



**INGO NETWORK**  
**FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**2021-2026**  
*Public Document*

## Introduction

The International NGO Network (INN) has been supporting the INGO community in Lao PDR for over 15 years. The network is a dynamic group that has grown to over 75 different INGOs. The network serves its members in a variety of ways, including but not limited to network services, working groups, representation, and information sharing.

The mission of the INGO network is:

*The Network is a focal point for INGO information dissemination in the Lao PDR and exists to facilitate and enhance the work of its members. The primary focus is to facilitate liaison and information sharing among INGOs and other development partners as well as the Government of Lao PDR. Through its services, the Network supports its members to optimize their contribution to development in the Lao PDR by enhancing collaboration that can achieve greater impact than when members act individually. The Network also represents its members in appropriate forums, promotes policy dialogue and supports the civil society in Lao PDR.*

As part of the service to its members, the network performs a strategic review of its members, services and goals every five years. This process involves data collection, surveys, interviews, and other background assessments. This plan was developed based on the findings of the review and is intended to be shared with the Network. This plan should be reviewed periodically to ensure that the goals are still relevant and that there is progress toward the goals within the allotted timeframes.

## Methodology for Review and new Strategic Plan

This five-year strategic plan was created in collaboration with network members, steering committee members, Development Partners (DPs) and Government of Lao PDR (GoL) partners. The goals were developed after 11 interviews of INGO members, DPs and GoL partners, a survey which included 34 INGO members and a participatory meeting with the Steering Committee (SC). The results and data collected from the five-year strategic review was used for a participatory discussion with the SC and INN Coordinator which contributed to the creation of this five-year strategic plan.

After evaluating the previous goals, the consultant conducted a literature review, including background information on the Network, notes from meetings and past strategic reviews. A list of questions was sent in the form of a survey to the Network members. The consultant created an additional list of questions for the interviews. All the data from the survey results and the interviews was collected and analyzed by the consultant.

The consultant met with the SC and the Coordinator to present the findings of the desk review, the survey results and the data collected from interviews. Four goals were generated from data collection and analysis, further supported from evidence that came out of extensive interviews and discussion with network members and other stakeholders. The final plan was submitted to the SC for approval.

## Strategic Review 2017-2020

The strategic review included a document review, in-depth interviews with members and stakeholders and a survey sent out to the entire INGO Network. More than 45% of the Network members participated in this process, giving a robust viewpoint of the overall membership needs.

### Survey Results

The results of the survey show that 75% of Network members are satisfied with the achievements of the network over the last five years, none reported that they are unsatisfied.

Networking and information sharing are the areas that are most valued by the Network members, followed by connection with other INGOs and dialogue with government partners.

The survey indicated that there is a desire to see increased dialogue efforts on behalf of the Network in several areas such as with the Government of Lao PDR (GoL) and with Development Partners (DPs).

### Interview Results

Interviews included five non-INGO partners, including a representative from MOFA and several DPs.

The consultant interviewed a variety of members, including “small” INGOs operating on less than 500,000 usd per year, up to “large” INGOs that have over a 3.5 million usd yearly operating budget. Those who were interviewed represented different sectors; health, social development, natural resource management, social development, child protection, disability inclusion, agriculture, education, land rights, and government capacity building.

The results of the interviews aligned with the results of the survey, with networking and information sharing being the highest value associated with Network membership

Understanding and following the laws and decrees in Lao PDR is an area that members would like support around. The idea of supporting the Network members to be empowered and understand Lao laws related to INGOs is another area that will be added to the five-year plan as it lines up closely with the goal of the network to be an “information hub” that supports the needs of its membership. Beyond that, this initiative will help support members with providing up-to-date and clear information, adding even more value to the Network services.

One discussion of note that was revealed during the interview process is the idea of building more stability into the Network through strengthening the role of the Steering Committee (SC) and Coordinator.

In addition to interviewing Network members, the consultant interviewed several DPs. It is clear from the interviews that the DPs would like to have an increase in collaboration with the Network. The consensus among the DPs who were interviewed was the desire for an increase in partnership, shared dialogue and the request to have more consistent communication.

MOFA accepted the request to meet and discuss the five-year strategic review. MOFA noted that there is strong partnerships with the Network and that this should continue through biannual meetings, and also voiced an opinion that the Network’s role is to regulate the Network members. The consultant clarified that the mandate of the Network is not to regulate, but to support the members.

Another topic of discussion with MOFA during the interview was around MOU delays. The comment was made by the interviewee that some INGOs did not follow the rules and regulations, which caused delays. As MOUs are a key area in which the members would like to see more dialogue around, it is suggested that clarifying factors that cause MoU delays should be a key dialogue point for the five-year plan.

**Review of survey and interview results**

Once the interviews and survey were completed, the consultant met with the members of the SC and Coordinator and discussed the results of the survey, the interviews, and the SWOT analysis. The previous five-year strategic goals from 2017-2020 were also discussed during this meeting. After reviewing all relevant data a participatory discussion followed. Topics such as organizing structure, the role of Network, SC and coordinator, CSO involvement, MOU process and dialogues were some of the key themes that were discussed.

**SWOT Analysis**

As part of the review process, a Strengths Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was completed in order to enhance the five-year strategic plan.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Information sharing</li> <li>*Networking</li> <li>*Collective action</li> <li>*Dialogue</li> <li>*HR/Finance Groups</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Turnover of SC and Coordinator</li> <li>*Lack of unity over collective dialogue points</li> <li>*Non-constructive atmosphere</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Increase support from network for MOU process</li> <li>*Establish closer bond with GOL partners at MOFA and other key ministries to support better collaboration.</li> <li>*Increase value of membership through more topical meetings</li> <li>*Increase collaboration with DPs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Focus of network on wrong issues</li> <li>*Unclear regulations and decrees</li> <li>*Increased financial constraints due to COVID pandemic</li> <li>*Reduction in funding after graduation from Least Developed Country status, potentially reducing Network members</li> </ul>

## 2021-2026 Plan Goals

When generating the five-year plan goals the consultant was aware that with 75 members, it may be hard to create goals that would be amenable to the entire network. There are significant differences between the stakeholders interviewed, especially in the areas around CSO support and relationships with government entities. When deciding on which goals would be the priority for the next five years the consultant kept two things in mind. First, does the action or goal support the “greater” network? In other words, is this a topic that affects the majority of the group members, defined as 75% or higher? Secondly, is this goal achievable by a volunteer SC that meets once per month and has limited time to fully devote to the Network activities?

Keeping these concerns in mind, the goals for the next five years are:

1. **Information and Education:** Act as the key source of information for INGOs and expand this function for greater impact
2. **Dialogue and Operating Space:** Support collective dialogue on issues that affect all INGOs and contribute to an enabling environment for INGO operations
3. **Network Stability:** Integrate standards into bylaws and practice to ensure greater stability of the network
4. **Partnerships:** Strengthen existing partnerships and broaden network ties

To support the completion of the above goals, clearly defined activities and measures have been produced. To ensure these goals are met within the timeframes, the consultant has laid out the goals, activities and measures in the table below.

## 2021-26 Plan: Goals, Activities and Measures

Focus Area	Goal	Activities	Measures
<b>Information and Education</b>	1. Continue to act as the key source of information for INGOs and expand this function for greater impact	<p>1.1 Continue WhatsApp group and make data accessible for long-term use</p> <p>1.2 Continue weekly emails</p> <p>1.3 The coordinator facilitates a yearly meeting to support new INGO leadership on important laws, decrees and operating practices in Lao PDR</p> <p>1.4 The coordinator initiates a topical meeting every two months to increase information sharing and added value to membership</p> <p>1.5 Increase information sharing on the website through the addition of a repository of helpful documents such as Lao laws and decrees</p> <p>1.6 Continue annual salary and HR survey and add satisfaction element to the survey</p>	<p>1.1.1 Members will report that WhatsApp groups continue to be a venue for up-to-date sharing and information on biennial satisfaction survey</p> <p>1.1.2 Key data will be taken out of WhatsApp group and added to file on website for long-term access</p> <p>1.2.1 Members report emails are useful and give up to date information on biennial satisfaction survey</p> <p>1.3.1 Yearly meeting on laws and operations in Lao PDR is attended and participants report the information provided is helpful on the biennial satisfaction survey</p> <p>1.4.1 Documented evidence of topical meetings every two months (topics may include HR/Finance updates, DP specific meetings etc.)</p> <p>1.5.1 By 2022, Coordinator (or external consultant) has created and uploaded up-to-date documents to the website that give data, background and relevant resources for operations in Lao PDR</p> <p>1.6.1 Perform HR, salary and satisfaction survey biennially (hire consultant to support if needed)</p>

<p><b>Dialogue and Operating space</b></p>	<p>2. Support collective dialogue on issues that affect all INGOs</p>	<p>2.1 Network will dialogue for smoother and timelier MOU processes</p> <p>2.2 MOFA quarterly meeting is productive and topics that are discussed are valuable to the greater membership and support the network goals</p> <p>2.3 The network cultivates a collective understanding on laws and clarity on operations in Lao PDR as it affects operating space for INGOs</p>	<p>2.1.1 By 2022, the network has created a working document (that can be updated in real time by members) to support dialogue between INN members and MOFA on MOU processes with GoL</p> <p>2.2.1 Two weeks before biannual meeting with MOFA, a document will be circulated defining the purpose of the meeting and members can comment and give feedback before meeting</p> <p>2.2.2 Next steps/action points with MOFA and network will be circulated and follow up on these actions takes place within one month of the meeting</p> <p>2.3.1 Each year, there will be at least one topical meeting to disseminate details on the INGO handbook to support the use of this resource to the members.</p>
<p><b>Network Stability</b></p>	<p>3. Integrate standards into bylaws and practices to ensure greater stability of the network</p>	<p>3.1 Role of the coordinator is clearly defined</p> <p>3.2 SC updates staffing structure and funding requirements to enable more stability in the coordinator role</p> <p>3.3 SC continues to diversify the roles of the committee and ensures a more equitable workload for SC members</p>	<p>3.1.1 By 2021, SC has created a clear job description with expected duties and expectations, including management of the coordinator position</p> <p>3.2.1 By 2022, SC reviews Coordinator job position, pay scale and management and publishes changes in bylaws and practices</p> <p>3.3.1 Members of network will report that the role of SC is accessible and believe they are capable of filing the SC role on biannual satisfaction survey</p>

<p><b>Network Stability</b></p>	<p>3. Integrate standards into bylaws and practices to ensure greater stability of the network</p>	<p>3.4 SC reviews operating structure</p> <p>3.5 SC will work to foster a positive, solutions focused atmosphere within the network</p>	<p>3.3.2 SC members reach out through personal conversations or direct requests to smaller INGOs, INGOs from non-western countries and Lao-led INGOs each time there is a call for new SC members</p> <p>3.4.1 By 2022, SC (or external consultant) has documented research on the different ways that the network can be organised</p> <p>3.5.1 SC will lead by example facilitating positive and respectful conversations during meetings and in communication with network members and partners</p> <p>3.5.2 SC will make efforts to keep the tone of the group aimed at solutions and strengths</p>
<p><b>Partnerships</b></p>	<p>4. Strengthen existing partnerships and broaden network ties</p>	<p>4.1 Widen network of INGOs through increased communication with non-members and other networks</p> <p>4.2 Strengthen relationship with MOFA</p>	<p>4.1.1 Coordinator will meet at least one non-member every month to encourage an increase in membership and communication</p> <p>4.1.2 SC and Coordinator will seek out key informants from other networks (Korean, Japanese, Lao) and invite them to join membership meetings</p> <p>4.2.1 SC and Coordinator will schedule one annual informal networking event with MOFA for all INN members</p>



<b>Partnerships</b>	4. Strengthen existing partnerships and broaden network ties	4.3 Strengthen relationships with Development Partners (DPs)  4.4 SC will lead discussions with members regarding the INGO network’s goal of supporting civil society  4.5 Increase quality and quantity of networking events	4.3.1 Increase consistent communication and partnership through monthly emails to DPs  4.3.2 Increase collaboration with DPs through a scheduled quarterly meeting with DPs and SC members  4.4.1 By 2021, SC has defined and documented the role of CSOs in relation to INGO network and CSO collaboration  4.4.2 By 2022, Support and collaboration for CSOs is updated in the bylaws  4.5.1 Documented evidence of networking events with specific agendas such as a focus on DP, CSOs and GoL partners etc.
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## Conclusion

In its goal to serve members effectively, the INGO Network strives to stay relevant and open to the ever- changing context of Lao PDR. The current strategic plan is based on data collection, interviews and discussions that occurred in March 2021. However, as seen during the recent covid pandemic, the context of working in Lao PDR can change drastically in a short time. It is suggested therefore that the strategic plan be reviewed every two years by the full membership and at least annually by the SC members themselves. Additionally, it is suggested that in 2023 there is a midterm review to establish if the goals and objectives are still relevant.