BRIEF HOUSEHOLD CARE SURVEY IN LAO PDR

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BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE:

• In Laos, disproportionate UCDW responsibilities, largely by women and girls, and unknown values
• Lack of comprehensive evidence and national-level statistics.
• It is difficult to fully understand the scope of the issue, develop effective policies, and track progress towards gender equality.

• So the HHS aims to generate evidence on how women, men, and children spend their time, how care is provided, by whom, and the main factors affecting people’s responsibilities for UCDW.
• It also aims to highlight areas for improvement and opportunities for targeted interventions.
• How to address the challenges faced by households, particularly regarding gender roles, caregiving burdens, and economic opportunities, Lao PDR can move towards a more equitable and prosperous future for all.
Methodological and approaches:

- Oxfam, LFTU, and LWU together with provincial stakeholders conducted HHS in the end of 2023,
- Target areas: Sisattanack district in Vientiane Capital, Phonghong district in Vientiane Province, Luang Prabang district in Luangpabang, Parksong district in Champasack, and Laogarm district in Salavan province
- The sample: 501 participants (75% of women, and 15% of males, and 10% of children)
Demographics & Household Characteristics

- **Ethnicity:** Laoloum is the largest ethnic group (80%), followed by Khamou, Hmong, etc.
- **Age:** Most of the respondents are adults.
- **Marital Status:** 81% of women, and 92% of men are married.
- **Household Size:** Most households have 4-6 members.
- **Education:** Primary education is the most common attainment level, followed by lower secondary (19%) and upper secondary (20%)
RESULTS OF SURVEYS:

• **Time**: Women dedicate 4 more times than men towards care work, ex between 5 and 6 am, 42% of women and 19% of men cared for others or did housework.

• **Most values care work** is meal preparation for families, and women are expected to make the food.

• **Men and women agree** that women contribute more to housework.

• **They perceive** that women are better at food preparation and housekeeping tasks. While **men are better at building, repair, and outdoor work**.
• People want an equal sharing household but the reality is different. Men and women believe that men should share in housework and caregiving, however, Traditional views and workload concerns often hinder the full participation of women.
• Women frequently said that men's focus on paid work was a reason for the limited involvement (ex, 33% for fuel collection, 28% for meal prep).
• Many women would like to get help (ex, 60% water collection, 67% childcare)
• Good News!, Most women and men believe the community wouldn't penalize men who share tasks.
• Decision-making, Our survey shows that women mostly decide on personal matters and small purchases while other decisions are made by men.
• Women are also less satisfied with the division of chores in the household.

• Care work does cause stress and time constraints. Caregiving during the farming season is particularly stressful for families.

• UCDW burdens both physical and mental health. Alarmingly, 21% of respondents from both genders reported health problems due to these responsibilities. Women experience more pain, with headaches and backaches being common complaints. Men, on the other hand, report higher rates of exhaustion.

• Generational issue! Girls dedicate more time to childcare compared to boys while Boys contribute more to paid work and leisure activities.

• Equipment/Essentials covered: water access (often with hot water options), refrigerators for food storage, and washing machines or storage for clean clothes.
• **The gap exists** for specialized equipment: Childcare (playpens) or care for the elderly and disabled.

• **Their priorities** focus on improving efficiency. Fuel/energy sources like gas or electric stoves top the list, followed by solutions for clean clothes (possibly dryers or better washing machines) and food preparation equipment like upgraded refrigerators or blenders. All of these indicate that there is a huge demand for interventions that focus on the reduction of the time and effort spent on care responsibilities.

• The survey **shows strong preferences for government support** in the form of healthcare access and cash transfers to alleviate caregiving and household burdens.
RECOMMENDATION:

Policymakers to design targeted interventions and allocate resources effectively. It would also serve as a valuable baseline for monitoring progress towards achieving gender. We recommend to

- **Promote shared responsibility**: Implement social awareness campaigns and educational programs challenging traditional gender norms and encouraging men to actively participate in childcare, housework, and eldercare.

- **Invest in care services**: Develop and expand accessible and affordable childcare centers, eldercare facilities, and after-school programs to free up women's time for education, employment, and leisure.

- **Enhance educational opportunities**: Provide scholarships, mentoring programs, and targeted skills training for women and girls, particularly in entrepreneurship, to increase their employability and income-earning potential.

- **Challenge gender stereotypes**: Conduct workshops and community dialogues to address harmful gender stereotypes and create a supportive environment for girls to pursue their aspirations.

- **There is a very urgent need to collect comprehensive data**: Regularly conduct national-level surveys on unpaid care work and gender equality to inform policy decisions and track progress.

- **Strengthen legal frameworks**: Review and revise discriminatory laws and policies to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all aspects of life.

- **Allocate resources effectively**: Direct funding towards initiatives that directly address gender inequality and the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work on women and girls.

- **Engage stakeholders**: Collaborate with government agencies, civil society organizations, and community leaders to design and implement programs that promote gender equality and empower women and girls.
THANK YOU