Analysis of the UN Survey

Phase 2: Effects of Development Issues in Lao PDR

Background

In 2015, the UN Country Team in Lao PDR initiated the crowdsourcing of problem trees using the Futurescaper platform. The initiative aims to actively and creatively engage people in analysing development issues and crafting their own solutions through a round of mini-surveys. This provides interesting insights into perceptions of Lao PDR’s current key development challenges, their causes, effects and priorities for the future of the country. The outcome of the crowdsourcing feeds into the design and operationalization of the Lao PDR – UN Partnership Framework (2017-2021), helping the UN strengthen its programme strategy.

The first phase explored the existing development issues and their causes. It thus helped to complement the country analysis - an important basis for the Partnership Framework - with a “wisdom of crowds” approach. The analysis of the first phase is available here.

The second phase, launched in February 2016, asked about key effects of development issues in the country. Building on the factors identified in the first survey, it tasked the respondents to select the most pressing development issue and speculate on its immediate and ultimate effects. The survey was disseminated to a wide range of stakeholders including international development partners, civil society, the government, the public at large and all UN staff through various channels, including targeted communication, UN websites, public discussion forums and social media. The respondents had an opportunity to complete the survey in English and Lao. The current analysis covers the results of this second survey.

Survey Participation

187 people responded, consisting of UN staff (60 respondents), public at large / citizen experts (94 respondents), Government (4 respondents) and those who did not wish to disclose their belonging to any of the target group categories (29 respondents). The graph #1 below provides the response rate by main categories.

Graph #1. Breakdown of survey respondents by main categories. Anonymous includes respondents who did not wish to disclose their belonging to any of the target group categories.

Top 10 major effects of development issues

Graph #2 displays the 10 most influential effects of development issues identified. The arrows show the inter-linkages and influence among the effects. The bolder the arrow, the stronger the linkage, depending on the number of times a particular effect was mentioned by the respondents.

The effects most frequently identified include challenges in governance and public administration; limited and unequal income generation opportunities; and increased poverty and unemployment.

These effects have various degrees of influence on each other. The respondents believe that issues around governance, for instance, not only influence public administration, but also economic development; access and quality of education; income generation opportunities and inequality. Similarly, inadequate access and
quality of healthcare very strongly affects the rate of preventable diseases and risks to the population’s wellbeing, which in turn is also interrelated with limited and unequal income generation opportunities.

Similar to the first survey, identical factors entered by respondents have been merged under ‘leading’ factors for ease of user reference. Below is a breakdown of constituents of the top four leading factors in the second survey:

- Lack of transparency & accountability
- Lack of monitoring & enforcement
- Weak implementation and adherence to regulations/law
- Limited trust in public services
- Lack of coordination among sectors
- Weak evidence-based prioritization

- Inequality of income distribution
- Rural population well-being is challenged
- Low financial protection
- Social inequality
- Restricted income
- Lack of savings and insurance

- Droupouts & high rate of grade repetition
- Lack of scholarships/funding
- Low performance of teachers
- Limited number of teachers & educational facilities
- Need for modern curricular
Storylines of issues & effects

The following graph #3 presents the top five emerging storylines between development issues and effects, as identified by all survey respondents.

![Graph 3. Top five major storylines (all respondents)](image)

This automatically generated impact cascade analysis picks the most important factors identified and links them with the most frequent effects. Again, the bolder the arrow, the more frequent the linkage, depending on the number of times a particular factor was mentioned. The colour coding indicates the extent to which a factor was raised as a development issue, immediate effect and ultimate effect. For instance, poor economic development is identified as ultimate effect mostly caused by limited and unequal income generation opportunities. At the same time, poor economic development leads to unsustainable use of land and natural resources.

Graph #4 shows that the perception of non-UN respondents is quite similar to the overall results presented in graph #3.

![Graph 4. Top five major storylines (excluding UN staff)](image)

1 The arrows’ colour-coding depends on the biggest pie slice of the factor the arrow originates from.
A number of interesting observations can be made: the challenges related to the level of literacy, for example, are mostly identified as development issues, while poor access and quality of education is seen more as an immediate and ultimate effect. Poor access and quality of education in turn is seen to lead to poor economic development as well as decreased environmental sustainability. The chain of effects originating from poverty and unemployment leads all the way to subsequent difficulties in graduation from LDC status.

Graphs #5 and #6 present examples of two individual responses that showcase the vast amount of interconnected implications of increased poverty and unemployment as well as reduced food and nutrition security. One can see the rationale of the respondents’ answers under the respective graph.

**Conclusion**

The in-depth analysis conducted by the survey respondents not only revealed interesting perceptions on the correlation between development issues and their effects, but also predicted short and mid-term future development scenarios of what could happen if no measures are taken.

As next steps, phase 1 (development challenges and causes) and phase 2 (effects) will feed into a final phase 3, where the respondents will find solutions to the development issues.