



# Resilient and Inclusive Urbanization

Vientiane, Lao PDR  
31st October 2022



**UN HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



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Proceedings of the  
**Lao National Urban Forum (LNUF)**  
under the theme of  
**“Resilience and Inclusive Urbanization”**

jointly organized by  
**Ministry of Public Works and Transport**  
**(MPWT)**  
and  
**United Nations Human Settlements Programme**  
**(UN-HABITAT)**

31st October 2022

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## Background to the Lao National Urban Forum

In the context of an increasingly urbanized world, the last decade has seen a growing recognition of the linkages between urbanization and sustainable development. In 2015, under the aegis of the United Nations, Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030), which specifically highlights that sustainable urban development and management are crucial to people's quality of life.

On October 2016, the recognition of the key contribution of sustainable urbanization to achieve development goals culminated in the historic adoption of the **New Urban Agenda** at the United Nations Conference on Housing and

Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador. The New Urban Agenda promotes a positive notion of cities, demonstrating that urbanization through planning and management can be a transformative force for inclusive prosperity and well-being, while protecting the environment and effectively addressing climate change. Implementation of the New Urban Agenda will support the localization and application of Agenda 2030 toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in an integrated manner.

Building on the momentum created by Habitat III and the commitments made in the New Urban Agenda, the policy debate on

<sup>1</sup> SDG Knowledge Hub, "Eleventh Session of the World Urban Forum (WuF11)", <https://sdg.iisd.org/events/eleventh-session-of-the-world-urban-forum-wuf11/>

## Purpose of the Lao National Urban Forum

sustainable urban development has been revived with increased participation and inclusivity. At the global level, the **World Urban Forum (WUF)** convenes every two years as the world's premier conference on urban issues, organized by UN-Habitat since 2002. Facilitating partnerships and knowledge sharing, the Forum mobilizes support for the New Urban Agenda's implementation, follow up, and review, maintaining it firmly on the global agenda.

The Eleventh Session of the WUF (WUF11) was co-organized by UN-Habitat, Poland's Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy and the Municipal Office of Katowice. Taking place on the theme "Transforming Our Cities for a Better Urban Future," WUF11 aimed to provide greater insights and clarity on the future of cities based on existing trends, challenges, and opportunities, including valuable lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

**The concept of National Urban Forums (NUFs) came from the WUF.** NUFs are national-level platforms that bring multiple stakeholders together around a common vision for sustainable urban development in alignment with the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. NUFs provide advocacy, knowledge sharing, capacity development, partnership and networking opportunities for national government agencies, civil society organizations, private sector groups, the international donor community, and various other urban sectors and stakeholders.

**The goal of the Lao National Urban Forum (LNUF) is "to support sustainable urban development in Lao PDR so that urban areas become pleasant, safe and healthy to live in, and economically, socially and spiritually sound with active participation from all key stakeholders in good urban governance".**

One of the key characteristics of Lao PDR is **rapid and uncontrolled urbanization as a result of dynamic rural-urban migration.** The total population of Lao PDR in 2020 was estimated at 7.498 million with urban residents accounting for about 37%. According to World Bank data, the urban population has been increasing at rates of 3.3-3.4% since 2015 compared to the national population growth rate of 1.5-1.6%.<sup>2</sup>

Reasons for rural-urban migration include younger generations seeking employment and a better quality of life, steady economic growth over the years leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, political stability, transport connections, and liberal economic policy and market mechanisms leading to increased demand for labour in urban areas.

Much of this urbanization has taken place with minimal coordination, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient regard for environmental impacts. In turn, this has resulted in disorganized growth, inefficient land use, damage and loss of natural resources, and inadequate access to urban services.

<sup>2</sup> Urban population data from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.GROW?locations=LA>. World Bank estimates of population growth differ from those of the Lao Bureau of Statistics.

<sup>3</sup> UN Habitat Programme Document 2012-13, p.3

<sup>4</sup> UN Habitat Programme Document 2012-13.



At the same time, urban expansion has tended to concentrate large populations of poorer communities in hazard-prone areas, resulting in increased climate change and disaster risks and presenting challenges to social cohesion.

To respond to these challenges, UN-Habitat has partnered with the Ministry of Public Works and Transport's Department of Housing and Urban Planning (MPWT – DHUP) on several basic service projects providing the minimum requirements needed to **offer a decent life to citizens in human settlements**, including water supply and sanitation, housing, transport, and sustainable waste management, including wastewater management.

- **At the national level**, the MPWT-DHUP is responsible for developing and supervising the implementation of strategic plans, policy advice, detailed urban and rural development plans, water supply, housing projects, and preparing/supporting regulatory documents.<sup>3</sup>

- **At the local level**, these central agencies realize their duties and functions through their field offices. The Provincial Public Works and Transport Divisions represent MPWT in the local governments and set up operational offices in all districts within their jurisdictions. These offices are tasked with developing, supervising, and monitoring operations and maintenance of road and drainage systems.

**The Urban Development Strategy to the year 2030**, prepared by the MPWT, was approved by the government in November 2012. It envisages several actions to strengthen the urban planning and management system, such as improving urban planning and management institutions, undertaking a comprehensive revision and amending the urban planning law and other development acts, making sure that most urban areas, including district towns and focal village clusters (koumban phathana) are provided with comprehensive and detailed urban development plans.<sup>4</sup>





Urban development has also been highlighted in Lao PDR through its participation in a number of activities at the global level. In 2021, Lao PDR was the first country in the Asia-Pacific region to submit a National Progress Report (NPR) on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The NPR was prepared as the first of its kind for Lao PDR with the joint effort of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT) and UN-Habitat. Then, in April 2022, the Minister of Public Works and Transport led a Lao delegation to the High-Level Meeting to review progress on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. As a result of Lao PDR's commitment to and potential for sustainable urbanization, it was selected as one of 29 countries to engage in a Joint Initiative on Sustainable Urban Development, which is being undertaken by the UN Development Coordination Office (UNDCO) and UN-Habitat. This is an exciting opportunity to engage at a global level in the latest developments in urban programming and puts Lao PDR in a favorable position to initiate a National Urban Forum.

A Lao National Urban Forum will play an important role in bringing to the fore urban reality and conditions of Lao cities which are facing multiple effects of economic and financial crises. It is also a crucial time to observe how cities recover and build back better after the unexpected impacts of the pandemic. The recovery of cities and the nature of urbanisation will have not only a marked effect on achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but also represent an opportunity to develop new urban strategies centered around the 'Leave No One Behind' principles and a 'Human Security' approach. In light of these points, the Lao government has reached out to UN-Habitat for cooperation in establishing a NUF. The NPR noted that a NUF

was called for in May 2020 to follow up and review the NUA and SDG 11. A NUF will also support a coordinated national contribution to and participation in international development processes and frameworks.

The pressing urbanization challenges in Lao PDR and the present national political focus on the Urban Sector Strategy provide an excellent opportunity to raise urban issues through a national platform. It is, therefore, time for a Lao PDR National Urban Forum (LNUF) to be created and led by DHUP with the support of UN-Habitat.

## Objectives of Lao National Urban Forum

The overall objective of the Lao PDR National Urban Forum (LNUF) is to establish a national multi-stakeholder platform to discuss the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly urbanizing economy and engage in the planning and management of urban growth.

## Outcomes Achieved

- Provided a national platform for dialogue among all stakeholders of the urban sector to participate in the planning and management of urban growth;
- Raised/increased awareness about issues pertaining to urbanization;
- Identified thematic areas which would benefit from increased advocacy among stakeholders

to help address urban challenges via human-centric, inclusive and collaborative approaches for building more resilient and sustainable cities in Lao PDR; Facilitated Government - Development partner dialogue on defining strategic areas of support for appropriate policy adjustment during the implementation process of development and investment programs and for applying new techniques in urban development and management;

- Initiated coordination among local, international bodies and development partners for purposes of research and information sharing to strengthen the institutional framework in urban sectors;
- Promoted integrated participatory planning, development and management of the natural and built environment amongst urban actors in urban areas;
- Successfully served as a stakeholder forum to effectively support and complement other Government work requiring a coherent and integrated approach; and
- Contributed to positioning Lao PDR as part of the broader international knowledge-sharing platform in Urban Planning by facilitating partnerships with other governments to showcase best practices from Lao PDR and from around the world.

## Summary of the Proceedings

In the first meeting of the National Urban Forum, the objectives of the Forum have been presented, priority actions have been identified, and issues as well as possible future pathways have been discussed. The meeting focused on collaboration between all levels of government, UN agencies, regional organizations, and private stakeholders to encourage partnerships to address current issues, derive recommendations, and promote mutual learning. The discussion mainly focused on identifying challenges and opportunities as well as considering key strategies and actions for the future. The Minister of Public Works and Transport, Mr. Viengsavath Siphandone stated, “Urban development is a matter of global importance because cities are central to socio-economic and environmental development. Urban development is the responsibility of all sectors of society, including the government.”

Future meetings will build on decisions made in the initial meeting and contribute to achieving sustainable urbanization and broader social, environmental, and economic development goals. Consideration toward city governance and management is essential, as cities will continue to play an important role in achieving sustainability and resilience.

## LNUF Proceedings | Morning Session

Opening Sessions		
8:30 - 9:00	Opening Remarks	Minister of Public Works and Transport
	Video Message	Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN-Habitat
	Remarks	Ms. Sara Sekkenes-Tollefsen, UN Resident Coordinator

1. **Mr. Viengsavath Siphandone, Minister of Public Works and Transport** expressed the importance of urban development from a global perspective and welcomed all the participants to the first Lao National Urban Forum. He presented the development progress achieved by the government so far, highlighting internal effort as well as international assistance received. The uniqueness of urban development issues in Laos includes the unsystematic control of urban spreads, the imbalance between housing prices and living quality, and other cascading problems on transportation, infrastructure, urban disasters,

among others. Mr. Siphandone then spoke on the purpose of this forum as a platform to discuss and participate in the development and problem-solving of cities for a sustainable, presentable, and modern future of the country.

2. In her opening remarks, **Ms. Sara Sekkenes-Tollefsen, UN Resident Coordinator**, congratulated the success in the organization of the LNUF. She emphasized three urban-specific challenges in Laos and key considerations, including:

- **Planning** - The New Urban Agenda (NUA) offers a relevant theoretical framework for



Lao PDR to properly plan and manage its cities. She also noted Laos' pioneering role in the Asia-Pacific region in submitting the progress report on the implementation of the NUA.

- **Inclusivity and multi-stakeholder participation** - Successful urban planning relies on the participation of all stakeholders and strengthened inter-ministerial coordination. She stressed that the comprehensive urbanization strategy is as important as the localized approach in each city, echoing the World Cities Day theme this year, "Act Local to Go Global: Localizing the SDGs for leaving no one and no place behind."
- **Leaving no one behind** - Specific attention should be drawn to the issues of the most vulnerable populations, gender equity, and rural livelihoods.

Ms. Sekkenes-Tollefsen also drew attention to relevant issues, including the current 4F - food, fertilizer, fuel, and financing crisis, the current financial imbalances in Lao PDR, and the need to integrate climate change adaptation into urban planning. She concluded that through collaboration, opportunities could be seized, and risks mitigated.

3. In her video message, **Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN-Habitat** congratulated the government of Lao PDR for conducting the inaugural Lao National Urban Forum and for their active participation and effort in promoting sustainable development nationwide. She also pointed out that while facing several challenges, especially the fastest urbanization rate in the region, it is vital for Lao cities to have a platform for broad consultation with different entities and stakeholders including women, youth, and other vulnerable groups in urban communities in keeping with the principle of "Leaving No One Behind."

Keynote Presentation: Prospects and Challenges of Urbanization		
9:00 – 9:30	1. New Urban Agenda and SDG localization	Bruno Dercon, OIC, UN-Habitat Regional Office of Asia and the Pacific
	2. Southeast Asia perspective	Omar Siddique, Economic Affairs Officer, SUDS, EDD, UN ESCAP
	3. Urbanization in Lao PDR	Dr. Avi Sarkar, UN-Habitat Lao PDR
9:30 – 9:40	4. Voices of Urban Dwellers	MPWT and UN-Habitat
9:40 – 9:50	5. Presentation on Lao National Urban Forum's purpose and objectives	Dr. Viengnam Douangphachan, DG DHUP
9:50-10:10	Comments from Development Partners	6. Australia
		7. European Union
		8. Asian Development Bank

1. **Mr. Bernhard Barth, Human Settlements Officer, UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (representing Mr. Bruno Dercon)**, recognized the progress made by Lao PDR so far regarding the implementation of NUA and the localization of SDGs. He emphasized that achieving the SDGs is directly linked to the capacity of local and regional governments to ensure access to basic services that underpin the quality of life, especially in the face of rapid urbanization and the global pandemic crisis.
2. **Mr. Omar Siddique, Economic Affairs Officer, SUDS, EDD, UN ESCAP** presented on the Southeast Asia perspective. After extending formal appreciation for inviting ESCAP to the NUF, he identified the value of the chosen topic in its close relation to the localization of the SDGs. He then presented multiple interlinked crises facing Southeast Asian cities and comparisons of SDG progress before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. He identified the significant regression in multiple indicators of SDG 11 in the region, as well disconnection between local and national levels in tracking progress. He then articulated opportunities to build urban sustainability and resilience through localization of the SDGs, viewing urbanization as a transformative process, and making cities a potent force for sustainable socio-economic growth and innovation in urban development. Mr. Siddique also presented research on urbanization patterns among Southeast Asian countries and identified key issues for adapting urban policies to address interlinked crises.
3. **Dr. Avi Sarkar, UN-Habitat Lao PDR**, spoke on the urbanization in Lao PDR. He gave a briefing on the urbanization in Laos and its underlying key drivers through various perspectives. He



stated that the number of urban residents is on the rise at a rate of 4.9 percent per year, which is the fastest rate in the region. As a result, more than half of the population is expected to move to an urban area by the next decade. He specified the consequent challenges, including land use planning and management, flood risk, air pollution, poverty, and inequality. He proposed three strategic areas to improve the current trajectory of urbanization: focusing on coordinating awareness/knowledge sharing, improving research and data analysis, and increasing support for urban planning.

4. **Dr. Viengnam Douangphachan, DG DHUP**, introduced the background of the Lao National Urban Forum and noted three imperatives in holding the LNUF: (i) for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda especially addressing housing, climate change, achieving the SDGs and disaster issues; (ii) for the exchange of opinions and participation in the development and solving of urban problems; (iii) for creating conditions for the readiness of Lao PDR to obtain and access various sources of funds related to the priority areas of the United Nations.



He then proposed the four goals of the LNUF, including (i) increasing stakeholders' engagement and listening to opinions of the society; (ii) creating conditions and an environment for all members of the society to take ownership and participate; (iii) promoting and mobilizing all parties to invest in urban infrastructure; (iv) creating momentum for the organization of the next National Urban Forum.

5. **A video of urban dwellers' voices prepared by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport and UN-Habitat was displayed to all participants.** In this video, opinions and reflections from people living in cities across the country were collected and presented. Challenges such as traffic jams, road conditions, flooding, and economic issues were among key concerns raised by urban dwellers.
6. **Mr. Soulivann Souksavath, representative of the Australian Embassy,** noted that Australia also acknowledges the importance of urban development in Laos and the ASEAN region. The ASEAN-Australia Smart City Trust fund was established in 2018 and currently working closely with three cities in Laos: Kaysone, Pakse, and Luang Prabang. Australia is also working with MPWT to support the Lao 'Land-lock to Land-link' policy and multi-model transport planning, as well as improve cross-border facilities along National Road No.2 connecting Laos' border with Vietnam and Thailand through the 'Lao-Australian Connectivity Partnership Project'.
7. **Mr. Niall Leonard, representative of the European Union,** began with the suggestion to think about small things. Considering the new realities faced by Laos, he emphasized the

value of learning from and reflecting on past experiences of foreign countries as opposed to direct replications. He reminded the attendees to think of the existing resources and strengths in Lao cities and proposed Luang Prabang as an exemplary case of implementing a localized urbanization path. He then suggested planning and managing the cities from various perspectives, for example, that of the disabled, the vulnerable, etc., to achieve the ultimate goal of inclusive and sustainable urbanization. Mr. Niall Leonard reiterated the need to embrace collaborative, intellectual approaches and to make the best use of existing resources within the context of the global pandemic and hard financial conditions.

8. **Ms. Soudalay Souanavong, representative of the Asian Development Bank (ADB),** affirmed ADB's growing role in Lao urban development. As the implementing partner of the ASEAN-Australia Smart City Trust Fund project, ADB is also expected to have another key urban project approved in 2024 named the "Urban Environment Improvement Investment Project." This project will focus in the areas of infrastructure, landfills, wastewater treatment facilities, city landscapes, and capacity building.

Following Sessions from the Ministries		
10:20-11:00	Line Ministries	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
		Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
		Ministry of Health
		Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism
11:00 - 11:45	MPWT Departments	Housing and Urban Planning
		Water Supply
		PTI
		Transport

1. **Mr. Keosangkhom Phommaseng, representative of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment**, shared the lessons learned from past experience of sustainable development, focusing on three cities in Laos: Sam Neau, Luang Prabang, and Kaysone Phomvihane. He mentioned the barriers that have been preventing Laos from achieving the SDGs to transition into a green, clean, and sustainable country. He highlighted environmental issues in need of urban solutions, including wastewater discharge, solid waste disposal, and poor management. He presented a wide range of efforts through which the MoNRE is targeting these challenges, including technical guidelines, multimedia dissemination, climate change integrated education, mobilization of finance, as well as raising awareness at all levels. He shared moments from projects in the three cities and presented further planned actions working with the ASEAN Action Group that focus on implementation at all levels, including awareness-raising activities in communities.
2. **Mr. Vilai Phanthavong, representative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare**, outlined the structure of the MoLSW. Based on the the ministry's mandates related to urban planning, he presented perspectives of the human rights of labor forces, regarding disaster management, and of the vulnerable. He also mentioned four challenges regarding urbanization in Laos. These include lack of dissemination of city development plan to society, insufficient water drainage systems exacerbating floods, need for improved basic public services and facilities, and unclear roles of management and maintenance for public buildings and facilities. He highlighted a range of potential solutions from disseminating laws at the local level , decentralizing management, early planning for better risk management, among others. He concluded with the imperative to consider the needs of all walks of life while acknowledging the importance of urbanization for economic growth.



3. **Dr. Bouakeo Suvanthong, representative of the Ministry of Health**, shared the work progress of the Ministry. He noted an increase in MOH's involvement in implementing national laws related to health, such as tobacco control, pandemic control, and dengue fever control, as well as actions taken regarding wastewater management. He stressed the importance of ensuring urban and rural health and the implementation of healthy cities as a commitment to the SDGs. He also emphasized that goals related to emissions and green cities need a systematic approach, as does problems in dealing with waste.
4. **Dr. Somkietisack Kingsada, representative of the Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism (MICT)**, presented the roles and mandates of the MICT regarding urbanization and urban development. He emphasized the role of advisory bodies from the national level to the sub-national level and multimedia platforms as important tools for dissemination.

He shared a perspective of development that encompasses both GDP and other societal aspects, which was confirmed by Mr. Siphandone's (MPWT) statement recognizing the value of culture's contribution to mental prosperity.

5. **Mr. Sengdara Douangmyxay, delegate from the Department of Housing and Urban Planning (DHUP), MPWT**, began by introducing the DHUP mandates regarding urbanization and development, from the strategy-making and project implementation to the monitoring and evaluation. DHUP is also responsible for aiding other government ministries and local authorities in responsible fields. Past experiences were mentioned, including solid waste management, improvement of environmental investment, infrastructure and livelihood, and capacity building. He highlighted multiple negative externalities of urbanization in Laos that were identified during the work progress.

Mr. Douabgmyxay also proposed a set of approaches to call on reactive measures as opposed to proactive measures in addressing urban problems.

6. **Mr. Sompong Sitthivong, Director General of the Department of Water Supply, MPWT**, gave a briefing on the development of the Water Supply and Sanitation Sector, including regulations that have been established and are in-progress. Briefing on the status of water supply infrastructure and services nationwide, he mentioned that only 26% of the total population have access to the water supply. He also listed several wastewater management projects in regards to sanitation infrastructure. He highlighted the clear presentation of specific goals through the 9-year Sectoral Development Strategy and the 4-year Development Plan, as well as their interlinks to SDG 6.

7. **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aphisayadeth Insisiengmay, representative of the Public Work and Transport Institute (PTI)**, introduced the role of PTI as an advisory body to the Ministry, actively engaging in research and capacity-building activities related to public work and transport. The PTI also has forged a deep association with Laos architects and engineers, forming a supportive arm at the ministry level.

8. **Dr. Bounta Onnavong, delegate from the Department of Transport**, presented on the topic of 'Transportation vs. Urban Development.' He indicated the role and goal of the department as well as its core concept of accessibility. He illustrated the relationship between urbanization and sustainable transportation, and how it addresses the needs of everyone. Dr. Onnavong proposed an integrated Environmentally Sustainable

Transport (EST) strategy and presented several initiatives addressing current issues in the transport planning process. To address challenges including projects being implemented in disregard or absence of urban development master plans, as well as lack of funding for master plan development and feasibility studies, several initiatives are underway: the JICA supported Vientiane Urban Transport Master Plan, ADB supported Vientiane Sustainable Transport Project, JICA supported Luang Prabang Sustainable Transport Master Plan, National Road Safety Strategy, EV promotions, and Vientiane-Nongkhai Cable Car F/S. He also presented several initiatives supported by JICA and ADB, highlighting the strong link between urban development and the need for effective coordination.

## LNUF Proceedings | Afternoon Session

Stakeholder Presentations	
13:20 – 15:10	1. Lao Youth Union (LYU)
	2. Senior Village Chief from Vientiane
	3. Civil society – Namjai Community Association
	4. Association of Lao Architects & Engineers
	5. Lao Women's Union (LWU)
	6. The Special Economic Zone Promotion and Management Office (EZPMO), MPI
	7. Mayor of Kaysone Phomvihane City
	8. Mayor of Luang Prabang
	9. Mayor of Pakse
	10. Vientiane City - VCOMS
	11. Faculty of Architecture, National University of Laos
	12. Lao Architects & Engineers Council

1. **Mr. Souliya Keophisavong, representative from the Lao Youth Union**, demonstrated LYU's active support of the urbanization process of Laos. He presented the organizations and operations of the Lao Youth Union and highlighted its role in leading youth nationwide. He discussed challenges facing youth participation in urban development, as well as possible solutions.
2. **Mr. Sovath Chansombath, Senior Village Chief from Thatluang village**, Vientiane Capital, shared two challenges that Thatluang

village face: flood risk and traffic congestion. Disappearance of natural drainage canals from uncontrolled leveling of the land is causing flooding in some areas of the village during the rainy season. Thatluang village also happens to be a center of transportation for travelers from all directions, making it one of the most congested areas in Vientiane.

3. **Mrs. Minavanh Phonsena, representative from Namjai Community Association**, presented on the work and roles of the organization. While briefing the



Association's work, she mentioned specific projects addressing rights of disadvantaged populations, gender equity in education and sports, and one which was jointly engaged with UN-Habitat in 2010. She shared knowledge learned, experience gained, and the influence achieved through the aforementioned projects. She concluded with challenges witnessed at the local level and the need for the city to be livable for all.

4. **Mr. Vongphai Boumanee, President of the Association of Lao Architects & Civil Engineers (ALACE)**, illustrated the role of ALACE as a non-profit association and its organizational structure. As the association is closely related to urbanization, it has been taking an active role in transforming the vision of urban planning into reality. He noted the challenges in urban development from the people's perspective as well as management, distribution, and decentralization imperatives in the planning process. Mr. Boumanee emphasized ALACE's aspiration to contribute to inclusive cities, and how its values align with the themes of urban environment, heritage conservation, and green/sustainable issues.
5. **Ms. Sisavanh Dedvongsone, representative from the Lao Women's Union**, presented the mandates of LWU and its operations at all levels. She gave a brief of the 5-year plan and action plans for the Union, as well as opportunities to improve. She also mentioned the impacts of climate change on LWU, as it could contribute toward increase in violence against women under COVID-19 contexts. Ms. Dedvongsone also called for multi-sectoral engagement in urban development to ensure equal access to infrastructure and basic services for women.
6. **Mr. Sonepaseuth Daravong, representative from the Special Economic Zone Promotion and Management Office (EZPMO), Ministry of Planning and Investment**, presented an overview of the management of 22 Special Economic Zones across 8 provinces in Lao PDR. He also presented the role of EZPMO in urban development, especially in the industry, services, and export sectors. He concluded with identifying challenges from urbanization in Laos as well as initiatives for coping with them.
7. **Mr. Pasongsin Chaleunsouk, Mayor of Kaysone Phomvihane City**, provided an overview of Kaysone's demography, economy, and existing and planned infrastructures. Mr. Chaleunsouk also highlighted four key challenges the city is currently facing from urban development in the city: difficulties in enforcing existing legislation, budget constraints in implementing public projects, difficulties in promoting more public participation and involvement, and unclear roles and responsibilities of government agencies. He concluded with the city's initiatives to tackle the aforementioned challenges.
8. **Mr. Viengthong Hatsachan, Mayor of Luang Prabang City**, started with an emphasis on the importance of cities in the country's development, followed by an overview and strategic plan for the future of Luang Prabang. Mr. Viengthong also raised some challenges and possible solutions regarding urban development. He highlighted several imperatives including the need to have a detailed development plan for the city and small districts, improvement of road conditions, and installation of traffic lights on main roads.

9. **Mr. Boualy Phetsongkham, Mayor of Pakse City**, spoke about the importance of Pakse city's location and other conditions that could potentially bring economic opportunities into the region. Important statistics regarding Pakse's achievements were illustrated in his presentation. Mr. Phetsongkham also highlighted key challenges facing his city such as the pandemic and climate change, and his plan for the future to cope with these challenges.
10. **Mr. Bounpakop Phonhalath, representative from Vientiane City Office for Management and Services (VCOMS)**, presented the organizational structure of the Office and explained key tasks and responsibilities of the organization including public park management, waste management, water treatment, and city vibrancy and cleanness. Mr. Phonhalath concluded with identifying

challenges related to urban development and city management while also highlighting the need for more active participation in maintenance and stewardship of the capital city.

11. **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Soukanh Chithpanya, Faculty of Architecture, National University of Laos**, presented on the topic of rethinking the urban planning system in Lao PDR based on studies conducted by faculty and students. He spoke on suggestions provided by the study regarding three urban themes:
- **Connectivity** – creating connectivity between urban-urban and urban-rural; create conditions to link Lao urban areas with other cities in the region;
  - **Competitiveness** - creation of regional competitive advantages through the implementation of a trans-border city cluster concept;



- **Collaboration** - a trans-disciplinary collaborative planning platform for achieving SDG 11 and sustainable development.

12. **Dr. Bounleum Sisoulath, former Deputy Minister of Public Works and Transport and representative from the Lao Architect and Engineer Council**, spoke on the evolution of urbanization in Lao PDR. He reflected on urbanization and urban development nationwide, mentioning strengths and weaknesses of past processes. He gave a chronological overview, from the historic development of 1975 in which the first national plan was implemented with the

support of UN-Habitat, to recent adoption of laws and legislations. Highlighting multiple achievements and relevant policies and cooperations, he shared challenges faced and lessons learned during urbanization processes within the landlocked reality of Laos. Commending the past achievements and established progress of the MPWT, Dr. Sisoulath emphasized the imperative of a future vision for a more comprehensive development path and integration of laws for problem-solving.

Remarks		
15:10 – 15:30	Closing remarks	Ms. Sara Sekkenes-Tollefsen, UN Resident Coordinator
		Minister of Public Works and Transport

**Ms. Sara Sekkenes-Tollefsen, UN Resident Coordinator**, commended DHUP for the achievement in bringing together a very diverse group of urban stakeholders. She emphasized three points from the outcome statement:

- The need to extend the spirit of cooperation to all stakeholders;
- The need to act smartly to change the trajectory of urban development under the context of uncontrolled urban growth in Lao cities;

- The need to continue raising awareness of urbanization issues among the general population and to leverage external knowledge through urban networks.

Ms. Sekkenes-Tollefsen expressed her gratitude to the DHUP for the facilitation of the forum and looked forward to its continuation.



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## **ANNEXURE**

**Annexure – I List of Participants**

**Annexure – II Forum Agenda**

**Annexure – III Lao National Urban Forum Concept Note**

**Annexure –IV Lao National Urban Forum Outcome Statement**



## Annexure – I

### List of Participants

No.	Name	Position	Telephone	Sign.
1 Department of Housing and Urban Planning, MPWT				
1-1	Mr. Nalongxay Misapadith	Deputy Director General	020 58870086	
1-2	Mr. Sompong Luangluxay		020 56562995	
2 Department of Planning and Finance, MPWT				
2-1	Ms. Vanh Dilaphanh	Director General		
2-2	Mr. Chanthavong Bounsombath	Officer	020 96996987	
3 Department of Transport, MPWT				
3-1	Mr. Bounta Onnavong	Director General	020 55466466	
4 Public Works and Transport Institute, MPWT				
4-1	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aphisayadeth Insisiengmay	Deputy Director General	020 55409959	
5 Department of Roads, MPWT				
5-1	Mr. Phitsaphonh Philavong	Deputy Director General	020 54197897	
6 Department of Water Supply, MPWT				
6-1	Mr. Sompong Siththivong	Director General		
6-2	Mr. Xayya Kinkeo		451943	
7 Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment				
7-1	Mr. Phumisith Vongvansa	Deputy Director, Department of Environment	020 22229045	
7-2	Mr. Keosangkhom Phommessay	Director, Department of Environment	020 28953562	
8 Ministry of Home Affairs				
8-1	Mr. Pongphonh Xayachack	Head of Division	020 22494443	
9 National Assembly				
9-1	Ms. Kingnakhone Chanthakoumman	Deputy Director	020 59463539	
10 Ministry of Planning and Investment				
10-1	Mr. Sonpaseuth Daravong	Head of Office	020 22220405	
11 Department of International Cooperation (DIC), MPI				
11-1	Mr. Santi Songnavong	Director of DOI	020 22223989	
12 Department of Planning, MPI				
12-1	Mr. Kalouna Nanthavongdouangsy	Deputy Director	020 22239099	
13 Center for Development Policy Research, MPI				
13-1	Mr. Aphisa Khamsouksai	Technical Officer	020 29803256	

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Lao National Urban Forum

31st October 2022 – (Venue: Crowne Plaza Hotel, Vientiane, Lao PDR)

No.	Name	Position	Telephone	Sign.
14 Ministry of Public Health				
14-1	Dr. Bouakeo Suvanthong	Deputy Director, Department of Hygiene and Health Promotion	020 55224019	
14-2	Mr. Sadavouth Manivong	Technical Officer, Department of Hygiene and Health Promotion	020 98266662	
15 Ministry of Energy and Mines				
15-1	Mr. Phetphaphone Latthachak	Deputy Head of Office	020 98982188	
16 Ministry of Public Security				
16-1	Mr. Somsanit Chanthavong	Security		
17 Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism				
17-1	Dr. Somkietisack Kingsada	Deputy Head of Office	020 29998982	
18 Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry				
18-1	Mr. Khamouan Khamphoukeo	Acting Director General, Department of Rural Development		
18-2	Ms. Veomany Thepphavong		020 99854188	
19 Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare				
19-1	Mr. Vilay Nanthavong	Deputy Head of Office	020 55046666	
20 Ministry of Education and Sport				
20-1	N/A			
21 Administration Office - Vientiane Capital				
21-1	Ms. Phouangmalay Sengmixay	Deputy Head of Office	020 23935599	
22 Natural Resource and Environment Office – Vientiane Capital				
22-1	Mr. Phavanh	Head, Division of Natural Resources and Environ- ment of Vientiane Capital		
22-2	Mrs. Vanthong		020 59655254	
23 Urban Development Administration Authority				
23-1	N/A			
24 District Administration Office (9 districts in VTE)				
24-1	Mr. Thavixay Xaypasueth	Head of the office of PWT, Xaysetha District	020 22204620	
24-2	Mr. Desa Phommasack		020 54463941	

## List of Participants (cont'd)

No.	Name	Position	Telephone	Sign.
24-3	Mr. Phetsomphone Sengsy	Head of the office of PWT, Xaythany District	020 22222500	
24-4	Mr. Latsamy Phommalueam		020 22241486	
24-5	Mr. Khamlar Angmatsa	Head of the office of PWT, Sikhottabong District	020 22453265	
24-6	Mr. Vixay Lovanhuk	Head of the office of PWT, Chanthabuly District	020 22435605	
24-7	Ms. Lakhone Poulommavong	Deputy head of the office of PWT, Sisattanak Dis- trict	020 77706200	
24-8	Mr. Bounprasit Vanhnasing	Deputy head of the office of PWT, Naxaithong District	020 55694880	
24-9	Mr. Sengsoulith Sakounsouk	Head of the office of PWT, Hadxayfong District	020 55792322	
24-10	Thippachan Kanharlykham		020 22432333	
24-11	Mr. Loumkham Chanthapanya	Head of the office of PWT, Sangthong District	020 55618541	
24-12	Mr. Phouvieng Boutmixay	Head of the office of PWT, Parknguem District	020 22409293	
25 Luang Prabang City				
25-1	Mr. Viengthong Hatsachan	Mayor of Luang Prabang	020 29999995	
25-2	Mr. Yengher Vacha	Deputy head of administration office – Luang Prabang city		
25-3	Mr. Vilada Kittana		020 54001587	
26 Kaisone City				
26-1	Mr. Pasongsin Chaleunsouk	Mayor of Kaisone	020 95619999	
26-2	Mr. Lae Phankhampiew	Technical Officer		
27 Pakse City				
27-1	Mr. Bualy Phetsongkham	Mayor of Pakse	020 55530411	
27-2	Mr. Kaiyaphone Muenviseh	Technical Officer		

No.	Name	Position	Telephone	Sign.
28 Department of Public Works and Transport - 18 provinces				
28-1	Mr. Soulivanh Phommahaxay	Director, DPWT of Vientiane Capital	020 22204620	
28-2	Mr. Bounphanith Keohoung	Director, DPWT of Phongsaly Province	020 56796555	
28-3	Mr. Kamsouk Yindalakham	Technical Officer, DPWT of Phongsaly Province	020 52092555	
28-4	Mr. Khamla Khansanga	Director, DPWT of Luang Namtha Province		
28-5	Vongsack Thamasouk		020 23932798	
28-6	Mr. Sengda Phalyvong	Technical Officer, DPWT of Luang Namtha Province	020 22929679	
28-7	Mr. Khamphet Kettavong	Director, DPWT of Oudomxay Province	020 55780079	
28-8	Mr. Khamphai Inthasone	Technical Officer, DPWT of Oudomxay Province		
28-9	Mr. Soulisack Chittavong		020 59366639	
28-10	Mr. Thaviphone Vonglorkham	Director, DPWT of Bokeo Province	020 55683713	
28-11	Mr. Phonexay Phompanya	Technical Officer, DPWT of Bokeo Province		
28-12	Mr. Houngaloun Bounthameuang	Director, DPWT of Houaphanh Province	020 91919655	
28-13	Mr. Amphet Sisomphan	Technical Officer, DPWT of Houaphanh Province	020 22955449	
28-14	Mr. Hongkham Phimmasan	Director, DPWT of Xiengkhouang Province	020 59789415	
28-15	Mr. Serm Oudomsouk	Technical Officer, DPWT of Xiengkhouang Province	020 29497898	
28-16	Mr. Bongvang Wangjasa	Director, DPWT of Luang Prabang Province	020 54541789	
28-17	Mrs. Vankeo Sengkeovongphachanh	Deputy Director, DPWT of Vientiane Province	020 59952221	
28-18	Mr. Vongkham Pianmalavong	Technical Officer, DPWT of Vientiane Province	020 29992221	

## List of Participants (cont'd)

No.	Name	Position	Telephone	Sign.
28-19	Mr. Khamphet Phommalaith	Director, DPWT of Xayabury Province	020 55401977	
28-20	Mr. Sithphaxay Kongsanith	Technical Officer, DPWT of Xayabury Province	020 92228643	
28-21	Mr. Yorlao Yongsa	Director, DPWT of Xaysomboun Province	030 4878720	
28-22	Mr. Vathao Jiakerthao	Technical Officer, DPWT of Xaysomboun Province	020 96661104	
28-23	Mr. Soulin Keobounheuang	Director, DPWT of Bolikhamxai Province	020 22333119	
28-24	Mr. Sisavanh Chanthaphone	Technical Officer, DPWT of Bolikhamxai Province	020 22336050	
28-25	Mr. Datdavong Mienmany	Deputy Director, DPWT of Khammouane Province	020 55548951	
28-26	Mr. Khamphaseuth Kaiyalath	Technical Officer, DPWT of Khammouane Province		
28-27	Mr. Khamphong Somvichit	Director, DPWT of Savannakhet Province	020 22440944	
28-28	Mr. Souvanh Sengchamphone	Head of Housing and Urban Planning unit, DPWT of Savannakhet Province	020 22619055	
28-29	Mr. Mitxay Xayyabanha	Director, DPWT of Salavan Province	020 55448833	
28-30	Mr. Simkhit Vongsaly	Deputy director, DPWT of Salavan Province	020 96000929	
28-31	Mr. Vakkhaly Phialath	Technical Officer, DPWT of Salavan Province		
28-32	Mr. Phongsavath Duangpanya		020 58113133	
28-33	Mr. Thounsavanh Souliyo	Technical Officer, DPWT of Sekong Province		
28-34	Mr. Vienthong Thammanouvong	Deputy Director, DPWT of Attapeu Province	020 22292339	
28-35	Mr. Vilasone Sitthiphan	Technical Officer, DPWT of Attapeu Province		
28-36	Mr. Khamphone		020 55431792	



No.	Name	Position	Telephone	Sign.
28-37	Mr. Chanthavisouk Vanhsili	Director, DPWT of Champasak Province		
28-38	Mr. Kittisak	Head of Housing and Urban Planning unit, DPWT of Attapeu Province	020 55263888	
29 Association of Lao Architects and Civil Engineers				
29-1	Mr. Vongphay Bounmany	President	020 22441244	
30 National University of Laos				
30A Faculty Of Architecture				
30A-1	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Soukan Chitpanya	Vice Dean	020 58826312	
30B Faculty of Engineering				
30B-1	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Souliphan Kannitha	Vice Dean	020 55405428	
30C Faculty of Environmental Science				
30C-1	Dr. Kanya Souksakoun	Deputy head of department	020 22333328	
31 Lao Architects & Engineers Council				
31-1	Prof. Dr. Bounluerm Sisoulath	President	020 55590255	
32 Lao Women's Union				
32-1	Mrs. Sisavanh Detvongsone	Deputy Director General, Cabinet Office	020 28991855	
33 Lao Federation of Trade Unions				
33-1	Mr. Bounchan Chayesarn	Head of the Lao Federation of Trade Unions	020 55601775	
34 Lao Youth Union				
34-1	Mr. Souliya Keophisavong	Director General Cabinet Office		
35 Buddhist Fellowship Organization of Lao PDR				
35-1	N/A			
36 Namjai Community Association (NCA)				
36-1	Mrs. Minavanh Phonsena	Director	020 55599221	
37 Proud To Be Us, Laos				
37-1	N/A			
38 VCOMS				
38-1	Bounpakob Phonharath	Deputy Director General	020 55508058	

## List of Participants (cont'd)

No.	Name	Position	Telephone	Sign.
39 Village Chief				
39-1	Mr. Sovath Chansombath	Village Chief's Secretary	020 77729280	
40 Lao Front National Development				
40-1	Mr. Henry		020 28231868	
41 Development Partners				
41A UN-Habitat				
41A-1	Mr. Avi Sarkar	Regional Chief Technical Advisor, South-East Asia, UBSS	020 55555654	
41A-2	Mr. Buahom Sengkhamyong	Chief Technical Advisor	020 91244455	
41A-3	Mr. Phengphone Khamseansouk	Communication Officer	020 22226009	
41A-4	Mr. Thatsanee Sanouban	GIS Expert	020 78170055	
41A-5	Ms. Heather Robertson	Consultant		
41A-6	Ms. Vilaysouk Ounvongsai	Admin and Finance Officer		
41A-7	Ms. Soukdarak Thavonsouk	Intern		
41A-8	Ms. Bounthida Ounavong	Intern	020 52227373	
41B UN RCO				
41B-1	Ms. Sara Sekkenes-Tollefsen	Resident Coordinator		
41C UNOPS				
41C-1	Caroline Spivelski	Country Manager/ INFRAS PM	020 52408873	
41C-2	Mr. Piene-Yves Jousseume	Senior Project Manager	020 57887362	
41D UNCDF				
41D-1	Ms. Phetanong Mounlamay	National Consultant	020 77588668	
41E UNESCO				
41E-1	Kamonrat Chayamarit		020 57837783	
41F UNFPA				
41F-1	Sisouvanh	Project Officer	020 55384580	
41G IOM				
41G-1	Sia Kondeh	Head of Unit		
41G-2	Chris Richter	Regional Migration Environment and Climate Specialist		

No.	Name	Position	Telephone	Sign.
41H UNIDO				
41H-1	Sommaï Faming	Country Representative	020 99802320	
41I UNDP				
41I-1	Eriko Nakanishi	Project Analyst	020 95773438	
41J UNV				
41J-1	Ms. Giyoung Yim	Communication and Program Support Officer	020 58913412	
41K ILO				
41K-1	Mr. Viengprasith Thiphasouda	National Coordinator	020 22207224	
41L WHO				
41L-1	Dr. Lo Ying Ru	Head of Office		
41M ESCAP				
41M-1	Mr. Omar Siddique	Economic Affairs Officer, SUDS, EDD, UN ESCAP		
41N KOICA				
41N-1	Mr. Hyereen Park	Deputy Director	020 55555978	
41N-2	Mr. Khamphaeng	Officer	020 54565993	
41O World Bank				
41O-1	Ms. Amphavanh Sisouvanh	DRM Consultant	020 54836693	
41P ADB				
41P-1	Soudalay Souannavong	Senior Project Officer	020 28773377	
41Q Australia				
41Q-1	Mr. Soulivanh Souksavath	Program Manager	020 22502807	
41R EU				
41R-1	Niall Leonard	Chargé D'Affaires First Counsellor	020 55540063	
41S JICA CDUDCP				
41S-1	Ms. Tomako Yamamoto		020 91320067	
41S-2	Mr. Yuta Aihara		020 57875047	
41S-3	Mr. Minoru Matsui		020 57889531	
42 Host – DHUP, MPWT				
42-1	Mr. Dao Keosoukan	Head of division, DHUP, MPWT	020 55838886	
42-2	Mr. Soulikone Xaysana	Technical Officer	020 59815557	
42-3	Mr. Vasaly Sisavath	Technical Officer	020 28999788	

## List of Participants (cont'd)

No.	Name	Position	Telephone	Sign.
42-4	Mr. Souksavan Hanphom	Technical Officer	020 54555500	
42-5	Mr. Thavisack Phengmala	Technical Officer	020 78757979	
42-6	Mr. Jittavong Keomanyvong	Technical Officer		
43 Participants from other organizations				
43-1	Chansamone Vongsoth	Lao National Television	020 54902516	
43-2	Ms. Yupinthong Thepbouly	Journalist	020 55499920	
43-3	Ms. Aon Faisomthong	Journalist	020 55997909	
43-4	Ms. Thipphavanh Ongta	Vientiane Television	020 56655835	
43-5	Saysena	Interpreter		
43-6	Sanker	Interpreter		
43-7	Oun Xayavongkaisone	Viengchanami Newspaper	020 29225289	



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## Annexure – II

### Forum Agenda

National Urban Policy and Priorities for Resilient, Liveable and Smart Development

Time	Agenda	Remarks
8:00 - 8:30	Arrival and Registration	
8:30 - 9:00	Opening Remarks	Minister of Public Works and Transport
	Video Message	Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN-Habitat
	Remarks	Ms. Sara Sekkenes-Tollefsen, UN Resident Coordinator
9:00 – 9:30	Keynote Presentation: Prospects and Challenges of Urbanizationw	
	1. New Urban Agenda and SDG localization	Bruno Dercon, OIC, UN-Habitat Regional Office of Asia and the Pacific
	2. Southeast Asia perspective	Omar Siddique, Economic Affairs Officer, SUDS, EDD, UN ESCAP
	3. Urbanization in Lao PDR	Dr. Avi Sarkar, UN-Habitat Lao PDR
9:30 – 9:40	4. Voices of Urban Dwellers	MPWT and UN-Habitat
9:40 – 9:50	5. Presentation on Lao National Urban Forum's purpose and objectives	Dr. Viengnam Douangphachan, DG DHUP
9:50-10:10	Comments from Development Partners	6. Australia
		7. European Union
		8. Asian Development Bank
10:10-10:20	Coffee Break	
10:20-11:00	Line Ministries	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
		Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
		Ministry of Health
		Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism

Time	Agenda	Remarks
11:00 - 11:45	MPWT Departments	Housing and Urban Planning
		Water Supply
		PTI
		Transport
11:45-13:00	Lunch Break	
13:20 – 15:10	Stakeholder Presentations	
	1. Lao Youth Union (LYU)	
	2. Senior Village Chief from Vientiane	
	3. Civil society – Namjai Community Association	
	4. Association of Lao Architects & Engineers	
	5. Lao Women Union (LWU)	
	6. The Special Economic Zone Promotion and Management Office (EZPMO), MPI	
	7. Mayor of Kaysone Phomvihane City	
	8. Mayor of Luang Prabang	
	9. Mayor of Pakse	
	10. Vientiane City - VCOMS	
	11. Faculty of Architecture, National University of Laos	
	12. Lao Architects & Engineers Council	
15:10 – 15:30	Closing remarks	Ms. Sara Sekkenes-Tollefsen, UN Resident Coordinator
		Minister of Public Works and Transport

## Annexure – III

### Lao National Urban Forum Concept Note

#### 1. Background to the Lao National Urban Forum

In the context of an increasingly urbanized world, the last decade has seen a growing recognition of the linkages between urbanization and sustainable development. In 2015, under the aegis of the United Nations, Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030), which specifically highlights that sustainable urban development and management are crucial to people's quality of life.

On October 2016, the recognition of the key contribution of sustainable urbanization to achieve development goals culminated in the historic adoption of the **New Urban Agenda** at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador. The New Urban Agenda promotes a positive notion of cities, demonstrating that urbanization through planning and management can be a transformative force for inclusive prosperity and well-being, while protecting the environment and effectively addressing climate change. Implementation of the New Urban Agenda will support the localization and application of Agenda 2030 toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in an integrated manner.

Building on the momentum created by Habitat III and the commitments made in the New Urban Agenda, the policy debate on sustainable urban development has been revived with increased participation and inclusivity. At the global level, the **World Urban Forum (WUF)** convenes every two years as the world's premier conference on urban issues, organized by UN-Habitat since 2002. Facilitating partnerships and knowledge sharing, the Forum mobilizes support for the New Urban Agenda's implementation, follow up, and review, maintaining it firmly on the global agenda.

The Eleventh Session of the WUF (WUF11) was co-organized by UN-Habitat, Poland's Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy and the Municipal Office of Katowice. Taking place on the theme "Transforming Our Cities for a Better Urban Future," WUF11 aimed to provide greater insights and clarity on the future of cities based on existing trends, challenges, and opportunities, including valuable lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

**The concept of National Urban Forums (NUFs) came from the WUF.** NUFs are national-level platforms that bring multiple stakeholders together around a common vision for sustainable urban development in alignment with the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. NUFs provide advocacy, knowledge sharing, capacity development, partnership and networking opportunities for national government agencies, civil society organizations, private sector groups, the international donor community, and various other urban sectors and stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> SDG Knowledge Hub, "Eleventh Session of the World Urban Forum (WuF11)", <https://sdg.iisd.org/events/eleventh-session-of-the-world-urban-forum-wuf11/>

## 2. Purpose of the Lao National Urban Forum

**The goal of the Lao National Urban Forum (LNUF) is “to support sustainable urban development in Lao PDR so that urban areas become pleasant, safe and healthy to live in, and economically, socially and spiritually sound with active participation from all key stakeholders in good urban governance”.**

One of the key characteristics of Lao PDR is **rapid and uncontrolled urbanization as a result of dynamic rural-urban migration**. The total population of Lao PDR in 2020 was estimated at 7.498 million with urban residents accounting for about 37%. According to World Bank data, the urban population has been increasing at rates of 3.3-3.4% since 2015 compared to the national population growth rate of 1.5-1.6%.<sup>2</sup>

Reasons for rural-urban migration include younger generations seeking employment and a better quality of life, steady economic growth over the years leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, political stability, transport connections, and liberal economic policy and market mechanisms leading to increased demand for labour in urban areas.

**Table 1. Urban and Rural Population (1,000 persons)**

Year	Total Population	Urban Population	Rural Population	Urban/Rural Population (%)
2000	5,168	1,395	3,773	27/73
2005	5,679	1,667	4,012	29/71
2010	6,230	1,987	4,243	32/68
2015	6,835	2,360	4,475	35/65
2020	7,498	2,803	4,695	37/63
2025	7,680 – 7,830	3,936		47/53
2045	8,980 – 9,920			

*Sources* Bureau of Statistic assumed growth rate (2% per year), and ADB urban population growth rate (3.5% per year).  
2025 and 2045 projected populations from Lao Population Projections 2015 2045, MPI, LSB  
2025 urban population from World Cities Report 2016, UN Habitat

<sup>2</sup> Urban population data from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.GROW?locations=LA>. World Bank estimates of population growth differ from those of the Lao Bureau of Statistics.

Much of this urbanization has taken place with minimal coordination, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient regard for environmental impacts. In turn, this has resulted in disorganized growth, inefficient land use, damage and loss of natural resources, and inadequate access to urban services.

At the same time, urban expansion has tended to concentrate large populations of poorer communities in hazard-prone areas, resulting in increased climate change and disaster risks and presenting challenges to social cohesion.

To respond to these challenges, UN-Habitat has partnered with the Ministry of Public Works and Transport's Department of Housing and Urban Planning (MPWT – DHUP) on several basic service projects providing the minimum requirements needed to **offer a decent life to citizens in human settlements**, including water supply and sanitation, housing, transport, and sustainable waste management, including wastewater management.

**At the national level**, the MPWT-DHUP is responsible for developing and supervising the implementation of strategic plans, policy advice, detailed urban and rural development plans, water supply, housing projects, and preparing/supporting regulatory documents.<sup>3</sup> **At the local level**, these central agencies realize their duties and functions through their field offices. The Provincial Public Works and Transport Divisions represent MPWT in the local governments and set up operational offices in all districts within their jurisdictions. These offices are tasked with developing, supervising, and monitoring operations and maintenance of road and drainage systems.

**The Urban Development Strategy to the year 2030**, prepared by the MPWT, was approved by the government in November 2012. It envisages several actions to strengthen the urban planning and management system, such as improving urban planning and management institutions, undertaking a comprehensive revision and amending the urban planning law and other development acts, making sure that most urban areas, including district towns and focal village clusters (koumban phathana) are provided with comprehensive and detailed urban development plans.<sup>4</sup>

Urban development has also been highlighted in Lao PDR through its participation in a number of activities at the global level. In 2021, Lao PDR was the first country in the Asia-Pacific region to submit a National Progress Report (NPR) on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The NPR was prepared as the first of its kind for Lao PDR with the joint effort of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT) and UN-Habitat. Then, in April 2022, the Minister of Public Works and Transport led a Lao delegation to the High-Level Meeting to review progress on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. As a result of Lao PDR's commitment to and potential for sustainable urbanization, it was selected as one of 29 countries to engage in a Joint Initiative on Sustainable Urban Development, which is being undertaken by the UN Development Coordination Office (UNDCO) and UN-Habitat. This is an exciting opportunity to engage at a global level in the latest developments in urban programming and puts Lao PDR in a favorable position to initiate a National Urban Forum.

<sup>3</sup> UN Habitat Programme Document 2012-13, p.3

<sup>4</sup> UN Habitat Programme Document 2012-13.



A Lao National Urban Forum will play an important role in bringing to the fore urban reality and conditions of Lao cities which are facing multiple effects of economic and financial crises. It is also a crucial time to observe how cities recover and build back better after the unexpected impacts of the pandemic. The recovery of cities and the nature of urbanisation will have not only a marked effect on achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but also represent an opportunity to develop new urban strategies centered around the 'Leave No One Behind' principles and a 'Human Security' approach. In light of these points, the Lao government has reached out to UN-Habitat for cooperation in establishing a NUF. The NPR noted that a NUF was called for in May 2020 to follow up and review the NUA and SDG 11. A NUF will also support a coordinated national contribution to and participation in international development processes and frameworks.

The pressing urbanization challenges in Lao PDR and the present national political focus on the Urban Sector Strategy provide an excellent opportunity to raise urban issues through a national platform. It is, therefore, time for a Lao PDR National Urban Forum (LNUF) to be created and led by DHUP with the support of UN-Habitat.

### 3. Lao National Urban Forum Framework

#### National Commitments

##### National Socio-economic Development Plan (NSEDP)

The 9th NSEDP is the ongoing strategic document for the socio-economic development for the Lao PDR. It aims to:

- Guide Lao PDR's graduation from the status of Least Developed Country (LDC);
- Lay a strong foundation for achieving the National Strategy on Socio-Economic Development 2025 and the Vision 2030.

The combined data from studies indicates that recent development has been dominated by the challenges associated with COVID-19 response and recovery, sustainability and climate change, quality and inclusive growth, human capital development, and infrastructure development.

##### National Urban Strategy (under development)

This urban development roadmap is aligned to the priorities of the Government of Lao PDR, including principles of the Asian Development Bank. The framework aims at:

- Setting up guiding principles toward resilient, liveable and smart urban development;
- Creating a clear hierarchy and division of responsibilities for urban management;
- Providing more appropriate land-use plans;
- Building awareness of urban and environmental issues amongst key decision makers.

## International Commitments

### Agenda 2030

The Lao National Urban Forum aims at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially by building synergies to advance SGD 11 “Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”.

The President has issued a Decree appointing the Prime Minister as chair of the National Steering Committee for SDG implementation, with members of the Committee drawn from all concerned ministries, ministry-equivalent agencies, and mass organizations. The Committee appointed a National SDG Secretariat, led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Planning and Investment, with SDG focal points within each of the relevant line ministries as custodians to lead and take ownership of each SDG, ensuring smooth coordination and collaboration within the government .

Moreover, Laos is closely collaborating with the UN Development System and other development partners to attain these goals in order to make sure that the support and collaboration in development are well aligned with national goals and that the partnerships will hasten the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

### New Urban Agenda

The LNUF is set to accelerate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, which envisions a better and more sustainable future, in which people have equal rights and access to the benefits and opportunities in urban spaces as well as access to adequate and affordable housing.

Especially during this time when a huge amount of people is determined to move to the cities and towns, methods such as raising awareness, sharing knowledge, and promoting collaboration about the positive impact of rapid urban trends are necessary.

**Figure 1. Key Commitments of the LNUF**



## 4. Objectives, Terms of Reference and Activities of the Lao National Urban Forum

The overall objective of the Lao PDR National Urban Forum (LNUF) is to **establish a national multi-stakeholder platform to discuss the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly urbanizing economy and engage in the planning and management of urban growth.**

The specific Terms of Reference are to:

- Provide a national platform for dialogue among all stakeholders of the urban sector to participate in the planning and management of urban growth;
- Raise/increase awareness about issues pertaining to urbanization;
- Identify thematic areas which would benefit from increased advocacy among stakeholders to help address urban challenges via human-centric, inclusive and collaborative approaches for building more resilient and sustainable cities in Lao PDR; Facilitate Government - Development partner dialogue on defining strategic areas of support for appropriate policy adjustment during the implementation process of development and investment programs and for applying new techniques in urban development and management;
- Initiate coordination among local, international bodies and development partners for purposes of research and information sharing to strengthen the institutional framework in urban sectors;
- Promote integrated participatory planning, development and management of the natural and built environment amongst urban actors in urban areas;
- Serve as a stakeholder forum to effectively support and complement other Government work requiring a coherent and integrated approach; and
- Contribute to positioning Lao PDR as part of the broader international knowledge sharing platform in Urban Planning by facilitating partnerships with other governments to showcase best practices from Lao PDR and from around the world

Future Activities could include:

- Multi-stakeholder workshops
- Cross Country learning
- Lectures
- Presentation and discussion platform on national and subnational policy frameworks
- Municipalities' workshops
- On-line Activities (communication platform between relevant government agencies and the public, newsletter, etc.)

## 5. Suggested Operating Modalities

### Where will it be housed?

The LNUF will constitute a subsector of the Infrastructure Working Group, which is one of ten Sector Working Groups in Lao PDR's Round Table Process. It will be housed and facilitated by DHUP. There will be a formal process of becoming a subsector group and linking with the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI).

### Meetings

The LNUF will meet at least once in a year or more often as required and agreed upon by members, providing a platform for discussion on sustainable urban development in Lao PDR. The meeting will reflect the mix of entities active in bringing urbanization issues to the fore.

### First meeting: Resilient and Inclusive Urbanization

In this first meeting, issues and future possible pathways will be discussed, the LNUF's objective will be presented and priority actions will be identified. Additionally, the meeting will focus on collaboration between the government at all levels, UN agencies, regional organisations and stakeholders to reinforce partnerships to address current issues and derive recommendations as well as mutual learning. The main theme of discussion will identify challenges and opportunities and consider key strategies and actions for the future. Future meetings will then build on the decisions made at the initial meeting, contributing to the achievement of sustainable urbanization and broader social, environmental and economic development goals. Cities will continue to play an important role in achieving urban sustainability and resilience, so it is essential that due consideration is given to city governance and management.

### The Chair

The Minister of MPWT will chair the LNUF and will be responsible for providing regular advice to the Ministry about the outcomes of Urban Forum meetings and actions.

## 6. Membership

Membership of the LNUF will include representatives of DHUP and MPWT, other relevant Ministries, international donors, the private sector, and civil society including universities and non-profit organisations.

## Agenda

(Planned to be held in October 2022)

1st Lao National Urban Forum - “Resilient and Inclusive Urbanization”	
Planned date	3rd week of October 2022
Venue	TBD (Vientiane Capital)
Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National Line Ministries</li> <li>▪ Officials from all 18 provinces</li> <li>▪ International/National organisations</li> <li>▪ Members of the UNSDCF Urban Development output (UNOPS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNCDF, UNIDO, IOM)</li> <li>▪ International donors</li> <li>▪ Private sector stakeholders</li> <li>▪ University (academics from National University of Laos)</li> <li>▪ Non-profit organizations</li> <li>▪ Mass organizations (Lao Women’s Union, Lao Youth Union, Lao Federation of Trade Union etc)</li> <li>▪ Civil society organizations and networks of vulnerable urban populations such as LGBTIQ people, people with disability, migrant workers etc (Sengsavang, Village Focus International, )</li> <li>▪ Vientiane Youth Center, Sithane Road, Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR</li> <li>▪ Proud to Be Us Laos, 123, Unit 10, Beungkayoung Village, Sisattanak District, Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR</li> <li>▪ Lao Disabled Women’s Development Centre, 100 Thadeua Road, Hadsayfong District, Vientiane</li> <li>▪ Dr. Soukanh Chithpanya., PhD - Deputy Dean, Faculty of Architecture, National University of Laos, Vice-president, Lao Association of Lao Architects and Civil Engineers (ALACE)</li> <li>▪ Dr. Khampaseyth Thepvongsa, PhD: Head, Department of Civil Engineering, National University of Laos, Vice-president, Lao Association of Lao Architects and Civil Engineers (ALACE)</li> <li>▪ Urban authorities (UDAAs)</li> </ul>



### 1st Lao National Urban Forum - “Resilient and Inclusive Urbanization”

Allocated budget	USD 10,000 (to be mobilised by UN-Habitat HQ)
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Present LNUF purpose and objectives</li> <li>▪ Discuss current/urgent issues</li> <li>▪ Identify priority actions/domains of interventions</li> <li>▪ Discuss ways forward, organisational arrangements and possible synergies</li> </ul>
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Summary of discussions</li> </ul>

Government of Lao PDR

Ministry of Public Works and Transport

#### **Lao National Urban Forum**

Chair: Minister of MPWT, Co-chair: UN Resident Coordinator

Date: TBD



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## Annexure – IV

### Lao National Urban Forum Outcome Statement

First Lao National Urban Forum  
Resilient and Inclusive Urbanization  
Vientiane, Lao PDR, 31st October 2022

#### Introduction

The inaugural Lao National Urban Forum was organized under the theme “**Resilient and Inclusive Urbanization.**”

The goal of the Lao National Urban Forum (LNUF) is “**to support sustainable urban development in Lao PDR so that urban areas become pleasant, safe and healthy to live in, and economically, socially and spiritually sound with active participation from all key stakeholders in good urban governance.**”

The overall objective of the first LNUF was to **establish a national multi-stakeholder platform to discuss the challenges and the opportunities of a rapidly urbanizing economy and engage in planning and management of urban growth.**

The Forum focused on identifying challenges and opportunities and considering key strategies and actions for the future.

#### Common Understandings

- We, the participants of the first Lao National Urban Forum recognise the critical role that urbanization plays in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and national and local development goals.
- We appreciate that urbanization is a cross-sectoral phenomenon and that there is a need for strong cross-sectoral coordination to achieve sustainable urbanization which is resilient and inclusive.
- We understand that, while in the past there has been an emphasis on infrastructure in urbanization, it goes much further than infrastructure and so we choose to view urbanization in a human-centric way, acknowledging the impacts of health, education, economic and food security, livelihoods, safety, and human mobility among other things.
- We value environmental well-being and we recognise the inherent link between urbanization and the state of the environment.
- We recognise that Lao PDR is at a decisive stage in its urban development, and that we have a window of opportunity now to set the course for sustainable, resilient, and inclusive urbanization.
- We realise that we need broad, multi-stakeholder participation in urban decision-making, including government entities at national, provincial, district and village level, development partners, women and girls, youth, the elderly, disabled people, urban migrants and diverse ethnic groups, other vulnerable and marginalised groups, and urban dwellers.

## The Way Forward

In light of the above,

- We commit to participating in an annual national urban forum which will be a multi-stakeholder platform to discuss the challenges and the opportunities of urbanization and engage in planning and management of urban growth in Lao PDR
- We will establish a permanent platform for ongoing discussion and evolution of ideas relating to urbanization, to be accessible by all
- We welcome knowledge exchanges and partnership building with global urban networks and we will make connections with such networks
- The Lao NUF will be a platform to contribute to monitoring and sharing progress on the New Urban Agenda (NUA), and to ensure that national urban priorities and interests are communicated in the context of other multilateral processes including but not limited to on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- We commit to building on the connections that have been established at this first LNUF and working in a collaborative way with relevant stakeholders on specific aspects of urbanization. To that end we will share the contact details of participant organisations.
- We will select the theme of the second LNUF and will invite participants to prepare accordingly to enable a productive second LNUF.
- We commit to holding preparatory meetings to lay the groundwork for succeeding LNUFs, including to receive inputs and contributions from all stakeholders on key thematic issues and priorities, and to provide continuity and coherence to the LNUF.
- We will promote a people-centric approach to urbanization which emphasises its social dimensions and encourages local communities to reclaim their neighbourhoods and develop them into pleasant, green spaces which encourage inclusive, cross-generational enjoyment of urban living.
- We will encourage the integration of international migrants into the Lao urban context, so that urban areas can benefit from diverse contributions that enhance their Lao character and so that social benefits and public services are equally distributed across human settlements.