

Organizational unit: Lao PDR Country Office

Year of report: 2021

Title of evaluation report: UNFPA Country Programme Evaluation Lao PDR

Overall quality of report: **Very good**

Date of assessment: 20 April 2021

Overall comments: This is a very thorough, well-designed and well-implemented evaluation despite being carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic. It used a useful combination of international and national experts so that the data could be obtained well. The 39 findings were well-supported and led to conclusions and recommendations primarily for the UNFPA Country Office that could help improve the next country programme. The evaluation report covers all programme interventions – sexual and reproductive health (SRH), adolescents and youth (A&Y), and population dynamics (PD) – as well as the cross-cutting areas of gender equality, emergency preparedness and humanitarian response. The evaluation addresses nine evaluation questions organized according to the four standard OECD-DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability), but without a detailed assessment of any one programme. Chapters 2 (Country Context 2) and 3 (UNFPA Response) provide a good background for understanding the country programme and the evaluation approach. The evaluation includes a Theory of Change logic, an evaluation matrix, and uses a balanced mixed-methods approach. The description of the evaluation methodology, however, is limited by an incomplete description of the evaluation tools employed in data collection and analysis. Overall, more attention could be given to clarifying the evaluation design and methodology, particularly including more description of qualitative tools and data collected through interviews, focus groups and site visits. The findings reflect a reasonable analysis of the intervention's strengths and weaknesses within the context of influencing factors. The conclusions provide a balanced perspective and are grounded on the evaluation findings. A distinct gender and vulnerability analysis is a part of the evaluation results. The evaluation is disability inclusive in that it considers whether the CP has explicitly addressed disability as part of its focus on vulnerable populations and whether related data collection was sufficient. Although the analysis of disability issues is not indepth, the basic questions are answered.

Assessment Levels

Very Good (blue box)	strong, above average, best practice	Good (green box)	satisfactory, respectable	Fair (yellow box)	with some weaknesses, still acceptable	Unsatisfactory (red box)	weak, does not meet minimal quality standards
-----------------------------	--------------------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------------	--------------------------	--	---------------------------------	---

Quality Assessment Criteria *Insert assessment level followed by main comments. (use 'shading' function to give cells corresponding colour)*

1. Structure and Clarity of Reporting	Yes	Assessment Level: Very good
	No	
	Partial	

To ensure the report is comprehensive and user-friendly

1. Is the report structured in a logical way? Is the report easy to read and understand (i.e. written in an accessible language appropriate for the intended audience) with minimal grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors? Is there a clear distinction made between analysis/findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned (where applicable)?	Yes	The report follows the standards in terms of order.
---	-----	---

2. Is the report of a reasonable length? (maximum pages for the main report, excluding annexes: 60 for institutional evaluations; 70 for CPEs; 80 for thematic evaluations)	Yes	The report is of reasonable length; excluding the preamble pieces (map, list key facts, etc.) on pages 1-14 and executive summary on pages 15-19, the body of the text is 57 pages long (pages 20 to 77).
--	-----	---

3. Do the annexes contain – at a minimum – the ToRs; a bibliography; a list of interviewees; the evaluation matrix; methodological and data collection tools used (e.g. interview guides; focus group notes, outline of surveys)?	Yes	The annexes contain the desired annexes.
<i>Executive summary</i>		
4. Is an executive summary written as a stand-alone section, presenting the i) Purpose; ii) Objectives, scope and brief description of interventions; iii) intended audience; iv)	Yes	The executive summary is complete and is written as a stand alone section that presents the main results of the evaluation.
5. Is the executive summary reasonably concise (e.g. with a maximum length of 5 pages)?	Yes	The executive summary is reasonably concise, being five pages long.
2. Design and Methodology		
	Yes No Partial	Assessment Level: Good
<i>To ensure that the evaluation is put within its context</i>		
1. Is the development and institutional context of the evaluation clearly described and constraints explained?	Yes	The development and institutional context of the evaluation is clearly described, including country context and strategies, development challenges, progress achieved in previous programs, and UNFPA response to specific programs in the Laos country program, with constraints noted.
2. Does the evaluation report discuss and assess the intervention logic and/or theory of change?	Partial	The evaluation report does briefly discuss the theory of change which the evaluation team developed and presented in Annex 2: They reconstructed the Theory of Change, but without any further elaboration or assessment.
<i>To ensure a rigorous design and methodology</i>		
3. Is the evaluation framework clearly described in the text and in the evaluation matrix? Does the evaluation matrix establish the evaluation questions, assumptions, indicators, data sources and methods for data collection?	Yes	The evaluation framework is described in the text, albeit in an abridged manner, through presentation of the evaluation objectives, scope, evaluation criteria and questions as well as methods and tools. The evaluation matrix is presented in Annex 12 and includes the necessary elements.
4. Are the tools for data collection described and their choice justified?	No	The evaluation tools - interviews, document review, focus groups. - are briefly noted in the evaluation framework and cross-referenced in the evaluation matrix, although there is no detailed description of, or rationale for, the selection of the tools.
5. Is there a comprehensive stakeholder map? Is the stakeholder consultation process clearly described (in particular, does it include the consultation of key stakeholders on draft recommendations)?	Yes	The evaluation report notes the primary intended users and provides a comprehensive stakeholder map in Annex 5: UNFPA Lao PDR Stakeholder Map 2017-2020. The report states that "the validation of analysis and findings was sought through regular exchanges with the UNFPA country office." It also noted that results "were formally presented to the UNFPA country office during a staff retreat" and that the results of that "fed into the recommendations of the first draft." A combination of a series of bilateral debriefings and a stakeholders' meeting were held from which written comments on the first two drafts were provided to the evaluation team. Finally, the Stakeholders Map in Annex 5 has a column labeled "Intended Beneficiaries" targeting vulnerable and marginalized groups includes mention of "vulnerable groups, "beyond target groups", targeted groups for advocacy, and minority groups.

6. Are the methods for analysis clearly described for all types of data?	Partial	While the evaluation report identifies the sources of data, both quantitative and qualitative, in the evaluation matrix (Annex 12), there is no overall description of the process for management and analysis of data in the text of the evaluation framework. While the text notes it uses qualitative "content analysis" as one type of analysis which "was applied to integrate what the evidence said about each of the evaluation matrix indicators", it does not specifically address what other types of analysis were used.
7. Are methodological limitations acknowledged and their effect on the evaluation described? Does the report discuss what was done to minimize such issues?	Yes	The mixed methods approach to data collection allowed an analysis of survey data, publicly accessible data from Country Ministries and data regarding progress achieved in terms of CPD output and outcome data in Annex 3.
8. Is the sampling strategy described?	Yes	This was done. The evaluation text states " the CPE team strived to consider and include diverse views by consulting as much as possible stakeholders and intended beneficiaries from relevant vulnerable groups and geographic areas, based on the stakeholders map". The Field Visit Sampling (Annex 10) notes that the Stakeholders Map (Annex 5) "served as the basis for sampling stakeholders and intended beneficiaries" describes the sampling of field visits as "purposive and non-random." The same Annex (5) notes some of the factors that were taken into account in developing the sample and that country staff was consulted with and agreed on the actual sampling. In the case of a survey, questionnaires were sent out to all of the participants in the 4th ARD, but there was only a response rate of 21% while for the 5th ARD it was 46%.
9. Does the methodology enable the collection and analysis of disaggregated data?	Yes	The mixed methods approach to data collection allowed an analysis of survey data, publicly accessible data from Country Ministries and data regarding progress achieved in terms of CPD output and outcome data in Annex 3.
10. Is the design and methodology appropriate for assessing the cross-cutting issues (equity and vulnerability, disability inclusion, gender equality and human rights)?	Yes	Cross-cutting issues dealing with gender, human rights and youth are addressed as issues to be dealt with, and in humanitarian responses to a more limited degree, as can be seen in the findings as well as in the evaluation matrix (Annex 12). Disability inclusion is considered under evaluation question 7. Also, the evaluation states that "quantitative monitoring data have neither been disaggregated by nor systematically qualified with information about vulnerable groups or about gender. Reconstructing these data sets went beyond the resources available to the CPE Team."
3. Reliability of Data	Yes No Partial	Assessment Level: Very good
<i>To ensure quality of data and robust data collection processes</i>		

<p>1. Did the evaluation triangulate data collected as appropriate?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The evaluation states that "Besides triangulation, the validation of analysis and findings was sought through regular exchanges with the UNFPA country office." While there is no further mention of how the evaluation triangulated data as appropriate across sources and methods per se, the evaluation matrix (Annex 12) does note multiple sources of information and methods of data collection and similarly multiple source of evidence are noted in references, citations and footnotes in the body of the report - which suggests they did follow triangulation in practice.</p>	
<p>2. Did the evaluation clearly identify and make use of reliable qualitative and quantitative data sources?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The evaluation used both quantitative data (finance, census, health statistics) and qualitative data (interviews, focus groups and observations).</p>	
<p>3. Is there evidence that data has been collected with a sensitivity to issues of discrimination and other ethical considerations?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The evaluation notes the "CPE team closely adhered" to UNEG guidance and UN code of conduct and that all interviewees and focus group participants were assured data gathered was confidential and voluntary, and described the limits of their direct questions with women and girls. Annex 10 (Field Visit Sampling) also addressed the precautions that were undertaken to ensure sensitivity to discrimination and other ethical considerations.</p>	
<p>4. Analysis and Findings</p>	<p>Yes No Partial</p>	<p>Assessment Level:</p>	<p>Very good</p>
<p><i>To ensure sound analysis and credible findings</i></p>			
<p>1. Are the findings substantiated by evidence?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>There is care in substantiating the 39 findings. The findings in the evaluation report are supported by evidence in the text, with sources noted either in the body of the narrative text, in footnotes, or in the Annexes.</p>	
<p>2. Is the basis for interpretations carefully described?</p>	<p>Partial</p>	<p>The evaluation describes the basis for interpretation. The main sources of information and evidence are noted in the findings, although more substantive analysis of qualitative data would have been helpful.</p>	
<p>3. Is the analysis presented against the evaluation questions?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The findings are presented against each of the evaluation questions, with a summary statement of each finding related to the evaluation question presented in a text box immediately under the evaluation</p>	

<p>4. Are the cause and effect links between an intervention and its end results explained and any unintended outcomes highlighted?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>There is a clear effort to show the causal connections between what UNFPA produces and the result (or not).</p>
<p>5. Does the analysis show different outcomes for different target groups, as relevant?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The various UNFPA-supported programmes had different target groups and this was always noted in the findings. Where outputs and/or outcomes are provided, different target groups are identified. Results are expressed more as outputs and activities than actual outcomes in the text and as such different outputs for different groups are commonly shown. Annex 3: CPD Monitoring Data is where the relationship is provided, which provides a summary statement and overall progress as of October 2020.</p>
<p>6. Is the analysis presented against contextual factors?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The analysis clearly takes contextual factors (budget, COVID-19) into account. Contextual factors are presented in the UNFPA Response chapter by program area. In addition, specific sections of the findings include contextual factors that have an immediate bearing on the finding(s) being analyzed.</p>
<p>7. Does the analysis elaborate on cross-cutting issues such as equity and vulnerability, disability inclusion, gender equality and human rights?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The evaluation deals with cross-cutting issues such as equality, vulnerability etc. as well as with emergency preparedness and humanitarian response as specified in the Terms of Reference. Gender equality is a constant cross-cutting theme. There are references to disability in terms of the programme addressing people living with disabilities and of the need to improve related data collection (finding 29 and 30) conclusion 4 and recommendation 7).</p>
<p>5. Conclusions</p>	<p>Yes No Partial</p>	<p>Assessment Level: Very good</p>
<p><i>To assess the validity of conclusions</i></p>		
<p>1. Do the conclusions flow clearly from the findings?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Conclusions are based on the analysis of findings and clearly flow from the findings. Each conclusion is followed by the number of the relevant evaluation question, the evaluation criteria, and the associated recommendation. The conclusions are grouped at the strategic level and at the programmatic level.</p>
<p>2. Do the conclusions go beyond the findings and provide a thorough understanding of the underlying issues of the programme/initiative/system being evaluated and reflect as appropriate cross-cutting issues such as equality and vulnerability, disability inclusion, gender equality and human rights?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The conclusions are clearly stated and provide an understanding of the underlying issues as well as of appropriate cross-cutting issues. Disability is included in conclusion 4.</p>
<p>3. Do the conclusions appear to convey the evaluators' unbiased judgement?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>There is no evidence of bias.</p>

6. Recommendations	Yes No Partial	Assessment Level:	Good
<i>To ensure the usefulness and clarity of recommendations</i>			
1. Do recommendations flow logically from conclusions?	Yes	The recommendations flow clearly from the findings and each recommendation notes the number of the conclusion on which it is based, although they are not grouped at the strategic and programmatic levels in a manner parallel to the conclusions .	
2. Are the recommendations targeted at the intended users and action-oriented (with information on their human, financial and technical implications)?	Partial	The recommendations are action-oriented. Each recommendations has a "target level" which indicates the intended users and provides a description of the operational implications which deal with mostly human and technical implications, but not financial ones. The recommendations could have been grouped at strategic level and programmatic level as was done in the conclusions since they were the two principle components of the evaluation.	
3. Do recommendations appear balanced and impartial and address, as relevant, key cross cutting issues such as equity and vulnerability, disability-inclusion, gender equality and human rights?	Yes	The recommendations appear balanced and impartial, building on strengths and addressing weaknesses. Recommendation 7 addresses cross-cutting issues including vulnerable groups, adolescents with disabilities, and gender equality.	
4. Are the recommendations prioritized?	Yes	Each recommendation is prioritized as very high or high with the 8 recommendations being evenly split between those two ratings.	
7. Gender			
	0 1 2 3 (**)	Assessment Level:	Very good
<i>To assess the integration of Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (GEEW) (*)</i>			
1. Is GEEW integrated in the evaluation scope of analysis and indicators designed in a way that ensures GEEW-related data to be collected?		a. Does the evaluation include an objective specific to assessment of human rights and gender equality considerations or was it mainstreamed in other objectives? (Score: 0-3) An objective on gender and human rights exists. Score: 3) b. Was a standalone criterion on gender and/or human rights included in the evaluation framework or mainstreamed into other evaluation criteria? (Score: 0-3) It was both mainstreamed and specific. Score=3. c. Is there a dedicated evaluation question or sub-question regarding how GEEW was integrated into the subject of the evaluation? (Score: 0-3) Evaluations 3 and 6 are related to GEEW. Score=3 d. Does the evaluation assess whether sufficient information was collected during the implementation period on specific result indicators to measure progress on human rights and gender equality results?(Score: 0-3) Absence of information is noted. Score=3	

<p>2. Is a gender-responsive methodology used, including gender-responsive methods and tools, and data analysis techniques?</p>	<p>a. Does the evaluation specify how gender issues are addressed in the methodology, including: how data collection and analysis methods integrate gender considerations and ensure data collected is disaggregated by sex? (Score: 0-3) There is a noted effort to ensure, where possible, that gender data is collected. Score=3</p> <p>b. Does the evaluation methodology employ a mixed-methods approach, appropriate to evaluating GEEW considerations (collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data, and ensuring the appropriate sample size)? (Score: 0-3) A mixed method approach is used and there is an effort to collect gender data of both types. Score=3</p> <p>c. Are a diverse range of data sources and processes employed (i.e. triangulation, validation) to guarantee inclusion, accuracy and credibility? (Score: 0-3) 3 Triangulation and validation are used to verify the data. Score=3</p> <p>d. Do the evaluation methods and sampling frame address the diversity of stakeholders affected by the intervention, particularly the most vulnerable, where appropriate? (Score: 0-3) There is an effort to address diversity of stakeholders, as shown in Annex 10. Score=3</p> <p>e. Were ethical standards considered throughout the evaluation and were all stakeholder groups treated with integrity and respect for confidentiality? (Score: 0-3) Ethical standards were shown. Score=3</p>
<p>3. Do the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations reflect a gender analysis?</p>	<p>a. Does the evaluation have a background section that includes an intersectional analysis of the specific social groups affected by the issue or spell out the relevant normative instruments or policies related to human rights and gender equality? (Score: 0-3) The background section describes the different social groups affected, including especially those affected by humanitarian crises. Score=3</p> <p>b. Do the findings include data analysis that explicitly and transparently triangulates the voices of different social role groups, and/or disaggregates quantitative data, where applicable? (Score: 0-3) In a number of key questions, the data analysis tries to acquire the diversity information. Score=2</p> <p>2 c. Are unanticipated effects of the intervention on human rights and gender equality described? (Score: 0-3) There are a few references to unanticipated effects, but it is not a major issue. Score=2</p> <p>d. Does the evaluation report provide specific recommendations addressing GEEW issues, and priorities for action to improve GEEW or the intervention or future initiatives in this area? (Score: 0-3) Recommendations 4 and 7 deal with gender. Score=3</p>
<p>(*) This assessment criteria is fully based on the UN-SWAP Scoring Tool. Each sub-criteria shall be equally weighted. (**) Scoring uses a four point scale (0-3).</p>	
<p>Overall Evaluation Quality Assessment</p>	
<p>Assessment Levels (*)</p>	

Quality assessment criteria (scoring points*)	Very good	Good	Fair	Unsatisfactory
1. Structure and clarity of reporting, including executive summary (7)	7			
2. Design and methodology (13)		13		
3. Reliability of data (11)	11			
4. Analysis and findings (40)	40			
5. Conclusions (11)	11			
6. Recommendations (11)		11		
7. Integration of gender (7)	7			
Total scoring points	76	24		
Overall assessment level of evaluation report	Very good			
The evaluation integrates adequately cross cutting issues of gender equality and human rights, even though is not included as part of the evaluation objective.				
Consideration of significant constraints (e.g. COVID-19 or civil unrest)				
The quality of this evaluation report has been hampered by exceptionally difficult circumstances: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No				
If yes, please explain:				