Executive Summary

The approval of the Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS), which enabled the Government of Lao and its partners to measure progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and provided disaggregated data highlighting disparities between provinces for the first time, was of significant importance.

In 2012, the Government committed to “A Promise Renewed,” a global initiative to reduce childhood deaths due to preventable illnesses. Data from the LSIS was timely in supporting advocacy meetings to increase national resource allocation and in strengthening policies and guidelines for priority interventions including increasing immunization coverage, increasing access to essential drugs for diarrhea and pneumonia, and improving newborn care. In the follow-up to “A Promise Renewed,” UNICEF met with the Vice-Minister of Health (in partnership with US Embassy), and the new director of the Department of Hygiene and Health Promotion.

UNICEF worked closely with development partners to ensure the immunization programme was fully financed in 2013. Through a series of meetings, UNICEF advocated for the Government to close the funding gap using the national budget. As a result, the Government committed funds to procure traditional vaccines for the first time.

The Scaling Up Nutrition Initiative (SUN) provided the opportunity to strengthen multi-sectoral partnerships for addressing under-nutrition. UNICEF developed an advocacy and orientation presentation on SUN, which was shared with the Ministry of Health (MOH), UN agencies and development partners. This contributed to a shared understanding of the nutrition situation and the 13 evidence-based, direct nutrition interventions outlined in SUN framework. It also contributed to discussions among key ministries and development partners concerning the need for a multi-sectoral mechanism to coordinate the implementation of the framework. The recommendation from this meeting was shared at the Round Table Meeting in November.

In June 2012, the national Quality Standard for primary and secondary schools was endorsed by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES). The standards outline what the expectations of Ministry of every school and they promote equitable access and student achievement. This achievement paves the way for more targeted investment within schools and decentralized administrative structures.

In partnership with the Ministry of Education and the two main television stations, UNICEF is supporting an early childhood education television programme to help pre-school aged children develop skills. The show addresses their physical, cognitive, social and emotional development and will model a child’s love and willingness to learn. The series will be holistic and inclusive. Each of the 15 episodes will have three sections: “clay-mation” (boy, girl, water buffalo and elephant characters), live action with children, and storytelling.

In 2012, commitment to water and sanitation was strengthened though support to the participation of high level representatives from three ministries (Finance, Health, and the National Commission for Mothers and Children) in a High-Level Sanitation for All meeting in Washington DC. The Government has now committed to increasing the budget allocation for WASH and has approved the National Plan of Action for Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, which was developed with technical and financial support from UNICEF.

Country Situation as Affecting Children & Women

The Lao Social Indicator Survey 2011-12 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey/Demographic and Health Survey (MICS/DHS) this year enabled the Government of Lao and its partners to update the situation of children and their families and to measure progress towards the MDGs. UNICEF support enabled partners to conduct primary and secondary analysis of the data to document the distribution of disparities. Additionally, UNICEF prepared a series of presentations examining various aspects of the MDGs, which supported advocacy and action planning meetings with the Government, the UN and development partners. The results of the LSIS analysis were included in the background report for the Government-Development Partner meeting (Round Table Meeting) in November.
The LSIS provided disaggregated data that, for the first time, enabled the government to show provincial level data. The survey clearly showed across all indicators, except domestic violence, wide disparities determined by geography, ethno-linguistic group, and wealth quintile. Health outcomes were also particularly sensitive to the education levels of the mother.

Of significance was the fact that the country registered the greatest in the world percentage decline – a reduction of two-thirds - in child mortality (UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, September 2012). Fewer children die every year in Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR) as a result of increased breastfeeding, immunization and socio-economic status, and the country is on track to reach MDG4. Nevertheless, between 16 and 39 children under five continue to die every day in Lao PDR. Children from poor families, from some ethno-linguistic groups and those living in remote areas and whose mothers have lower educational levels, are five times more likely to die before reaching their fifth birthday. Further analysis shows that a number of life-saving interventions addressing major child killers are not reflected in Lao PDR policies and/or do not have operational delivery models. Furthermore, for interventions already included in the national policies and guidelines, domestic funding is directed towards facility-based curative interventions in the context of very low utilization rates and significant geographic, cultural and financial barriers to care, which is not effective and efficient in tackling inequities. Development partners fund most of the preventative and promotional interventions, which is unsustainable and unpredictable. Looking at the supply-side issues, the data shows that the availability and distribution of essential supplies, and the availability and capacities of health providers pose significant barriers to universal coverage. Community-based interventions are very limited in scope and coverage and receive inadequate attention; and apart from breastfeeding promotion, there are no large-scale interventions promoting adequate family and community practices.

The academic year 2011-2012 showed improvements in the participation rate for primary education and survival rates to grade five. Net enrollment rates increased from 94.1 per cent in 2010-2011 to 95.2 per cent in 2011-2012. During the same period the net intake rate increased from 84 to 90 per cent. However, this progress is marked by significant provincial disparities, and repetition and dropout rates continue to be a problem, particularly in grade one with some provinces having repetition rates greater than 30 per cent. In remote areas, many children drop out of school to support their families with agricultural work. Distance to primary schools and the lack of teaching and learning materials are noted as key barriers. The LSIS data shows that the MDG2 goal for primary completion cannot be achieved by 2015. Additional investments are urgently required for teacher education and for teaching-learning materials with a focus on rural, remote areas.

The analysis of the data on violence showed that 76 per cent of children aged 2-14 years experienced violence of some sort. Geographic location and wealth quintile have relatively little impact on use of any violent discipline method but do impact on the use of severe physical punishment. Education and wealth quintile are determinants for influencing attitudes towards physical punishment with around 45 per cent of those with primary or no education believing that children should be physically punished compared to around 27 per cent of those with post secondary and higher qualification. This analysis will be further explored in the Study on Violence Against Children, which is planned for 2013.

At the macro level the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts a growth rate of 8.3 per cent in 2012 mainly due to Foreign Development Investments in the natural resource sector. There are concerns that rapid civil service wage growth could crowd out higher priority spending, that there are insufficient funds to cover full 12 month salaries at the higher rate, and that the level of debt risk is increasing. The exceptionally high rate of growth provides an opportunity for UNICEF to advocate for greater investment in basic social services, particularly targeting the disparities in the access and coverage of services.

Key events for the Government in 2012 include the accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in the last quarter of the year and hosting the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) under the theme: “Friends for Peace, Partners for Prosperity.” Events that accompanied the ASEM meeting included the Asia-Europe People’s Forum, the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting and the Asia-Europe Business Forum. These provided a focus on new economic opportunities and partnerships. The ASEM meeting clearly highlighted the national capacity to mobilize resources and for high-level coordination. It also emphasized the importance of
the conclusions from the Busan meeting on development cooperation and development of wider partnership strategies.

The Government’s priority of decentralisation dominated much of the discussions on governance policy and administrative reform in the last quarter of 2012. A key opportunity and challenge in 2013 will be how to best support the health, education and social sectors in conducting an analysis of functions to inform the rollout of the Prime Ministerial Order No 16. This decree calls for resources to be channelled to sub-national level through its “three builds” strategy: build the province as the strategic unit; build the district to be the overall strengthening unit; and build the village to be the development unit.

Country Programme Analytical Overview

The health and nutrition programme conducted a bottleneck analysis for all intermediate results, and this analysis was then verified through technical support from the UNICEF Regional Office (RO). The burden of child mortality analysis using the new LSIS data prompted attention to areas previously not explicitly addressed, including attention to newborn health, pneumonia, and diarrhea. The analysis of the nutrition data showed the need for increased attention to breastfeeding and to counter the trend of use of breastmilk substitutes. It also shows the need for greater attention to the linkages between nutrition and open defecation.

UNICEF used the LSIS analysis to shape its advocacy and programme response and was instrumental in informing the consultation process with partners for developing the 2013 work plans. In particular, the analysis helped sharpen the focus on major deprivations like diarrhea, pneumonia, newborn health, and WASH. A newborn care assessment is underway and expected to influence work plan priorities in 2013. UNICEF’s monitoring for immunization is also under way and is using available systems and data to the best extent possible; for example, Health Management Information System (HMIS), annual commodities survey, and field monitoring of bottlenecks using structured tools. This will also be complemented by additional data collection using a Lot Quality Assurance Sampling methodology.

For WASH, the LSIS analysis will provide an important baseline for a programme evaluation that is planned in 2013 and that will include a comprehensive bottleneck analysis. The links between education, nutrition, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and WASH will be a focus of the study and help to inform future advocacy and programme work.

For Education, there were a number of processes that contributed to internal discussions related to the strategic focus of UNICEF’s support to the sector. In particular, these included the sub-sector discussions concerning the Mid Term Review of the Education Sector Development Plan, the primary analysis of the LSIS data, a technical review of UNICEF’s support to teacher policy and a Theory of Change analysis. The conclusion of the discussions and the analysis of the data is that UNICEF will focus its support more explicitly to early-years education and strengthen decentralised teacher support services.

An internal review of the UNICEF’s focus province, Luang Namtha, was conducted at the end of 2012. This provided a useful analysis of the challenges and opportunities for operationalizing an equity focus and engaging in sub-national planning and budgeting processes. These findings complement the analysis of the broader environment field monitoring reports and the analysis conducted by Health and Nutrition and Education. The combined analysis identified coordination and management as the primary constraint across all programmes, and multiple planning and budgeting processes even within sectors at sub-national level are an underlying cause. As a result, strengthening district sector planning is an overall priority for the programme in 2013. Furthermore the new government decree on decentralisation and the subsequent government pilot decentralization programme in selected districts and communities offer new opportunities to support sectoral counterparts to engage in the discussions on the delegation of functions. Humanitarian Assistance is not applicable.
Effective Advocacy
Mostly met benchmarks

Capacity Development
Mostly met benchmarks

Communication for Development
Mostly met benchmarks

Service Delivery
Mostly met benchmarks

Strategic Partnerships
Mostly met benchmarks

Knowledge Management
Mostly met benchmarks

Human Rights Based Approach to Cooperation
Mostly met benchmarks

Gender Equality
Mostly met benchmarks

Environmental Sustainability
Mostly met benchmarks
**Narrative Analysis by Programme Component Results and Intermediate Results**

**Lao People's Dem Rep. - 2460**

**PC 1 - Communication**

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**PCR** 2460/A0/04/100 By the end 2015, families and communities, especially in areas that are remote, poor and populated by underserved ethnic groups, increased demand for, and better access to, quality social services within a supportive public and media environment.

**Progress:** The LSIS, released in 2012, indicates that some three-fourths of the population have access to a mobile phone and watch television at least once a week. While television has now overtaken radio as the main source of information, it should be noted that Thai radio channels are quite popular. Internet use remains low and confined to urban areas. Social media is at an early stage and unlike neighbouring countries, there is virtually no political activity on social media.

Radio remains a proven, effective delivery channel in many rural locations where audiences are hard to reach or where the target language can be easily broadcast to local populations. Lao National Radio (LNR) effectively covers more than 85 per cent of the country. LNR broadcasts programmes in the two main ethnic languages, Khmou and Hmong, on short wave radio.

This public and media environment results in challenges, particularly to reach remote and poor populations, but also opportunities to increase stakeholder awareness and understanding of issues related to UNICEF Lao PDR's development objectives. Advocacy work is also done through the United Nation’s Communication Group, with nutrition being the common theme.

At the national level, support for the Centre for Information and Education on Health (CIEH) is aimed at building capacity to conduct health promotion activities, research, and Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials production. This resulted, for example, in the development of a community Infant and Young Child Feeding training package and the launch of a breastfeeding communication strategy involving village-level and health-centre personal counselling across three southern provinces, reinforced by mass media, advocacy and administrative mobilization activities and point-of-service promotions using print materials. Similarly, UNICEF undertook extensive planning with the Centre for Environmental Health and Water Supply (Nam Saat) under the Ministry of Health to revise and strengthen the strategy for ‘Community Dialogue and Participatory Planning on Rural Water Supply and Sanitation.’ Efforts focused on examining the behaviour change components, with emphasis on hygiene promotion and gender aspects.

To help increase demand and access to essential services, UNICEF launched the country’s first Directory of Essential Services for Children and Youth in Lao PDR, with co-funding partners, UNFPA and World Vision. The Directory includes details of nearly every organization and public service that can help to improve the daily lives of children and youth nationwide, as many children in need are uninformed and unaware of the services available to them.

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**IR** 2460/A0/04/100/001 By the end of 2013, adolescents and young people, both boys and girls alike, have increased opportunities and confidence to participate in advocacy for their rights through radio and television.

**Progress:** Youth participation, particularly youth radio and youth TV, is a key activity of the LNR and the Children Cultural Centre, under the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism.

Started in 2004, the Youth radio programmes are broadcast in four languages in 13 provinces (12 in 2011) and are linked to listeners’ groups where young people can discuss the programmes’ contents; youth radios remain one of the rare spaces where young people can express their views with relative freedom, including on some issues that might be considered "too sensitive."
The impact of the Youth Radio network goes beyond broadcasts as the young communicators are often requested to engage in dialogue with officials; for example, UNICEF worked with partners UNFPA and Support to an Effective Lao National Assembly (SELNA) to respond to a request from the National Assembly to facilitate a meeting between young people and parliamentarians. Participants included representatives from youth networks, including five from youth radio provinces.

Development partners are also taking notice. The US Ambassador in Lao PDR has visited Youth Radio teams several times, resulting in additional funding, and Ms. Maria Otero, Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights, visited the Youth Radio in Vientiane in June 2012. With UNICEF support, 180 young reporters improved their skills through workshops and radios have now their own Facebook pages to promote the radio and exchange information.

UNICEF is also linking the Youth Radio to the Early Childhood Development (ECD) initiative. Dozens of young reporters, with an equal number of girls and boys, were trained and youth radio programmes on ECD are now being broadcast. Youth TV by, and for young people is also broadcast every week.

Progress was hindered somewhat due to officials and young reporters moving on in their career or education; however, regular training is taking place for newcomers.

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<td><strong>IR 2460/A0/04/100/002</strong> The capacity of Lao national and provincial journalists in reporting on children issues improved through orientation, and training through field visits to UNICEF supported program.</td>
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**Progress:** A major ECD Communication Workshop was organized in February 2012 in Vientiane. More than 120 artists, government officials, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and people with disabilities developed TV and radio spots, animations, puppet shows and book illustrations, all aimed at young children. The objective is to encourage parents’ engagement in their children’s development through guided play and the creative ‘delivery’ of information to caregivers.

The clay animation spots developed during the workshop will be the centre-piece in a planned TV series of 15 episodes, produced in cooperation with MOES, the national television and the private TV channel Lao Star. To be launched in early 2013 under the title “My Village,” they will also include story-telling and short videos.

The exercise was also a good advocacy tool, as the initiative became a regular news item, thus creating awareness about the product and fundraising opportunities. UNICEF and the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism also organized workshops on ECD for some 80 media staff nationwide.

Apart from the ECD initiative, UNICEF and its partners featured prominently in the media, especially the Vientiane Times, on a regular basis mostly through events taking place in the capital, but also through field visits with officials, donors and development partners, resulting in more than 100 media items, mostly through national outlets.

However some challenges remain, such as conflicts of timing and priorities between officials and UNICEF in the implementation of the activities, or government’s concerns about procedures linked to field visits and censoring. This issue will be addressed in 2013 through better cooperation regarding field visits, opening the way for further advocacy for UNICEF and the United Nations’ Communication Group, particularly on nutrition issues.

No major adjustments are anticipated to the current plan, although field trips for local media could be increased.

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| **IR 2460/A0/04/100/003** IR 3. Programme Support. 1. Staff members are secure with salary and other entitlements in 2012. Field visits and conducted to monitor project activities, organize National Committee visits, attend workshops and trainings. Individuals or institutions contracted to support graphic design, photography, translation, artwork, editing, video and radio production, story writing, and data analysis to
help with project implementation.

**Progress:** UNICEF provided Human Resource (HR) support through this Intermediate Result (IR) with the funds utilized in this IR to mainly help the organization contribute to the achievement of other IRs within the programme component, or across Programme components in the country programme of cooperation.

### PC 2 - Education

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<td><strong>PCR</strong> 2460/A0/04/200</td>
<td>By 2015, the most disadvantaged children will be developmentally prepared for right-age entry into school, able to survive through primary grades and make the transition into lower secondary education.</td>
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**Progress:** In partnership with Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), the World Bank and MOES, the UNICEF Education Programme is firmly on track in supporting the national Education Sector Development Plan's 2015 targets in the early childhood, primary and lower secondary education cycles. A substantive review of the sector's key coordination mechanism—the Education Sector Working Group—was undertaken in 2012, resulting in improvements to the efficiency of the current structure and greater attention to more inclusive, technical level coordination.

The endorsement in June 2012 of national Quality Primary and Secondary School Standards is a significant achievement within the sector, as this paves the way for more targeted investment within schools and decentralized administrative structures against the achievement of these.

There were important improvements in student participation rates and increased numbers of children completing primary education. The Gender Parity Index for primary education however remains the same in 2011-2012 as in the past 2 years at 0.94, and therefore falling slightly short of being achieved. It improved most significantly for lower secondary education, which moved to 0.89 from 0.83 the previous year. The high repetition and dropout (12 per cent in Grade 1) rates in the early years of primary education continue to pose a significant challenge and are a key factor in why the MDG 2 targets will not likely be met by 2015.

Whilst MOES has continued to print and distribute textbooks and teacher guides for primary and secondary levels, a joint Government and Development Partner Rapid Assessment Survey revealed a continuing shortage of textbooks at school level. This belies a need for greater support to decentralised sector planning and management systems, as such UNICEF and partners will intensify support in 2013 to improved district and provincial planning and coordination processes in line with recent Government policy on decentralization.

The use of disaggregated data for sector planning and budgeting purposes continued to improve, as evidenced through the use of sector data in Ministry led review processes; however, there is a continued need to further strengthen the use of data at sub-national levels to ensure that adequate resources are being targeted on those Districts with the greatest needs in meeting targets. The Education Programme has undertaken a review of the education sector data as well as a gendered analysis of children’s access to quality, basic education leading to an improved Theory of Change mapping for our joint results with MOES.

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<td><strong>IR</strong> 2460/A0/04/200/001</td>
<td>By the end of 2013, government has the capacity to effectively coordinate, plan, implement and monitor education sector development with strengthened focus on most remote and vulnerable populations.</td>
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**Progress:** The second Joint Sector Review Mission was successfully conducted in March 2012 under the leadership of MOES, with UNICEF’s engagement as co-chair of the Education Sector Working Group. *The Joint Education Sector Revision Mission Aide Memoire* outlines progress of key reform strategies and alignment of investment from government and Development Partners to the Education Sector Development Plan. This also outlines the continued challenges in the provision of effective, quality education for all. A full review of the Education Sector Working Group structure and function was also completed, in line with a request by the Government of Laos to review all sector working group structures. An outcome of this review has been a greater formalization of the sub-sector Focal Groups, of which UNICEF co-chairs that on Basic Education.
Through a partnership between UNICEF Laos and Yale University, MOES was supported to review a first draft of their Plan of Action for the national Early Childhood Development Policy. This draft provides the basis for the costing and subsequent prioritization of the Plan of Action’s outputs, which remains a priority for early 2013. To date the National ECD Policy has not yet been formally approved.

A road map by which a disaggregated data presentation platform, Lao EduInfo, will be integrated within MOES’ Education Management Information System (EMIS) has been agreed upon and the drafting of a national education sector profile conducted. The piloting of provincial and district profiles have also been initiated as a key contribution to decentralised annual education planning processes with UNICEF providing technical assistance.

Over 2013-2014, as a key strategy by which to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of basic education services, UNICEF will provide greater technical and financial assistance to strengthening the district education sector management systems.

IR 2460/A0/04/200/002 Pre-school aged children, especially girls in educationally disadvantaged communities, are better prepared for school.

**Progress:** In line with UNICEF’s three-year investment in strengthening the preschool curriculum, a review of the Kindergarten Year 2 curricula (developed in 1990) was completed. Work has subsequently been undertaken to update this curriculum as well as produce a ‘package’ of teacher and student materials. This initiative emanates from UNICEF’s prior support of the development of national early learning and development outcomes, set by MOES for all children aged three to five. Over 2013, UNICEF will see its support focus on strengthening decentralized technical assistance in early childhood education.

A community-based school readiness programme was introduced in 2012, with equity-focused criteria utilized in the selection of 27 target communities in Luangnamtha and Saravane provinces. By the end of the year, just under 500 five year-old children and their parents were benefitting from this pilot initiative. The facilitators’ modules which support this nine-month programme have been completed, the training of community facilitators, essential in light of their limited knowledge of holistic, child-centred learning and development. Further, supporting materials for parents and caregivers have been drafted which integrate key messaging from the Ministry of Health’s Maternal Neonatal and Child Health Services. The development of a Monitoring and Evaluation framework for this pilot initiative remains a priority in order to ensure that lessons learned are adequately documented. This pilot is being undertaken in partnership with the World Bank and AusAID, who are supporting piloting to a joint pooled education sector programme.

In collaboration with the UNICEF Laos Communication Programme, a television series entitled ‘My Village’ was developed for parents and young children. This television programme aligns with MOES’ early childhood education curriculum and seeks to encourage parents’ engagement in their children’s development through guided play and the creative ‘delivery’ of information to caregivers.

IR 2460/A0/04/200/003 Primary and secondary school-aged children, especially girls in educationally disadvantaged communities, enroll and complete primary and secondary education that uses a life-skills approach. This approach uses participatory child teaching and learning techniques to teach life skills such as critical thinking, decision making, problem-solving and active listening in content areas such as hygiene and health education, prevention of HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, disaster risk reduction, and seasonal prevention.

**Progress:** In June 2012, the national Quality Standards for primary and secondary schools were endorsed by MOES. The standards outline what the Ministry of every school expects and therein promote equitable access and student achievement across all school settings. As an initial step in the dissemination of these standards, a draft set of materials for schools has been produced and training of key provincial and district officials in six target districts were conducted with UNICEF support. It is expected that this will be rolled out to school principals and Village Education Development Committees by the first quarter of 2013, as a result
of which more than 450 primary schools in the target districts will produce costed School Improvement Plans based on these standards. With other Development Partners, UNICEF will support the roll out of the School Standards Training package nationally by mid-2013. The alignment of the Ministry’s planning processes and management tools currently utilized at different central and sub-national levels against the Quality Standards, is also under process.

A multi-year partnership between MOES, Mahidol University, UNESCO, the World Bank and UNICEF was agreed for the development of bilingual teaching and learning materials for early grade students. With technical expertise of Mahidol University in the production of multilingual materials, this initiative will result in strengthened literacy of students. Through this initiative, a seminar on bilingual programs currently being piloted by various organizations in Lao PDR was held. It is expected that the early grade bilingual literacy material development will take place in early 2013.

With UNICEF and UNESCO support, MOES has drafted a primary teachers’ competency framework, which includes a teachers’ set of ethical behaviours, for use by pre-service teacher education colleges.

**IR 2460/A0/04/200/004 Effective and efficient management of the Education programme.**

**Progress:** UNICEF provided HR support through this IR with the funds utilized in the IR to mainly help the organization contribute to the achievement of other IRs within the programme component, or across Programme components in the country programme of cooperation.

**PC 3 - Health and nutrition**

**On-track**

**PCR 2460/A0/04/300** By 2015, the programme will achieve an enhanced policy environment, increased coverage of quality services Maternal and Neonatal Child Health (MNCH), Nutrition, and improved practices by individuals, families and communities, with particular emphasis on the most remote and vulnerable populations, resulting in healthier children and mothers.

**Progress:** The 2011-2012 LSIS revealed a significant decline in child mortality rates that could be attributed to improvements in the socio-economic conditions and increased coverage with high-impact interventions, in particular immunization and breastfeeding. Should the rate of decline continue at the same pace, the country is likely to achieve MDG 4 on child mortality.

Despite this progress, the country has one of the highest child mortality levels in the South-East Asia and there are large disparities in mortality across socio-economic groups, by ethnicity, provinces, and educational level of mothers. A child born into a poor family is four times more likely to die before their fifth birthday as compared to a child from a rich family.

Neonatal conditions, pneumonia and diarrhea are responsible for 70 per cent of all under-five deaths. Yet, the coverage with high impact life-saving interventions to address those remains low.

Lao PDR is off track for the MDG 1. Malnutrition is implicated in at least one third of under-five deaths. Chronic undernutrition represents the biggest challenge, with an estimated 330,000, or 44 per cent of children under-five stunted.

The MOH developed comprehensive strategic plans for scaling-up maternal, newborn and child health and nutrition. The implementation of those remains patchy with many of the interventions not being operationalized. The bottleneck analysis for Lao PDR conducted by UNICEF suggests four main determinants of slow policy operationalization: Very low government expenditures on health (less than one per cent of GDP and six percent of Government spending) and overreliance on external support for core service delivery inputs like essential medicines, operating costs for outreach; inadequate supply and logistics management for public health programmes, including poor cold chain management; limited availability and access to services due to geographic, financial and social barriers: and widespread traditional practices and beliefs with negative
The health reforms launched by the Government present an excellent opportunity to address the systems’ bottlenecks. UNICEF engaged in this process by sharing analysis of country-specific issues relevant for child health and nutrition, as well as local and global evidence of what works. Major UNICEF comments in the process included: The need to increase and prioritize Government resources to evidence-based interventions and core service delivery inputs like vaccines; the need to address social, behavioural and geographic barriers to health services utilization, not just financial, including health outreach and network of primary health care facilities through greater attention to community-based programmes; and the potential of linking health reforms with decentralization, public finances and administration reforms to clarify accountabilities of the various tiers of the government and increase resource allocation to health and nutrition at subnational level.

The 2013 work plans will be revised in January to reflect UNICEF support to systems strengthening, in particular testing of delivery models for new interventions, community-based approaches and multi-sectoral collaboration models.

**Constrained**

**IR 2460/A0/04/300/001** By the end of 2013, women and children under five, especially those most hard to reach and living in remote areas, have increased access to and use of quality integrated Mother and Child Health (MCH) and nutrition services.

**Progress:** Progress was made in strengthening the equity focus of MOH policies and decision makers. UNICEF worked through the health sector coordination mechanisms and the Joint UN programme to engage in policy dialogue and action planning relevant for child survival agenda. Significant time was invested in data analysis of the latest available sources (LSIS, HMIS), review of global evidence and commitments, and developing programme advocacy and communication materials to support discussions across all levels of the health sector.

The quality of provincial and district annual integrated MCH plans improved with both development partners and domestic contributions being reflected in the interventions being prioritized based on local needs and evidence of high efficacy. This planning process stimulated discussions on the need for health sector planning guidelines and addressing the disconnect between the monitoring, planning and budgeting among the ministry’s departments, provincial health managers and development partners.

The capacity of provincial, district and health centre staff to deliver quality MNCH services in target areas increased; at least one staff in all health centres was trained to provide basic MCH care and all district staff have enhanced supervisory skills. UNICEF’s contribution in target provinces to the creation of and placement of midwives is in line with national targets. The delivery of essential MNCH services to the most remote populations was strengthened, with health outreach to the most remote communities being supported on quarterly basis.

UNICEF’s partnership strategy to promote scale-up of child survival interventions using a health system strengthening approach is hindered by a fragmented donor support. Individual donors employ different planning, procurement and monitoring systems and varying operational service delivery models for health outreach. UNICEF continues building a consensus on the need to review and harmonize the integrated health outreach policy and practice and to strengthen its equity orientation.

**On-track**

**IR 2460/A0/04/300/002** By the end of 2013, women and children under five, especially those hardest to reach and living in remote areas, have increased access to and use of quality integrated equitable immunization services.

**Progress:** During 2012 the country maintained its polio free status. Joint World Health Organization (WHO)-UNICEF efforts from 2012 resulted in the introduction of the rubella vaccine in the routine immunization schedule.
During the first nine months of 2012, over 108,000 children under one year of age were vaccinated with BCG, 101,000 - with DPT3, 89,000 - with measles and rubella vaccine. Key UNICEF inputs included: The procurement of vaccines, including procurement services from the national and Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) funds; operational costs for health outreach; and the promotional use of data for programming at the central and sub-national levels.

A risk assessment for maternal and neonatal tetanus, conducted in the framework of pre-validation, identified seven medium-risk districts that were subject to specific programmatic effort. Over 453,559 women of childbearing age received immunization against tetanus.

In the framework of the Effective Vaccines Management Action Plan (EVM), UNICEF contributed to the development of training and supervisory capacity at the central and subnational levels. Furthermore, at least one staff in each Health Centre of Luangnamtha and Phongsaly acquired skills in the area of EVM.

Despite steady increases, there are significant variations in immunization coverage across districts with many of the districts unlikely to reach 80 per cent by end 2012. A number of outbreaks were registered in 2012 involving diphtheria and pertussis. The first six months of 2012 saw stock run out of Hepatitis B vaccines.

An analysis of major service delivery bottlenecks and the 2012 Immunization Review conducted in partnership with WHO, UNICEF, GAVI, Lux-Development, Centre for Disease Control/ United States Agency for International Development (CDC)/(USAID) highlighted: a high dependency (90 per cent) and limited predictability of external funding for vaccines and operational costs of outreach; unclear accountabilities for micro-planning, resource allocation and implementation of integrated outreach; inadequate supply and cold chain maintenance with over 10 per cent of 600 units of the cold chain equipment donated during 2009-2010 becoming non-functional; and lateness and limited reliability of data.

IR 2460/A0/04/300/003 By the end of 2015 women and children under five, especially those most hard to reach and living in remote areas, have increased understanding, access to, and use of quality nutrition interventions.

**Progress:** Guided by SUN framework, UNICEF worked to mobilise technical and political backing for nutrition and to bring diverse groups of people around common goals. UNICEF nutrition analysis shaped SUN-related dialogue, nutrition action-planning and resource mobilization with the government and development partners.

At the policy level, UNICEF supported the development of the first National Guidelines for Infant and Young Child Feeding and review of content and mapping of development partners’ support to community-based nutrition. UNICEF’s engagement in health sector coordination mechanisms and the partnership with Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) was instrumental in advocating for inclusion of nutrition indicators into the HMIS and testing their implementation on the ground. A UNICEF-supported Study on the Violations of the International Code of Marketing informed national advocacy on protection of exclusive breastfeeding. The establishment of a new partnership with Minerals and Metals Group aims to support the development of delivery mechanisms for multiple micronutrient powder and a model for collaborating with the private sector on nutrition.

In terms of service delivery, as part of integrated MNCH package, UNICEF enabled the delivery of Vitamin A (42 per cent in Round one; 90 per cent in Round two) and deworming for children under-five, and iron folic acid for pregnant women. The Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition was implemented in four southern provinces with the worst nutritional indicators. Out of 58,743 screened children; the 657 identified as severely malnourished received therapeutic treatment. Over-reliance on donors for essential commodities, poor supply distribution system, inadequate operational strategies and resources for delivering nutrition services represent key challenges for sustaining high coverage or expanding high-impact nutrition interventions.
Partnership with EU was instrumental for nutrition-related advocacy, support to service delivery and communication efforts. An exclusive breastfeeding media campaign was implemented nation-wide in 2012. The expansion of community-based nutrition programmes is challenged by lack of clear accountability, incentive framework and resources, including support to community health workers.

**IR 2460/A0/04/300/004** By the end of 2013, children and pregnant women, including women living with HIV, will have access to and receive quality service for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and treatment in Luangnamtha, Vientiane Capital and Savannakhet.

**Progress:** UNICEF supported a readiness assessment of Vientiane Capital health services to implement an operational pilot linking HIV-Mother and Child Health and Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health services. It is expected that the pilot implementation will inform policy and practice in prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT). With the technical support of UNICEF regional office and in consultation with WHO and UNAIDS, a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Linked Response pilot is being designed.

As a result of improved coordination and joint advocacy with WHO and UNAIDS around PPTCT, UNICEF was able to provide critical inputs into the National PPTCT training curricula and the strengthening of Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) recommendations for HIV positive mothers based on the new National IYCF Guidelines. Joint UNAIDS, WHO advocacy and technical support led to MOH agreement to review PPTCT related indicators in the National HIV/AIDS strategy in line with global Global AIDS Response Progress (GARP) indicators.

A partnership with Lao Positive Health Association (PHA) was developed to strengthen access to treatment, care and support for women and children living with HIV and affected by AIDS and to strengthen linkages between civil society organizations and health providers in order to reach key affected populations.

Gender-based stigma and discrimination within health service provision is being addressed by the Linked Response through the provision of client-friendly services to all clients irrespective of age, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, or HIV status. The Lao PHA programme engages with male partners of HIV positive women to provide couples counseling including information on reproductive health rights.

Key challenges included inadequate programmatic linkages between HIV and MNCH, discontinuation of the PPTCT coordination mechanism, dramatic decline in financing and change in the Global Fund policies. Shortage of rapid HIV test kit, which is the key for PMTCT-linked response, undermined the implementation of testing strategy at service delivery sites.

**IR 2460/A0/04/300/005** Effective and Efficient management of the Health and Nutrition programme.

**Progress:** UNICEF provided HR support through this IR with the funds utilized in the IR to mainly help the organization contribute to the achievement of other IRs within the programme component, or across Programme components in the country programme of cooperation.

**PC 4 - Child protection**

**On-track**

**PCR 2460/A0/04/400** By 2015, children in the Lao PDR are protected against abuse, exploitation, violence, neglect and discrimination through the development of a legal, regulatory and social welfare system.

**Progress:** The Child Protection Programme with the Government of Lao PDR, in close partnership with Save the Children, the Child Protection Working Group, the Disability Sector Network Group and UNDAF Outcome Group on Governance made a strategic shift in 2012 towards a more comprehensive systems-based approach to child protection focusing on integrating child protection into the broader child welfare and justice systems.

UNICEF’s direct contribution has been to advocate and support new working mechanisms and partnerships,
which emphasize a more coordinated sector-wide and systems-based approach to child protection. Key examples of direct outputs of UNICEF’s contribution have included the establishment of a cabinet led-coordination mechanism within the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to strengthen the Ministry's contribution to the child and family welfare sector and the establishment of a Protection Emergency Cluster Coordination Mechanism, co-chaired by UNICEF and Save the Children. Technical and financial support was provided to the National Commission on Mothers and Children to affirm their role to lead and coordinate inter-ministerial, International Non-Government Organisation (INGO) and civil society engagement and participation to plan and report on the progress of the Government to meet its commitments to child rights. UNICEF has been the key driver behind the formal agreement between the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the National University of Laos to officially professionalize social work.

The Government has endorsed key studies proposed by UNICEF to be conducted in early 2013: A Baseline Study on Violence against Children; a Situational Analysis of Adolescents and Young People (with UNFPA, UNESCO and WHO); and an Assessment of Child Mediation Practices and the assessments of both the Child Justice and Child and Family Welfare Systems. Each of these studies will be firsts for Lao PDR and will require cross-sectoral collaboration.

Key challenges faced by the programme in 2012 include significant structural and organizational changes within key line ministries that influenced implementation and limited coordination between the child justice, and child and family welfare sectors. Further, while significant change has been noted there is still lingering resistance to address sensitive issues, such as violence against children.

2013 will see the completion of activities initiated in 2012, with greater focus on new partnerships with the Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Health (MOH), and Ministry of Home Affairs. The programme will work through these partnerships to address societal attitudes and beliefs that put children at risk to exploitation, violence, abuse, neglect and discrimination.

**IR 2460/A0/04/400/001 By 2015, a child sensitive and gender appropriate child justice system established in line with international standards better protecting children in conflict with the law, victims and witnesses of crime.**

**Progress:** UNICEF is the lead advocate to the Government in the development of a child sensitive and gender appropriate child justice system. This support directly complements the Government’s own broader Legal Sector Master Plan supported by fellow UN partners United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and bi-laterals. Key results this year have included a Law drafted on Juvenile Procedures, with the direct input of adolescents and young people through participatory and consultative activities. An assessment of child mediation and restorative justice practices was initiated, with the Ministry of Justice. A comprehensive assessment of the child justice system is being planned to provide the basis on which to identify gaps and bottlenecks. A standard data collection form was finalized for prosecutors that will enable the collation of disaggregated data and information on children referred to the formal justice system.

Key strategies employed this year have included increased participation and consultation with adolescents and young people and improved partnership with non-traditional stakeholders, including the Lao Bar Association. Main challenges this year have included a continued lack of accurate, disaggregated data; limited options and services available for children in conflict or conflict with the law; and insufficient coordination between ministries and sectors, particularly at differing administrative and zonal levels nationally.

In 2013, the programme will continue to advocate for the establishment of effective and efficient data collection system between key stakeholders to track children in conflict and contact with the justice system and to support prevention activities through strengthened cooperation between sectors, particularly child justice and the child and family welfare sector, INGO and local child protection partners.
These concepts are often confused with trafficking. Further the limited availability of data and a general clarity and understanding on what constitutes the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Terms and protection concepts with counterparts involved in the process, there is still limited institutional commercial sexual exploitation in Lao PDR. 2013 will see the finalization of key processes initiated in 2012.

A MOU has been signed between the National University of Laos and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to equip, graduate and place qualified social workers in the child and family welfare sector by 2015. Support to extensive technical dialogue and capacity building exercises with key partners, including Government, INGO and civil society, has mitigated resistance to public discussion of ‘sensitive’ issues and the insistence to support only inter-ministerial field visits has fostered greater collaboration and coordination across education, health, public security and social welfare sectors. The main challenge this year has been the timeliness of Government’s approval of qualitative studies on child disciplinary practices and child commercial sexual exploitation in Lao PDR. 2013 will see the finalization of key processes initiated in 2012.

IR 2460/A0/04/400/003 Effective and efficient management of the Child Protection Programme.

Progress: UNICEF provided HR support through this IR with the funds utilized in the IR to mainly help the organization contribute to the achievement of other IRs within the programme component, or across Programme components in the country programme of cooperation.

IR 2460/A0/04/400/004 By the end of 2013, national and sub-national Government have strengthened capacity to collect, analyse and use evidence that will support equity-focused policies, plans and budgets.

Progress: UNICEF is a key partner to the National Commission on Mothers and Children (NCMC). UNICEF with Save the Children has provided a great deal of technical support to develop a National Implementation Plan to respond to the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to Lao PDR. The plan was developed through national and provincial inter-ministerial consultative and participatory processes and will serve as the road map and a basis for monitoring progress on Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) implementation in preparation for the next State Party report due in December 2016. With UNICEF’s technical and financial support, the first State Party Reports on the two Optional Protocols to the CRC were finalized. Both reports benefitted from the inputs of stakeholders such as national and provincial inter-ministerial counterparts, development partners, INGOs and university students, through national and provincial consultations.

While key results were achieved this year, and efforts were made to support technical dialogue to define terms and protection concepts with counterparts involved in the process, there is still limited institutional clarity and understanding on what constitutes the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. These concepts are often confused with trafficking. Further the limited availability of data and a general reluctance to include what exists in report preparation or to use it in response planning has meant that
progress monitoring is vague and planned activities are left fairly general. In 2013, support to strengthen the capacity of the NCMC, line ministries, civil society and international organizations to better manage the data and knowledge being generated will ensure more specific, measurable impact planning and reporting in the future.

### PC 5 - Water, sanitation and hygiene

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**PCR 2460/A0/04/500** By 2015 children’s health and development will benefit from equitable and sustainable access to, and use of safe water and bathroom sanitation, with particular emphasis on reaching rural remote areas.

**Progress:** At the policy level, UNICEF financed and provided technical assistance for the Development of a National Plan of Action on Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, which was approved by the government. This provides a national framework for the sector development for next four years. The programme supported three National WASH monitoring initiatives.

Coordination in the WASH sector continues from the platform of WASH Technical Working Group (TWG). UNICEF and its partners have agreed during the year-end review to move forward with the merging WASH TWG into official Technical Assessment Team (TAT). TAT already exists within the MOH represented by key sector partners including Ministry of Public Works and Transport.

A new partnership with the Lao Red Cross was initiated for Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction activities in 100 villages. UNICEF, Plan International, SNV and World Bank-WSP (World Bank Water and Sanitation Programme) agreed to launch joint studies on sanitation demand and marketing. Another strategic partnership is initiated with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the MOE to implement WASH activities in 1,400 schools where a school meals programme is implemented. In addition, WASH partners are standardizing current community approaches to rural sanitation. The WASH programme also participated in development of Inter Agency Contingency Plan (IACP) for emergency response in Lao PDR. The programme has also updated the WASH cluster contingency plan, which is now part of the IACP.

Designs for school water and sanitation facilities that are gender specific, accessible (for children with disabilities) and responsive to risks associated to disasters were prepared, tested and implemented in 90 schools.

To support community participation in accessing rural water supply a community dialogue review was conducted taking into account the gender specific needs. A guide and communication materials are being developed.

A baseline study on WASH in schools is in underway to map childrens’ and teachers’ responses to availability or non-availability of these facilities. This baseline will serve as a reference to an evaluation of a five-year WASH in Schools project.

UNICEF and WHO are supporting MOES to revise the Hygiene Education Toolkit through consultations. New activities and teaching materials were developed and trialed. The Toolkit will be finalized and used as a teaching aid to support hygiene education in the primary school curriculum.

Constraints faced were the limited capacity of implementers in comparison to the programme scale, the limited UNICEF WASH staff, the remote location of schools, inadequate funding for community WASH, non-availability of a national framework on rural sanitation and system change in UNICEF causing delays to project implementation.
IR 2460/A0/04/500/001 Government and partners use disaggregated data, tools, strategies, and guidelines to implement equitable, inclusive and access to WASH interventions nation-wide.

**Progress:** A key achievement was the approval of the national plan of action on rural water supply, sanitation and hygiene by the MOH. Preparation is being made with partners to call a donor conference to mobilize resources for rural WASH.

Progress is achieved towards improving the quality of data on WASH. First, MOH has initiated the National Water and Sanitation Sector Assessment for Laos. UNICEF and WHO have provided the technical resources and computer equipment for database development. The Lao Social Indicator Survey has been approved and WASH has completed a draft analysis of the findings in relation to coverage and linkages with Health, Nutrition and Education. The data has already been shared with all national partners.

Coordination in the WASH sector continues from the platform of WASH TWG. UNICEF and its partners have agreed during the year-end review to move forward with merging WASH TWG into official TAT. TAT already exists within the MOH represented by all key sector partners including Ministry of Public Works and Transport. This will be a big step towards recognition of WASH as a sector. WASH partners are supporting the government in standardizing current community approaches to rural sanitation. The progress is slow, but steady. The activities are being co-funded by the partners.

To improve the planning for provision of rural water supply the revision of process, existing materials and tools on community dialogue was conducted taking into account the gender specific needs. A manual is drafted on development of communication materials to support implementation. The pre-test of the manual has taken place.

With WHO in the lead, WASH programme provided technical assistance to government and partners to revise the national Water Quality Standards. The newly drafted Standards are ready and UNICEF has translated the document in Lao.

IR 2460/A0/04/500/002 WASH partners use strengthened coordination mechanisms to better plan, budget, implement and monitor activities relating to DRR and Emergency Response.

**Progress:** The WASH programme participated in the development of IACP for emergency Response in Lao PDR. The programme has also updated the WASH cluster contingency plan, which is now part of the IACP.

As part of the preparedness response, the programme has supported the government to pre-position supplies in the government warehouse in order to respond to the needs of approximately 40,000 to 50,000 people including women and children. WASH has allocated resources for immediate field mobility of governmental people. The programme has adequate capacity to handle level one emergencies as all the professional WASH staff are trained on needs assessments, coordination and emergency response.

The programme is expanding its partnerships with civil society on disaster risk reduction and preparedness through the financial support of USAID/OFDA. UNICEF has signed a Project Cooperation Agreement with the Lao Red Cross to implement Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR) in 100 villages of Saravane and Sekong provinces. This new partnership has enabled UNICEF to work closely with the National Disaster Management Office to build the capacity of Lao Red Cross benefitting the work of National Disaster Management Committee (NDMC), Provincial/District Disaster Management Committees (PDMC) and Village Disaster Preparedness Units (VDPU). The Lao Women’s Union is also part of the Disaster Management Committees that is being trained by the project.

WASH programme partners have supported the informal TWG to strengthen its capacity in coordination and monitoring of WASH interventions. The same group will take the shape of WASH cluster in case of a rapid onset of an emergency. The new book on the Sphere project and minimum standards for humanitarian response has been translated into Lao language. UNICEF will disseminate the translated document at
provincial and district levels.

**IR 2460/A0/04/500/003** Families and communities in 21 of the poorest districts have access to, and use improved water supply and sanitation facilities including health centers.

**Progress:** From the total planned 21 districts, the WASH programme has provided water supply sources to 50 villages in seven districts in the northern target provinces of Phongsaly, Luangprabang and Xiengkuang, reaching a total beneficiary population of 22,339, including women and children. However, the shortage in resources for the community WASH programme is slowing the progress. The programme is actively working on resource mobilization and it expected that in early 2013 the work in southern provinces will start with the support of AusAID and Japan Committee for UNICEF.

For rural sanitation, the WASH programme focused on developing a national level partnership with the World Bank-Water Sanitation Program to establish a national framework for community approaches to total sanitation. The studies for supply and demand chain planned for this year have been postponed to the first quarter of 2013.

The programme is also working with a Canadian organization Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology on consolidating existing communication materials and providing technical support on household water treatment including promotion of bio-sand filters.

**IR 2460/A0/04/500/004** Children and teachers in schools of educationally most disadvantaged 60 Education for All (EFA)- Fast Track Initiative (FTI) districts have access to, and use of improved water sources and separate sanitation facilities for girls and boys.

**Progress:** Through partners, the WASH programme has completed the physical construction in 90 primary schools. More than 300 schools are planned in the first and second phase where the programme will ensure complete service delivery in nine educationally most disadvantaged districts in north of the country. Another 1,066 schools will be facilitated in additional 18 districts.

UNICEF has developed new WASH designs in consultation with MOES, AusAID and The World Bank. The new designs are responsive to the needs of children with disabilities, gender and risks associated to extreme climatic events, particularly floods.

The evaluation of the participatory toolkit for hygiene education found that some water supply systems and latrines are not used due to lack proper guidelines for schools. Thus UNICEF has developed an operation and maintenance manual for water and sanitation facilities in consultation with government counterparts. In addition, the WASH programme is conducting a study on operation, maintenance and use of WASH facilities in schools. The results of the study will help UNICEF in further improving sustainability of school WASH facilities.

UNICEF and WHO are supporting MOES to revise the Hygiene Education Toolkit or Blue Box through consultation among all key stakeholders. New activities and teaching and learning materials were developed and tested in selected schools for a month. Inputs from teachers will be consolidated for finalization of the materials. In addition at the request of Ministry of Education, WASH has printed 1,000 hygiene toolkits for the primary schools in target provinces.

Recognizing the logistical needs of the National Centre for Rural Water Supply and Environmental Health (Nam Saat) to access and monitor WASH interventions in the remotest areas of Phongsaly and Luangnamtha provinces, UNICEF has provided vehicles to both northern provinces.
PCR 2460/A0/04/600 By 2015, children, young people and women have their rights fulfilled through a strengthened knowledge, policy, legislative and budgetary environment.

**Progress:** The Ministry of Planning and Investment has been accelerating the public investment pillar of the decentralization reform processes with a view to strengthen the management of capital investment at sub-national levels and in the line Ministries such as health and education. Then Lao Statistics Bureau was upgraded to a sub-Ministry status, and the roll-out of National Statistics Law was accelerated, resulting in the appointment of additional staff at central, provincial and district levels, and further delegation of functions to the villages is anticipated. The Lao Statistics Bureau is advocating the use of data for planning at all levels as part of strengthening statistics system and adequately apply evidence based in planning and monitoring.

The Ministry of Planning and Investment began its preparation for the mid-term review of the seventh National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP). The Monitoring & Evaluation (M & E) framework of seventh NSEDP was developed to be able to easily track the progress of its implementation and achievement. The goal to graduate from Least Development Country (LDC) status by 2020 guides the progress within the framework of seventh NSEDP, but with a strong focus on economic development. Advocacy efforts have been made to address the weak regulation and monitoring over the impact on children, women and families of rising foreign direct investment, land concession and natural resources management.

The Government released a number of studies and surveys capturing the situation of children, including a Child Labour Survey and an agricultural census. The Government is also conducting the Lao Economic Consumption Survey 5, and is starting to prepare for the 2015 Census. The preparation of the third MDG report has also begun. The allocation of the budget in research has increased from approximately USD$ 1.7 million in 2011-2012 to USD$ 2.8 million in 2012-2013.

Partnerships, namely with National Assembly, Departments under Ministry of Planning and Investment such as Lao Statistics Bureau, National Economic Research Institute, Department of Planning and MOH as well as development partners such as UNFPA, UNDP, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), WHO, The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Plan International, Swiss Development Cooperation and AusAID were deepened, and supported policy dialogues around issues on equity and children that were previously considered sensitive. Turnover of counterparts due to institutional reform has reduced the speed of implementation.

IR 2460/A0/04/600/001 By the end of 2013, national and sub-national Government have strengthened capacity to collect, analyse and use evidence that supports equity-focused policies, plans and budgets.

**Progress:** LSIS, first combined MICS 4 and the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) Survey in Lao PDR, was approved, and will inform Lao PDR’s third MDG report as well as forthcoming mid-term review of a five-year national development plan and health sector reform processes, reflecting the value of the dataset. Government ministries, development partners and donors also expressed their interest in obtaining LSIS datasets to further explore and analyze data. Assessment on civil and birth registration—jointly supported by UNICEF, UNFPA, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), WHO, IOM and Plan International—was also completed in advance of Lao PDR’s participation in the Asia Pacific High Level Meeting on Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in which Vice Ministers from Lao Statistics Bureau and Ministry of Home Affairs. The study on causes and impact of internal migration on children was disseminated widely.

The national database system in LaoInfo v6 was launched during the National Statistics Week to disseminate data from major surveys as well as those from routine and administrative data collection systems including early warning system. The first bulletin on early warning systems in two pilot districts have generated district Governors’ leadership in responding effectively to the seasonal trends in health and education indicators identified through the analysis. Capacity building on evaluation was initiated to effectively prepare,
coordinate and conduct mid-term evaluation of the seventh NSEDP.

On social protection, in close collaboration with the health and education sections, advocacy and technical input to the discussions around Poverty Reduction Support Operation was provided, especially on equity-focused policy triggers in the health and education sectors related to Mother and Child Healthcare fee waiver policy and school grants. In collaboration with the Child Protection Section, the integrated child-sensitive social protection components are in the process of being integrated into the forthcoming Social Welfare and Work Decree.

IR 2460/A0/04/600/002 Effective and Efficient management of the Health and Nutrition programme.

**Progress:** UNICEF provided HR support through this IR with the funds utilized in the IR to mainly help the organization contribute to the achievement of other IRs within the programme component, or across Programme components in the country programme of cooperation.

PCR 2460/A0/04/650 By 2015, strengthened subnational capacity for evidence-based and integrated planning, budgeting and monitoring to enhance the delivery of social services.

**Progress:** The Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) along with the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) and the Ministry of Finance has been accelerating the policy reform processes, which seek to decentralize finance, public administration and governance, and public investment functions. Under the Prime Minister’s Order 16, the Ministries have issued three instructions on each of the pillar. During the one-year piloting phase, the decentralization policy will be streamlined to the line Ministries to gradually decentralize various functions, however its implementation has to be closely monitored and documented to feed into refinement of the instructions. The criteria for selection of pilot districts and villages differ across the sectors and through the ‘three-builds’ approach, causing challenges in integrated planning and budgeting processes.

UNICEF is increasingly being recognized as a key partner in the Governance Sector Working Group. The primary focus of the recent Governance Sector Working Group Meeting was the dissemination of the ‘three-builds’ approach while MOHA is also expected to play a greater role in engaging civil society organizations, promoting public participation, and addressing the critical concerns affecting the communities.

With a view to implement their new mandates, MOHA has also issued a number of instructions on civil registration, and is expected to play a greater role in coordinating the relevant line Ministries to improve efficiency and effectiveness of civil and birth registration services.

Lack of sufficient central and sub-national staff, the capacity associated with the recent upgrading of MOHA to a Ministry and being a new partner to UNICEF continues to pose challenges in implementation.

IR 2460/A0/04/650/001 By 2013, children, young people and women, especially those most vulnerable, have their rights fulfilled through strengthened national capacity to use data and existing planning mechanisms as well as discretionary budget to deliver social services to remote areas.

**Progress:** MOHA and UNICEF signed a work plan in August 2012, opening up opportunities for UNICEF to engage more strategically in the Governance Sector Working Group as well as the broader decentralization process accelerated by the Government. This is the first work plan that is synchronized with Government fiscal year to promote ownership and alignment to Government processes.

UNICEF supported a coordination workshop in Luangnamtha, with the involvement of key stakeholders including NCMC, MOHA, MPI, MOES, MOH, Poverty Eradication Centre, UNCDF, INGOs as well as provincial Government and sectoral departments.

A MOHA, UNICEF, and UNCDF joint causality analysis and Operational Expenditure Block Grants (OEBG) workshop was conducted for Luangnamtha Province, with a specific focus on the Sing district. The follow up
of OEBG in the Sing district was monitored, and issues affecting the integrated planning and budgeting were discussed with MOHA to facilitate the communication and accountability relationship between the central and sub-national levels. A work plan with programme sections is currently being developed to link district planning processes in health and education sectors and OEBG, with a view to improve the overall quality of district plans and maximize the use of various funding allocated to the districts.

UNICEF supported the participation of an inter-Ministerial delegation to attend the East Asia and Pacific Conference on Public Finance, Social Policies and Children with an objective to facilitate dialogue between Ministry of Finance and line Ministries in addressing disparities that affect children. An in-country debriefing is being planned for early 2013. As part of the follow-up, UNICEF Lao PDR is contributing to the concept of the regional study to document allocation formulas that are being applied in countries in the region.

### IR 2460/A0/04/650/002 Effective and Efficient management of the Learning zone programme.

**Progress:** UNICEF provided HR support through this IR with the funds utilized in the IR to mainly help the organization contribute to the achievement of other IRs within the programme component, or across Programme components in the country programme of cooperation.

#### PC 800 - Cross-sectoral costs

**On-track**

### PCR 2460/A0/04/700 Effective and efficient programme performance.

**Progress:** In 2012 UNICEF office staff participated in, and responded to multiple changes in the external aid management environment and in UNICEF global programme processes. The year 2012 marked the first step in implementing the Delivering as One reform. The move from agency specific Country Action Plans to one UNDAF Joint Action Plan requires the development of a new agency specific and complementary to the processes. This year was also the first year of the new country programme and saw the introduction of new strategic and simplified results framework and multi-year work plans. The internal audit in August and September was an opportunity to review the way the new country office programme management processes were responding to these changes, in particular to look at whether there was a robust system of oversight and quality assurance.

In follow up to the Busan meeting, there were several new initiatives to strengthen development cooperation in the country. In particular, the MPI developed an online Aid Management database that captures Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) financial contribution to individual MDGs and sectors. In 2013 there are plans to develop a geographic mapping of ODA in the country. Secondly, the Ministry led the review of the Vientiane Declaration Common Action Plan, which aims to build consensus around a revised set of indicators. The discussion process provided the opportunity for the development partners to discuss extending the aid platform to include the contribution of civil society and be inclusive of Foreign Direct Investment. This is critical given that the majority of GDP growth (projected at 8.3 per cent in 2012 by IMF) is fuelled by the natural resource sector and extractive industries.

The Round Table Meeting in November marked the largest regular development cooperation forum. The approval of the Lao Social Indicator Survey, which was one of the most significant achievements in 2012 and involved all programme sections, was instrumental to informing the discussions on MDG progress at this meeting. At the Round Table, key advocacy messages from development partners emphasised the progress in many areas, the need to focus on the off-track indicators which reflect the widening inequality, more domestic investment in the health and education, and the need to establish an inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms for nutrition. UNICEF’s primary and secondary analysis of the LSIS data contributed to preparatory discussions for the Round Table and is the main source of data for MDG Report that is currently being drafted with support from the UN Country Team.
IR 2460/A0/04/700/001 Strengthen Programme Coordination.

**Progress:** The office revised or developed new country office policies, guidance, learning opportunities and knowledge management processes to respond to the changes in UNICEF’s global programme processes and the external environment.

For example to support the move to the UNDAF Action Plan, a Strategy Note and new guidance on the planning and review process were developed. These ensured that core commitments, programme strategies and operational issues were clearly articulated and regularly discussed as part of consultation meetings with partners.

To support the transition to more simplified multi-year work plans, new quality assurance processes were developed. These are helping to ensure that work plans are results focused and are inclusive of programme strategies. In addition a database of multi-year work plans linked to Google Earth was developed. This enables results to be filtered by strategy, geography and sector and thus facilitates multi-sectoral planning. It also improves targeting to the most remote areas and applies a lens of life cycle, partnership, decentralisation, advocacy, capacity development and other strategies. In 2013 UNICEF will further explore its use with partners to facilitate a more visual analysis of equity-focused provincial and district planning.

The implementation of the Monitoring of Results for Equity System (MORES) was priority in 2012. It was mainstreamed into regular progresses and was the catalyst for a number of initiatives. An average of 20 staff per week participated in formal and on-the-job learning to strengthen skills in data analysis and use of visuals to highlight disparities. The documentation, analysis and discussion of bottlenecks using the 10 determinants framework identified during field monitoring was integrated into regular programme meetings and field travel reports and an assessment of the equity focus and understanding of bottlenecks in monitoring and planning in the learning zone. In 2013, the learning from these initiatives will be an integral part of the Mid Term Review.

IR 2460/A0/04/700/002 Media and External Relations.

**Progress:** The Communication section successfully organized several donor visits. Examples included visits to Luangprabang for UNICEF Hong Kong and Cathay Pacific airlines, to Champasak for UNICEF Germany NC, Goodwill Ambassador Barbara Becker and Pampers staff in support of tetanus immunization, and to Luangnamtha for UNICEF Australia and their partner Qantas. The Hong Kong and Australian visits resulted in immediate funding commitments. The link to Australia was further strengthened when UNICEF, the Sydney-based mining company MMG–represented by its CEO, Andrew Michelmore–and the MOH, launched a new partnership to improve the nutrition of Lao children in three provinces in September. Other donors visits were organized for the Aeon and Japan Committee for Vaccines, which also resulted in new funding commitments. Apart from foreign journalists accompanying delegations from UNICEF committees, there were no visits from foreign media.

The Education Donor Toolkit (for UNICEF National Committees) was finalized, and the two remaining toolkits, for Child Protection and Health, are at the final editing stage in Geneva.

The section produced human interest stories, photos and videos for donor reports, proposals and UNICEF’s main public website on a wide range of topics. The importance of good reporting from the field was emphasized again when a feature story on education was instrumental in obtaining funds from UNICEF Netherlands.

Office wide communication and resource mobilisation strategies were developed and programme sections identified specific advocacy objectives, as a result of an internal workshop held in May. The Communication section is an active participant in the UN Communication Group meetings and initiatives such as UN advocacy, UN newsletter, and events.
No major adjustments are anticipated to the current plan, but it is hoped that a new “country kit,” presenting the UNICEF programme, will trigger interest from media and development partners.

**PCR 2460/A0/04/800 Effective and efficient programme management and operations support.**

**On-track**

**IR 2460/A0/04/800/001 Governance and Systems**

**Progress:**

2012 has been dominated by the transition from PROMS to VISION as the main operating system. The first phase of this transition, to manage the processing of routine transactions, has been largely successful. The office used the change as an opportunity to review and revise all the main work processes in the office. Most major processes and associated forms have been redesigned, and routing slips used to both test the process and to support staff to know which step to go to next.

The Performance Management System is still new, but the office is moving towards a better use of the information. Further training is planned, in particular to support the oversight function of section chiefs and management. More work is also needed to master the more complex month end processes in Finance. It is expected that these will be strengthened by year-end. The office key performance indicators, monitored monthly by the Programme Coordination Committee, and at the Country Management Team meetings, ensure that cash transfer balances are kept within the nine-month aging target. Utilisation rates of donor grants and the full use of expiring funds have been monitored regularly.

The office has submitted 16 donor proposals including one donor toolkits, and 29 donor reports; 17 of which were due to donors and 16 of those due to donors were sent on time. The office has also hosted five visits from interested donors to continue support to the country programme.

**IR 2460/A0/04/800/002 Financial Resources and Stewardship**

**Progress:** As the office was advised early in the year that it would be subject to internal audit, the office has used the preparation process for the audit as an opportunity to strengthen governance and oversight mechanisms in general. The office has updated the terms of reference for the Country Management Team (CMT) and established a revised set of key performance indicators that are monitored regularly, making good use of the Performance Management System data. The Programme Coordination Committee continues to function well, reviewing progress against work plans using effective monthly reporting tools. The rolling Annual Management Plan was updated at the start of the year with good participation of all staff. The key programme and management results take into account actions to address the areas that have been identified as high risk in the office Risk Assessment exercise. A mid-year review of progress against results has been completed, with actions agreed upon for further follow up. With the start of the new country programme this year, the office has re-structured the online archive of shared files, with clearer responsibilities for maintaining each folder. The Business Continuity Plan was updated to reflect changes with the transition to the VISION system, and off-site tests were conducted to ensure continuing remote access to the office systems.

**IR 2460/A0/04/800/003 Human Capacity**

**Progress:** The Country Office (CO) is now well staffed with all programme section chief posts filled. Funding for international posts remains precarious, but so far the office has been able to attract and retain a high calibre of staff. The office has a rolling three-year HR Development Plan that is being implemented to support the programmatic changes in the country programme. This is to be complemented by management skills development, with coaching and performance management training planned for the last half of the year.
The office has instituted a successful programme of Friday Learning sessions, which are one hour classes designed to provide key hands-on skills, with the focus to date on the generation and analysis of data. As part of the annual management planning process, an exercise was conducted to define and clarify the roles and responsibilities of common functions within the office, and establish standard sets of accountabilities, which are to be captured in the performance appraisal forms of each staff member. This process has been linked to the introduction of the new operating system, VISION, and an increased delegation of authority to the programme result managers. The Staff Association continues to be active. Joint Consultative Committee meetings between the staff association and management have been held regularly.
**Effective Governance Structure**

A Rolling three-year Annual Management Plan (RAMP) was established in 2011. Progress against the plan was reviewed at the start of 2012 and the results modified. The RAMP focuses on five key programme results, covering the crosscutting areas of: establishing the ‘learning’ zone office; equity and monitoring; strategic partnerships; advocacy; and emergency preparedness and response. The five key management results cover: UN coherence and alignment with government aid effectiveness; resource mobilisation; heads of sections leading the change and supporting a coaching culture; revised work processes and VISION implementation; and audit preparation and process. Good progress has been made across all results. The key results areas in the RAMP include all areas highlighted as High Risk in the risk management plan so that actions for these areas are fully incorporated into the routine follow up by the CMT.

Throughout the course of the year the office has continued the internal discussions to clarify roles and expectations for the new Country Programme 2012-2015, including expanding the standard performance results and indicators for Section Heads, Programme Result Managers and Programme Assistants. The process has focused on deepening the office-wide understanding of the shifts in approaches and strategies that underlie the new country programme including the shift in roles and responsibilities required with the introduction of VISION.

Given that 2012 was the start of the new Country Programme, and with the transition to VISION and the preparation for the internal audit visit in August and September, it has been a year with a significant focus on systems and processes around programme and operations management. As a result, the office closes the year with strengthened and well-documented work processes, enhanced programme monitoring, and increased delegation to Programme Result Managers. The internal audit visit was very constructive, with helpful guidance provided by the audit team. The draft internal audit report makes seven recommendations for action, of which two are considered a high priority. A detailed action plan is in place to address the issues raised, which will be incorporated into the update of the RAMP planned for early 2013. The audit report noted as areas of good practices: internal quality assurance mechanisms over key programme documents, effective functioning of the key management bodies, regular testing and updating of the Business Continuity Plans, up to date completion of the monthly bank reconciliations, and good management of the fixed assets.

The Country Management Team has continued to meet regularly during the year, providing support to the office decision-making processes. The Joint Consultative Committee also met three times during the year. Management and the staff association have worked closely together to address issues raised by staff, including through the anonymous suggestion box. The Programme Coordination Committee has also met monthly, focusing on oversight of key programme indicators, programme implementation progress using effective monthly reporting tools, and also providing a forum for learning and discussions around programme priorities and inviting regional colleagues for presentations on emerging topics of interest.

**Strategic Risk Management**

The key programme and management results in the RAMP take into account actions to address the areas that have been identified as high risk in the office Enterprise Risk Assessment exercise. These also correspond to the areas covered by the internal audit report. As part of the preparations for the internal audit, the office conducted a review of the management of Cash Transfers to Government. Based on this and the audit observations, the processes have been strengthened, with increased oversight and improved tools to support effective management.

Over the course of the year, the allocation of roles and responsibilities for processing in VISION has been reviewed several times. The segregation of duties is now fully in line with global policy. While the office has supported increased delegation of accountability to the Programme Result Managers, the office has established processes to ensure that areas of high risk have a higher level of review by senior management. The office has maintained Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS) compliance, and a small stock of supplies to support staff in emergency is kept in storage. The Supply unit has an up-to-date list of pre-qualified suppliers. Security briefings are provided for all new staff, and any security advisories from the UN...
Department of Safety and Security) UNDSS office are shared with staff as a matter of routine.

Although there were no major emergencies in Lao PDR in 2012, the office continued to maintain its capacity to respond. UNICEF participated fully in an OCHA-led, inter-agency emergency simulation. UNICEF updated cluster plans in 2012 for the four (out of eight) clusters where UNICEF is the cluster lead: Water and Sanitation, Nutrition, Education (co-lead with Save the Children) and Protection. The Business Continuity Plan (BCP) was reviewed and tested to ensure continued capacity to communicate voice and data messages through alternate means: Mini-M satellite phone and BGAN, HF and VHF radio. The Operations team spent a day at the identified alternate off-site location, to allow for hands-on training on the use of radios, how to access the UNICEF systems remotely, and involving a review of the Operations commitments in emergencies. Actions have been taken to improve preparedness based on the review.

Evaluation

Lao PDR has started its new Country Programme 2012-2015. A four-year IMEP has been developed with an obligation of each programme to conduct evaluation to learn more on the programme’s achievement. The two-year multi-year IMEP (MY-IMEP) has been prepared to resonate the studies, assessments, surveys and evaluations in the programme sections’ work plans. MY-IMEP supports the monitoring of progress as well as effective implementation of the activities. Quarterly review of MY-IMEP was conducted in 2012 during which time new and emerging activities are incorporated and progress of implementation updated. Reporting to the Programme Coordination Committee (PCC) and CMT are done on a regular basis.

To ensure the quality of studies, assessments, and evaluations, the CO has set up an internal Quality Assurance Network (IQAN) to review all Terms of Reference (TORs). The members of the IQAN are the office focal points for crosscutting issues such as gender, equity, aid effectiveness, youth and adolescent, and M&E. The key task of each focal point is to review the TOR with their focal point lens and contribute to development of the good TOR.

UNICEF, along with UNFPA, was a major supporter of a national household survey LSIS, which combined the Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey 4 and the Demographic Heath Survey and provides data disaggregated to the provincial level. The final LSIS report will be available by late 2012. The findings will be used for monitoring progress towards MDGs and the seventh NSEDP, as well as supporting the third MDG progress report. UNICEF, with EU funding, also supported a nutrition survey in four provinces that used LSIS sampling frame and is linked to other LSIS data. The report will be completed early in 2013.

UNICEF also supported a Civil and Birth Registration Assessment and a Study on Causes and Impact of Internal Migration on Children in 2012 with both reports expected to be completed in 2013. The Civil and Birth Registration Assessment led to participation of two Vice Ministers to the “Asia Pacific High Level Meeting on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics,” and will develop follow up actions to be led by MOHA.

In 2012, preparation of a joint UN evaluation on Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) has started and the actual evaluation will commence in 2013. The evaluation will assess the joint effort of three UN agencies (UNICEF, WHO, and WFP) in addressing acute malnutrition in the southern provinces. UNICEF and WHO also collaborated with the MOH in conducting a comprehensive review of national immunization programme. One recommendation from the assessment was for the Government to increase its budget allocation to the immunization programme.

In 2012, UNICEF supported officials from the MPI to attend a training course on evaluation to support the preparation of the mid-term evaluation of seventh NSEDP in early 2013. The national capacity building will continue in 2013 to further strengthen capacity of government in planning, leading and conducting quality evaluation.
Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology

2012 started with a new Information and Communication Technology (ICT) challenge to support VISION/SAP access and performance. In spite of some complications and delays, the office was able to ensure that all SAP users could access the system according to the office role mapping. Users have become confident in the use of the system, as a result of the intensive VISION training in the last quarter of 2012 together with the subsequent WebEx sessions, and internal clinics that ICT supported.

In 2012, the ICT functions were stable and well managed. Access to IT systems is done via the appropriate endorsement from concerned Sections, HR and Operations. A security enhancement was put in place for secure access to office systems and data, and a new internal ICT policy was issued and provided to all users regarding acceptable use of ICT systems and information. As well as frequent use of internet and intranet, other communication methods were also in place to assist the operations and programme activities, such as video conferencing, Webex and webinar sessions, Blackberry and Skype.

The UN agencies in Lao PDR have shared information about internet use and service provision to enable improved negotiation of services from often the same service providers. Increasingly, the inter-agency teams are using common platforms to share information. The UNICEF off-site location for business continuity remains located at the UNDP offices, while the UNDP data backup was kept off-site at UNICEF premises. Discussions regarding emergency communications were held with WFP and UNDSS.

in place of desktops and laptops, UNICEF staff at the professional level have been equipped with laptops with docking stations, reducing costs for hardware replacements, and enabling remote access to office systems via the use of 3G internet access. Improved access to emails and office data while staff was on field missions has been a major benefit for programme activities.

The procurement of all ICT equipment used in the office was done through the direct order Long Term Arrangements established at UNICEF HQ level, ensuring that all of our ICT equipment is compliant with ICT standards and policy. The obsolete ICT equipment was reviewed and data cleansed to permanently destroy data prior to disposal. Disposal of functioning ICT equipment is through donation to government counterparts to support programme implementation in accessing use of ICT equipment.

The ICT rollouts set by NYHQ were focused and completed on time. Additional piloting projects were also completed by the office as support to HQ test processes prior to the general release. The Hyper-V Hosts and Windows 2008 Virtual Machines that were put in place will help in cost reductions and enhanced cost effectiveness in ICT. The ICT elements of the business continuity plan and disaster recovery are in the process of adjusting to new technologies, in coordination with the RO.

Fund-raising and Donor Relations

The office has submitted 36 donor reports, all of which were sent to the donor on time. The office has also hosted seven visits from donors interested in continuing support to the country programme. These donors included Japan with Aeon and the UNICEF committees of Hong Kong with Cathay Pacific; Australia with Qantas; and Germany with Goodwill Ambassador Barbara Becker and Pampers staff.

UNICEF prepared comprehensive proposals for the Health and Nutrition, Child Protection and Education Programmes (Donor Toolkit). A total of USD$ 14,149,395 of OR funds were raised in 2012 representing 111 per cent of the annual target.

Utilisation rates of donor grants and the full use of expiring funds have been monitored regularly. Overall, utilisation rates for regular resources are above 99 per cent. Four other resources grants were extended during the year with the full agreement of the donor. Utilisation of other resources was close to 100 per cent. Outstanding Direct Cash Transfer (DCT) over six months was recorded only in the last quarter, with no quarters ending with DCT outstanding over nine months. The quarterly reports from the RO, which show how the country office measures against the standard performance indicators set for the region, are reviewed by the CMT and responses have been submitted as required.
Management of Financial and Other Assets

2012 has been dominated by the transition from PROMS to VISION as the main operating system. The first phase of this transition, to manage the processing of routine transactions, has been largely successful, with most staff now confident system users in their areas of work. The office used the change as an opportunity to review and revise all the main work processes in the office. As a result, most major processes and associated forms have been redesigned, and routing slips introduced to both test the process and to support staff to know which step to go to next. The Performance Management System is being used routinely for management information, for example, at PCC and CMT meetings. The office dedicated learning time on data management skills, which while aimed at programme data use, also helped staff strengthen skills in pivot tables. Further training and exploration of the system is planned, in particular to support the oversight function of section chiefs and management.

The mid-year and year-end closure processes have supported strengthening of the more complex month end processes in Finance. The office conducted a review of its Cash Transfer processes in preparation for the audit, which rated the area as high risk. As a result, the guidelines and tools for processing payments to government and conducting Spot Checks have been strengthened, with enhanced monitoring and oversight by management.

The new VISION Asset Management system has been implemented to improve and integrate asset management with the financial system. Although there have been some difficulties with the migrated data, the office conducted a full count of assets at mid-year. Although the new bank reconciliation process was challenging at the start, the two accounts have been reconciled on a monthly basis since August, meeting HQ deadlines each month.

The CMT regularly reviews proposed allocations and utilisation of funds by the different programmes. The office key performance indicators, monitored monthly by the PCC, and at the CMT meetings, ensure that cash transfer balances are kept within the nine-month, aging target. Any exceptions are recorded and followed up.

Supply Management

The office has continued to maintain effective support to the supply needs of the country programme, and for Procurement Services to the Government. An Annual Supply Plan was developed in the first quarter, and quarterly updates were shared with relevant programme sections during the year.

In support of the VISION roll-out, the Supply team in consultation with the Operations Manager, VISION super-users in the region and support from Supply Division, has developed: A new workflow to reflect and comply with VISION; supply request forms from Sales Order for programme supply; Purchase Requisition and Purchase Order etc; provided training to SAP users for supply transactions; and assisted programme colleagues through on the job training on a case-by-case basis. The Supply team continues learning through knowledge exchange with other UNICEF COs to maximize the benefits from the system.

Implementation of the new procurement modality called Procurement Through Government is in progress based on recommendations from Supply Division. The purpose is to decentralize and support the capacity building of government counterparts in handling procurement activities. Two trainings were delivered to counterpart staff from the central Water and Sanitation Department of the MOH and also from 16 provinces. Counterparts are now managing the bidding process at the provincial level and report to UNICEF CO for approval, prior to processing the award of contract. Payment is through Direct Payment modality.

UNICEF supported the establishment of a Common Procurement Team (CPT) in 2012 in line with global guidelines, and is participating with procurement staff from other UN agencies to initiate UN common procurement. The Supply Officer is the vice chair of the CPT. To date, information has been shared including the procurement through government modality, which is totally new to other local UN agencies.

The Supply unit has continued to build good procurement practices including: Allowing end users to provide
inputs for technical requirements and join during goods inspection visits, which helps the end user take more responsibility; public bid openings that allow suppliers to participate and observe during bid opening processes; inform unsuccessful bidders in writing, as this can help suppliers be updated on the tender result and build reliability of the efficiency and transparency of the process; and continue market surveys at central and provincial level to ensure sufficient qualified suppliers and contractors.

**Human Resources**

The country office is now well staffed with all programme section chief posts filled. Funding for international posts remains precarious, but so far the office has been able to attract and retain a high calibre of staff. The office maintains good recruitment practices to ensure a transparent selection process.

The office has a rolling three-year HR Development Plan, which is being implemented to support the programmatic changes in the country programme. This is complimented by management skills development, with coaching and performance management training conducted for all but two of the supervisors in the office in 2012. The office has instituted a successful programme of Friday Learning sessions, which are one hour classes designed to provide key hands-on skills, with the focus to date on the generation and analysis of data. During the year, the office has conducted several in-house training and learning activities with interested staff actively involved in the learning events.

As part of the annual management planning process, an exercise was conducted to define and clarify the roles and responsibilities of common functions within the office, and establish standard sets of accountabilities, which are to be captured in the performance appraisal forms of each staff member. This process has been linked to the introduction of the new operating system, VISION, and an increased delegation of authority to the Programme Result Managers. The Performance Appraisal System functions well with good compliance on completion by the deadlines. The office will continue to support improved setting of individual work and development objectives, building on the training and materials provided.

The HR team maintains a liaison role with the UNDSS office, and supported the UN Dispensary for the launch of an annual seasonal flu vaccination for staff and their eligible family dependents.

The results of the global staff survey that were received in January 2012 show that the office is above UNICEF global average across all dimensions. Management continues to work with the Staff Association and through the Joint Consultative Committee to maintain this sense of staff satisfaction.

As part of the VISION rollout, the HR Team devised new forms and processes to support the smooth processing of contracts and staff entitlements including leave. This has contributed the streamlining of processes in the office.

**Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings**

The office has continued to look at ways to manage its operations in a cost-efficient manner. Several internal processes and policies have been adopted to support cost savings. These include: Requesting the use of development partners premises for conducting staff training workshops, for little or no rental fee; putting in stronger controls over approval for international travel, so that the programmatic benefit is clearly established to justify the expense; postponing the replacement of one office jeep; and using video conferencing systems for consultations with regional officers, instead of inviting them for visits (for example, for a review of the audit recommendations, and for consultations on the new monitoring systems).

In addition, the office is in the process of reviewing the value for money principles for what UNICEF will fund for government implementation. This will be discussed with other UN agencies and partners to ensure a common approach. The office has received agreement that the new provincial zone office will be hosted by the Provincial Department of Planning and Investment at no rental cost.
Changes in AMP & CPMP

The office requested some small staffing changes at the November mail poll Programme Budget Review process. This was to request the establishment of three new UNV posts, in WASH, Health and Nutrition and Communication. For Health and Nutrition, the new post is a fully funded United Nations Volunteer (UNV) Intern funded by Irish Aid. This is the fourth year that the office has been able to benefit from this programme, having received in each case very competent, young volunteers to support the programme. The office also requested a new post to strengthen the Social Policy unit. The office continues to receive interns, hosting four graduates in 2012 across different programmes.

Summary Notes and Acronyms

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<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<td>ANC</td>
<td>Antenatal care</td>
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<td>ARV</td>
<td>Anti-retroviral</td>
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<td>AusAID</td>
<td>Australian Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>AWP</td>
<td>Annual Work Plan</td>
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<td>CATS</td>
<td>Community Approaches to Total Sanitation</td>
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<td>CCCs</td>
<td>Core Commitments for Children</td>
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<td>CDC</td>
<td>Centre for Disease Control</td>
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<td>C4D</td>
<td>Communication for Development</td>
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<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<td>CIEH</td>
<td>Centre for Information and Education on Health</td>
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<td>CO</td>
<td>Country Office</td>
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<td>CPAP</td>
<td>Country Programme Action Plan</td>
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<td>Country Programme Document</td>
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<td>CMAM</td>
<td>Community Management of Acute Malnutrition</td>
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<td>CMT</td>
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<td>CN</td>
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<td>Child Protection Networks</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>DAC</td>
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<td>DHS</td>
<td>Demographic and Health Survey</td>
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<td>DPT</td>
<td>Diphtheria Polio Tetanus</td>
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<td>DRR</td>
<td>Disaster Risk Reduction</td>
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<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
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<td>EIA</td>
<td>Environment Impact Assessment</td>
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<td>EMIS</td>
<td>Education Management Information System</td>
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<td>EPI</td>
<td>Expanded Programme of Immunisation</td>
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<td>ESCAP</td>
<td>Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</td>
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<td>ESWG</td>
<td>Education Sector Working Group</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>EVM</td>
<td>Effective Vaccine Management</td>
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<td>FTI</td>
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<td>GAR</td>
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<td>GAVI</td>
<td>Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation</td>
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<td>GBV</td>
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<td>GoL</td>
<td>Government of the Lao PDR</td>
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<td>GLAAS</td>
<td>Global Annual Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water</td>
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<td>GPAR</td>
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<td>HIV</td>
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<td>HMIS</td>
<td>Health Management Information System</td>
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<td>HRBA</td>
<td>Human Right-Based Approach</td>
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<td>IEC</td>
<td>Information, Education and Communication</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFC</td>
<td>Individuals, Families, Communities</td>
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<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organisation for Migration</td>
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<td>ITNs</td>
<td>Insecticide Treated Nets</td>
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<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Government Organisations</td>
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<td>IYCF</td>
<td>Infant and Young Child Feeding</td>
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<td>JICA</td>
<td>Japanese International Cooperation Agency</td>
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<td>JOICEF</td>
<td>Japanese Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning</td>
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<td>JMP</td>
<td>Joint Monitoring Programme</td>
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<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>The Lao People’s Democratic Republic</td>
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<td>LaoPHA</td>
<td>Lao Positive Health Association</td>
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<td>LDC</td>
<td>Least Developed Country</td>
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<td>LNR</td>
<td>Lao National Radio</td>
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<td>LSB</td>
<td>Lao Statistics Bureau</td>
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<td>LSIS</td>
<td>Lao Social Indicator Survey</td>
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<td>LWU</td>
<td>Lao Women’s Union</td>
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<td>MCH</td>
<td>Mother and Child Health</td>
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<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</td>
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<td>MICS</td>
<td>Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey</td>
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<td>MMG</td>
<td>Minerals and Metals Group</td>
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<td>MNCH</td>
<td>Maternal and Neonatal Child Health</td>
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<td>MNP</td>
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<td>MNT</td>
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<td>MNTE</td>
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<td>MoES</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Sport</td>
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<td>Ministry of Health</td>
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<td>MoLSW</td>
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<td>Ministry of Home Affairs</td>
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<td>NAWASAL</td>
<td>National Water and Sanitation Sector Assessment</td>
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<td>NERI</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSC</td>
<td>National Statistical Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSEDP</td>
<td>National Socio-Economic Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUoL</td>
<td>National University of Laos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLHIV</td>
<td>People Living with HIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMTCT</td>
<td>Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPTCT</td>
<td>Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission of HIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRSO</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Support Operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCSA</td>
<td>Risk Control and Self-Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>Regional Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELNA</td>
<td>Support to an Effective Lao National Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDC</td>
<td>Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STIs</td>
<td>Sexually Transmitted Infections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAT</td>
<td>Technical Assessment Team (for WASH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TT</td>
<td>Tetanus toxoid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>UXO</td>
<td>Unexploded Ordnance</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCCT</td>
<td>Voluntary Confidential Counselling and Testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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