

STRENGTHENING THE ROUND TABLE PROCESS FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE 7TH NSEDP/MDGS

Project ID: 00078226

Project Description

The Round Table Process is the national mechanism for enhancing mutual understanding and development coordination between the Government of Lao PDR and Development Partners towards achieving Lao PDR's development goals together in a coordinated and effective manner. Those goals are outlined in the five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP). The 7th National Socio-Economic Development Plan is coming to an end in 2015 and the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan is currently being finalised for the period of 2016-2020.

Since its inception in 1983, the Round Table Process has evolved into an increasingly effective platform for substantive dialogue, helping to develop common understanding on the country's development priorities and further increase aid effectiveness.



The 2013 High-Level Round Table Meeting in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Photo: UNDP Lao PDR / Valter Siantoni

Project Summary:

- Duration: 2011 – 2015
- Geographic coverage: Vientiane Capital
- Focus area: Poverty reduction
- Implementing partners: Department of International Cooperation (DIC), Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI)
- Website: www.rtm.org.la, http://www.la.undp.org/content/lao_pdr/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/realizing-the-mdgs-in-lao-pdr--consolidated-programme-of-support.html

Round Table Meetings have traditionally taken place every three years and focused on presenting new national development strategies and key policy interventions to seek and organise the support of Development Partners towards those goals. In the beginning, these meetings took place in Geneva. In 1999 they were moved to Lao PDR, thus increasing the effectiveness of the Round Table Meeting for national development.

In addition to traditional High-Level Round Table Meetings, a range of related consultations have come to play an important role within the overall Round Table Process. Annual Round Table Implementation Meetings have been introduced to review progress made on National Socio-Economic Development Plan implementation, consolidate lessons learned and work towards achieving consensus on how to accelerate progress towards national development goals.

Furthermore, provincial level consultations now form an important part of the Round Table Process by providing a platform to link discussions at the national and local levels on critical development issues and highlight specific local challenges.

In June 2005, Sector and Thematic Working Groups were formed. These working groups have now become the primary locus of coordination at the sector and thematic levels between Government and Development Partners, including Civil Society. They are organised around ten key areas: Health, Education, Infrastructure, Agriculture and Rural Development, Natural Resource Management and Environment, Governance, Macroeconomics, Trade and Private Sector Development, Mine Action (UXO), Illicit Drug Control.

Main Objectives and Outcomes

The main objective of this project is to further strengthen the capacity of the government to lead the effective mobilisation and coordination of Official Development Assistance towards achieving the goals set within the National Socio-Economic Development Plan. These goals include the achievement of MDGs and their upcoming adaptation into Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the graduation from Least Developed Country status, the new national development priority to be achieved by the mid-2020s which also serves as the main objective of the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan.

The goal is to further develop the capacity of government officials from the Department of International Cooperation at the Ministry of Planning and Investment to lead and facilitate the effective mobilisation and coordination of development assistance provided by a growing number of Development Partners, while acknowledging the global trend on development cooperation and effectiveness which sees a global reduction of development assistance.

Results and Achievements to Date

The Round Table Process Project has provided high-quality technical support, as well as financial support to the government to ensure successful organisation of results-oriented meetings. Achievements to highlight so far are:

- The Round Table Process has become more consultative and inclusive through new platforms for regular discussions and consultations among relevant stakeholders, including Development Partners, Line Ministries, Sector Working Groups, Civil Society Organisations, International Non-Governmental Organisations, and the private sector.
- The coordination between Sector Working Groups and the Department of International Cooperation, as well as among the 10 Sector Working Groups, has improved and become more effective in providing information and reporting. Sector Working Groups have become more involved in the preparation processes of the High-Level Round Table Meeting and the Annual Round Table Implementation Meeting. Communications between the Round Table Secretariat and the chairs

and co-chairs of Sector Working Groups have facilitated improved coordination.

- The government, particularly the Department of International Cooperation, has gained more experience and increased capacities in substantively preparing and following-up recommendations from the 2013 High-Level Round Table Meeting and the 2014 Round Table Implementation Meeting with Development Partners and Sector Working Groups. This is evident in the improvement of substantive, focused discussion points being incorporated into the preparation of the outcome-based 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan.
- The Round Table Process became the mechanism and platform for the government to enhance aid effectiveness and make progress on the *Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (a localised version of the Paris Declaration) and its Country Action Plan.
- The web-based Aid Management Platform was successfully launched as a public interface in November 2013. The platform has helped to improve the availability and accessibility of development assistance information, which has significantly strengthened coordination, management, monitoring and reporting. This database has generated Foreign Aid Implementation Reports and tracks development assistance flows.

Funding:

- Total project budget: USD 4,847,350
- Donors:
 - UNDP: USD 2,486,135
 - Government of Luxembourg: USD 638,863
- Unfunded budget (funding gap): USD 1,722,353
- Delivery in 2014 fiscal year: USD 493,155 (98% of budget plan)

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