



Lao Population and Housing Census 2015

Provisional Report

Ministry of Planning and Investment

Lao Statistics Bureau

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Forword

The Ministry of Planning and Investment, through the Lao Statistics Bureau, conducted the Lao Population and Housing census in 2015. This census is the fourth in a series of periodic censuses being undertaken in this country every 10 years starting from 1985. The data collection for this census took place on 1-7 March 2015. Funding for the Census comes mainly from the Lao Government with support from the Chinese Government as well as from international organizations which include the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), World Bank (WB), and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) .

This report is the first to be generated from the 2015 Population and Housing Census. The main objective of this report is to disseminate some of the key results of the Census which are deemed of immediate importance to planners, policy makers and other data users. The report includes data on total number of households, total population and their distribution by geographical area and by sex. The report also includes information on number of villages in the country and their characteristics with respect to presence of certain types of infrastructure such as school, market, health center, electricity, public water distribution system and access to roads.

The main census report, which is expected to be disseminated in June 2016, will include much more comprehensive information about the population of the country. In the meantime, Lao Statistics Bureau continues to systematically review the voluminous data that have been collected to ensure high quality of information that will be disseminated to the public.

On behalf of the Lao Government and, in particular, the National Census Steering Committee, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all government agencies, international organizations, private sector organizations for their valuable support to the conduct of the census. I would also like to give my heartfelt appreciation to the thousands of census enumerators who collected the data and to all respondents, namely, Lao citizens and citizens of foreign countries who were residing in Lao during the Census, for their cooperation and support that made the 2015 Census successful.

Vientiane Capital, 25 November 2015

Samaychanh Boupha, PhD
Head of Lao Statistics Bureau
National Steering Committee

Executive Summary

The 2015 Census of Population and Housing of Lao PDR was conducted in March 2015 with 1st of March as the census reference date. This is the fourth in a series of decennial censuses conducted during the post-independence era. Previous censuses were carried out in 2005, 1995 and 1985. Included in the census enumeration of 2015 are : all Lao citizens who usually reside in the country; Lao citizens who are temporarily residing abroad; citizens of foreign countries who reside in Laos at the time of the census.

The population was enumerated using the de jure method, that is, each individual was listed in his usual place of residence regardless of where he or she happened to be at during the census reference period. Enumeration was carried out over a period of one week through house to house visits by around 26,000 census enumerators. The results of the census indicate that the population of Lao PDR as of March 2015 is 6.5 million. Population growth seems to have slowed down; annual growth during the period 2005 to 2015 is 1.45 percent – down from 2.08 percent which was the annual growth rate from 1995-2005.

There are slightly more males than females among the country's population. The sex ratio of the population indicates that there are 100.5 males for every 100 females. Savannakhet remains the largest province with around 15 percent of the total population, followed by Vientiane capital with nearly 13 percent and Champasack with around 11 percent. The total number of private households listed during the last census is nearly 1.2 million. These households have an average size of 5.3 members as compared to those in 2005 which had an average size of 5.8. The reduction in size could be due to a number of factors such as decline in fertility and tendency towards nuclear-family living arrangement, among others.

As of 2015, the population density in Lao PDR, or the average number of people living in one square kilometer of land is still relatively low, at 27. In 2005, it was 23 persons per square kilometer. Phongsaly Province is the least dense with only 11 people per square kilometer on average. On the other side of the spectrum is Vientiane Capital with 210 people inhabiting in one square kilometer of land.

There are now a total of 8507 villages in the country. This has reduced from 10,052 in 2005 as a result of moves to merge two or more small villages into one larger village for the purpose of increasing efficiency of governance at the village level. As a result of merging of villages, coupled with increase in population, the average size of villages now stand at 761 persons – up from 533 a decade ago. As regards the districts, of which there are a total of 148 in the country, the average population size ranges from around 17 thousand in Xaysomboon to 91 thousand in Vientiane Capital. For the country as a whole, the average size of a district is about 44 thousand people.

Urbanization in the country increased from 27 percent in 2005 to 33 percent in 2015. Improvements in village infrastructure have been observed with proportionately more villages in 2015 having selected infrastructure compared to villages in 2005.

I. Introduction

Population data are indispensable tools for planning, monitoring and evaluating programs on the demographic and socio-economic aspects of a country. These data are usually obtained from a number of sources among which are surveys, registration systems and population censuses.

As a source of data, population census has the unique distinction of being able to provide a complete count of the population, including their demographic and socio-economic characteristics, as of a specific point in time. More notably, a census provides statistics at the lowest administrative area which is not possible through sources like sample surveys. In view of the valuable information that censuses provide, most countries of the world conduct censuses of their population on a regular basis, often at a ten-year interval.

In Lao PDR, the first nation-wide census in the country after independence was carried out in 1985. It reported a total population of 3.6 million persons. Thereafter, censuses were undertaken regularly every 10 years. Thus, in 1995 and 2005, the second census and third population census were carried out. The total population enumerated during these censuses was 4.6 million and 5.6 million, respectively.

The last census of population was conducted in March 2015. This report provides a short description of this most recent census in terms of its objectives, its legal basis, the methodology used in collecting the information. The questionnaire used in data collection is attached as Appendix 3.

This report also includes provisional data on some of the key findings of the 2015 census. The aim of publishing this report is to provide users with advance results as early as possible since the full report of the census may take some time to complete.

1.1. Census Objectives

The main objectives of the 2015 census were:

- To provide up-to-date and appropriate information on demographic and related socio-economic characteristics of the population at national and sub-national levels. Such information is needed for social and economic planning and monitoring at central as well as regional levels in the country.
- To provide and maintain a time series of demographic data at national and sub-national levels.
- To develop and maintain an efficient sampling frame for sample surveys.

1.2. Legal Basis of the census

Conduct of a Census of Population and Housing is a major undertaking that requires major financial outlay. It is for this reason that such a project is normally carried out only once in 10 years. It is also the reason, why in most countries, special decrees by the government are required every time a census is conducted, as these decrees serve the purpose of legitimizing the budgetary allocations and the use of other government resources by the organization tasked to implement the census.

For the 2015 round of Lao PDR censuses, the following special decrees serve as the legal basis for its conduct:

- Statistical law No 03/NS, dated 30 June 2010, article 19, topic 1 regarding Census;
- Decree No 89/PM, dated 11 September 2013, issued by the Prime Minister, authorizing the conduct of the 2015 census;
- Decree No 17/DPM dated 2 April 2014, issued by the Deputy Prime Minister, creating the Census Central Office within the Lao Statistics Bureau and mandating it to plan, prepare and implement the census;
- Decree No 53/PM dated 2 April 2014, issued by the Prime Minister, creating the National and Provincial Census Steering Committees, to issue policies and administrative guidelines that shall govern the conduct of the census.

The Lao Statistics Bureau is the primary statistical agency of the government and as such it is the agency which is tasked to plan and implement the census. Prior to 2010, it was one of the departments, (Department of Statistics) in the Ministry of Planning. It was subsequently elevated to become a sub-Ministry under the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) through the enactment of the Statistical Law of the country.

1.3. Methodology

1.3.1. Defining Census

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