Country Profile on Disability
Lao People's Democratic Republic

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Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

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Lao PDR
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Abbreviations

ADDP	Asian Development with the Disabled Persons
AFA	Association for Autism
AFD	Association for the Deaf
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
CBID	Community-based Inclusive Development
CBR	Community-based Rehabilitation
COPE	Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LAB	Lao Association for the Blind
LDPA	Lao Disabled Persons Association
LWWDA	Lao Women's with Disabilities Association
NCPD	National Commission for Persons with Disabilities
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSDRR	National Strategy on Disaster Risk Reduction
OPD	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
PDR	People's Democratic Republic
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

1. Basic Profile

1-1. Basic Indicators[1]

Gross Domestic Product[2] per capita	USD 2,123.9	2024

Expenditures by Sector

Healthcare (% of GDP)	1.3 %	2023
Education (% of GDP)	8.2 %	2024
Social protection (% of GDP)[3]	0.7 %	2019

Population

Total population	7,769,819	2024
Male (% of total population)	50.2 %	
Female (% of total population)	49.8 %	
Urban population (% of total population)	39.6 %	
Rural population (% of total population)	60.4 %	
Life expectancy at birth (total)	69.0 years	2023
Male	66.8 years	
Female	71.2 years	

Health

Prevalence of undernourishment (% of population)	N/A	
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	35.2	2023

Education

Education System[4]		
Primary Education	5 years	
Compulsory education	9 years	
Literacy rate (% of ages 15 and above)	75.6 %	2023
Adult male	85.1 %	
Adult female	66.7 %	

[1] Based on the World Bank Database（https://data.worldbank.org/indicator (Accessed: January 17 2026)）

[2] Hereinafter referred to as "GDP."

[3] Excluding healthcare. Based on ILO (2024) World Social Protection Report (https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/WSPR_2024_EN_WEB_1.pdf (Accessed: January 17 2026))

[4] Based on JICA website (https://www.jica.go.jp/domestic/yokohama/information/topics/2024/__icsFiles/afieldfile/2024/07/10/08_laos_1_240709.pdf (Accessed: January 17 2026))

School enrollment		
Primary (% gross) (total)	93.1 %	2025
Male	93.6 %	
Female	92.6 %	
Secondary (% gross) (total)	50.5 %	2025
Male	51.0 %	
Female	50.1 %	
Tertiary (% gross) (total)	14.9 %	2023
Male	17.0 %	
Female	12.7 %	

Employment

Unemployment (total)	1.2 %	2025
Male (% of male labor force)	1.4 %	
Female (% of female labor force)	0.9 %	

1-2. Definition of Disability and Indicators on Disability

1-2-1. Definition of Disability

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (hereinafter referred to as "Laos"[5]) ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (hereinafter referred to as "CRPD") in 2009 and has been working to harmonize its domestic laws with the Convention. The 2014 Decree on Persons with Disabilities (Prime Ministerial Decree No. 137) defines a person with a disability as "persons with "physical, mental or intellectual anomalies or defects, including vision, hearing and speaking impairments for a long term, which hinder their daily activities and full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others." According to a parallel report submitted by multiple organizations of persons with disabilities (hereinafter referred to as "OPD") in 2022[6], the Law on Persons with Disabilities, enacted in 2018, defines a person with a disability as "those having physical, visual, hearing, speaking, intellectual and memorizing impairment, as well as other forms of obstacles that hinder their full engagement in daily works, learning, and social activities". Articles 9 through 14 of the Law list the types

[5] When referring to the Lao government, "the Government of Lao PDR" is used.

[6] Submission Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Lao PDR. A parallel report submitted by 11 organizations (LDPA、Lao Disabled Women Development Center、Aid for Children with Disabilities Association、AFD、AFA、Intellectual Disability Association、LAB, Association for Vocational Development for the Blind、Disability Service Center, DMAS Center、Hands of Hope Skill Development Center). Another report was submitted by Quality of Life Association. This report primarily refers on reports from 11 organizations.

of disabilities and their definitions as follows[7].

Physically disabled persons	Physically disabled persons refer to those having physical impairment which complicates physical functioning and mobility, including other impairments and the loss of limb.
Visually disabled persons	Visually disabled persons refer to those having a visual impairment or loss of vision, for instance blindness, color blindness, blurred vision that impede visual effort.
Hearing and speaking disabled persons	Hearing and speaking disabled persons refer to those having an impairment or loss of hearing and speaking ability, for example deafness, dumbness, stuttering, unclear speech that impede hearing and speaking effort.
Intellectually disabled persons	Intellectually disabled persons refer to those who experience slower mental development, and have limitations in carrying out their daily life and participate in social activities.
Memorizing disabled persons	Memorizing disabled persons refer to those with mental disorder, for instance people with learning and cognitive disorder, including constantly changing emotions.

1-2-2. Indicators on Disability

In Laos, a Population and Housing Census has been conducted every 10 years since 1985 (the first in 1985, the second in 1995, the third in 2005, and the fourth in 2015)[8]. Questions regarding disability were first included in the 2005 census[9]. In the 2015 census, the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning was used[10]. The fifth census was conducted in 2025, and the results are expected to be released in 2026 or 2027. In addition to the census, the Lao Social Indicator Survey has been conducted approximately every five years since 2011 as part of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, and disability-related data has been collected[11].

Number of Persons with Disabilities (ages 5 and above)	160,881	2.8 % of total population[12]	2015
Male	80,766		
Female	80,115		

The third Lao Social Indicator Survey in 2023 involved a sample survey of children aged

[7] United Nations Lao PDR (2021) *UN Country Team Joint Submission on the Progress towards the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Lao PDR*. A provisional translation of the law can be found in the annex.
[8] Lao Statistics Bureau (2015) *Results of Population and Housing Census 2015*.
[9] Lao Statistics Bureau (2020) *Disability Monograph of Lao PDR from the 2015 Population and Housing Census*.
[10] *Ibid*.
[11] Lao Statistics Bureau (2024) *Lao Social Indicator Survey III, 2023*.
[12] Lao PDR (2018) Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

2 to 17 and reported that 2.6% of them were persons with disabilities.

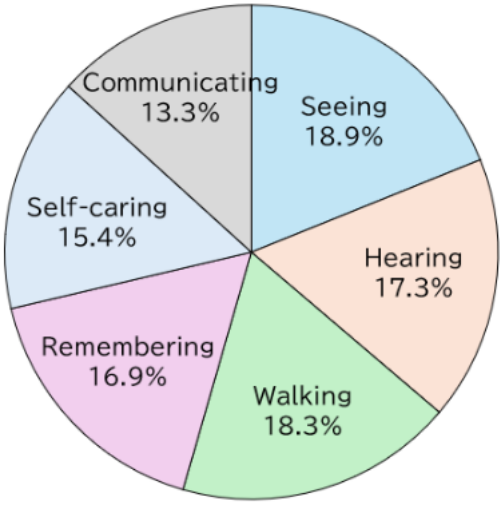


Figure 1 Percentage of Functional Limitation[13] (ages 5 and above) (2015)

The highest percentage was for "seeing" (18.9%), followed by "walking" (18.3%) and "hearing" (17.3%). "Remembering" accounted for 16.9%, "self-care" for 15.4%, and "communication" had the lowest percentage at 13.3%.

Source: Prepared by the study team based on Lao Statistics Bureau (2015) *Results of Population and Housing Census 2015*

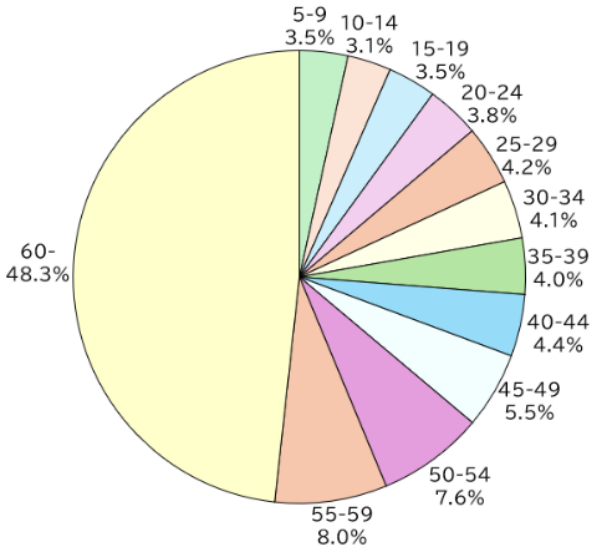


Figure 2 Percentage of Persons with Disabilities by Age Group(ages 5 and above) (2015)

The highest percentage was 48.3% for those aged 60 and older, followed by 8.0% for those aged 55–59, 7.6% for those aged 50–54, 5.5% for those aged 45–49, 4.4% for those aged 40–44, 4.2% for those aged 25–29, 4.1% for those aged 30–34, 4.0% for those aged 35–39, 3.8% for those aged 20–24, 3.5% each for those aged 5–9 and 15–19, and 3.1% for those aged 10–14.

Source: Prepared by the study team based on Lao Statistics Bureau (2015) *Results of Population and Housing Census 2015*

[13] The total number of respondents who reported having limitations in daily living activities is 413,720. While the total number of persons with disabilities is 160,881. The chart shows the percentage of persons with limitations in each area of daily living.

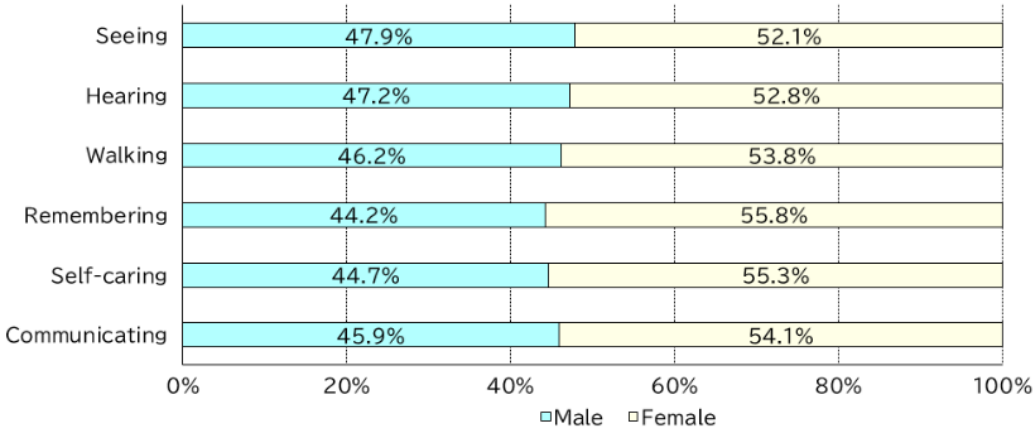


Figure 3 Percentage of Functional Limitation by Sex (ages 5 and above) (2015)

For "seeing," the figures are 47.9% for males and 52.1% for females; for "hearing," 47.2% for males and 52.8% for females; and for "walking," 46.2% for males and 53.8% for females. "Remembering" was 44.2% for males and 55.8% for females; "self-care" was 44.7% for males and 55.3% for females; and "communication" was 45.9% for males and 54.1% for females.

Source: Prepared by the study team based on Lao Statistics Bureau (2015) *Results of Population and Housing Census 2015*

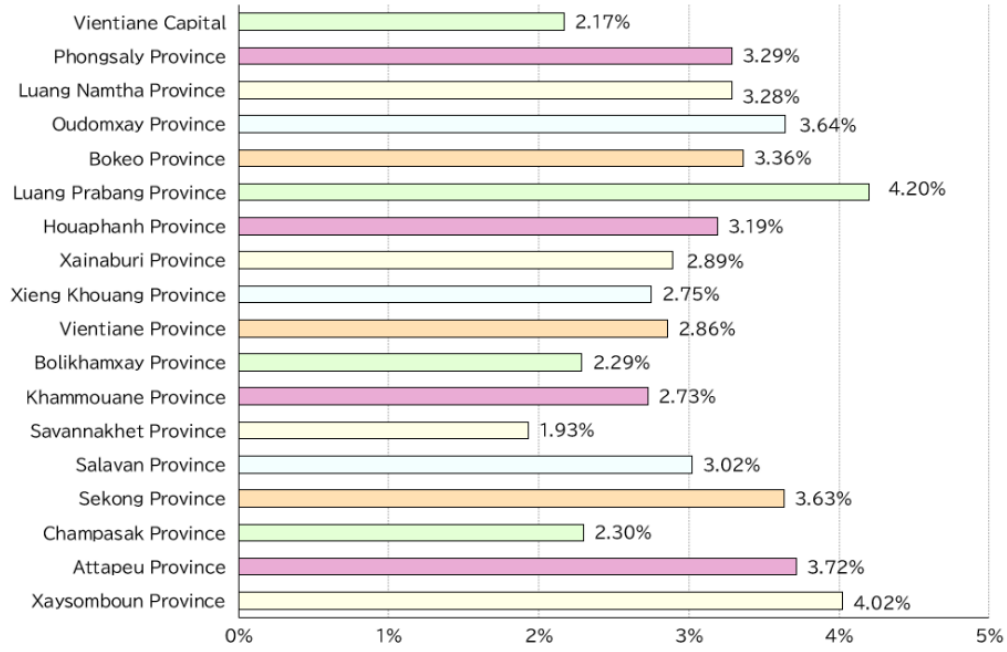


Figure 4 Percentage of Persons with Disabilities by Residential Area (ages 5 and older)(2015)

Luang Prabang Province had the highest rate at 4.20%, followed by Xaysomboun Province at 4.02%, Attapeu Province at 3.72%, Oudomxay Province at 3.64%, and Sekong Province at 3.63%. In the middle range, Bokeo Province (3.36%), Phongsaly Province (3.29%), Luang Namtha Province (3.28%), Houaphanh Province (3.19%), and Salavan Province (3.02%) are clustered around 3%. This is followed by Xainaburi Province at 2.89%, Vientiane Province at 2.86%, Xieng Khouang Province at 2.75%, and Khammouane Province at 2.73%. In the lower bracket, Bolikhamxay Province stands at 2.29%, Champasak Province at 2.30%, Vientiane Capital at 2.17%, and Savannakhet Province at 1.93%.

Source: Prepared by the study team based on Lao Statistics Bureau (2015) *Results of Population and Housing Census 2015*

2. Administration and Policy on Disability

2-1. Administration on Disability

<Central government>

Entities responsible for disability issues

Table 1 Entities responsible for disability issues in Laos

No.	Name	Overview
1	Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare[14]	・Responsible for the social welfare of veterans and all persons with disabilities. ・Responsible for overseeing and coordinating the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, and serves as the central focal point for disability policy[15]. ・Serves as the secretariat for the National Social Protection Committee, which is responsible for implementing the National Social Protection Strategy (described in 2-2). ・Eleven Prosthetics and Orthotics Centers, originally established for veterans with disabilities, were formerly under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. Currently, rehabilitation functions have been transferred to rehabilitation centers under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health.
2	Ministry of Health[16]	・It oversees medical rehabilitation. In addition to the National Rehabilitation Center located in the capital city, there are four provincial rehabilitation centers under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Health Departments (Northern Region (Luang Prabang), Northeastern Region (Xiengkhouang), Central Region (Savannakhet), and Southern Region (Champasak). ・Rehabilitation centers provide disability diagnosis, the preparation and fitting of prosthetics and orthotics, physical therapy, community-based rehabilitation[17] programs, and education for children with hearing and visual impairments. ・The Ministry provides comprehensive support for the services offered by the five rehabilitation centers mentioned above in collaboration with COPE (Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise), a joint venture established with the cooperation of the U.S. Agency for International Development[18] and several non-governmental organizations[19]

[14] Based on the 3rd ASEAN & Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies (2005) H*ealth and Social Welfare Report in Lao PDR*.（https://www.mhlw.go.jp/bunya/kokusaigyomu/asean/asean/kokusai/siryou/dl/h17_lao.pdf）, UN Lao PDR (2021)

[15] Replies to LOI（2020）

[16] Based on The 3rd ASEAN & Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies (2005) Health and Social Welfare Report in Lao PDR, COPE report（https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/rehab-ortho-prosthetic-prop.pdf）, Llewellyn, G.(2013) *Rehabilitation Sector Situation Analysis Report Lao PDR*, National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS 2020)

[17] Community-based Rehabilitation: CBR

[18] Hereinafter referred to as "USAID".

[19] Hereinafter referred to as "NGO"

		・for the purpose of assisting victims of unexploded ordnance (UXO) [20].
3	Ministry of Education and Sports[21]	・The Ministry calls for the enactment and revision of regulations, policies, and laws regarding inclusive education, sports, education for persons with disabilities, and special support in education. ・It promotes awareness, dissemination, and education regarding policies, strategic plans, laws, and regulations related to inclusive education, reasonable accommodations in education, and educational policy. ・It guides and oversees the development and revision of curricula tailored to specific types of disabilities, while ensuring access to education for children with disabilities. It also secures teaching staff and provides appropriate facilities and teaching materials. ・It regularly reports on and summarizes the status of implementation of disability-related initiatives. ・In cooperation with representatives of persons with disabilities, it develops Lao Braille, sign language, and audio programs to ensure that persons with visual and hearing impairments can access education that includes a variety of information sources. ・At 25 vocational training facilities, it offers learning programs ranging from short-term skills certification courses to advanced diplomas and multi-year industrial programs in business, accounting, agriculture, engineering, welding etc.

Status of Coordination Mechanism[22]

To ensure the consistent fulfillment of its obligation to monitor the country's implementation of Article 33 of the CRPD, the Government of Lao PDR established the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (hereinafter referred to as "NCPD") [23] by Prime Ministerial Decree No. 61/PM in 2009 as the body responsible for managing and monitoring matters related to persons with disabilities.

[20] Laos is the country with the highest level of UXO contamination in the world. 2.7 million tons of bombs were dropped during the Vietnam War, which lasted until 1975. The National Regulatory Authority for UXO/Mine Action in Lao PDR (2012) *UXO Sector Annual Report 2012*, https://files.acquia.undp.org/public/migration/la/UXO-Annual-Report-2012_ENG.pdf (Accessed: 10 March 2026)

[21] Based on UN Lao PDR (2021), Replies to LOI（2020）

[22] Based on State Party's Report（2016）

[23] According to State Party's Report（2016）, NCPD was renamed the National Committee for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly (NCPDE) by Prime Ministerial Decree No. 232/PM in 2013. However, it is referred to as the National Committee for Disabled Persons (NCDP) in UN Lao PDR (2021). In the Concluding Observations (2022), it is referred to as NCPD, indicating that there has been some inconsistency and changes in the name. In this report, the name will be unified as NCPD.

Table 2 Overviews of NCPD

Name of the mechanism	NCPD
Commission Members (19 members)	・ Department of Pensions, Invalids, and Handicaps (Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare)(functions as head of the Secretariat), Ministry of National Defense, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Planning and Investment, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Finance, the Veterans' Association, the Central Lao Women's Union, the Central Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union, and the Central Lao Federation of Trade Unions ・Chairperson: Deputy Prime Minister ・Vice-Chairpersons(4): Minister of Labour and Social Welfare (also serving as Acting Chairperson), Deputy Minister of Health, Deputy Minister of Education and Sports, President of the Lao Red Cross ・Members(14): Director-General of the Department of Pensions, Invalids, and Handicaps, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (also serving as Secretary-General); Ministry of National Defense; Ministry of Public Security; Ministry of Planning and Investment; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Public Works and Transport; Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism; Ministry of Home Affairs; Lao Veterans Association; Lao Women's Union; Lao Youth Union; Lao Federation of Trade Unions
Roles and status of operation	1) Research and formulation of national policies 2) Research specifications and measures from the central to the grassroots levels and make proposals to the government 3) Research relevant international documents and propose response strategies to the government 4) Coordinate with relevant countries and the private sector to implement international conventions ratified by the country 5) Monitor, inspect, support, and advise relevant government agencies and the private sector on the implementation of policies and regulations 6) Raising awareness through the publication of relevant domestic and international policies and laws and regulations 7) Procuring financial and material assistance 8) Organizing commemorative events for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and the International Day of Older Persons 9) Coordinating with relevant agencies in conducting

	statistical surveys and providing collected data to request organizations 10) Reviewing and approving requests for the establishment of affiliated organizations 11) Verifying compliance with government policies and laws by affiliated organizations 12) Liaising and cooperating with allied nations, international organizations, NGOs, and other entities 13) Attending domestic and international conferences, seminars, and training sessions 14) Submitting periodic reports to the government on the implementation of the CRPD (every two and four years) 15) Preparation of annual plans 16) Development and effective implementation of action plans 17) Regular reporting of activities to the government 18) Other duties designated by the government The Secretariat takes the lead in appointing disability coordinators to be stationed in relevant ministries and agencies

<Local government>

Laos is divided into 17 provinces and the Vientiane Capital District. The local administrative structure consists of three levels: provinces, districts, and taseng(sub-districts)[24].

Entities responsible for disability issues

Name	Overview
Regional Branch of NCPD	・Chairperson, vice-chairperson, and members of the Provincial Committee for Persons with Disabilities are appointed by the provincial governor or mayor, based on the specific circumstances of each province or city and in a manner consistent with the personnel structure at the national level. ・Chairperson, vice-chairperson, and members of the District Committee for Persons with Disabilities are appointed by the district governor or mayor (if applicable), based on the specific circumstances of each district and in a manner consistent with the personnel structure at the local level.
Provincial/District Department of Labor and Social Welfare	To ensure the consistent fulfillment of its obligation to monitor the implementation of the CRPD, the government has designated the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare at the central level, and its provincial/district departments at the local level, as the agencies responsible for managing and monitoring matters related to

[24] This system was established under the 2025 Constitution. Based on Institute of Developing Economieswebsite（https://www.ide.go.jp/Japanese/IDEsquare/Eyes/2025/ISQ202520_016.html）(Accessed: 15 March 2026).

	persons with disabilities.[25]

2-2. Laws and Policies on Disability

Article 36 of the Constitution (amended in 2025) states that "All Lao citizens are equal before the law, regardless of gender, social status, education, beliefs, or ethnicity."[26] The Government of Lao PDR has established NCPD and focused on amending laws related to persons with disabilities to bring them into line with the CRPD since its ratification. Notable examples include the Law on the Prevention of Violence against Women and Children (2014), the amended Constitution (2015), the Law on Persons with Disabilities (2018), the amended Law on Sports and Exercise (2019), the National Strategy and Action Plan on Inclusive Education (2011–2015), the Strategy and Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities (2020–2030), the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities (2026–2030), the National Fund for Persons with Disabilities, and the 9th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development (2021–2025)[27].

Title	Law on Persons with Disabilities No. 57/2018
Year of enactment	2018
Overview	It was enacted as a more comprehensive legal framework to replace the Decree on Persons with Disabilities No. 137/2014. It establishes principles, regulations, and standards for the management and supervision of disability-related initiatives in order to guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities, eliminate discrimination, and create an environment that enables their self-development, independence, and social participation. At the same time, it aims to ensure the political, legal, economic, cultural, and social equality of persons with disabilities, promote their integration into the community, and support their contribution to the nation's socioeconomic development. The amended Constitution (2015) and this law intend to shift from a charity and medical model to a human rights-based approach. It consists of 12 parts and 90 articles. Part1 General Provisions Part2 Types and Statistics of Disabled Persons Part3 Equality, Rights and Obligations of Disabled Persons Part4 Protection and Development of Disabled Persons Part5 Scientific Research and Manufacturing of Equipment

[25] Based on Replies to LOI（2020）

[26] The same provision appeared in Article 35 of the former Constitution (enacted in 1991). The Constitution was amended in 2003 and 2015.
https://www.jica.go.jp/activities/issues/governance/portal/laos/__icsFiles/afieldfile/2025/05/15/01-1Ver.1.0_3.pdf (Accessed: 15 March 2026)

[27] Based on Concluding Observations（2022）

	Part6 National Committee for Disabled Persons and Disabled Persons' Management Authority Part7 Disabled Persons Fund Part8 Prohibitions Part9 Dispute Resolution Part10 Management and Monitoring of Works Related to Disabled Persons Part11 Policies towards Devotees and Measures against Violators Part12 Final Provisions

Other major laws related to the rights of persons with disabilities include the following.

Title	Amended Constitution
Year of enactment	2015, 2025
Overview	The Constitution was enacted in 1991. When it was amended in 2003, it made no mention of persons with disabilities. Starting with the 2015 Constitution, the following provisions address this issue, explicitly stipulating their rights to social security and education. Article 22 "The State and society attend to developing high quality national education, to create opportunities and [favorable] conditions in education for all people throughout the country, especially people in remote areas, ethnic groups, women, children, disadvantaged people and disabled people." Article 28 "The State and society attend to implementing policies on social security, especially towards national heroes, soldiers, retired civil servants, disabled people..." The 2025 Constitution contains no additional references to persons with disabilities, and these provisions remain largely unchanged. Although the Concluding Observations issued by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to the Government of Lao PDR in 2022 recommended the removal of provisions disqualifying persons with disabilities from voting and standing for election, the 2025 Constitution retains the following provision in Article 37. "Lao citizens aged eighteen (18) years and above have the right to vote, and those aged twenty (20) years and above have the right to stand for election, except those who are legally declared insane or mentally ill..."

Title	Law on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Children（Law No. 56）
Year of enactment	2014
Overview	The following definitions refer to disability (Article 4). Negligence or neglect: the failure to fulfill the obligation to care for one's own child or a child for whom one has a duty of support; failure to provide care when a family member is ill or has a disability. The failure to act according to the law or failure to act in a manner in

	which family members should treat each other, which results in physical, psychological harm or [affects] the health of women and children. Discrimination against women: any distinction, exclusion or restriction that is based on a women's race, color, sex, ethnicity, religion, language, education, knowledge and capacity, intelligence, socio-economic status, health status, physical appearance, disability, and other aspect that makes women's rights unrealized. Discrimination against children: any distinction, exclusion or restriction that is based on a child's or a child's parent's race, color, sex, ethnicity, religion, language, education, knowledge and capacity, intelligence, socio-economic status, health status, physical appearance, disability, origin and other aspect of a child, child's parents or other child's family members that makes children's rights unrealized.

Title	Law on Sport and Physical Activities (Amendment)（Law No. 74）[28]
Year of enactment	2019
Overview	It secures that all citizens have equal rights to exercise, participate in sports, watch sports, and organize sports events, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, health status, disability, or socioeconomic status. Article 15 on sports and physical activity for persons with disabilities requires sports organizations and society at all levels to promote the participation of persons with disabilities in physical activity and sporting events for the sake of physical and mental health, recreation, and social integration, and to research and develop activities and curricula for sports and physical exercise suitable for all types of disabilities. The CRPD progress review report by UN Lao PDR (2022)[29] points out that Article 33, which sets forth the criteria and conditions for national teams, requires athletes to be "in good health," and that, according to the definition of "good health" under the Law on Healthcare (Law No. 58), this could constitute discrimination against persons with disabilities.

Disability Policies

Title	National Strategy and Plan of Action on Inclusive Education 2011-2015
Year implemented	2011
Overview	This policy, issued by the Ministry of Education and Sports to implement the National Inclusive Education Policy (No. 509/2010), emphasizes the removal of barriers to learning and participation so that all learners can

[28] Based on UN Lao PDR (2021)

[29] United Nation Lao PDR (2021) UN Country Team Joint Submission on the Progress towards the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Lao PDR.

	receive a quality education. It aims to promote the development of an educational system that continuously adapts to the needs of individual learners rather than requiring learners to adapt to the needs of the school, and to expand the participation of all learners in mainstream schools.

Title	National Strategy and Action Plan on Persons with Disabilities 2020–2030[30]
Year implemented	2018
Overview	The plan defines eight priority areas, 23 projects, and 86 activities, and is divided into two five-year phases. The priority areas for intervention are as follows: 1) Raising public awareness 2) Data and statistics 3) Healthcare 4) Accessibility of physical environment, information, communications, and services 5) Work and employment including TVET 6) Social protection 7) Participation in cultural life, recreation, and sports 8) Disability-inclusive governance Access to justice, inclusive education, and disaster management are not specified as separate priority areas. NCDP and the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare are designated as the responsible entities.

Title	The Ninth National Socioeconomic Development Plan 2021–2025
Year implemented	2021
Overview	This is a fundamental national plan for advancing national development across six areas (economy, society, environment, and governance) with the goals of graduating from the category of Least Developed Countries and achieving sustainable economic growth. While references to the rights of persons with disabilities were limited in the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2016–2020), the 9th Plan includes references in multiple outcome areas, such as vocational training and equal access to the labor market (Outcome 2.3), equal opportunities and development (Outcome 3.3), youth (Outcome 3.4), social security services (Outcome 3.5), safety from unexploded ordnance (Outcome 3.6), and good governance and the judiciary (Outcome 6.3). However, direct references to the rights of persons with disabilities, their inclusion, and accessibility are missing from the indicators for health services (Outcome 2.1), education (Outcome 2.2), infrastructure (Outcome

[30] UN Lao PDR (2022)

	5.1), and disaster prevention, management, and recovery (Outcome 4.3)[31]. The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the plan.

Title	The National Action Plan on Disabled Persons 2020-2025, 2026–2030
Year implemented	2020
Overview	Established by NCDP, this plan seeks to amend Law on Persons with Disabilities, Labor Law, Education Law, Law on Healthcare, and Law on Construction to bring them into full compliance with the CRPD. However, as of the time of this study, the plan had not been made public, and its details could not be verified[32]. A monitoring and evaluation framework and indicators for the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan have been introduced. The indicators for 2020–2025 are as follows. Key Area 1: Raising Public Awareness - 2,000 employees from the public and private sectors better understand the CRPD and the rights of persons with disabilities Key Area 1: Raising Public Awareness - 5,000 people with disabilities, their families and caregivers, and OPDs' representatives better understand the basics of disability work. Key Area 2: Data and Statistics - 1 centrally managed database of persons with disabilities created. Key Area 2: Data and Statistics - 600 employees from the public sector have the knowledge and capacity to collect and disaggregate disability data; 1 national survey to collect disability data conducted. Key Area 3: Healthcare - 400 health workers, including sexual and reproductive health service providers, strengthened their capacity to provide services to persons with disabilities. Key Area 3: Healthcare - 1,800 women and children with disabilities benefited from sexual and reproductive health training. Key Area 4: Accessibility - 10,000 individuals (including policymakers, engineers, physicians, teachers, families, and caregivers of persons with disabilities) have an increased understanding of accessibility in compliance with the CRPD; three pieces of legislation to promote accessibility issued or amended. Key Area 4: Accessibility - Technical Standard Guide on Accessible Public Facilities, focusing on both construction and maintenance, is developed and approved.

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] UN Lao PDE (2022) outlines sector-specific initiatives (healthcare, employment, social security, and accessibility) under this plan. These are described in sections 2-3.

2-3. Measures on Disability

1) Healthcare[33]

By 2025, the National Action Plan aims to train 400 healthcare personnel in disability-inclusive services and 1,800 women and children with disabilities in sexual and reproductive health. Its estimated budget for all the planned activities in the health sector for 2020-2025 is USD590,000.

Law on Persons with Disabilities, Law on Hygiene, Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Law on Healthcare, and Law on Health Insurance secure equal access to health information and services, rehabilitation, and healthcare. However, according to a parallel report (2022), awareness of current regulations, awareness of rights, and budget allocation are insufficient, and persons with disabilities face barriers at all levels in accessing timely and high-quality health information, treatment, and rehabilitation.

Health status

A report based on the national census[34] shows changes in the causes of functional disabilities over the past 10 years. Congenital factors and UXO, which accounted for nearly half of all causes of disability in 1995, decreased from 38% to 19% and from 10.6% to 4.4%, respectively. The incidence of functional disabilities caused by disease increased from 28.5% to 44.7%, becoming the leading cause of disability. While infectious diseases remain the leading cause of death and morbidity in the country, the incidence of noncommunicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, cancer, and cerebrovascular diseases is on the rise. In the future, as average life expectancy at birth continues to increase, the rise in age-related functional impairments, such as dementia and special medical needs, is likely to accelerate.

A regional sample survey indicates that persons with disabilities experience poorer health and welfare conditions[35].

Table 3 Health status of persons with disabilities

	Kham Province Xiangkhouang District	Xayphouthong Province Khammouane District
Sick enough to miss 3 or more days of work or school in the past 3 months	73.3%	54.2%
Needing healthcare in the	56%	43.1%

[33] UN Lao PDR (2022)

[34] Lao Statistics Bureau (2020)

[35] Nguyen, L., Pryor, W. and Marella, M., et al. (2020) Community Based Inclusive Development (CBID) Demonstration Model Impact Assessment – Baseline Survey Report. World Education Inc, Vientiane. However, the information is based on citations from the parallel report (2022) since the article was unable to obtain in this study.

last 3 months.		
Not knowing what rehabilitation was	13%	46.1%

Source: Prepared by the study team based on the parallel report (2022)

When the two districts were combined, the top barriers cited by persons with disabilities who reported being unable to access medical services were direct costs (35.4%), lack of information (29.2%), and distance to healthcare facility (19.9%).

Availability of Medical Services

In Laos, there are significant regional disparities in medical facilities. Inadequate transportation infrastructure, long travel distances, and financial burdens act as barriers, making it difficult for residents in remote areas to access medical and rehabilitation services. Consequently, the government, in collaboration with development partners and NGOs, dispatches mobile clinics to provide medical care and health promotion activities in remote areas.[36]

According to the parallel report (2022), the majority of healthcare services for persons with disabilities continue to focus on those with physical disabilities, particularly UXO victims, while the healthcare needs of persons with disabilities are diverse. While there is a strong emphasis on rehabilitation and the provision of assistive devices, comprehensive primary care and ongoing medical services are largely unavailable.

Primary healthcare services for persons with visual and hearing impairments are particularly limited. The Ministry of Health-run Ophthalmology Center in Vientiane is the only specialized facility providing services to persons with visual impairments. For persons with hearing impairments, Mahosot Hospital in Vientiane is the only specialized facility in the country providing appropriate medical services.

Access to Healthcare Services

According to the parallel report (2022), persons with disabilities are often forced to travel long distances to access necessary services, creating additional barriers such as a lack of transportation options, difficulty in using available transportation, and high transportation costs. Most clinics are not designed in accordance with technical accessibility regulations.

Very few healthcare professionals have acquired knowledge about persons with disabilities, and the majority lack the skills and experience to provide services to people with various types and degrees of disability. Expertise in the diagnosis and treatment of persons with

[36] Lao Women's Union (2019) *Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and Adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform*.

intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder (hereinafter referred to as "ASD") remains underdeveloped. There are only a very small number of clinical psychologists practicing in Vientiane. Currently, Mahosot Hospital in Vientiane is the only facility providing psychiatric evaluations, medication, and therapy. Caregivers of children and adults with intellectual disabilities and ASD have to seek support in neighboring Thailand or Vietnam. However, high treatment and travel costs act as barriers, leaving the majority of families unable to access support.

In addition to five public medical rehabilitation centers located across the country, smaller rehabilitation centers are operated at the prefectural level. However, many persons with disabilities, particularly those living in remote areas who lack access to media or digital devices, either do not recognize the importance or availability of rehabilitation services, or cannot afford the transportation costs associated with long-distance travel, resulting in limited use of these services. Even when rehabilitation services are available, the provision of specialized services is limited.

Assistive devices

Articles 18 and 19 of the Law on Hygiene, Disease Prevention, and Health Promotion secure the free provision of assistive devices. However, according to the parallel report, awareness of and utilization rates for assistive devices among persons with disabilities are low, particularly in remote areas. Only 28.7% of persons with disabilities reported using assistive devices such as prosthetics, crutches, wheelchairs, and eyeglasses, and the usage rate among women was 68% lower than that among men.

Health insurance

The National Health Insurance program was fully implemented in 2016 and, as of 2021, covers approximately 94% of the population. The Government of Lao PDR's replies to the List of Issues for the CRPD (hereinafter referred to as the "Replies to LOI") state that persons living in poverty and persons with disabilities are exempt from the obligation to pay premiums to the National Health Insurance Fund. However, according to the parallel report, persons with disabilities are not exempt from contributing to the Fund; in particular, the vast majority of persons with disabilities living in remote areas are uninsured, and necessary health checkups and treatments for persons with intellectual disabilities, ASD, and psychosocial disabilities are not covered by the insurance system.

2) Education

Status of Legislative Framework

The 2007 Law on Education was amended in 2015. Article 49 recognizes the right of

children from low-income families or socially vulnerable groups, children with disabilities, gifted children, and particularly girls and children from ethnic minority groups to receive support in accordance with the provisions of the Act[37]. While the Law does not mention inclusive education, the Law on Persons with Disabilities (2018) stipulates the following[38].

Article 30 Inclusive Education

- Persons with disabilities can study with other persons at both public and private academic institutions based on their actual conditions and capabilities.
- Academic institutions hosting disabled students must provide the following essential facilities:
- Proper classroom and study place;
- Curriculum designed specifically for each type of disabled persons;
- Proper teaching-learning equipment and materials;
- Enabling a study environment within schools;
- Academic institutions hosting students with disabilities must consider applying proper teaching-learning methodologies and recruiting qualified teachers and caretakers for students with disabilities.

Article 31 Specific Educational Assistance for Disabled Persons

- Intellectually, memorizing, visually, hearing, and speaking persons with disabilities shall be provided with specific educational assistance on a case-by-case basis, for instance, in terms of curriculum, teachers, sign language, braille code, voice assistant software, equipment, media, and other teaching-learning facilities.

Article 32 Educational Charge for Persons with Disabilities

- Both public and private academic institutions must implement a policy exempting or reducing study fees and charges for students with disabilities as stipulated by law.

<u>Enrollment status</u>

The UN Laos Progress Report on the CRPD (2022) states the following:

- The literacy rate for persons with disabilities is 52.9%, compared to 86% for the general population.
- 43.16% of children with disabilities have never been enrolled in primary school, compared to 9.6% of the general population.
- The school retention rate for persons with disabilities is lower than that of the general population; more than 20% of those who have access to education drop out before

[37] Replies to LOI (2020)
[38] UN Lao PDR (2022)

completing primary school, and only 16.8% complete primary education (compared to 20.8% of the general population).

- While 9.1% of children with disabilities advanced to high school, the rate for students without disabilities reached nearly 28.7%. This trend was repeated during the transition from upper secondary education to university, with the rate of students with disabilities advancing to higher education institutions being 2.2 times lower than that of students without disabilities.

Inclusive education

According to the Replies to LOI (2020), 5,075 students with disabilities were enrolled in 1,968 schools; 81 specialized teachers (in Lao Sign Language and Braille) were trained; and 2,151 teachers were trained for inclusive classes. The government also provides support in the form of a monthly allowance of 200,000 kip for 12 months to 239 children and students with disabilities (including 113 girls), and implements other support measures such as tuition exemption from preschool through higher diploma education.

Special school

According to the State Party's Report submitted by the Government of Lao PDR to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (hereinafter referred to as the "State Party's Report"), there are three special education schools operated under the Ministry of Health in Vientiane, Luang Prabang Province, and Savannakhet Province. These schools employ 22 teachers (17 of whom are women) and serve 183 students with disabilities (74 of whom are girls). Of these, 121 are children with hearing impairments (50 of whom are girls) and, 62 are children with visual impairments.

Regarding this situation, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has raised the following concerns.

- Progress in inclusive education has been limited.
- Special schools fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health.
- Illiteracy rates among persons with disabilities are high.
- Commuting to school is difficult due to long distances and a lack of public transportation.
- Dropout rates among students with disabilities are high due to a lack of reasonable accommodations in the general education system.
- Insufficient training on the rights related to inclusive education for teachers and non-teaching staff, particularly in rural areas.
- There are negative attitudes among teaching staff, students without disabilities, and their parents regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream

education.

- There is a lack of accessible teaching materials, learning environments, and individualized support at all levels of education, particularly for children and students with disabilities living in remote areas or belonging to ethnic minorities.
- Children with intellectual disabilities, children with ASD, girls with disabilities, and children affected by leprosy are particularly excluded from education.
- Opportunities for persons with disabilities to access higher education are limited.
- Data collection focuses solely on children with physical disabilities.

3) Gender

Status of Legislative Framework

The Government of Lao PDR ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (hereinafter referred to as "CEDAW") in 1981. To protect and promote the advancement of women, the government established the National Commission for the Advancement of Women and has been paying close attention to promoting gender roles and equality, including for persons with disabilities. Consequently, the Law on the Development and Protection of Women was enacted in 2004[39]. Article 177 of the Penal Code (2005) stipulates that anyone who discriminates against or segregates any woman, or who treats her in a discriminatory manner on the basis of gender, or who obstructs or restricts a woman's participation in political, economic, sociocultural, or family activities, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term of not less than one year and not more than three years and a fine of not less than 1 million kip and not more than 3 million kip[40]. The 2015 Constitution explicitly enshrines gender equality in Article 35 and incorporates the key provisions of CEDAW. The government has formulated the Five-Year National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women (2021–2025) and is advancing measures to combat violence against women. This action plan refers to women with disabilities and prioritizes, in particular, administrative statistical data disaggregated by disability and the provision of services tailored to the needs of women and girls with disabilities[41].

Status of women with disabilities

According to the UN Lao PDR (2022) , 49.8% of persons with mild disabilities, 51% of those with moderate disabilities, and 52.2% of those with severe disabilities are women. The report also states that women with disabilities face barriers to accessing services and participating

[39] State Party's Report (2016)
[40] Lao Women's Union (2019)
[41] UN Lao PDR (2022)

in socioeconomic activities, a situation that is most pronounced when public restrooms (WASH[42] facilities) accessible to persons with disabilities are not available. According to the national review of the Government of Lao PDR for Beijing+25 (2020), which assessed progress toward the gender equality goals established at the Beijing Conference (1995), women in vulnerable positions, including those living in remote areas, informal workers, the poor, those with low levels of education, and persons with disabilities, continue to face discrimination. To mitigate this impact, the Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism is collaborating with development partners to conduct awareness campaigns on gender and racial issues by holding workshops for local government officials.

UN Lao PDR（2022） also states that the employment rate for women with disabilities is 38.1%, compared to 54.9% for men with disabilities, while the employment rates for men and women in the general population are nearly equal (67% for women and 69.7% for men). Additionally, 18.4% of men with disabilities are homemakers, while the figure for women is 32.5%, meaning women with disabilities are twice as likely as men to be full-time homemakers. This reduces their opportunities to earn an income and hinders their social participation.

In the regional sample survey shown in Table 3, 25% of women, regardless of whether they are with disabilities, rated their health as "poor," and they were 40% more likely than men to require medical services. In two districts, it was reported that women with disabilities were 68% less likely to use assistive devices than men with disabilities.

4) Vocational Training and Employment

Status of Legislative Framework

According to the State Party's Report, Article 4, Paragraph 2 of the Law on Labor (2013 No. 43/NA) states that the State, from the perspective of poverty reduction, shall support low-income individuals, persons with disabilities, the unemployed, and those facing social challenges to develop their vocational skills and gain access to job placement services. Article 33, Paragraph lists the promotion of self-employment, employment in one's home village, and telecommuting, as well as the employment of socially vulnerable groups, women, persons with disabilities, and the elderly as components of job creation. Article 38 of the Law on Persons with Disabilities stipulates that persons with disabilities may apply for employment at any enterprise or institution, whether public or private, and must be treated on an equal footing with others in terms of wages, salaries, promotions, status, and welfare benefits. Article 39 provides for policies to facilitate access to financing, investment, and

[42] Water, sanitation and hygiene

preferential tariff and tax measures for persons with disabilities engaged in self-employment.

According to UN Lao PDR (2022), the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities (2026–2030) aims to increase the employment rate of persons with disabilities by 10% by 2030. Specific initiatives are listed below.

(1) Issue or amend legislation related to TVET[43] and employment of persons with disabilities
(2) Improve the facilities and curricula of TVET programmes to better meet the needs of persons with disabilities.
(3) Provide disability training for teachers from public and private TVET facilities.
(4) Reduce or waive the TVET costs for students with disabilities.
(5) Determine quota for employment of persons with disabilities.
(6) Provide seed funds for income-generating activities to persons with disabilities.

Status of Employment

According to the Replies to LOI (2020), between 2016 and 2019, 680 persons with disabilities completed vocational training, and the majority of them found employment. However, a closer look at the breakdown reveals that while the vast majority, 522, were self-employed, few secured jobs in government agencies or private companies, where those with degrees have an advantage. According to a report by UN Lao (2022),

- 46.5% of persons with disabilities aged 10 and older are employed, compared to 68.4% of people without disabilities.
- The unemployment rate for persons with disabilities is 4%, compared to 1.3% for people without disabilities.
- The employment rate for persons with visual or hearing impairments is 40%, while for other types of disabilities it remains at 30–35%, suggesting that persons with physical or intellectual disabilities are more likely to experience unemployment.
- The labor force participation rate for persons with disabilities is 70%, compared to 82% for people without disabilities.
- Young persons with disabilities aged 15–24 are seven times more likely than their non-disabled peers to be neither in employment, education, nor vocational training.
- The college graduation rate for persons with disabilities is only 4%, compared to 13% for persons without disabilities.

Vocational Training

[43] Technical and Vocational Education and Training

According to the Replies to LOI (2020), the government has been working to improve the environment for vocational training at centers for persons with disabilities and general vocational training centers. Between 2016 and 2019, a total of 680 persons with disabilities completed training programs. The majority of graduates have found employment, and 522 have become self-employed. On the other hand, only a small number have found employment in government agencies or private companies. This is because the number of persons with disabilities who have graduated with a degree remains low. The parallel report notes that, due to technical, organizational, and financial constraints as well as limitations in human resources, employment initiatives and programs for persons with disabilities in the TVET sector are limited to fragmented, non-accredited technical courses. These programs primarily target members with physical and visual disabilities and are out of step with market demand.

Lao Disabled Women Development Center provides six-month technical training in sewing, needlework, weaving, papermaking, computer skills, office administration, and project cycle management to women with physical disabilities and their caregivers, with a particular focus on those from poor and near-poor households, ethnic minorities, and orphans. Over the past five years, 152 women with disabilities from 10 provinces have participated in the Center's training programs, and 65% of graduates have secured employment, including self-employment. Fifteen percent of participants found paid employment[44].

The Association for the Blind and the Association for the Visually Impaired also regularly conduct six-month technical training programs of massage therapy with for their members with visual impairments. Since 2016, 135 individuals with visual impairments have received massage training, and 70 of them have subsequently been employed.

5) Social Security, Social Service for Persons with Disabilities

Status of Legislative Framework

Article 29 of the Law on Persons with Disabilities stipulates that persons with disabilities living in poverty and those without dependents are exempt from rehabilitation costs and the costs of assistive devices. Article 41 states that persons with disabilities living in poverty or financial hardship, or those who have difficulty supporting themselves, are eligible to receive subsidies in addition to support from their families, society, and the government. However, the Replies to LOI (2020) report that, given the severe socioeconomic conditions, the government does not provide systems such as monthly allowances.

Additionally, the government amended Social Security Law No. 54/NA in 2018 to extend

[44] Parallel Report（2022）

benefits to contributors to the Social Security Fund, their survivors, and disabled veterans[45]. Benefit amounts are calculated based on the final salary or average contribution amount, depending on the disability grade. The Law on Persons with Disabilities stipulates the establishment of a National Fund for Persons with Disabilities, which is financed by the state budget, contributions from individuals, corporations, civil society, and international organizations, as well as activities by persons with disabilities (Articles 54 and 55). The fund is allocated for vocational training, skills development, and employment promotion for persons with disabilities; emergency support for persons with disabilities; and allowances for poor households, including those with members who have disabilities. According to UN Lao PDR (2022), the fund's budget allocation, sources of revenue, and annual performance are not publicly disclosed.

According to observations by OPD[46], the government's social protection programs primarily support veterans who are unable to work and individuals who have become unable to work due to work-related injuries, and other persons with disabilities who are unable to work are not eligible for support.

The National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities (2026–2030) aims to increase the number of persons with disabilities benefiting from national social protection services by 30%. The estimated budget for all planned activities in the social protection sector from 2026 to 2030 is USD1.13 million. Specific actions include the following:

- Enactment or amendment of laws regarding social protection for persons with disabilities
- Improved access to the National Health Insurance Fund, the National Social Protection Scheme, and the Poverty Reduction Fund through improvements to social protection policies for persons with disabilities

Service Provision

The National Social Protection Strategy (2020) identifies the following challenges in the social welfare sector:

- Systematic social welfare services and benefits are not provided to children under the age of three, children requiring special protection, persons with disabilities, elderly people living alone, or those not receiving pensions, the unemployed, and other vulnerable groups.
- School operating budgets are insufficient to cover the costs of students from low-

[45] According to International Labour Organization (ILO)(2024) *Review of the Social Security Law (amended version) 2018 of the Lao People's Democratic Republic*, amendment of the law is underway.
[46] UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2014) *Universal Periodic Review: A Stakeholders report prepared by Lao Disability Network, Lao PDR.*

income families.

- Nutrition support programs for school-age children are inadequate, and such programs rely on donor funding.
- Limited budget allocations to address these challenges pose a threat to the future of society.

According to the parallel report, the current social security system excludes many persons with disabilities who rely on non-regular employment or agriculture. They have low and unstable incomes and face poor working conditions; even if social security benefits exist, they are limited in the event that they lose their means of livelihood or fall ill. The number of persons with disabilities and caregivers receiving benefits under the amended Law on Social Security (2018) is extremely small. Factors affecting access include low awareness of the system at the community and household levels, barriers to accessing information and completing application procedures, and a lack of officially certified identification documents or disability certificates issued by public agencies.

6) Transportation and Urban Development (including accessible urban planning)

Status of Legislative Framework

Article 44 of the Law on Persons with Disabilities requires individuals, corporations, and organizations that own buildings or premises to construct, install, or provide facilities for persons with disabilities. Article 45 requires public transportation operators to construct, install, and provide facilities for persons with disabilities, and also stipulates exemptions or reductions in fares for persons with disabilities[47]. According to the Replies to LOI (2020), the government compiled the "Handbook on Basic Standards for Barrier-Free Access[48]", based on the Construction Law (2009), to make facilities, including buildings, public spaces, and transportation, more accessible to persons with disabilities. It reports that access to facilities such as schools, hospitals, government offices, and private buildings has been improved in urban areas and some rural areas. The Lao Building Code (2016), developed based on this handbook, established standards for details such as the width of interior doors, the size of stair treads, the installation of handrails on stairs, and Braille signage for persons with visual impairments and visual guidance for persons with hearing impairments

. The National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities (2020–2025) sets the following goals[49].

[47] UN Lao PDR(2022)

[48] Handbook on Basic Standards of Facilitations for Persons with Disabilities. Parallel Report (2022) also mentions about the handbook.

[49] UN Lao PDR(2022)

- Develop an accessibility manual in accordance with the CRPD and provide accessibility training to relevant government officials at the central and local levels.
- Enact or amend laws related to accessibility.
- Produce various programs in Braille and sign language, and introduce them into the media and education.
- Conduct training on Braille and sign language for relevant officials and persons with disabilities.
- Develop national standards for accessibility, and provide training to relevant government officials at the central and local levels.
- Conduct accessibility assessments of buildings and public facilities.
- Implement pilot projects for the improvement and construction of accessible public infrastructure.

The Action Plan establishes the following three indicators with regard to accessibility:

- More than 10,000 people, including policymakers, engineers, doctors, teachers, family members, and caregivers of persons with disabilities, will deepen their understanding of accessibility.
- At least three laws and regulations related to accessibility for persons with disabilities will be enacted or amended.
- "Technical Standards Guide for the Accessibility of Public Facilities," focusing on both construction and maintenance, will be formulated and approved[50]

According to UN Lao PDR (2022), the newly constructed railway stations are accessible to persons with disabilities and are wheelchair-friendly. In addition, a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system is currently under development as part of the "Vientiane Sustainable Urban Transport Project[51]," which is being funded through co-financing from the Asian Development Bank and other institutions. Universal design measures will be implemented at all 28 BRT stops. Furthermore, 50 new battery-powered electric buses are scheduled to be introduced, though details regarding barrier-free features for people with disabilities inside the vehicles are currently unknown.

Accessibility Improvements

The National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities (2020–2025) states that the environment, transportation, information, and communications remain generally inaccessible

[50] No information regarding the standards guide was available in this study.
[51] Vientiane Sustainable Urban Transport Project: VSUTP.
https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freefreenews/freecontent_238_Construction_y24.php (Access: 15 March 2026)

to persons with disabilities. Specifically, there is a shortage of accessible ramps, elevators, WASH facilities, signage, pavement, public transportation vehicles, Braille-based communication, and voice input and output technologies. The parallel report (2022) points out that many public buildings nationwide lack ramps, elevators, accessible entrances, passageways, restroom facilities, and wayfinding signage. Many relevant ministries and agencies, particularly at the province and district levels, still lack awareness of their obligations regarding accessibility. As a result, both existing and new facilities continue to fail to meet basic accessibility standards. There are no systematic data collection or monitoring efforts to assess the status of accessibility in the country's public infrastructure. Additionally, there is no information available on the number of state-owned media outlets or government agencies that meet universal design standards.

Regarding public transportation, UN Lao PDR (2022) reports that transportation in Laos relies heavily on private cars and motorcycles. In 2011, motorcycles accounted for 67% of daily trips, while the estimated usage rate of public transportation remained at just 0.6%. Tuk-tuks are the primary alternative for commuting, but getting on and off tuk-tuks is difficult, and there have been reports of drivers refusing to transport persons with disabilities due to the burden of assisting them. According to the parallel report, transportation operators are unaware of their legal responsibilities, and there is no oversight by the authorities. There are no mandatory accessibility standards for transport infrastructure, and since not all vehicles meet even basic accessibility requirements, it is difficult for persons with disabilities and their families to use external services for mobility support.

7) Information Accessibility

According to UN Lao PDR (2022), small-scale training and resource development regarding information services for persons with disabilities are supported primarily through international development partners due to the lack of policies encouraging mass media to produce content for diverse audiences and a system to monitor progress on information and communication accessibility. A pilot version of Lao-language voice input software developed by the Lao Association of the Blind to improve access to and usability of Windows systems and third-party applications is currently not operational.

Lao Sign Language is still not officially recognized, which limits social and educational interaction for people with hearing impairments. According to the Association for the Deaf, there are currently fewer than 10 interpreters in the country, and there is no sign language interpretation system in place for public services.

According to the parallel report, access to information is primarily provided through verbal or written communication. As a result, persons with hearing and visual impairments, or

intellectual disabilities, as well as those with ASD, are being left out of information access. This increases their vulnerability during emergencies such as natural disasters and pandemics.

8) Disaster Risk Management

The Law on Disaster Management (2019, Law No. 71) provides for the establishment of the Central Disaster Management Committee. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare serves as the secretariat and is responsible for overall coordination regarding disaster risk management priorities among relevant ministries, NGO, international organizations, and diplomatic missions. The Prime Minister appoints the members, who consist of 15 deputy ministers, as well as representatives from the Lao National Front for Construction and Development, the Lao Revolutionary Youth League, and the Lao Red Cross. NCDP and OPD are not included among the members.

According to UN Lao PDR (2022), the National Strategy on Disaster Risk Reduction (hereinafter referred to as "NSDRR") 2021–2030 commits to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in community-based disaster risk reduction programs by improving local plans and targets for community capacity-building in high-risk areas, with a focus on early warning, evacuation, information sharing, awareness-raising, and local emergency response plans. Additionally, the strategy highlights the importance of health services that include persons with disabilities, including psychosocial support, during disasters. Recognizing a significant lack of comprehensive and accessible information in early warning systems and emergency communications, the NSDRR aims to address this issue as a core component of efforts to strengthen early warning system capabilities. The NSDRR is supplemented by the Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR) Manual. This manual identifies persons with disabilities as community stakeholders who should be involved in local planning and decision-making for disaster preparedness, just like other vulnerable groups. It also includes examples of basic intersectionality, such as the inclusion of women with disabilities and the documentation of various types of disabilities.

During the 2021 floods in Xayabouly Province (which affected 43 villages across 10 districts, impacting 2,747 households and approximately 13,297 people, including 6,524 women), disability-related items were incorporated into a household-level baseline impact, livelihood, and food security assessment jointly conducted by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour and Social Welfare, and UN agencies. The results showed that 4.3% of respondents reported facing some form of disability, with visual impairment and mobility impairment having the highest prevalence.

3. International Treaties and International Cooperation

3-1. Status of Implementation Following the Ratification of the CRPD[52]

The Government of Lao PDR signed the CRPD on January 15, 2008, and ratified it on September 25, 2009. It has not ratified the Optional Protocol. In 2016, it submitted the State Party's Report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Following a constructive dialogue, the Committee adopted its Concluding Observations in 2022. In the Concluding Observations, the Committee noted measures taken to establish a public policy framework for promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, particularly the enactment of the Law on the Prevention of Violence against Women and Children (2014), the amended Constitution (2015), the Law on Persons with Disabilities (2018), and the amended Law on Sports and Exercise (2019), as well as the formulation of the National Strategy and Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities (2020–2030), as positive aspects. At the same time, as immediate measures to be taken, the Committee emphasized the need to strengthen close consultation and active engagement with persons with disabilities in the process of implementing and monitoring the CRPD, and to ensure that all children with disabilities receive quality inclusive education within the general education system at all levels. The next deadline for the State Party's Report is 2033.

3-2. Status of Implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty

As of March 2026, the Government of Lao PDR has not ratified the Marrakesh Treaty (Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled). Article 42 of the Law on Persons with Disabilities states that persons with disabilities shall have access to information through publications, electronic media, social media, and other appropriate forms of media. It further stipulates that organizations and relevant departments must create an environment that supports persons with disabilities in accessing information.

The parallel report notes that OPD's efforts in the area of accessibility are limited due to constraints in technical, organizational, and financial capacity, as well as insufficient human resources, and a lack of coordination with the Ministry of Public Works and Transport and the Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism. There are no disability support organizations systematically engaged in policy development or advocacy regarding inclusive and accessible information, including communication technologies and systems.

[52] https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx?CountryCode=LAO&Lang=EN (Accessed: 15 March 2026)

3-3. Initiatives on Disability Issues within SDG-related Policies

According to the Sustainable Development Goals (hereinafter referred to as "SDGs") indicator database of the United Nations Statistics Division, under indicator 1.3.1, "Proportion of the population covered by social protection systems," the proportion of persons with severe disabilities receiving disability benefits was 0.3% as of 2021. This is the only indicator related to persons with disabilities.

The Government of Lao PDR conducted Voluntary National Reviews (hereinafter referred to as "VNRs") in 2018, 2021, and 2024, in which national governments report on their progress toward achieving the SDGs and on policy implementation to the UN High-Level Political Forum. According to the third VNR report (2024), OPDs participated in consultations with youth, civil society organization networks, a kick-off meeting, and stakeholder consultations, providing feedback on the draft report and striving to ensure that the perspectives and experiences of persons with disabilities were reflected in the report's preparation.

3-4. Ratification of and Initiatives regarding Other International Treaties related to Disabilities and Development

The Government of the Lao PDR ratified CEDAW in 1982. The most recent Concluding Observations were adopted in 2024. It highlighted the lack of access to education, social protection, and support services for marginalized women, including women with disabilities, and recommended the development of disaggregated data and the strengthening of inclusive policies.

The Government of Laos ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991. The latest Concluding Observations were adopted in 2018. It highlighted the strong link between poverty, ethnic origin, and disability; the social stigma faced by children with disabilities; the lack of statistical data; and the weakness of early support systems. And it recommended the development of an inclusive education system.

In addition, the Government of the Lao PDR has not ratified the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention (International Labour Organization Convention No. 159, 1983), an international convention that calls on states to formulate and implement national policies to ensure that persons with disabilities receive appropriate vocational rehabilitation and have equal access to employment opportunities.

3-5. International Cooperation on Disability[53]

• The Government of Japan[54]

<Technical Cooperation Project>

- Project for Human Resource Development to Strengthen Organizational Capacity of UXO Lao(2025-2027)
- Project for Strengthening Operational Capacity of UXO Lao Contributing to Poverty Alleviation (2019-2023)

<Grant Aid>

- Employment Promotion through Elderly and Disabled Care Skills Training for Improving Livelihoods of Low-Income Youth (2024-2027)*
- Inclusive Community Revitalization through the PPT (Pro-Poor Tourism) Strategic Approach in Viengxay Village, Houaphan Province (2023-2026)*
- Project for Improving Learning Environment of Pre-school and Primary Education in Thapangthong District (2022-2025)*
- Project for Supporting Small-Scale Entrepreneurship for Persons with Disabilities, Mainly Women, in Laos (2021-2024)*
- Project for Building a Sustainable System for UXO Risk Education for Children and Strengthening Living Infrastructure for Vulnerable Groups (2022-2024)*
- Project for the Reconstruction of the Chao Anouvong Stadium (2024-2026)
- Support for the Development of Improved Hand-Pedaled Tricycles to Enhance Mobility for Persons with Disabilities (2020-2023)*
- Project for Supporting the Vocational Support Center for Persons with Disabilities in Houaphan Province (2019-2021)*
- Life and Employment Support Program for the Social Independence of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities in Laos (2017-2020)*

* Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects

<Grassroots Technical Cooperation Project>

- Project for the Promotion of Sports for Persons with Disabilities in Laos (2022-2027)
- Practice of Inclusive Education and Employment Support Aimed at Social Independence for Children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (2023-2026)

• Other donors

<International organization>

UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund)

- Community-Based Child Protection Services for Children with Disabilities (2017-2020)[55]

[53] Project names are listed exactly as they appear in the original text. However, this does not apply in cases where there is no English name or the English name is unknown.

[54] JICA website（https://www.jica.go.jp/activities/schemes/partner/kusanone/country/project/laos.html）、the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan website（https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/data/zyoukyou.html）(Accessed: 15 March 2026)

[55] https://www.ilo.org/asia/projects/WCMS_756752/lang--en/index.htm, https://www.unicef.org/laos/reports/project-

UNDP(United Nations Development Programme)

・ Strengthening participation in the implementation of the CRPD (2021-2022)[56]

・ Lao PDR Efficiency and Accessibility of Public Services Project (LEAP) (2024-2028)[57]

UNESCO(United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)

・ Disability-Inclusive Data for Inclusive Education[58]

<Bilateral Aid>

USAID

・ Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in Lao PDR: Okard Project (2017-2027)[59]

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

・ Disability Empowerment Skills Exchange (DESE)(2019-2022)[60]

・ Basic Education Quality and Access in Laos (BEQUAL)(2015-2022)[61]

European Union

・ Partnership to Strengthen the Education System (PSES)(2018-2024)[62]

Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)

・ Strengthening Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health Services through Mobile Clinics (2016-2020)[63]

Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China

・ Expansion of Mahosot Hospital (2018-2021)[64]

<International NGO>

Humanity & Inclusion[65]

review-and-documentation-report (Accessed: 15 March 2026)

[56] https://www.undp.org/laopdr/projects/strenghtening-participation-implementation-un-convention-rights-persons-disabilities-crpd-convention-lao-pdr (Accessed: 15 March 2026)

[57] https://www.undp.org/laopdr/press-releases/one-door-service-centres-strengthen-disability-inclusive-public-services-through-undp-and-dida-training (Accessed: 15 March 2026)

[58] Joint Project with UNICEF. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/disability-inclusive-data-workshop-advance-inclusive-education-lao-pdr (Accessed: 15 March 2026)

[59] "Okard" means "opportunity" in Lao. The project aims to expand opportunities for social participation, independence, and employment for persons with disabilities. It is implemented through World Education. https://la.usembassy.gov/usaid-okard-celebrating-the-successes-of-disability-inclusive-development-in-laos/ (Accessed: 15 March 2026)

[60] https://www.abc.net.au/abc-international-development/projects/disability-empowerment-skills-exchange (Accessed: 15 March 2026)

[61] https://bequal-laos.org/2018/11/30/supporting-children-with-disabilities-to-attend-school-celebrate-international-day-of-people-with-disabilities-2018/ (Accessed: 15 March 2026)

[62] https://www.unicef.org/laos/press-releases/ministry-education-eu-and-unicef-advance-education-lao-pdr (Accessed: 15 March 2026)

[63] UN Lao PDR（2022）

[64] https://china.aiddata.org/projects/64210, https://kpl.gov.la/EN/detail.aspx?id=63173 (Accessed: 15 March 2026)

[65] https://www.hi.org/en/country/laos, https://www.hi.org/en/news/in-laos--hi-is-accompanying-200-children-along-the-road-to-education (Accessed: 15 March 2026)

- Sowing the Seeds of Inclusion (SOS-IE)(2021-)
- UXO victim rehabilitation and inclusion programmes (2018-)

CBM（Prosthetic and Orthotic Worldwide Education and Relief）

- Community-Based Inclusive Development (2018-2022)

Asian Development with the Disabled Persons (ADDP)

- Project to improve Deaf Education (2023-)[66]

ADDP also implements several other JICA Grassroots Technical Cooperation projects.

[66] https://en.nippon-foundation.or.jp/news/articles/2023/20231017-95488.html (Accessed: 15 March 2026)

4. Disability-related Organizations and Activities

4-1. Organizations of Persons with Disabilities

According to UN Lao PDR (2022), disability-related initiatives in Laos focus primarily on the provision of fragmented services in the areas of awareness-raising, education, and skills development, and in many cases rely on funding from small-scale grant programs run by international NGOs. Only the LDPA and the LWWDA, which primarily represent persons with physical disabilities, participate in NCDP meetings. These two organizations participated in drafting the "National Strategy and Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities (2020–2030)" and in preparing the government report (2016) and responses to questions (2020) under the CRPD. Furthermore, apart from the NCDP Secretariat, OPDs have no formal partnerships with other ministries or agencies.

Name of Organization	Outlines
Lao Disabled People's Association (LDPA)[67] http://www.ldpa.org.la	Established in 2001. LDPA has 13 regional branches nationwide. It is active in areas such as the implementation of the CRPD, employment, information support, accessibility, assistive devices and equipment, gender equality, and income generation, and currently places a focus on livelihood support for persons with disabilities. Since 2005, with support from international organizations and in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, it has organized workshops, seminars, and conferences for administrative officials at the central and local levels. NCPD collaborates with LDPA to organize annual events such as National Day of Persons with Disabilities, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, International Day of the Deaf, and World Autism Awareness Day to raise public awareness. In 2017, NCPD launched an inclusive taxi service for persons with disabilities, consisting of four accessible taxis operating within Vientiane, specifically to support persons with disabilities who visit Mahosot Hospital.
Lao Women's with Disabilities Association (LWWDA) http://laodisabledwomen.com/	LWWDA conducts empowerment and awareness-raising activities for women with disabilities through vocational and life skills training. In 2018, LWWDA representatives attended a constructive dialogue with the CEDAW Committee as a member of the Lao government delegation[68]. As of June 2022, the LWWDA Chairperson heads the Labor Working Group of the Lao Civil Society Coordination Committee, which has been granted the

[67] Based on the questionnaire survey conducted in this study, website of each organization, Parallel Report（2022）, UN Lao PDR（2022） and State Party's Report（2016）

[68] Lao Women's Union (2019)

	authority to represent domestic NGOs.
Association for the Deaf (AFD) http://www.laodeaf.org	Established in 2013. This self-help organization promotes the rights of persons with hearing impairments in Laos. It provides vocational training, offers and trains sign language interpreters, compiles sign language dictionaries, conducts training for teachers at schools for the deaf, and raises awareness among government officials. AFD plays a vital role in connecting Deaf individuals who have graduated from middle and high school to employment opportunities at vocational training centers and special schools, as well as to the Kao Niou Theater Troupe and ADDP[69].
Lao Association for the Blind (LAB) http://www.lablao.org	LAB has two regional branches. It provides educational opportunities and vocational training to help persons with visual impairments become independent and participate in society.
Association for Autism (AFA) http://www.laoautism.org	Established in 2005. AFA was officially registered as a NGO in 2012. It promotes the rights of children and adults with ASD, improves access to appropriate services, and provides education, therapy, and training to enable individuals with ASD and their families to lead fulfilling and productive lives. AFA supports private ASD centers in two districts, where these centers provide preschool and primary education to children with ASD.

4-2. Disability Support Organizations

Name of Organization	Outlines
COPE（Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise） www.copelaos.org/index.html	Established in 1997. A joint venture dedicated to assisting UXO victims. It provides prosthetics, orthotics, and rehabilitation services.
Asian Development with the Disabled Persons (ADDP) http://www.addp.jp/	A Japanese nonprofit organization. It has been providing support for persons with disabilities, primarily in Laos since the 1990s. Through vocational training, the establishment of employment support centers, daytime activities and individualized support for persons with intellectual disabilities, and the promotion of para-sports, ADDP promotes the independence and social participation of persons with disabilities. In addition, it works in partnership with local communities to contribute to improving living standards and achieving social inclusion with financial support from the Japanese government and other sources.

[69] Parallel Report（2022）

5. Barriers and Needs Faced by Persons with Disabilities[70]

5-1. Barriers to and Needs regarding Healthcare Services

In Laos, persons with disabilities have greater healthcare needs than those without disabilities, yet they face multiple barriers. First, the financial burden of medical and transportation costs is significant. In rural areas in particular, there have been reports of persons selling their livestock to travel to medical facilities in urban areas. Second, there is a marked geographical disparity in healthcare services. Advanced medical care and specialized services are concentrated in Vientiane, leaving rural areas without adequate access. Additionally, many medical facilities are not designed to be accessible, and there is a lack of sign language interpreters and Braille materials, making communication barriers a serious issue. In addition, a lack of understanding and response capabilities regarding disabilities among healthcare professionals, as well as inadequate services in the areas of intellectual disabilities and mental health, have been pointed out. In light of these issues, key needs include the development of rehabilitation systems at the community level, the provision of accessible medical information, the training of specialized personnel, and the strengthening of financial support, including assistance with transportation costs.

5-2. Barriers to and Needs regarding Education

In the education of children with disabilities, low enrollment rates and difficulties in continuing their education are major challenges. Statistics show that the rate of children with disabilities not attending school is significantly higher than that of children without disabilities, and the rate of progression to secondary education is also low. Underlying these issues are not only physical barriers, such as distance to school and lack of transportation, but also financial burdens, including tuition and the cost of educational materials. Additionally, due to a lack of teachers' understanding of disabilities and instructional skills, as well as a lack of reasonable accommodations, educational materials and information and communication technology (hereinafter referred to as "ICT"). Furthermore, bullying and social prejudices, such as the belief that "children with disabilities cannot learn," also hinder educational participation. In particular, children with intellectual disabilities or ASD often face refusal of admission or segregation. Taking into consideration of these issues, there is a need to strengthen teacher training, implement inclusive education, improve the accessibility of school facilities, expand financial support, and develop teaching materials and support systems tailored to individual needs.

[70] Based on two parallel reports

5-3. Barriers to and Needs regarding Employment

A major challenge in employment is the institutional disconnect between education, vocational training, and the transition to employment. TVET options for persons with disabilities are limited. Skills taught often do not align with labor market demands, and official certification of qualifications is inadequate. Additionally, training institutions have high admission requirements, creating a system that excludes persons with disabilities who have not received a basic education. There is a lack of job placement and employment support services, resulting in many cases where training completion does not lead to employment. Moreover, social security coverage is low, and persons with disabilities working in agriculture or the informal sector, in particular, are unable to receive income security. A lack of information and inadequate disability certification systems also hinder access to these programs. Consequently, there is a need to expand vocational training linked to the labor market, provide support for the transition from education to employment, expand social security coverage, and improve information provision and employment support services.

5-4. Barriers to and Needs regarding Transportation

There is a striking disparity between the legal framework and the reality regarding transportation. While the law provides for the use of public transportation and fare exemptions, accessible transportation services are not actually in place, and the means of transportation available to persons with disabilities are extremely limited. In rural areas, public transportation is scarce, severely limiting access to medical care and education. Furthermore, many roads, buildings, and public facilities are not barrier-free, making mobility itself difficult. The lack of sufficient public awareness regarding programs such as fare exemption schemes poses a significant barrier. To address these challenges, there is a critical need to develop accessible public transportation, secure transportation options in rural areas, implement universal design in infrastructure, and disseminate information about relevant programs.

5-5. Barriers to and Needs regarding Information Access

In the field of information accessibility, it is common for persons with disabilities to be unable to access the information they need. First, there is a shortage of accessible information, such as sign language interpretation, Braille, and easy-to-read materials, which leads to communication difficulties in settings such as healthcare, education, and the judicial system. Limited access to digital devices and media prevents information about systems and services from reaching persons with disabilities directly. As a result, even when legal rights and support systems exist, they often go unused. Additionally, because the methods used to provide information do not consider the specific nature of disabilities, this poses a significant

barrier, particularly for persons with hearing and visual impairments. In light of these issues, there is a need to provide information in diverse formats, utilize ICT, conduct outreach activities regarding rights and support systems, and establish communication support systems.

5-6. Barriers and Needs regarding Gender

Women with disabilities face multiple disadvantages due to the intersection of disability and gender. First, existing legal and policy frameworks related to gender do not sufficiently incorporate the perspective of disability, resulting in a lack of support measures specifically tailored to women with disabilities. Furthermore, access to sexual and reproductive health services and information is limited, a problem that is particularly pronounced among women in rural areas and those living in poverty. In addition, despite their high vulnerability to violence and exploitation, protection, reporting, and support systems are not sufficiently developed. Opportunities for policy-making and social participation are limited, making it difficult for their voices to be heard. To address these challenges, key needs identified include the introduction of policies specifically tailored to women with disabilities, improving accessibility to sexual and reproductive health services, strengthening violence prevention and support systems, and promoting participation in decision-making processes.

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