



Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



Cooperative member harvesting organically-grown carrots, Xiengkhouang, Laos. Photo © GIZ-CEGGA/Phoonsab

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is Switzerland's international cooperation agency within the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. In collaboration with other federal offices, the SDC is responsible for the overall coordination of development cooperation and humanitarian aid delivered by the Swiss Confederation.

The Swiss international cooperation in the Mekong region comprises of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Thailand (the CLMVT countries), with a country focus on Cambodia and Laos. It includes projects with broader outreach in the Mekong region.

In 2006, the SDC opened a cooperation office in Vientiane Capital to oversee Switzerland's development cooperation activities in the country.

The SDC in Laos

The SDC aims at reducing poverty, supporting equitable and sustainable development, and fostering participative and democratic governance while improving people's resilience in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing impacts from climate change and disasters.

The SDC's overall goal for the **Swiss Cooperation Programme in the Mekong Region 2022-25** and development and cooperation activities in Laos, is to 'enable people, in particular young people, women and disadvantaged groups', 'to be more prosperous, resilient and better included in development processes'.

The overall country budget amounts to CHF 59 million in Laos, plus CHF 28.2 million for Mekong regional projects.

Country programmes and activities in Laos are managed through the three following thematic portfolios:

In the **Governance and Citizen Participation (GCP)** portfolio, people will benefit from responsive public service delivery and actively engage in local and national governance processes. Inclusive, evidence based and gender-responsive policies and plans will be elaborated and effectively applied into practice.

In the **Inclusive Economic Development (IED)** portfolio, people will have access to quality vocational skills development, employment support and business development services to improve their employment and income opportunities, thus becoming more resilient to economic shocks and crises. Inclusive policies will be developed by policymakers, consulted with the private sector and civil society originations and implemented together.

In the **Climate Change and Natural Resource Management (CCNRM)** portfolio, people will have more secure and equitable access to natural resources (land, forest and water) and will be able to manage them sustainably. Implementation of responsive climate change adaptation and mitigation policies will make people more resilient to climate change and disasters.

In addition to the above thematic portfolios, the transversal cross-cutting themes of **Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, Good Governance, and Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation and Disaster Risk Reduction** will consistently be applied throughout the programmes throughout the portfolio, including the support for **COVID-19 recovery**. The recovery phase will remain a key context feature throughout this Cooperation Programme period.

All programme objectives and outcomes in Laos are aligned with the Government of Laos' development priorities, defined within the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan, while also oriented towards the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, which includes the country's Sustainable Development Goals.

Governance and Citizen Participation

Citizen Engagement for Good Governance, Accountability and Rule of Law: (01/2017-10/2022, CHF 6,576,316). This project seeks to improve the inclusiveness of the development process in Lao PDR, focusing on three main intervention areas: improving the environment for the civil society, strengthening the National Assembly and enhancing the state of the rule of law. The project is a joint Switzerland, Germany and the European Union program implemented by GIZ.

Local Governance Programme: (11/2020-09/2022, CHF 1,940,000). Co-financed by SDC and Luxembourg, the project is executed by the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the Lux Development. The project aims to improve living standards in 229 villages in four provinces by lifting the communities above the poverty line through the strengthening of governance processes, supporting community-led development and social infrastructure initiatives related to education and clean water.

Inclusive Economic Development

Skills for Tourism: (01/2023-12/2027, CHF 9,000,000). The project is equally co-financed by Switzerland and Luxembourg, implemented by LuxDev. The project aims to support and improve the quality and expand the skills development programs in the tourism and hospitality sector. The overall goal is to increase employment and participation of Lao youth from disadvantaged groups to meet the needs of the tourism labour market.

Vocational Training and Employment Support Service: (08/2019-07/2023, CHF 8,6100,000). The project, is implemented by the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the consortium of Swisscontact and the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts supports the Integrated Vocational Education System in cooperation with Employment Support Services to consistently bring people with poverty and disability, job seekers, disadvantaged people and other marginalized groups into employment, self-employment, income generation or back into the education system.

Climate Change and Natural Resource Management

Enhancing Nutrition of Upland Farming Families: (07/2020-06/2024, CHF 7,660,088). This project implemented by SNV, follows a multi-sectoral approach to improve nutritional status of upland farming communities through improved feeding practices, household dietary diversity, improved access to hygiene and sanitation, increased access to nutritious food with a more conducive policy framework at sub national level.

Dam Safety Technical and Institutional Assistance in Lao PDR: (04/2022-03/2026, CHF 5,367,000). The project, implemented by Helvetas strengthens the capacity of Laos to protect people, property and the environment from harmful effects of poor operation or failure of dams and reservoirs, especially the hydropower dam safety supervisory authority's ability to enforce dam safety regulations, i.e. ensure that dam owners / operators comply with dam safety standards.

Enhancing Systematic Land Registration: (07/2021-09/2026, CHF 7,325,000). Support the Lao People's Democratic Republic's effort to accelerate systematic land registration, hence strengthening land tenure security of the Lao population, including the vulnerable groups, women and ethnic minorities. The project is implemented by the World Bank Office in Laos.

Public Information and Awareness Services for Vulnerable Communities: (09/2021-08/2024, CHF 1,815,041). This project, implemented by Helvetas, aims at improving access to legal information and counselling services for the most vulnerable communities, with a wider thematic scope of natural resources and land rights. The project complements the country's effort to enhance inclusive systematic land registration funded by the World Bank and the SDC.

Lao Upland Rural Advisory Services: (12/2021-11/2025, CHF 5,000,000). The project establishes a demand-driven pluralistic extension system, involving various service providers including self-determined farmer organisations, to support inclusive, resilient farming systems and agri-business, which in turn creates fairer and sustainable incomes. The project is implemented by Helvetas.



Practising hygiene standards in vocational training for tourism and hospitality sector, Laos. Photo © Skills for Tourism Project