



Lao Women's Union

Thadeau Road, P.O. Box 59, Vientiane Capital, Tel & Fax: 021 316373
E-mail: laowu_ird@yahoo.com, website: <http://www.laowomenunion.org.la/>

PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF LAO WOMEN'S RIGHTS

1. Lao Women's Union (LWU) is a mass and social organization of women at all strata throughout Lao P.D.R. It was officially established in 1955. The history of LWU is closely attached to the country's development. The organizational system of LWU operates throughout the country.
2. Mandates of the Lao Women's Union
 - To implement and materialized the development and protection of women's and child's rights and interest, the promotion of women's advancement and implementation of the gender equality in family and society.
 - To strengthen unity, mobilize active enhance the rights to self-mastery of all ethnic in the cause of preserving and developing the country.
 - To educate all Lao ethnic women to absorb and implement the guidelines and policies, constitution, laws, resolutions, orders, socio-economic development plan of state, Lao women's development plans and international conventions related to the development and protection of women's and children's rights and interests, which Lao PDR is a party members.
 - To contribute to the conservation and promotion of good culture heritage and traditions of nation in particular cultural unique of all Lao ethnic women.
 - To heighten the Women's Union's in international relations based on state foreign policy.
3. LWU would like to submit information and recommendations regarding the promotion and protection of women rights in Lao PDR as part of stakeholder's contribution.
4. Since the submission of the first National Report of the Lao PDR under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2009, LWU also submitted its report on behalf of a mass and social organization to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). In 2011, LWU actively participated in the seminar on the implementation

of the recommendations of the UPR in the Lao PDR which attended by over 150 participants including senior government officials, several ambassadors and senior diplomats representing their various countries, civil society, academic bodies and the media.

5. LWU observes that the Government of Lao PDR has taken effective measures to the promotion and protection of women rights which is stipulated in the first Constitution in 1991 and amended in 2003, family law, labour law, law on Development and Protection of Women in 2004 and the law on Lao Women's Union which has just approved in 2013 and the notification on the implementation of sex-disaggregated data in 2000. The government also provides a coherent policy and strategy context. The Seventh National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) 2011-2015 and the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women (2011-2015) and the Lao Women Development Plan (2011-2015) which prioritize gender equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women including violence.
6. LWU has witnessed new improvements and achievements in the promotion and protection of women rights in Lao PDR. Overall, the Lao PDR has achieved remarkable economic and social progress over the past two decades or so. The proportion of people living below the poverty line has been reduced by more than 40 percent from the levels recorded in 1992/93. The infant and under-five mortality rates show a steady decline over time. Indeed, the country has already achieved the national MDG target for under-five mortality rate, previously set at 80 per thousand live births. In addition, there is good progress towards universal primary education; and the access to health services has increased steadily. Gender parity has steadily improved in all three levels of education in Lao PDR. Women's participation at the political level is an overarching priority. Much progress has been achieved in recent years with one quarter approximately of our National Assembly members composed of women and the increasing involvement of women in government and local administration at all levels. At the same time the rapidly increasing number of women in our country with registered business is cause for much hope to further foster economic empowerment and political representation by Lao women.
7. However, we recognize that we cannot afford to be complacent and that huge challenges remain. First, the Lao PDR is a mountainous country and those living in the remote highland areas have fallen behind in socio-economic progress, compared to those living in areas that are more accessible. Reaching these poorest populations with services continues to pose daunting challenges. Second, many of the poorer and more remote communities will not be able to improve their status without changing certain traditions and behaviors, such as gender roles and perceptions, and the way children are raised. Changing behavior requires time, more so than expansion of services, but action is needed on both fronts. Third, we recognize that the need for sustainable and predictable financing continues to be an issue of concern, although the Government has given a high priority in this area and recently increased expenditure in the social sectors.

8. In this regard, LWU would like to recommend for the betterment of promotion and protection of women rights in Lao PDR that although the Government is totally committed to these priorities as witnessed by related policies and strategies, the government should intensify implementing those policies, strategies and laws related to the promotion and protection of women rights as well as strengthen its strong partnership with the Lao Front for National Construction and country mass organizations: Lao Women's Union, Lao Youth Union, Lao Trade Union coupled with wide participation of the society at large. These will be greatly contributing to the promotion and protection of women's rights in Lao PDR. In addition, gender mainstreaming should be mentioned clearly in the next NSEDP (2016-2020) in order to be implemented not only in all level of government sectors but also in families and society.
