

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 **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 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 organisations and implemented together.

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 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 Lao PDR (GoL)'s 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.

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.

Public Information and Awareness Services for Vulnerable Communities: (09/2021-08/2024, CHF 1,816,000). 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.

Enhancing Systematic Land Registration: (07/2021- 09/2026, CHF 7,125,000). Support the GoL's effort to accelerate systematic land registration, hence strengthening land tenure security of the Laotian population, including the vulnerable groups, women and ethnic minorities. The project is implemented by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and the SDC funding is channelled through a World Bank's Trust Fund.

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 the GoL 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.

Lao Upland Rural Advisory Services: (12/2021-11/2025, CHF 5,585,000). 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.

Sustainable Land Management and Investments for Climate-resilient Livelihoods: (08/2023-07/2027, CHF 4,199,333), The project is set to be executed by Switzerland's Centre for Development and Environment of the University of Bern to assist the GoL in enhancing land management, advocating for quality investments in sustainable land management, and strengthening knowledge, capacities, and processes for the benefit of the most vulnerable communities.

Sustainable Consumption and Production: (01/2024-12/2027) CHF 1,655,000. While Laos transitions to a more urban economy, it struggles with insufficient waste management. Switzerland and the European Union in support of the with the GoL, are joining hands to promote sustainable consumption and production practices in urban areas by strengthening the capacities, outreach and impact of waste-related Civil Society Organisations, who will contribute to the green and inclusive economic growth of the country.

Inclusive Economic Development

Skills for Tourism, Agriculture and Forestry Programme: (01/2023-12/2027, CHF 9,000,000). Switzerland, Luxembourg and the European Union are joining hands to reform the TVET sector together with the GoL to increase the employability and income of the Laotian people. Switzerland's engagement will support youth to access improved vocational skills development and reach employment through stronger employment service delivery that is aligned with labour market opportunities, benefiting particularly women and young people.

Vocational Training and Employment Support Service: (12/2023-12/2027, CHF 8,800,000). 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. The exit phase of project will further promote an inclusive vocational skills development (VSD) system in Laos, within the current context of economic crisis, early school leavers from disadvantaged backgrounds will benefit from improved and labour market relevant training, employment support services and a sustainable funding model for VSD.

Governance and Citizen Participation

Citizen Engagement for Good Governance, Accountability and Rule of Law: (11/2022-10/2025, CHF 5,000,000). This programme aims to contribute to good governance, rule of law and human rights, through providing more opportunities for local communities and civil society organizations to engage in the country's socio-economic development, and to collaborate with the legislature in bringing citizen's voice and concerns to the local and national executive authorities. The programme is a joint initiative of three Team Europe partners—the European Union, Germany, and Switzerland— together with the GoL and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ).

Local Development Governance Programme: (01/2023-12/2026, CHF 8,000,000). Co-financed by the SDC and Luxembourg, the project is executed by the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the Luxembourg Development Cooperation Agency. The project 's overall goal is to improve provision and access to social services, sustainable livelihoods and socio-economic opportunities through enhanced public administration capacities, participatory planning and effective decentralization.