

Annex 2: USAID Laos MCHN NOFO 72048621RFA00001 Alignment with U.S. Government Strategic Partnerships and Policies

The **Lao People’s Democratic Republic and United States of America Comprehensive Partnership** opens a new era of bilateral relations between Lao PDR and the United States. The MCHN Activity represents the United States’ commitment to help Lao PDR achieve its health and broader development goals. This five-year Activity will support Lao PDR in its efforts to improve health and nutrition for women, children, and adolescent girls, all to build a healthy foundation for the future.

The MCHN Activity will contribute to the **USAID Lao PDR Health Strategy 2019-2023** goal: *“Lao PDR has improved health and education systems that foster a healthier and more productive population,”* specifically contributing to meeting IR 2.1: *Improved health and nutrition outcomes among mothers, newborns, children and adolescents,* and IR 2.2: *Strengthened systems to improve equitable universal access to health services.*

This Activity will also support **USAID’s Global Health** efforts, grounded in investments in health systems strengthening and practical innovations to prevent child and maternal deaths. It also aligns with USAID Global Health vision that *“all women and children have the same chance of a healthy lifestyle, regardless of where they are born.”*

Several global USAID strategies and policies framed the design of the MCHN Activity:

- **USAID’s Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014-2025¹**: The goal of USAID’s Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy is to improve nutrition to save lives, build resilience, increase economic productivity, and advance development. The MCHN Activity will support USAID global efforts to reduce malnutrition in women of reproductive ages (age 15-49) and children under five, with a specific focus on the 1,000-day window from pregnancy to a child’s second birthday.
- **The USAID Policy Framework²**: The Policy Framework presents USAID’s mission and its vision for achieving it: ending the need for foreign assistance by partnering with countries along their Journeys to Self-Reliance. To realize this vision, the policy framework introduces a new, Agency-wide approach to development and humanitarian assistance: fostering self-reliance. This approach is grounded in three mutually reinforcing principles: USAID must (1) advance country progress by (2) making investments for impact through (3) programs that sustain results.
- **Journey to Self-Reliance³**: USAID is working with host country governments and partners to achieve locally sustained results, helping countries mobilize public and private revenues, strengthening local capacities, and accelerating enterprise-driven development. This

¹ “Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014-2025,” USAID (2014), https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1867/USAID_Nutrition_Strategy_5-09_508.pdf.

² “USAID Policy Framework 2019: Ending the Need for Foreign Assistance,” USAID (2019), https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/WEB_PF_Full_Report_FINAL_10Apr2019.pdf.

³ “Journey to Self-Reliance,” USAID, <https://www.usaid.gov/selfreliance>.

approach fosters stable, resilient, and prosperous countries that are more self-reliant, and prioritizes enduring partnerships.

- **Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy 2020**⁴: The goal of this policy is to improve the lives of citizens around the world by advancing gender equality and empower women and girls to participate fully in and equally benefit from the development of their societies. Ensuring women and girls can reach their full potential in society is critical not only to attaining gender equality and women’s empowerment, but also to meeting sustainable development outcomes.
- **Private Sector Engagement (PSE) Policy**⁵: The PSE Policy calls for actions to work together with the private sector to design and deliver USAID’s development and humanitarian programs across all sectors, including health. USAID is seeking an increase and deepening of collaboration with the private sector in addressing the challenges countries face on the Journey to Self-Reliance. This includes facilitating market-based solutions, support for market systems, and consistent leveraging of the private sector’s expertise, resources, and investment in addressing development challenges.
- **Vision for Action in Digital Health**⁶: USAID’s *Vision for Action in Digital Health* identifies four strategic priorities against which USAID global, regional, and country-specific investments in digital technologies for health should align: 1) assess and advance national and regional capacity for digital health, particularly in leadership and governance-assessing the digital health enabling environment; 2) support the development of and align investments to national, and where appropriate, regional digital health strategies; 3) support the development of and align investments to a national digital health infrastructure; and 4) adapt, re-use, and where needed, provide support to global goods.

USAID’s Past and Current Portfolio

The Activity builds upon lessons learned and promising practices previously or currently funded by USG and other international development partners.

Improving Health and Nutrition Outcomes for Mothers and Children in Vulnerable

Populations in Lao PDR (Sept 2020-Sept 2025): This program, implemented by UNICEF through a USAID grant, covers four provinces (Savannakhet, Attapeu, Khammouane, and Saravan) and 12 districts. The goal of the program is to improve health and nutrition outcomes for mothers, newborns, children and adolescents, particularly in the most vulnerable geographically or socially hard-to-reach populations in Lao DPR, through strengthening community-level primary

⁴ “2020 Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Policy,” USAID (2020), https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Draft_USAID_2020_Gender_Equality_and_Womens_Empowerment_Policy_-_External_Review_8.19.2020_.pdf.

⁵ “Private Sector Engagement Policy,” USAID, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/usaid_psepolicy_final.pdf.

⁶ “A Vision for Action in Digital Health 2020-2024: Accelerating the Journey to Self-Reliance Through Strategic Investments in Digital Technologies,” USAID (2018), https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USAID-A-Digital-Health-Vision-for-Action-v10.28_FINAL_508.pdf.

and nutrition services. This activity has three objectives: 1) enhance district health management and coordination for increased delivery of quality, equitable services to vulnerable populations; 2) improve the capacity of primary health workers to deliver a package of quality essential maternal and child health and nutrition service package interventions; and 3) improve community and household knowledge and positive care practices in health and nutrition.

UNICEF is implementing activities at community and primary care (health center levels) to increase access, demand and utilization for RMNCAHN services. The focus of the UNICEF grant is at community level, working with communities and primary care health centers. UNICEF also aims at strengthening referrals and follow-up from primary health care centers to district hospitals. The focus of the UNICEF grant is to strengthen demand, utilization, and access to primary care services from communities to health centers.

USAID envisions that the bilateral MCHN Activity could work in two of the four provinces where UNICEF is working but in different districts. It is USAID's expectation that the bilateral MCHN Activity will also work in additional provinces and districts than where UNICEF is working. It is critical for the Applicant to explain how the bilateral MCHN Activity will coordinate with and work in synergy with the UNICEF program. USAID's vision is for UNICEF program and the bilateral MCHN Activity to complement each other and share lessons learned for rapid scale-up of evidence-based interventions.

USAID Nurture (September 2016-September 2021): This program, which is implemented by Save the Children, aims to improve the nutritional status of women and children in order to reduce stunting and is focused on the first 1,000 days. USAID Nurture works in two provinces (Kammouan and Savnakheth) in the central region. Through health-system strengthening approaches, the program has supported Lao PDR to: improve community systems; integrate water, sanitation, hygiene, and nutrition activities through community facilitators and iNwash village committees; develop tools to improve adolescents' nutrition status ("small doable actions"); pilot private sector partnerships through village sales agents; improve nutrition service delivery by developing counseling materials, nutrition trainings, and by revising tools including the Pink Book; and support district planning for improved nutrition. (See Annex). A mid-term evaluation was conducted. It is USAID's expectation that the Applicant will integrate some of the previous USAID-funded evidence-based interventions into its proposed program.

Lao PDR National Institute of Nutrition (2018-2021): Implemented by RTI, this activity provided organizational and capacity building support to improve national nutrition outcomes through research, education, integrated service delivery, and care services.

USAID Okard (2017-2022): This activity aims to improve and sustain the independent living and functional ability of persons with disabilities. The activity has three main components: 1) health, 2) economic empowerment; and 3) stakeholder engagement. Okard works at two levels: Tier 1, a system-centered approach focused on Government of Lao PDR ownership and long-term sustainability; and Tier 2, which examines and supports the individual needs of persons with disabilities and the communities that support them.

USAID Local Solutions Support (2018-2022): Implemented by RTI, the project focuses on providing strategic, systematic, and measurable approaches to organizational capacity development with the goal of realizing increased leadership by local partners in determining development priorities.

USAID Laos Counter Trafficking In Persons (USAID Laos CTIP) (2019-2024): Implemented by Winrock International, this activity works to reduce vulnerability to human trafficking among targeted populations in the Lao PDR by supporting vocational training and employment opportunities for targeted vulnerable populations. The anticipated activity outcomes are to: 1) strengthen the Government of Lao PDR to lead anti-human trafficking efforts; 2) increase access to economic opportunities and employment among target vulnerable populations; and 3) increase access to support and services among trafficked persons.