

7th BRIEF:

2025 POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS OF LAO PDR

"The 2025 Census data serves as a vital foundation for the Government in formulating, monitoring, and evaluating the implementation of the 10th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2026–2030) while also supporting effective and efficient budget planning and resource allocation."

H.E. Santiphab Phomvihane
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance
Head of the National Steering Committee for the 2025 Population and Housing Census

Executive Summary

The Lao PDR's 2025 Population and Housing Census (2025 PHC) provides the country with its most comprehensive and up-to-date snapshot of the population size and structure, households and living conditions. Conducted once every ten years, the census is a major national milestone and a cornerstone of evidence-based planning and policymaking. The 2025 Census is particularly significant as the first digital census in Lao PDR, marking an important step in the modernization of the national statistical system and the country's broader digital transformation.

The new census data provide essential evidence for decisions that will shape Lao PDR's development over the coming decade. The Census data will inform national and subnational planning, allocation of resources and public services, monitoring of the 10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2026–2030), the Sustainable Development Goals and other national and international commitments. Importantly, the census also provides greater insight into population groups and communities whose circumstances may otherwise be less visible in national data, helping ensure that policies and investments respond to the realities of people across the country.

Reaching this milestone required one of the largest data collection operations undertaken in Lao PDR. Over 56 days in November and December 2025, 12,060 census field staff worked across 7,987 enumeration areas in all 18 provinces, using tablets, digital questionnaires and GIS mapping, covering approximately 3.6 million buildings to reach every individual living in Lao PDR.

Quality and completeness were central throughout the operation. Daily field monitoring, technical observation, supervisory reporting and digital monitoring tools enabled teams to identify areas requiring additional attention. Targeted revisit operations continued through March 2026, covering 3,590 enumeration areas to address outstanding issues and strengthen the completeness of the census.

The Post-Enumeration Survey (PES), conducted across 184 enumeration areas during February and March 2026, provided an independent assessment of census coverage and content accuracy using internationally recognized methodology. It assessed whether people and households had been counted and whether key information collected during enumeration had been accurately recorded. Together, the main enumeration and the PES provided complementary measures to strengthen confidence in the quality and credibility of the census results.

"With the census data collection completed, the focus moves from field operation to data processing, analyzing, reporting and putting them to use. The value of the census will ultimately be measured by how effectively its findings inform policies, programmes and investments and help decision-makers to better explore solutions to adapt to demographic change and effectively respond to the needs of people and communities across Lao PDR."

5TH POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS

LAO CENSUS LIFE CYCLE

2021
CONCEPTS & PLANNING

- Initial census plan and methodology developed and discussed.

2022
GOVERNMENT APPROVAL & RESOURCING

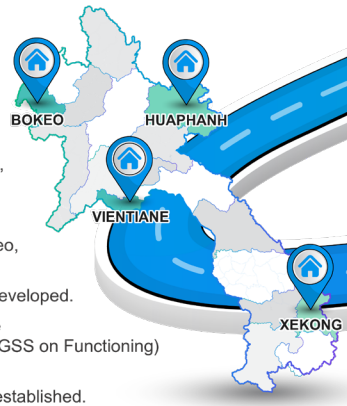
- Implementation plan and estimated US$ 22.2 million budget formally approved.
- Comprehensive GIS and IT assessments conducted.

2023
DIGITAL SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

- Census questionnaires, manuals, and data capturing programmes (CAPI) were developed and tested.
- Initial GIS mapping strategy drafted.

2024
STRATEGY & PILOT TESTING

- Partnerships and resources strengthened in collaboration with DFAT, SDC, LUX, GIZ, USAID, WB, UNFPA, UNV, China Aid.
- GIS mapping strategy finalized.
- Pilot census held in Vientiane, Bokeo, Huaphanh and Xekong.
- Census communications strategy developed.
- Census instruments improved to be disabilityinclusive (incorporating WGSS on Functioning) and gendersensitive.
- Quality Assurance Plan and KPIs established.



2025
NATIONWIDE IMPLEMENTATION

- GIS field operation completed and Enumeration Areas delineated.
- 12,060 enumerators and supervisors were trained through a 4tier cascade programme.
- Census website and nationwide publicity campaign officially launched.
- Nationwide enumeration commenced and successfully completed.
- Independent Census Technical Observation conducted by UN volunteers and international experts.

2026
DATA PROCESSING AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

- Census revisit operations conducted in selected EAs to ensure coverage.
- Post Enumeration Survey (PES) completed.
- Rigorous data editing, coding, and statistical imputation executed.
- Census data analysis initiated; provisional and final census reports prepared and disseminated.

2027
IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS AND THEMATIC REPORTS

- Specialized thematic analyses and census monographs completed and disseminated for targeted policy planning.

National leadership and effective partnership

The 2025 Population and Housing Census was first and foremost a nationally led undertaking. The Government of Lao PDR provided overall leadership through the National Census Steering Committee and made a substantial investment in the operations. Nearly US$14.7 million, including the World Bank load, was allocated by the Government, covering approximately 63 per cent of the overall census budget and demonstrating strong national ownership of this once-in-a-decade exercise.

The Lao Statistics Bureau led the implementation of the census, working through national, provincial and district census structures and in close collaboration with line ministries and local authorities.

The scale and ambition of Lao PDR's first digital census also required sustained international partnership. UNFPA is the lead UN agency in the area of population and housing census provided comprehensive technical, programmatic and financial support to the 2025 Census of Lao PDR together with key partners including the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Government of Luxembourg, and the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), the United State of America (USA), the World Bank and UNICEF. The Government of China, through China Aid, provided an in-kind contribution of 8,000 tablets, a major investment in the digital infrastructure required for nationwide data collection.

The completion of the census reflects this collective effort: strong Government leadership and investment, coordinated contributions from line ministries and local authorities, sustained technical support from UNFPA and development partners, and the work of thousands of census personnel and communities across Lao PDR. Together, these partnerships made it possible to undertake the country's first digital census and establish a stronger data system for national development.

Launch of the Census Campaign

The 2025 Population and Housing Census campaign and nationwide field data collection were officially launched on 20 October 2025. The event brought together senior government officials, including H.E. Santiphab Phomvihane, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, and the Head of the Lao Statistics Bureau, alongside the UN Resident Coordinator, the UNFPA Representative, key development partners from Australia, Switzerland, Luxembourg and China, and members of provincial steering committees. Local officials from across the country also joined virtually.

In a pre-recorded video message, H.E. Sonexay Siphandone, Prime Minister of Lao PDR underscored the importance of the census as a national undertaking and called on people across Lao PDR to actively participate in the enumeration.



Communicating and publicizing the census

Successful enumeration depended not only on operational readiness, but also on public awareness, trust and participation. Ahead of the fieldwork, the Lao Statistics Bureau, with support from UNFPA and partners, implemented a nationwide communication and publicity campaign to explain why the census mattered, encourage cooperation with the census field staff and prepare households for the arrival of enumerators.

Under the message ***"Counting Everyone, Because Everyone Counts."*** the campaign used a mix of mainstream media, social media, community outreach and public information materials, mass SMS campaign and using the loudspeakers at villages to reach people across the country. Messages encouraged households to participate and provide complete and accurate information, while also helping communities understand how the census would be conducted and what to expect from enumerators.

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Trainings for trainers and enumerators

Moving from census preparation to nationwide data collection required a well-prepared field workforce able to apply digital questionnaires including GIS-based maps, standardized procedures consistently across Lao PDR's diverse geographical and social contexts.

From August to October 2025, a four-level cascade training programme progressively transferred knowledge from national and international trainers to provincial and district teams and, ultimately, enumerators:

- **Level 1 – Training of Trainers for Master Trainers (ToTMT):** 12 senior master trainers were prepared to lead the cascade process, including 5 women.
- **Level 2 – Training of Master Trainers (ToMT) / Provincial-Level:** 72 participants were trained to support the transfer of census procedures and technical knowledge at provincial level, including 21 women.
- **Level 3 – Training of Trainers (ToT)/District-Level:** 2,803 participants were trained to support implementation and supervision at district level, including 727 women.
- **Level 4 – Training of Enumerators and Supervisors (ToES):** From 20 to 31 October 2025, approximately 9,173 enumerators (8,096 male and 1,077 female) were trained across 415 venues in all 18 provinces. The training combined practical exercises, field simulations and digital competency testing to prepare teams for tablet-based data collection.

The cascade model closely linked capacity building with field implementation, enabling trained personnel to move directly from training into census operations with a common understanding of procedures, digital tools and quality requirements. It also built on lessons from the pilot census, where rigorous preparation and familiarity with the digital questionnaire and GIS maps contributed to effective field implementation and data quality.



The Census Enumeration Process

The census enumeration translated months of preparation into a coordinated nationwide field operation. Enumerators worked directly with households and communities, supported by supervisors, local authorities and digital monitoring systems designed to guide coverage and resolve issues as they arose.

Each field team used tablets loaded with CAPI questionnaires and GIS-based maps, allowing interviews and location information to be captured digitally at source. Supervisors and census managers were able to follow field progress through real-time monitoring tools, identify areas requiring attention and organize follow-up where necessary.

Enumeration period

3 November - 28 December 2025

Over the 56-day enumeration period, teams worked across diverse of settings

Households reached

Approximately

1.4 million

from private households to collective living quarters and special economic zones

Buildings Identified

Approximately

3.6 million

Coverage of identified structures

about 99%

Close collaboration at the local level was essential. Village and local authorities helped teams identify households, facilitate access and respond to situations requiring additional coordination or revisits. This combination of digital tools, field supervision and community engagement was central to achieving broad coverage across the country.

The enumeration demonstrated that digitalization can strengthen the speed, consistency and oversight of a census, but that its effectiveness ultimately rests on a capable field workforce and strong cooperation with communities and local authorities.



Conducting revisit operations

Given the scale and complexity of the census, some areas required additional follow-up after the main enumeration. Real-time field monitoring dashboard helped identify locations with outstanding cases, coverage gaps or issues that needed further verification.

Through March 2026, targeted revisit operations were conducted across 3,590 enumeration areas. These follow-up visits provided an opportunity to complete unresolved cases, verify information and strengthen overall census coverage.

Rather than being treated as a separate corrective exercise, the revisit operation formed part of the census quality-assurance system, helping strengthen the completeness and reliability of the dataset before analysis and dissemination.

The Post-Enumeration Survey

Completing the main enumeration marked a major step in the census process, but assessing the quality of the resulting data was equally important. The Post-Enumeration Survey (PES) provided an independent check on whether people and households had been counted and whether key information collected during the census had been recorded accurately.

Conducted from 2 February to 17 March 2026 across 184 enumeration areas, the PES involved 277 dedicated enumerators and supervisors who returned to a selected sample of areas and re-interviewed households independently of the main census operation.

The survey assessed two core dimensions of census quality: coverage, examining whether people and households had been included in the census, and content accuracy, examining whether the information and characteristics recorded reflected respondents' circumstances. Comparing PES findings with the main census therefore provided an additional measure of the completeness and accuracy of the census data.

The PES was an integral part of the quality-assurance framework established for the 2025 PHC from the outset. Together with field monitoring, targeted follow-up and independent observation during enumeration, it provided further evidence on data quality and strengthened confidence in the census results.

2025 Population and Housing Census National Report

With enumeration, follow-up operations, the Post-Enumeration Survey and data processing completed, the 2025 PHC has reached one of its most important milestones: the completion of the National Report and the availability of updated census results for Lao PDR.

The results provide the most comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the size, composition and geographic distribution of the population, together with key demographic and socio-economic characteristics. They strengthen the evidence for national and subnational planning, monitoring of development priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals, and better understanding of how Lao PDR's demographics is changing.



Maximizing the Use and Impact of the 2025 Census

With the national census results available, the next priority is to ensure that this major investment in population data and statistics translates into better-informed policies, plans and decisions.

The National Report is an important milestone, but it is only the beginning of the post-census enumeration phase. Further in-depth analysis will deepen understanding of population change, diversities and inequalities across the country. Planned thematic reports include population dynamics and demographic dividends, fertility and mortality, migration and urbanization, population projections, children and youth, older persons, disability, education, labour, gender, housing and living conditions will be completed in 2026-2027 cycle.



The next phase will therefore focus on making census data accessible, understandable and usable by all.

This includes further thematic and geographic analysis, dissemination through user-friendly products and data platforms, and strengthening the capacity of government institutions, provincial authorities, researchers and other stakeholders to apply the findings and inform their decisions, policies and plans. Used effectively, the census can help identify where needs are greatest, anticipate future demand for services, improve the targeting of public investments and support more responsive national and local planning.

Sustained partnership will remain essential. Continued support from UNFPA and development partners can help expand access to census data, strengthen analytical and data-use capacity, and support the development of thematic products and tools that respond to policy and planning needs. At the same time, continued engagement by line ministries, provincial and local authorities, academia, civil society, private sector, the media and communities will be important to ensure that census findings are understood, discussed and applied to the realities faced by people across Lao PDR.

The true success of the 2025 PHC hinges not on the sheer amount of data collected, but on how effectively that evidence is applied to improve people's lives. By translating census insights into targeted policies, strategic investments, and public services that adapt to shifting demographic needs, this decennial initiative will foster more equitable, inclusive, and data-driven development throughout Lao PDR.

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