

EUROPEAN JOINT PROGRAMMING DOCUMENT FOR

# Lao People's Democratic Republic 2016–2020



## European development partners and the People's Democratic Republic of Laos

The European development partners and the People's Democratic Republic of Laos have a long standing, strong and dynamic partnership fundamentally grounded in their mutual commitments to social and economic development in Laos and its growing profile and participation in the global economy and governance systems. The partnership is through dialogue on sustainable economic development, environmental protection, integration in the world economy and trading systems, improving social service delivery and Laos' transition to an open, democratic society based on good governance, the rule of law, respect for human rights, women, children and minorities. This dialogue is further facilitated by European development cooperation that contributes much needed financial and, more importantly, technical and human resources.

### WHAT IS JOINT PROGRAMMING?

Every Laotian knows that if they want to compete in the boat races they must practice and that practice is more than anything else about building a team. Each rower in the boat comes with their own individual strengths and weaknesses. Some are tall, some are strong, some are left-handed and some are just having a bad day. Regardless the differences in the stature and profile of the rowers they must learn to row together. Rowing together means agreeing the best strategy to win the race, taking advantage of each other's strengths and compensating for each other's weaknesses. Most importantly, though, winning the race means agreeing to go in the right direction, pitching up on time and following the rules.

Joint programming follows the same principles except the rowers are development partners and the race is a marathon. This is a race in which the prizes are poverty eradication, a clean and safe environment, good social services and a better life for all. In Laos 'Team Joint Programming' comprises ten European development partners, essentially making a European team. The nine European development partners are the EU, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Hungary, Luxembourg, Poland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

## Why Joint Programming Now?

The Government of Laos has long been a supporter of efforts to improve the effectiveness of development cooperation. Development cooperation is more effective when development partners coordinate, communicate, agree a shared vision and strategy and play by the same rules. Last year, the Government drafted the 8<sup>th</sup> National Social and Economic Development Programme (NSEDP) for 2016 to 2020. The NSEDP provides European development partners an opportunity to come together in one team in support of the Government's own planning.

In this regard, European joint programming follows the Government's lead by using the NSEDP timetable 2016-2020, pursuing goals identified in the NSEDP, adopting the same sector definitions as used in the NSEDP and promoting the use of government reporting, monitoring and evaluation contributing to one single benchmark for success. It is also the foundation for dialogue on fundamental human rights, environmental protection and the expansion of good governance practices in Laos, amongst other shared European values.

it means more value can be delivered to Laos from the same resources.

European development partners use a joint approach to improve their focus on delivering results as identified in the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP. The table below shows how the European donors plan to spend their combined budget of LAK 4.5 trillion on improving the quality of life in Laos. European joint programming concentrates on seven sectors, all of which are priorities for the Government and people of Laos.

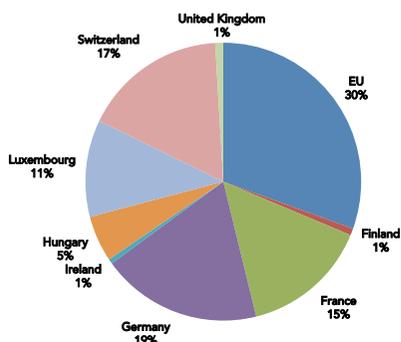
## Conclusion

Joint programming is a first step that is essentially nothing more than agreeing a shared strategy<sup>2</sup>, direction of the race and allocating resources. Going forward the European team are working together to improve their effectiveness in each of the sectors listed above. Having a shared strategy and agreeing the same direction, timetable and rules are only the beginning. In the future when projects are designed or activities planned they will increasingly be done jointly both amongst European development partners and always with the government but also encouraging other development partners to join up and work together.

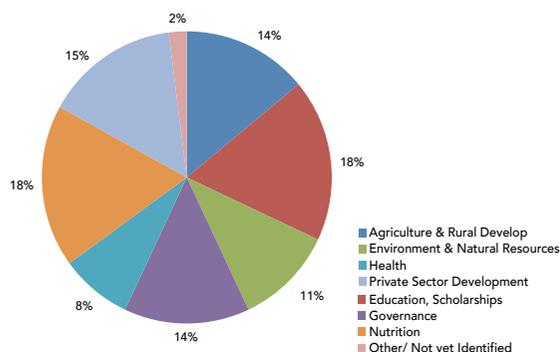
In this regard, it is worth noting that Laos is a global best practice and the first case of a joint programming that has successfully been able to replace the EU's own country strategy documents. Step by step, the joint approach is being progressively made more feasible by removing administrative barriers and building on a strong partnerships and dialogue with the Lao Government.

<sup>2</sup> Note: Joint Programming is at the strategy level; European Donor Funding still follows the same approach in regards to allocating resources through competitive and transparency processes.

KIP 4.5 Trillion in combined Development Resources



European Development Cooperation Investments by Sector



## Why is the European Joint Programme for Laos Important?

Laos is still highly dependent on international development partners for public investment funds. The 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP reports that almost two thirds<sup>1</sup> of public investment funds come from international development partners. Accordingly, when the European development partners improve their efficiencies and the effectiveness of their contributions

<sup>1</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP Financing Plan, pg. 135