethnic group; 2. Ethnic Minority Group; 3. Persons with Disabilities; and 4. Persons living in Vientiane Capital. Each group was asked to step forward if they thought their persona would progress in the civil service, from technical to Ministerial level. A discussion took place on why some groups progressed further and how if removing the barriers would enable each group to equally progress in their career.

Ms. Insouvanh then presented the national review findings. She first provided sex-disaggregated statistics of women's participation and leadership across different policy areas in public administration in Lao PDR. Some data disparities were discussed in plenary and partially explained by the level of educational attainment, retirement age and reduction in civil servants' numbers, along with the recent institutional reorganization of public administration in Lao PDR. The Ministry of Technology and Communication (MTC), for example, went through a merger with the Ministry of Science and Technology in 2019 and several staff were reallocated to other ministries.

It was agreed that the statistics in the national review would be reviewed and validated by the Lao Statistics Bureau (based in the Ministry of Planning and Investment) and by the Cabinet Office and Division of Planning and Finance in MoHA following the workshop. The presentation also underscored the lower percentage of women in leadership positions at the subnational level. MTC shared its willingness to allocate a budget to gender equality and leadership training for women officials.



The first group work session in the afternoon invited the participants to address three questions:

1. *Are there any gender gaps that may have been overlooked/ not discussed in the national review?*
2. *Why do these gaps exist? What institutional challenges, capacities, needs, and resource requirements contribute to them. Are there distinctions at the national and subnational levels?*

3. What concrete responses would be effective and applicable to respond to the challenges identified in the previous question?

In relation to the national review, participants in plenary discussed institutional challenges and policy responses, pointing out the lack of data on gender at the national level, the need to establish a national database, including the use of indicators in monitoring data collection. Participants recommended the establishment of a mechanism for the review of laws and regulations related to gender equality and to monitor the National Socio-economic Development Plan (NSED) targets on women in leadership positions. This would encourage contributions from women officials and the assessment of the effectiveness of current strategies. Furthermore, they referred to the need to improve the dissemination of information related to gender equality (National Strategies) particularly at the subnational level. Participants noted the lack of dissemination in their respective departments and understanding of current gender equality laws and policies.

Some participants noted the need for targeted human resources policies. In terms of recruitment, although MoHA oversees civil service recruitment, ministries should have an opportunity to indicate how many civil servants they require each year. Some highlighted that communicating the specific number of women needed for hiring in each ministry would enhance gender balance. Currently, gender balance is not considered during the recruitment process. The facilitator emphasized the impact of unconscious bias on recruitment.

Participants pointed out that maternity leave has an impact on performance evaluations. Female participants shared that their performance ratings declined (from excellent to good) during the year they took maternity leave, indicating a penalty for maternity. A young woman working in a male-dominated office pointed out that attending after-work activities is perceived as 'participation' in the team. Given that women often have more family responsibilities, this additional participation is not always feasible or prioritized, thereby constraining their opportunities for promotion.



Concerning capacity needs, participants emphasized the lack of training opportunities. They added that gender balance is needed in all training. Publishing a set of criteria for candidates' selection at each level would enhance clarity regarding the requirements for all roles. For instance, there is currently a lack of clear criteria or a timeline for capacity development related to Director positions. Building the capacity of Lao women officials requires supporting female staff to attend the core political theory course at all levels, in specific locations, which is mandatory for promotions. In terms of resource requirements, LWU pointed out the lack of needs assessment for human resources development, which are important for understanding

the professional development needs of civil servants and would enable better and more targeted training. Participants agreed on the need for an action plan that identifies the key staff tasked with its coordination and appropriate mechanisms to support its implementation.

The following group discussion focused on the organizational policies and practices affecting women's potential and capacity to serve in leadership positions in public administration. Participants discussed two questions:

- 1. What policies and practices are currently in place to ensure women can reconcile their family and professional responsibilities without compromising either?*
- 2. What are the differences between national and subnational levels in terms of the mechanisms and opportunities to increase women in leadership in public administration in Lao PDR?*

When reporting back on group work in plenary, participants did not directly reference policy responses for question 1 but shared their perceptions that the Civil Service Code and laws ensured gender equality. However, they admitted the lack of clear provision on work-life balance in the Civil Service Code and Social Security laws. One group reported that no conflict exists between a woman's family obligations and work requirements. Two groups contradicted this view and outlined the need for policies that enable remote and part-time working. A group suggested that women work fewer hours upon returning from maternity leave (the facilitator asked whether their salary would still be paid in full) and have access to childcare spaces at the workplace.

A key point discussed was the existing socio-cultural differences between the subnational and national levels. Groups had differing opinions on those differences. One group conveyed that there are opportunities for more rapid advancement at the local level in administrative positions due to smaller staff numbers and lower competition. However, progress is equally constrained by a shortage of resources to finance positions, and in remote areas, civil servants may be unwilling to relocate. At the subnational level, promotions to director-general level need to be approved by the Provincial People's Assembly. The quicker progression at the subnational level is attributed to the shorter time required to become a 'party member.' Civil servants at the district level need only two years for party membership, whereas participants noted that this requirement extends to 10 years at the national level, and party membership is a prerequisite for advancing into management roles. At the central level, participants perceived that women are more likely to progress to higher levels due to socio-cultural differences, but progression takes longer due to the higher number of civil servants with qualified backgrounds.

Participants underscored the importance of a mechanism to support and to report on the promotion of women. The Director General of Civil Service Management of MoHA informed that provincial and district levels must report to the national level on gender equality statistics. UN DESA asked what specific entity should oversee reporting. Some participants indicated that currently, there are no clear reporting responsibilities on the number of women being promoted within line ministries.

Two groups highlighted that staff development progresses more slowly at the provincial and district levels due to the absence of adequate human resources support. This contrasts with the central level, where superior services, conditions, and facilities contribute to a conducive environment for staff development. Some participants raised the need for a dedicated committee tasked with supporting women to attain promotions to leadership positions. A human development



plan at the provincial level was deemed essential, with responsibilities delegated to a coordinating entity—some participants suggested a provincial association. Additionally, there should be reporting from the subnational to the national level of government.

Participants underscored the lack of women in field missions, with cultural barriers and stereotypes identified as the primary reasons. For example, it is deemed inappropriate for one woman to join a mission in which she is alone among men. Participants reported that stereotypes continue to impact the number of women joining field missions, with specific sectors being perceived as more ‘dangerous’ for women (for example, mining and hydroelectric power). Another participant mentioned that the perceptions on sending women to the field have changed over time; this was previously viewed as dangerous, but now women conduct field missions such as in the Xaysomboun Province, for example. Although the norms on women in field missions were perceived to be changing, female participants noted that familial duties prevent women from leaving the home environment for prolonged periods. Especially women with young children or currently pregnant. As participation in field missions are a factor in promotion, this subsequently impacts women’s career progression opportunities.

At the end of the plenary session, participants reached a consensus that obtaining management approval is essential for advancing gender equality, including the implementation of mentorship programs. They were urged to deliberate on who would take the responsibility for addressing this issue at both the subnational and national levels, with a suggestion for a committee at the national level. Additionally, there was a reference to the necessity for legislation within the civil service to bolster gender equality. Financing was also highlighted as a notable area of concern, particularly in the context of the current economic situation Lao PDR is experiencing with high inflation and limited public finance.

Ms. Miyaoi proceeded to outline the basics of action planning for gender equality in public administration, incorporating a checklist derived from self-paced capacity building module three (available on the [“Moodle Platform”](#)). The checklist underscored the necessity to make the process of action planning participatory, inclusive, and consultative. It also focussed on the alignment with specific country contexts and the need to adhere to [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).



The third day of the workshop continued to train participants on action planning to address gender equality gaps and priorities emerging from the national review. It consisted largely of group work and feedback on the institutional and policy framework, human resource policies and indicators to measure gender equality progression. Chairperson Mme Vilaythone reflected on progress to date and emphasized the importance of aligning an action plan with NSEDP. She referenced the 40 per cent target for women’s representation at trainings, the need to have a focal point in each ministry and build division capacities, and the requirement to align gender equality programming within specific divisions and departments (i.e. ministries with lower female management rates). She highlighted two ministries that have their own Gender Equality Strategies - the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Ministry of Technology and Communications.



Presentations were structured to offer relevant good practices as action planning references and to increase ownership and capacity to collectively discuss and agree on gender equality priority points and identify implementation risks. Ms. Miyaoi presented global examples of institutional and policy frameworks to advance women's participation and leadership in public administration and discussed priorities, action lines, measurable indicators, and accountability mechanisms. Her presentation highlighted the need to examine differences at the national and local levels. Among the specific examples discussed were the [Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2026](#); the [Malaysian National Women's Policy and Women's Development Action Plan](#); the [Canadian School of Public Service Digital Academy](#); the [Seoul Metropolitan Government](#); and the [Cambodian Ministry of Civil Service \(MCS\) and National Programme for Public Administrative Reform](#)

[\(NPAR\)](#).

Ms. Miyaoi's second presentation brought attention to human resource policies and practices to encourage gender equality and gender parity in leadership positions. It reviewed policies on recruitment, retention, remuneration, allowance and benefits, work-life balance policies, and workplace harassment protection, and called for SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound) indicators to measure progress in gender equality goals.



In the first working session the group discussion centred around three questions:

1. *Which specific institutional and/or policy framework (including coordination and accountability mechanisms) can improve gender equality in public administration in Lao PDR?*
2. *What are the most urgently needed human capital development investments for improving gender equality in the public administration in Lao PDR, thinking about the capacity needs at all levels, and for both women and men?*
3. *Which indicators can measure the improvement in gender equality capacities at different levels?*

The discussion highlighted a consensus that, at a macro level, policy enhancements should be undertaken by the party, LWU, and MoHA. On a micro level, the Department of Organization and Human Resources development in MoHA should take responsibility for

formulating and implementing an action plan aimed at achieving an increased representation of women in leadership positions. The implementation of the plan requires a monitoring mechanism and capacity development.

In the second group session, participants discussed two questions:

1. *Which human resources and practice need to be addressed to improve gender equality and achieve gender parity at all levels but most importantly in leadership positions in public administration, differentiating those concerning recruitment, retention, remuneration, allowances and benefits, work-life balance, and workplace harassment protection?*
2. *Which actions and measures need to be differentiated at the national and subnational levels?*



Participants underscored the need for improving the quality and transparency of civil service examinations and adopting digital technology in the assessment of candidates in addition to facilitating remote working and increasing childcare facilities to enhance work-life balance. The plenary discussion underscored the need for a national legislation to guarantee the recruitment of female civil servants based on the international goal of 50 per cent by 2030. It also noted the need for data collection on retention and skill-development policies, particularly in sectors where several women leave their positions. Participants agreed that implementing a monitoring and evaluation system, along with a confidential reporting mechanism through a dedicated reporting and resolution unit, is crucial for addressing workplace harassment and providing formal protection, as the existing 'comments box' system is deemed ineffective and outdated. Recommendations include establishing distinct education requirements at subnational and national levels, considering the impact of cultural norms on gender roles, and ensuring clear criteria for upgrading knowledge and skills to address differences between national and subnational levels.

In the third group session, participants discussed three questions:

1. *What data and analysis will be essential to i) understand the status of gender equality and gender parity in the public administration in Lao PDR; ii) Can you track the implementation progress of actions and measures aiming to improve gender equality and gender parity, especially*

in leadership positions?; and iii) which agency should be responsible for collecting and analysing which data?

2. Which data and analysis are already available in Lao PDR? Are they accessible? Are there differences in availability between the national and subnational levels?

3. What kinds of capacity need to be developed and institutionalized to ensure the adequate collection and analysis of data? Are there existing in-country resources to develop these capacities?

Participants discussed at length which agency should coordinate data collection, whether it is NCAWMC, LWU or MOHA, without reaching consensus. At the subnational level, Provinces rely on LWU offices to data and analyse data. Participants also reiterated the need for improved coordination between national and subnational levels of government. There was a call for local governments to provide monthly, quarterly, and annual reports on gender progress and women's advancement.

The **fourth day** of the workshop pursued two goals: 1. to showcase the increased capacity of the participants and their ownership of the process to translate collectively agreed gender equality priority gaps into actionable measures; and 2. to identify the next steps for the implementation of these action points to increase women's presence in the decision-making positions in Lao PDR's public administration both at the national and local levels. Participants continued their work in draft action plans to increase the women's representation at leadership levels to 25-30 per cent.

For the final working session of the workshop, participants were guided to review, in plenary, available resources and the vision and a specific objective that would frame the development of a gender equality action plan in public administration in Lao PDR. The need to focus on enabling environments to achieve gender equal and diverse public institutions in Lao PDR was noted. Chairperson Mme Vilaythone further encouraged participants to make indicators measurable while the facilitators indicated that draft action lines recommended by the groups of participants needed more targeted measures to attain the goal of greater representation of women at leadership levels. Participants were hesitant to suggest concrete actions as they felt they did not have the formal endorsement of their ministries to do so. To address their hesitancy, the UNDP and MoHA announced their intention to 1. Jointly organize another Capacity Development Training and Consultation Workshop after increasing participants access to Moodle platform in Lao, so that they can complete self-paced modules and provide feedback on the Draft National Gaps Assessment Report in Lao; and 2. Support validation consultations with all ministries in December 2023-January 2024.

After a presentation by Ms. Resta on next milestones in the implementation of the project, participants reflected on their experiences during the workshop and completed an evaluation survey (Annex 2).

The workshop ended with closing remarks by Mme Vilaythone, on behalf of the Government of the Lao PDR, who thanked UN DESA, UNDP, the facilitators and the participants for their contribution to the workshop. Ms. Miyaoi delivered closing remarks on behalf of UNDP and Ms. Resta on behalf of UN DESA. Participants were then awarded training completion certificates.





Deliberations and Conclusions

Throughout the workshop, group deliberations played a significant role, giving participants an opportunity to reflect on the specific themes covered in expert presentations. These deliberations focused on identification of gender equality gaps across different institutional structures and policies and encouraged participants to bring in their own lived experiences and reflect on lessons learned from global practices. The following is a summary of the outcome of the group discussions on each day.



Day one group session: Participants focused on gender equality in public administration in Lao PDR. They discussed their own experiences and listed policies and processes that can help further improve gender equality at the national and local levels. Group reports underscored the importance of budgetary commitments for the effective implementation of gender equality strategies; the need to increase monitoring and accountability to foster more inclusive, fair, and responsible workplaces in public institutions; and the need to focus on capacity building and empowerment of women civil servants. Participants noted the difficulty of addressing gender stereotypes and the impact of motherhood on their career progression. Groups consistently emphasized the need for a comprehensive change of maternity leave policy and ensuring that taking leave does not negatively impact annual performance assessments.



Day two group sessions and plenary discussions: The group work focused on the findings of the national review. All groups noted the lack of gender data and its impact on the lack of monitoring indicators, which in turn weakens accountability mechanisms. Participants called for more gender balance in all professional training opportunities. Differences between the national and subnational levels were recognized with their advantages, such as faster promotion track at the subnational levels, as well as disadvantages including lack of resources and remoteness.

Day three group sessions and plenary discussions: The group work focused on specific institutional and policy frameworks, including coordination and accountability mechanisms and human capital investments that could be proposed for improving gender equality in public administration in Lao PDR.



The groups recommended for all ministries to assign a gender equality focal point and expanding human capital investments opportunities including through further targeted training. Participants noted the need to ensure equal opportunities for women in professional trainings by ensuring that half of the trainees are women. They underscored the need for a more effective monitoring and evaluation system with targeted indicators to improve

reporting and accountability lines. Participants also noted the importance of workplace harassment protections and suggested a confidential reporting mechanism to replace the current system of grievance reporting. It was mentioned that the Department of Civil Service Management in MoHA is currently drafting the National Strategy on Civil Servants (2023 – 2030), which will directly inform policies to promote gender equality and ethnic diversity, but resources will be needed for its implementation. Participants also reiterated the need for improved coordination between national and subnational levels of government, especially in terms of gender disaggregated data collection and analyses. The working sessions concluded with a consensus on the vision for the national action plan to state that women’s representation in

leadership/decision making positions in the public administration should be increased to a minimum of 25-30 per cent (both at national and sub-national levels, see Annex 1).

Day four group sessions and plenary discussions: The group work focused on targeted measures as inputs to an action plan for gender equality in public administration in the country. Participants were encouraged to design activities and actions that create enabling environments for people to work in addition to capacity-building and training, and to include measurable indicators for tracking progress. The groups also agreed that posting the draft national action plan on the MoHA website for feedback would increase buy-in from all line ministries.



Action Points for Implementation

Workshop participants agreed that an action plan to advance gender equality in public administration is needed to increase the representation of women in leadership positions to 25-30 per cent at all levels of government in Lao PDR. They recommended a list of actions which can be grouped around five dimensions (Annex 1):

- Gender equality policy and standards
- Sensitization
- Capacity development

- Monitoring and evaluation
- Data collection.

Concerning the upcoming steps, participants committed to completing the self-paced capacity development modules on gender equality and public administration provided by UN DESA and UNDP. They acknowledged the imperative to sustain efforts in order to reach a consensus on a preliminary action plan. UNDP committed to translating all material into Lao language to enhance accessibility and build expertise of civil servants, this will serve as a knowledge base for the formation of the Action Plan.

To achieve this objective, the contributions stemming from collaborative group efforts (refer to Annex 1) for the formulation of a national action plan must undergo a thorough review, consolidation, and enhancement by March 2024. This process is crucial to ensure that a preliminary action plan is ready for presentation and peer review at the regional workshop to be organized under the project in 2024.

Annex 1. Inputs for a National Action Plan on Gender Equality in Public Administration

Goal: attain at minimum 25-30 per cent of women at the leadership/decision-making level in the public administration both at the national and subnational levels in Lao PDR.

Activities	Indicators	Means of Verification	Time frame (divided into 4 quarters)	Required Resources	Responsible Party	Required but Missing Capacities
Gender equality policy and standards						
Develop a strategy to promote gender equality in governance	Completion of the draft strategy Hold 3 meetings	Draft strategy completed	quarter 1/2024	Policy statements/ directions from the State Party Example of national strategy for reference	Line ministries (e.g Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry)	Knowledge of human resources Knowledge of technology Knowledge of gender roles Budget requirements of 50,000 USD
Re-examine the leadership and management plan, commit to have women leaders	Select women based on their advanced progress/Advanced performance	The selected women need to promote women advancement	quarter 1 / Annually	Budget to implement the plan	HRD of MOHA	Responsible staff must be knowledgeable about criteria and gender policy for implementation
Develop standards and conditions for women civil servants to have the opportunity to attain decision-making positions	Draft criteria and identify enabling conditions	Criteria and enabling conditions are approved by Government	quarter 1/2025	The approved strategic plan must have sex-disaggregated statistics in the final target	Department of Human Resources, Line ministries (e.g Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry)	Implementation budget Amount: 50,000 dollars, recruit experts to advise on implementation
Sensitization						
Disseminate and publish the strategy and organize training on gender roles in PA	Training and dissemination plan	Training plan and dissemination of training courses	quarter 4/2024	Strategic plans, courses, and trainers	Department of Human Resources, Line ministries (e.g Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry)	Implementation budget: \$50,000, training manuals
Capacity development						
Disseminate and publish the above developed strategies and organize	Training and dissemination plan	Training plan and dissemination of training courses	quarter 4/2024	Strategic plans, courses, and trainers	Department of Human Resources, Line ministries (e.g Ministry	Implementation budget: \$50,000, training manuals

training on gender roles in PA					of Agriculture and Forestry)	
Training in leadership skills/ Leadership training for women in public sector	1 time (30 people) 70% of female participants understand the objectives and aims of the leadership training provided	certificate of completion Pre-and-post training assessment	quarter 2/2027 quarter 2-3/year?	Teachers/Courses Budget	Institute of Political Administration and HR Department MoHA	Specialization in specific areas Outsource-specialists to help build additional capacity for trainers
Gender training for HRD at the central level in all sectors	70% of the training participants must understand the work of promoting gender equality, both male and female	Pre-and-post training assessment	quarter 1-2/ year?	Budget	MCAWMC and LWU	Build strong gender role trainers
Update knowledge on Political Theory and Governance	-1 time (30 people)	certificate of completion	quarter 3/ 2024	Teachers/Courses	HR of MoHA and the United Nations	Specialized in theory
Capacity Building Project to 1. empower female civil servants with ICT knowledge 2. Foster an environment that facilitates increased representation of women in leadership and management roles within the civil service	Percentage of women trainees Percentage of civil servants whose knowledge and skills have been upgraded	Tracking system for evaluation Post evaluation	quarter 1-2-3-4/year?	Budget, personnel, digital government Action plan Budget And courses	Ministry of Technology And Communication / All HRD MoHA and the Board if the Central Party	Action plan of modern government Implementation of action plans
Upgrade Technical Knowledge	1 time (30 people)	certificate of completion	quarter 4/2024	Teachers/Courses	In and out-country study	Scholarship programme
Upgrade ICT knowledge	1 time (30 people)	certificate of completion	quarter 3/2025	Teachers/Courses and virtual training	Ministry of Technology and IC institutions	Budget
Improve foreign language skills	1 time (30 people)	certificate of completion	quarter 1/2026	Teachers/Courses, virtual training	Foreign Institute	Specialization in foreign languages

Monitoring and evaluation						
Monitoring and evaluation	Target 70% of training participants	Percentage of people aware of and understanding training topics	quarter 4/year?	Effective monitoring and evaluation tools	HRD of each ministry	Training for M & E staff to be proficient in additional monitoring and evaluation
Data collection						
Collecting information at the administrative level	Data collection in the entire country	Summary report on the implementation of data on administrative positions at the management level	quarter 1/2024	MoHA, equipment and budget	MOHA	Specialization in specific areas

Annex 2. Participant Evaluation Report

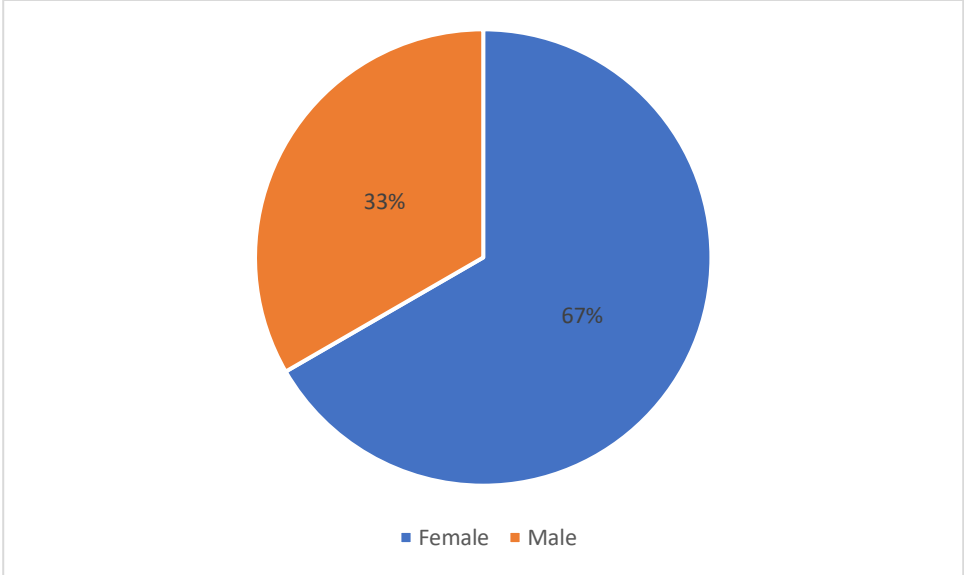
Background information

A Capacity Development Workshop titled “Promoting the presence and leadership of women within public institutions at the national and local levels” was held in Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) from 24 to 27 October 2023 under the project [“Building capacities for promoting the presence and leadership of women within public institutions at national and local levels”](#). The project is funded by the Government of Italy and implemented by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other UN entities. The workshop was organized by UNDP and UN DESA in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs of Lao PDR.

Participation

Twenty-four public administration officials from the Lao PDR attended the workshop, with a composition of 16 female officials (67%) and eight male officials (33%) from various government entities including the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Ministry of Technology and Communication, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Gender Development Association, Lao Women’s Union and National Commission for Advancement of Women.

Participation by gender



Satisfaction with the workshop

The workshop received feedback from twenty-two participants and their responses collectively indicated a high level of satisfaction.

Ninety per cent of the respondents were satisfied with the clarity of the meeting objectives and the organization and management of the sessions.

All the respondents expressed satisfaction with the quality of the presentations.

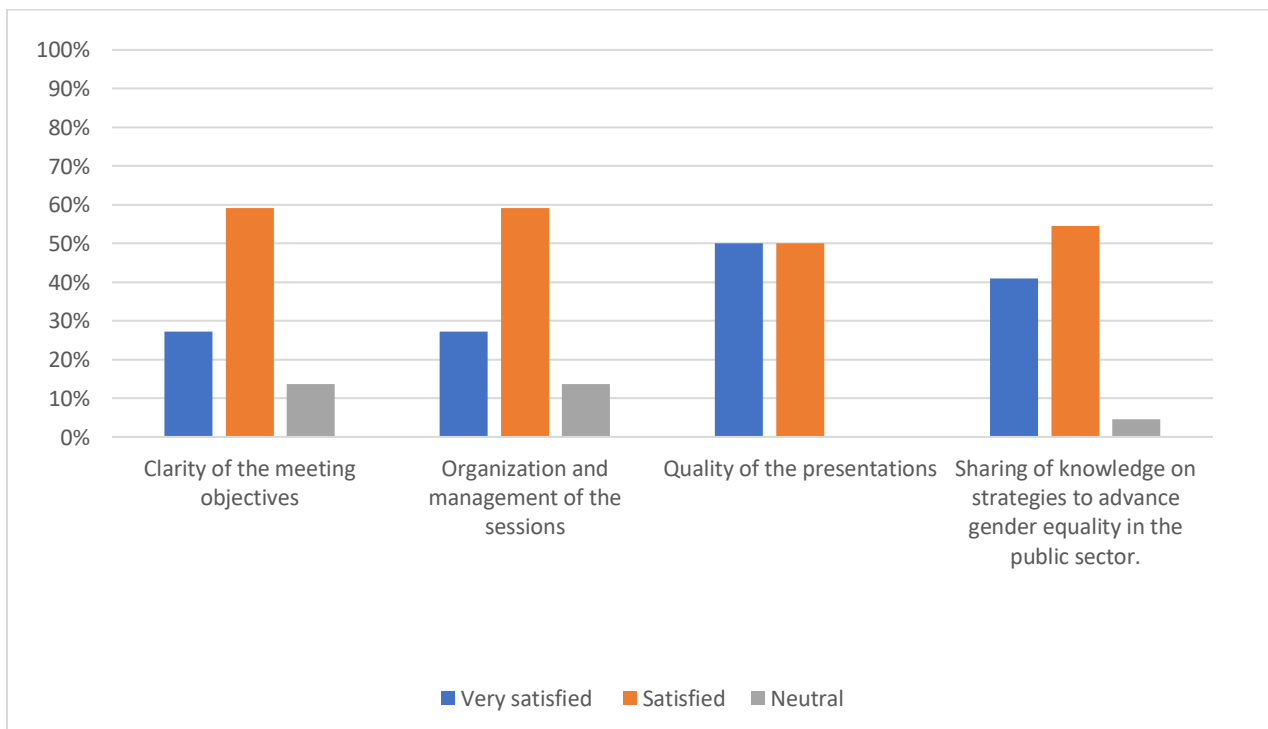
Ninety-five per cent of the respondents were satisfied with the sharing of knowledge on strategies to advance gender equality in the public sector.

Analysis of responses based on the degree of satisfaction

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied	Total
Clarity of the meeting objectives	6	13	3	0	0	22
Organization and management of the sessions	6	13	3	0	0	22
Quality of the presentations	11	11	0	0	0	22
Sharing of knowledge on strategies to advance gender equality in the public sector	9	12	1	0	0	22

Evaluation by participants - quantitative assessment

Satisfaction with various elements of the workshop



Evaluation by participants - qualitative assessment

Next steps after the workshop

Most respondents pointed out that, after the workshop, they were clearer about the main steps of the project and the country's participation in it.

One respondent added that both the workshop and the project would offer valuable guidance in developing the Gender Action Plan in the country.

Results of the national review

Most respondents acknowledged that the findings of the national review helped pinpoint the areas that need improvement and actions to promote gender equality in public administration in Lao PDR. However, one participant expressed concern about the clarity of the data presented in the national review, emphasizing the need for precise identification of target numbers at each administrative level. For instance, specifying that the primary administrative level includes division directors and deputy division directors, while the leadership positions encompass Deputy Director-General and above.

Additional observations by individual respondents referred to:

- The importance of the national review and the need to implement its recommendations to publicise it to enhance understanding and awareness of gender equality within public administration.
- The adequacy of the existing national plan on gender equality and the necessity of translating it into a specific action plan for each sector and ensuring effective implementation.

Relevance of the meeting in planning measures needed to increase the presence and leadership of women to achieve gender equality in public administration.

Most respondents agreed that the meeting helped to plan measures to increase the presence and leadership of women to achieve gender equality in public administration.

Two respondents noted that the meeting provided global lessons as well as insights on how to think of issues critically and identify the challenges and barriers faced by women within public administration which have a negative impact on their career path. A participant commended the lessons learned from the presentations and exchanges with other participants while another respondent noted learnings around data collection for planning and tracking progress on gender equality.

Recommendations on the organization of future workshops

Several respondents commended the workshop's organization; some appreciated the expertise of the facilitators. Participants also provided recommendations on the organization of future workshops:

- More clarity on the purpose of the workshop (four respondents).
- Additional time to be allocated for group work (two respondents).
- Need for additional workshops on the same topic (two respondents).

- Equal participation of men and women (one respondent).
- Translation of all workshop documents into Lao (three respondents).