THE SITUATION OF WOMEN MARKET VENDORS IN VIENTIANE: A BASELINE REPORT
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Many small-scale traders in Lao People’s Democratic Republic are market traders; women represent more than 90 per cent of vendors in fresh food markets across the country. Their roles often go unrecognized, however, resulting in many challenges, even though they manage entire value chains, from production to sales. They are poorly represented in decision-making, as market managers tend to be men; lack awareness, knowledge and skills; and find it hard to obtain credit. To explore new programmes to empower vulnerable women vendors, UN Women contracted Rapid Asia, Co. Ltd. to conduct a baseline assessment in Vientiane, the national capital.

The baseline study summarized in this report employed a mixed, qualitative methods design that included a desk and policy review as well as interviews. The review investigated relevant laws and policies concerning women vendors, with a view to better understanding their situation. In-depth interviews with key actors included relevant government agencies, women’s associations and market management committees. Women market vendors in selected fresh markets were interviewed to document the challenges they face.

The results showed that regulations, laws and policies related to women market vendors were typically gender blind or did not proactively support women’s empowerment. They mostly outlined general rules related to market opportunities, registration, infrastructure and designated market areas. These apply equally to both men and women, with no assurance of women being represented in market management committees. Some initiatives benefiting women vendors under the Lao Women’s Union provide access to financing, and strengthen business management capacity and financial literacy, but do not cover women market vendors in Vientiane.

Nearly all actors interviewed agreed that women market vendors in Vientiane are integral to the urban economy. They comprise a very significant share of the capital’s workforce, although it is difficult to accurately estimate their total number. Most actors were aware of the problems they face, such as the inability to secure permanent stalls, lack of proper market facilities, inadequate bargaining power to control the price of production, low education levels and a general lack of financial support. But since most existing regulations, laws and policies are gender blind, concrete actions are not taken. Furthermore, without studies or specific data, it was very challenging to identify problems with any level of precision.
Some challenges were described in interviews with women market vendors. These included loss or damage of products during transportation, unsuitable space to sell goods, difficulties in obtaining permission for stall set-up and uncomfortable market facilities. Some women experienced abuse and physical violence from conflicts with other vendors or authorities. Most women tended to quietly accept conflict as part of the daily work routine and did not think anyone could help. Some faced obstacles in managing their role at home when working in the market as they were overburdened with responsibilities. Most continued to work as vendors nonetheless since their income supports their families.

In markets across Lao People’s Democratic Republic, market management committee representatives consist of officials from relevant government agencies and market owners, with no market vendors. This leaves women vendors without a voice in decisions made or implemented by the committee. They also lack information about existing assistance and support functions. Most women interviewed had never received any assistance from any organization.

Potential ways to empower women market vendors to improve their situation include organizing them to strengthen their representation and bargaining power when dealing with the market management committees. A properly organized group could provide additional support to its members, such as advice on issues related to sources of production, affordable finance, food safety and transportation, and mediation of conflicts among vendors.

Raising awareness among women market vendors about their rights and existing support mechanisms could address challenges stemming from a lack of information. One potential channel for disseminating knowledge is through the public announcement systems in most markets.

Providing capacity-building to women market vendors on necessary skills that respond to their needs is crucial to improve their businesses. Particular emphasis might be placed on women street vendors, who tend to be the most vulnerable of all vendors, with risks including being arrested by the police or district tax officials. Helping them secure proper spaces to sell their products would be an important starting point. UN Women may consider working with the market management committees, market owners and village authorities to support women street vendors by granting permission for them to sell their products in the markets, or providing special conditions such as lower market fees or special permits during certain hours of the day.
Since initiating economic reforms in the mid-1980s, Lao People’s Democratic Republic has accomplished notable economic and social development improvements. According to the World Bank (2014), it is one of the fastest-growing economies in the region. With an average 7 per cent increase in gross domestic product over the last two decades, it has the highest growth rate in South-east Asia. Poverty has declined over the last 15 years, from 46 per cent in 1993 to 25 per cent in 2010 (World Bank and Asian Development Bank 2012). Living standards, education and health care have improved.

The Government’s commitment to gender equality has been demonstrated in its national strategies and plans of action. One was the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women, aimed at promoting women’s small and medium enterprises and economic leadership, increasing women’s participation in development planning and improving their access to services. Recent advances include women’s growing participation in the labour market.

Many economic and social challenges remain, however. Large differences are evident in the development levels of men and women, and among women. Those in vulnerable groups—ethnic minorities, informal workers, poor, educated at a low level, living with disabilities or residing in remote areas—encounter greater obstacles to jobs, services and other fundamentals of well-being.

The small-scale business sector is dominated by Lao women, the vast majority of whom are in one or more vulnerable groups. According the Gender Resource Information and Development Centre (2006), a lack of education and economic opportunities and limited access to resources drive women into the informal sector and small-scale enterprises. Women in small-scale businesses often face challenges such as limited knowledge of financial management, lack of capital, unsafe working environments, limited mobility due to household responsibilities, negative cultural norms, exploitation, discrimination, lack of protective services, inadequate knowledge about laws and policies, and weak support from government.
A large portion of small-scale traders are market vendors, and among the latter, women comprise more than 90 per cent of vendors in fresh food markets across the country (World Bank and Asian Development Bank 2012). Their roles often go unrecognized, however. Like women in other small-scale businesses, they encounter many difficulties, including inadequate representation in decision-making, as market managers tend to be men. Most women vendors tend to lack awareness, knowledge and skills, including to pursue business opportunities or even to perform simple accounting tasks. Some encounter difficulties when trying to obtain credit. Policies and regulations provide protections to market vendors or women in general, but have no specific provisions related to women market vendors.

UN Women is exploring the feasibility of a programme to empower vulnerable women vendors and improve their socioeconomic security. It would aim to ensure that rural and urban marketplaces are safe, inclusive and non-discriminatory, and promote women’s engagement. Such a programme requires first understanding the overall situation of women market vendors, their roles in the value chain, and policies and regulations that support them.

Towards this end, Rapid Asia, Co. Ltd, was contracted to conduct a baseline study, summarized in this report, of women market vendors in the capital of Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Vientiane. The study explored a number of critical issues through the perspectives of both duty-bearers and rights-holders, such as relevant policies and regulations; economic, social and political gaps for women market vendors; protection and market operation. Recommendations outlined potential areas of focus for a future UN Women programme for women market vendors.
BASELINE DESIGN, METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

BASELINE DESIGN

The project team for the study consisted of technical research experts with diverse experiences in Lao People’s Democratic Republic, within the surrounding region and globally. Team members had expertise in human rights, gender and policy analysis, and in conducting monitoring and evaluation work using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The team employed a mixed, qualitative methods design that included a desk review along with interviews with key actors and women market vendors. A developmental workshop with key actors built support and sought inputs for interview topics. Actors included both government and non-governmental agencies, including the Provincial Agriculture and Forest Office, Department of Industry and Commerce, Department of Health for Vientiane Capital, women’s associations and UN Women.

These methods were most relevant given the project timeframe, contextual limitations and budget allocation. Insights were identified through the triangulation of multiple data sources to construct findings, conclusions and recommendations. Figure I shows the research design.

Figure I. Research Design of the Baseline Study
DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Based on the initial document review and internal consultations with UN Women, the project team identified two main target groups. The first group comprised key actors, including from the market management committees, the Department of Domestic Trade, women’s associations and relevant UN agencies, and the second involved women market vendors in selected fresh markets in Vientiane.

Desk and Policy Review

The project team conducted a desk and policy review to investigate relevant laws and policies concerning women vendors. Documents were gathered online and from relevant actors, including the Division of Market Development and Management of the Department of Domestic Trade in the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the market management committees at the Phonsavang and Thongphanthong markets, the Department of Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion and Development, the Department of Food and Fruit, and the Department of Agriculture Extension and Cooperatives. Annex I presents documents obtained from UN Women and reviewed by the project team.

Developmental Workshop

On 8 February 2016, a developmental workshop at the UN Women office in Vientiane sought inputs for the interview topics from key actors.

The workshop was carried out in an informal and participatory style through a combination of brainstorming sessions, pair discussions and joint sharing sessions. It provided insights into the current context of women market vendors in Vientiane, identified intended audiences of the baseline report and defined key issues to address. The process helped inform questions for subsequent interviews with relevant actors and women market vendors.

Informant Interviews

In consultation with UN Women, the selection of informant groups was reduced to:

1. Major actors relevant to women market vendors, including government agencies, women’s associations and market management committees
2. Women market vendors in selected fresh markets in Vientiane

A pilot interview tested the flow and sequencing of questions. Most of the seven interviews with key actors took place immediately after the developmental workshop; a couple occurred in March. Participants are listed in Table I.
Twenty-four in-depth interviews with women market vendors took place in 14 markets across Vientiane, based on a moderator guide. Vendors were selected with the following criteria:

- Had been working as a market vendor for more than 12 months
- Had a lower socioeconomic status determined by their household not being able to afford food and new clothes.

Market locations were chosen based on a mix of different types, namely, municipal, private, street and association markets, as shown in Table II.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face in the local language.

### Table I. List of Interviews with Key Actors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Number of interviews</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A representative of UN Women</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A representative of the Lao Women’s Business Association</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A representative of the Lao Women’s Business Association</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A representative of the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women - Vientiane Capital</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A representative of the Market Development Division, Department of Domestic Trade, Ministry of Industry and Commerce</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A representative of the Market Management Committee at Phonsavang Market</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. A representative of the Market Management Committee at Thongphanthong Market</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table II. List of Interviews with Key Actors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Type of market</th>
<th>Number of interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Khuadin</td>
<td>Municipal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sao</td>
<td>Municipal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Thatluang</td>
<td>Municipal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Thongkhankham</td>
<td>Municipal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Thongpanthong</td>
<td>Municipal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Night Market</td>
<td>Municipal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Phonsavang</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Huakhua</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Thongpong</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Khuvieng street</td>
<td>Street</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. A street in Anou village</td>
<td>Street</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. A street in Sisavath village</td>
<td>Street</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. A street in Savang village</td>
<td>Street</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Organic market</td>
<td>Assonciation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VALIDATION WORKSHOP**

On 29 April 2016, a validation workshop presented key findings to major actors. Fourteen participants attended; see Annex VII. They validated recommendations based on the findings and generated additional proposals incorporated in the final report.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

**Document Review**

All findings from reviewed documents were included in the baseline study and analysed along with other findings.

**Interviews**

For each interview, the research team summarized responses into an analysis template, categorizing key themes, issues and recommendations raised by informants as well as any major findings identified by the interviewers.

Each interviewer was responsible for providing data for the template, referring back to notes and voice recordings to ensure significant points were included.
Data Analysis

The team used the multilevel combinations approach to ensure proper triangulation of the data (United States Agency for International Development 2013). First, data from the desk review and informant interviews were analysed separately, and key findings were identified and agreed on within the project team. Second, all key findings were linked back to key evaluation objectives. Finally, triangulation was accomplished by examining key findings across the different sources.

In addition, a human rights-based approach (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) was used as a conceptual framework. It reflects a cycle of access and engagement between duty-bearers and rights-holders.

![Figure II: Conceptual Framework](image)

The extent to which key actors and duty-bearers respect, protect and promote women market vendors’ rights was assessed by examining whether or not relevant regulations and policies recognize women market vendors (“pull” side). Awareness and attitudes in relation to relevant laws and regulation was further studied in talking to women in markets.

On the “push” side, women market vendors, as rights-holders, can potentially engage to claim their rights, such as through a women market vendors’ group. Results from this study can be used for dialogue with key actors to strengthen their commitment to upholding women market vendors’ rights in the future.

Limitations and Risks

Due to the limited availability of some key actors, interviews were delayed by a couple of weeks. When interviewing women market vendors, cooperation proved to be a challenge. Some were very busy with customers, refusing to participate. Others stopped discussions when customers arrived, requiring interviewers to wait until they finished. While this was time consuming, interviewers managed to ask all questions in the moderator guide.
The policy review of existing regulations, laws and policies that concern women vendors looked at whether or not these respect, protect and promote women vendors, and if women know about them.

Regulations, laws and policies were reviewed based on value chain analysis, covering production (farm, wholesale, processors), transportation and markets (registration,
FINDINGS

Overall policies relating to women’s economic empowerment included:

- Lao Women’s Union Development Plan 2011-2015
- Third Five-Year National Development Plan on Gender Equality (2016-2020)
- Five-Year National Socioeconomic Development Plan III (2016-2020)

The Lao Women’s Union Development Plan and the National Development Plan on Gender Equality are fully engendered. These two policy documents provide guidelines and project plans for women’s development in all aspects, including economic development and empowerment.

The Lao Women’s Union development vision up to 2030 and development strategy up to 2025 indicate clearly that promotion of women’s employment and businesses is a key priority. Programme III of the strategy identifies five aims:

1). Enhance woman’s knowledge of how to run small and medium businesses, applying scientific technology in production and services
2). Promote Lao Women’s Union development fund
3). Promote participation in trade fairs for agriculture and handicraft products, and raise awareness about intellectual property rights for handicraft and other products resulting from the innovations of Lao women
4). Expand microfinance institutions for women and families
5). Promote vocational training and skills training for women

This policy will largely cover women vendors, as small and medium enterprises are the target. Microfinance and the Lao Women’s Union development fund can be sources of finance for vendors.

The Third Five-Year National Development Plan on Gender Equality (2016-2020) also specifically seeks to strengthen women economically by supporting them to earn more income to reduce poverty. The plan sets very good targets related to: having policies and measures that economically strengthen women, training women on how to operate small and medium enterprises, having access to land and credit for women, and allowing female farmers to receive technical and academic training. If all of these can be realized, women would be better off economically.
The review did not find a section in the plans about coordination with organizations in other economic sectors, such as the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Also missing is a section specific to microenterprises such as vendors.

Poverty eradication and gender equality are key areas in the Five-Year National Socioeconomic Development Plan III (2016-2020), but it relates to poor provinces, districts and villages, not Vientiane.

A. Production

Women market vendors often produce the goods they bring to market, for example, by growing vegetables. They may also process or cook food to sell. The study tried to gather policies, regulations and laws on farming, wholesale and processing activities, including related to:

- Food hygiene
- Labelling
- Food safety
- Productivity
- Production skills

The most relevant policies are:

- National Strategy for Agriculture Development up to 2025 and Vision for 2030
- Minister’s Decision on Establishment of Agriculture Production Groups
- Minister’s Decision on Agriculture Cooperatives
- Law on Food
- Minister’s Decision on Food Labelling
- National Food Safety Policy
- Prime Minister’s Decree on Skills Development

No evidence was found to suggest that these laws and policies have any specific provision or clause on gender, but special provisions in existing legislation potentially could support women market vendors.

Agricultural production is strongly promoted in the national strategy. Given that women make up a large share of the agricultural labour force, a stipulation for supporting female farmers and addressing any gender or other barriers they face would potentially be beneficial. A provision on women’s participation could help bring more women into policy and decision-making processes, and strengthen their bargaining power, including in agricultural production groups and cooperatives. If female farmers could better organize themselves, they could potentially be stronger in many aspects. For instance, they could access the group loans that some banks (Agriculture Promotion Bank and Nayobai Bank, for example) provide. They could secure better prices through bulk purchases. Often the Government promotes groups, as it is easier to provide extension services and information dissemination through them.
Two Minister’s Decisions, on agricultural production groups and cooperatives, offer scope to provide special assistance to groups of female farmers. An additional provision could define helping female farmers to form groups or cooperatives. Specific ways to support groups of female farmers might comprise:

- Strengthening competitiveness and market access
- Facilitating access to finance, land allocation, tax reductions, extension services, new technology
- Supporting development of infrastructure and human resources
- Developing domestic and foreign markets

Policies and regulations around food, food safety and food labelling could become more gender responsive through a provision on dissemination of information on these, taking into account that different channels may be required to reach women. In many cases, small processors such as women vendors selling cooked food have limited knowledge of these regulations, with potentially negative consequences from the failure to follow them. Women could, for example, lose their customers if foods are not hygienic and cause sickness.

The Decree on Skills Development seems less relevant for vendors as it focuses on skilled labour. It gives guidance for providers of skills development, mostly formal technical and vocational institutes, and for employers to contribute to the skills development fund. Other provisions outline skill levels, competition and certificates. Article 5, clause 3, mentions that all Lao people, men and women, from all ethnic groups have equal rights to receive skill-building and development.

**B. Transportation**

The study considered transportation used by vendors and issues related to public systems, and looked at transporters and middle-persons. Potential issues facing women market vendors are:

- Availability of public transport for vendors
- Access to transportation
- Conflict mediation

The relevant policies are:

- Law on Land Transportation
- Law on Business Competition

These were less relevant to market vendors, as they are directed more towards formal transportation and registered businesses. The transportation network in Vientiane covers several routes, reaching to the outskirts of the city. Within the city, tuk-tuks are more commonly used. Transport associations do not have specific provisions for serving women.
C. Markets

The study assessed different market aspects, starting with registration and management, which are under the responsibility of the Department of Industry and Commerce of Vientiane Capital, Market Development and Management Section. The Ministry of Industry and Commerce has issued a few official documents on market management and management of retail businesses, but the District Industry and Commerce Office is the key organization overseeing the operation of markets in Vientiane. Actual management is in the hands of the market management committees, which issue and enforce market management regulations.

On market registration, there are several potential issues:

- Economic opportunity
- Economic vulnerability
- Infrastructure
- Complication of the registration process
- Outside designated market areas
- Health and safety challenges
- Business management skills, including financial management skills
- Access to finance
- Support network
- Social and legal protection
- Accessibility to data and information about policies, law and regulations

Relevant regulations, laws and policies include:

- Market Management Regulation
- Minister’s Decision on Markets
- Minister’s Decision on Wholesale and Retail
- Minister’s Decision on Labour Safety and Health
- Tax Law
- Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion and Development Law
- Decree on Small and Medium Enterprise Fund
- Decree on Microfinance Institutions
- Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion Strategy 2016-2020
- Law on Social Security
Reviewed policies, laws and regulations were mostly gender blind. Those most closely related to women market vendors include the Market Management Regulation, the Minister’s Decision on Markets, and the Minister’s Decision on Wholesale and Retail, but none of these had any section or clause fully addressing the potential concerns of women market vendors. They outline general rules related to market opportunity, registration, infrastructure and designated market areas with relatively appropriate standards.

Possible additional provisions could cover hygiene, separate toilets for men and women, adequate lighting, security for women vendors selling in the evening, protection against violence and harassment by customers or other vendors, and conflict resolution mechanisms. Another provision could ensure women sit on the market management committees. There is a clear opportunity to strengthen women’s representation, and the Lao Women’s Union may consider setting up a membership group in the markets. Stronger representation could help support equal economic opportunity for men and women, facilitate registration for women vendors who often have less education and may feel intimidated when approaching the authorities, ensure a fair allocation of market areas, and help raise and address concerns about health and safety challenges.

The Lao Women’s Union and Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women have networks down to the village and district levels, respectively. The former developed and managed to have the Law on Women’s Development and Protection ratified. The latter implements and facilitates policy for the advancement of women. The Law on Resistance and Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children has recently been promulgated, and is an example of the kind of women-focused laws and policies that could support women market vendors. The development strategies of both the union and the commission already strongly support women’s economic development and empowerment, including in terms of providing skills training, business management/operation training, access to finance, and support to women owners of small and medium enterprises.

These priorities are not reflected in market development regulations, however. With limited representation of women in market management committees and no support network among women vendors, it would be difficult to ensure that women vendors are aware of available assistance or can articulate their concerns.

The Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion and Development Law, the Decree on the Small and Medium Enterprise Fund, and the Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion Strategy are not only gender blind, but also do not cover informal sector businesses, so they exclude women market vendors.

The Decree on Microfinance Institutions and the policy for promoting them have no gender perspectives. In recent years, the number of microfinance institutions has increased, covering a much wider market. It is likely they target women market vendors, as their representatives have been observed visiting markets, households and shops.
Many vendors still rely heavily on informal moneylenders and informal savings networks, however. The moneylenders charge very high interest rates. Often vendors have limited knowledge about financial management, and accept loan terms without necessarily understanding the consequences. There is often no paper work or collateral. Hence, the scope for misleading women market vendors and even exploiting them is very high. Many end up in major debt that they find difficult to escape. Support from the Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion Fund, financial literacy, debt management training and other business development services would be very beneficial for women market vendors.

The Lao Women’s Union with support from the Savings Banks Foundation for International Cooperation of the German Development Bank implements project that support village development funds in some districts outside Vientiane. Women producers, who are members of village development funds, can obtain training on financial literacy and debt management. The project also strengthens the management capacity of the village development funds. Women have access to funds for agriculture production, small retail businesses, etc. This kind of initiative could be replicated for women market vendors in Vientiane, especially the training aspects.

The Law on Social Security covers all people. Women vendors, as individuals who are self-employed, can join the social security scheme for health-care coverage, protection in case of accidents or absence from work due to sickness, pensions, death benefits and unemployment insurance. Although joining is encouraged, it is on a voluntary basis. The scheme has not been widely promoted and is mostly known among formal businesses and organizations. It is not clear to what extent women vendors are aware of it.

Conclusions

Apart from the Law on Women’s Development and Protection and the Policy for the Advancement of Women, the remaining regulations, laws and policies related to women market vendors that were reviewed were gender blind or do not proactively support the empowerment of women vendors, despite the fact that women comprise the majority of vendors in markets for fresh produce and cooked food.

The only mechanism that governs market operation is the market management committee, yet there is no assurance of women’s representation on it. The networks of the Lao Women’s Union and the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women, although extending to the village level, do not cover market vendors. Some beneficial initiatives under the Lao Women’s Union support women’s access to finance, strengthen their business management capacity and improve financial literacy, but currently do not cover women market vendors in Vientiane.
This section looks at the perspectives of duty-bearers and key actors on regulations and policies related to market operations, the overall situation of women vendors and the possibility of their greater engagement in decision-making.

**A. Market Operations**

Most information about market operations is based on interviews with market management committee representatives and market regulators, as the former handles general market regulations, registration and provision of facilities.
**Regulation**

According to the market management committee representatives, the Government regulates facility requirements in each market based on size and ownership structure. There are three sizes: large, medium and small. Large markets have an area greater than 7,000 square metres with at least 400 stalls, and are managed by the city of Vientiane. Medium markets have an area between 3,000 and 6,000 square metres, with 100 to 400 stalls, and are managed at the district level. Small markets with 50 to 100 stalls are managed at the village level. Regulations also stipulate minimum standard dimensions for all market stalls and product displays (Annex II).

Every market has a management committee consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, the Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment and public security. District governors appoint each market’s committee.

**Registration**

For government markets, registration is regulated by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. Vendors need to register with the district office of the ministry through the market management committee. Vendors first need to specify the type of produce they intend to sell to ensure it is allowed. They have to sign a letter of acknowledgement that includes a copy of market regulations. A government official will then come to the committee to collect information (address, name, type of goods, etc.) from the vendor.

The cost for registration varies and is determined by the district office.¹ Vendors with income below 200,000 kip (US $24) per day don’t need to pay for registration; they only pay rent depending on the type of produce and stall size. They also need to pay for market maintenance, rental space and security fees. The fees vary by market zones, ranging from 2,000 to 20,000 kip (US $0.2-2.4) per day. Vendors may also encounter informal, negotiable fees, sometimes referred to as a ‘tax’. The tax rate varies depending on how much vendors earn each day. For private markets, the market owner determines the fee based on their own standard, which is not based on Ministry of Industry and Commerce regulations.

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¹ In Thongphanthong Market, the registration fee is 150,000 kip (US $18).
Transportation

Transporting products to markets can be time consuming, especially when checkpoints are established to register goods. Vendors often have to take detours and must also ensure they have all relevant documentation. Without proper cooling systems to protect fresh goods, spoilage can result if delays are too long. Although half of the vendors own a motorbike, these are not suitable for transporting large quantities of products. Many women vendors depend on someone else for transportation or use public transport.

Phonsavang Market

“Our organization consists of market owners who oversee the functions of the market. The [Market Management Committee] consists of members who are responsible for dissemination of laws, policies and regulations; security and organization; finance; electricity; advertisements; cleaning; maintenance and construction. This market used to be a customary market where vendors from surrounding villages came to sell their products. [It was a large plot of vacant land and until now it’s still privately owned. The total area is around one hectare.] In order to support vendors, this market was established in 2002. During the initial establishment of the market, rents were exempted for poorer vendors. We also provided financial contributions to the women’s union in this village as well as surrounding villages. We provided them with a well-established location to sell their produce with standard clean facilities and fire insurance. We follow relevant laws and market regulations to support vendors when they face a problem.”

—A representative of the Phonsavang Market Management Committee

Thongphanthong Market

“The land for this market belongs to the Government, and it is operated under a concession by a group of retired government officials. The market must comply with official market standards. This market was established in 1996, and there was no market regulation at that time. In 2012, the Government set up new market regulations and introduced standards that we have to adhere to, but we didn’t have enough funds to do that. After the regulations were introduced, the owners had to source financing in order to upgrade the market. One of the financing partners was a Thai-Vietnamese individual who abused vendors who could not afford to pay the high rent. We used to support the poor, widowed vendors, retired individuals, and those who collected vegetables from Thatluang lake to sell in this market by either exempting the fee or offering them half the fee. But since the upgrade our business partner has stopped all fee exemptions.”

—A representative of the Thongphanthong Market Management Committee
Some vendors hire jumbos (three-wheeled vehicles) to get to the market, and then carry their produce by hand to their stall or hire a helper. For smaller markets, there is often no cart service because of narrow walkways. Vendors can only carry goods by hand, which can take two or three trips from the vehicle.

**Health, Safety and Security**

Basic infrastructure such as toilets, proper stalls, electricity and water can help improve the work environment and make the market space safer, more comfortable and aesthetically pleasing, attracting more customers. Separate toilets for men and women recognize different needs. Greater gender responsiveness could also account for different vendor functions. Women selling cooked food have higher accident risks, for instance, because they use hot stoves, kerosene, gas, hot cooking oil and boiling water. Precautionary measures should be in place to protect their safety.

The District Department of Industry and Commerce conducts price monitoring, food safety monitoring and illegal product identification. It works with the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to monitor the illegal wildlife trade, informing vendors which animals or animal products are illegal to sell. Most vendors were not aware of this information, underscoring the case for better communication and outreach.

**B. Perceived Situation of Women Market Vendors**

Nearly all key actors agreed that women market vendors in Vientiane were an integral part of the urban economy and the capital’s workforce. While it is difficult to accurately estimate the total number of women vendors, about 80 per cent are women. According to market management committee representatives, women market vendors offer easy access to a wide range of goods such as fresh vegetables, fruits and meat, and prepare cooked food, garments and crafts, sometimes even selling lottery tickets. Women market vendors also add vibrancy to urban life. In some markets, they are part of cultural heritage.

All actors thought that women market vendors faced many challenges. For example, they were overlooked as economic agents, and, unlike other business owners, were hindered rather than helped by municipal policies and practices. Some actors explained that many women became market and street vendors because they could not find a job in the formal economy. The number of women entering this informal economy is expected to increase, despite the fact that more shopping malls and supermarkets have been built. Fresh markets are likely to remain.

“Vendors will still come to sell [...] despite more shopping malls and supermarkets because they are used to selling in the market. In fact, the number of vendors will increase, but the space is limited, so we won’t be able to accommodate more vendors. There is little chance they will shift to sell something else in the shopping malls,” said a representative of the Phonsavang Market Management Committee.

Interviewed representatives of market management committees recognized that it is not easy to set up a stall given high rental fees. Otherwise, generally low barriers to entry, limited start-up costs and flexible hours are some factors that attract many women to selling in markets. But to survive as a vendor requires a certain level of skill.

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2 Interview with the International Labour Organization.

3 Interview with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce.

4 Interview with the Lao Women’s Business Association.
The committee representatives explained that competition among vendors for space and access to customers is strong. Vendors must be able to negotiate effectively with wholesalers and customers to maintain a reasonable margin. Some women find it difficult to find a secure location, and those who don’t follow the regulations sometimes have their goods confiscated. They may make a viable livelihood, but earnings are low and risks are high, especially for those who sell fresh fruits and vegetables. Lack of storage facilities, theft and damage to stock are common.

Most key actors recognized that women vendors often earn the main income in their households. They source goods from wholesalers, and many of their customers work in the formal sector, making their activities intrinsically linked to the formal economy. They also generate revenue for Vientiane and market authorities through the payment of taxes, permits, fees and fines.

Key actors mentioned some characteristics of women vendors:

- There are two types: those with secure stalls and those without. Women vendors without secure stalls are more vulnerable, and face issues such as lack of security, dirty workspaces, and limited or no access to clean water and storage.
- Some women vendors produce and sell their own goods (e.g., vegetables and livestock). But their real occupation is agriculture. They normally only sell their produce in the mornings.

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5 Interview with the International Labour Organization.
In Thongphanthong market, women vendors who sell fresh vegetables, fruit and food tend to be poorer. Most have borrowed from moneylenders at high interest rates and find it difficult to get out of debt.

The educational backgrounds of fresh vegetable and food vendors are typically primary or secondary school. Very few have finished high school. Whereas vendors selling shoes and clothes, and wholesale vendors are generally better off.

Challenges faced by women market vendors and their vulnerabilities encompassed:

- Lack of bargaining power to control the price of products. When stocks become more expensive, they struggle to pass the cost on to customers, who expect to negotiate low prices in the market.
- More competition means women vendors earn lower margins.
- Many women have not completed primary school and lack management skills. They know how to sell but don’t know how to gain more customers. Many lack proper trading skills.
- Poorer vendors lack proper access to market facilities as regulations do not work in their favour.
- Women lack financial support because they don’t have formal business registrations. This makes it difficult to apply for formal loans. Only those with assets such as land are able to apply for loans.
- If already poor, women vendors have no choice but to borrow from informal lenders with exuberantly high interest rates. They borrow on a short-term basis for their business and daily expenses.
- Many women don’t know how to manage money. What they earn, they have to spend immediately. Some are in debt due to informal loans with high interest rates. The Lao term len huay or “ການກ້ອຍ” refers to a common informal loan system. It consists of one lender who lends money to many borrowers at the same time (up to 50). Although the borrowers have to pay higher than normal interest rates, it is the only source of money they can access.

“The main problems are related to money lending with a 20 per cent interest rate. Although banks provide lower interest rates, vendors don’t have assets to secure loans from a bank,” noted a representative of the Market Development Division.

- Some policies only focus on strengthening technical skills, such as how to increase yields. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has supported agricultural production, but not selling or exporting products.
- Women have dual roles at home and in the market. When they come home, they also have to take care of household work and their family.
**Occupational Health and Safety**

While current regulation requires that each market have a fire protection system and adequate water supply, in practice, there is a lack of proper fire safety equipment. Market vendors are exposed to potential risks.6

“We have requested to have fire insurance with an insurance company, but we got rejected because from their assessment, this market building is too old and is prone to fire hazards. There are no fire prevention measures in place,” said a representative of the Phonsavang Market Management Committee.

Other risks to health and safety are insufficient waste removal and sanitation services, resulting in unhygienic market conditions that undermine sales, and the health of vendors and customers. For perishable goods, cold storage is important, but not available in all markets. Many women have to lift and carry heavy loads to and from their stalls. Those without a stall who sell outside the market run the risk of having their goods exposed to adverse weather conditions, and most lack access to running water and toilets. Inadequate access to clean water is a major concern for vendors who prepare food.

**C. Empowerment of Women Market Vendors**

The main challenges and barriers faced by women market vendors, as perceived by most key actors, involve financial matters. Banks’ strict criteria and complicated processes make women hesitant to work with them, meaning they have less access to formal loans. Therefore, they go to informal moneylenders who impose high interest rates. To help women market vendors, market authorities have adopted policies, for example, to pay rent in installments or to certify a vendor with a registered stall to enable them to secure a bank loan.

A market management committee representative claimed that they also provide space for vendors from rural areas, and sometimes exempt old or retired vendors from paying rent or collect a reduced fee. In Phonsavang Market, the committee makes a financial contribution to the women’s union in the village, and provides it with a well-established location in the market.

While gender roles and the status of women can limit the say of women vendors, the top-down management approach of market management committees has potentially further restricted their economic opportunities. The lack of assurance that women vendors will be represented in the committee implies that market operators might not recognize their significance. Women vendor participation in market operations was occasionally observed, however, and committee representatives said they were open to increased participation, such as in fire prevention and cleaning, although the latter replicates traditional notions of gender roles. “We have them involved in eliminating praying boards [where incense sticks and candles are lit] and incentivize them to keep their stall clean. This helps to protect vendors’ assets and their health,” said a representative of the Thongphanthong Market Management Committee. Nonetheless, participation is still limited, especially when it comes to decision-making.

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6 A good example was a fire in Thongkrankham Market in Vientiane in 2014. The entire complex, including over 300 stalls, burned down.
According to a representative of the Lao Women’s Business Association, women market vendors have limited opportunities to improve skills as they spend most of their time in the market. The policy review revealed that the Decree on Skills Development focuses mainly on skilled labour for formal employment. It is therefore critical to have a strategy to encourage women market vendors to learn how to trade and improve sources of income. “We have tried to unite them to join our organization. We can train them on how to access the market even though they may not have capital to produce by themselves. We also would like to assist them in terms of how to access affordable financing options,” claimed a representative of the Lao Women’s Business Association.

**Representation and Participation of Women Market Vendors**

Women vendors’ participation in the informal economy allows them to have positive roles in their families and communities, and in the national economy. But they do not yet have a significant role in decision-making related to market management. According to representatives of the management market committees and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, no membership-based organization helps women market vendors manage their needs or relationship with authorities, build solidarity, and solve problems with other vendors and customers.

When there are issues, women vendors turn to the market management committee. At times, it brings problems to the district and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, which can assign a committee to check on the matter.

“When they [women vendors] have any problems in the market, they come to the market management committee. If the problem can’t be resolved at this level we will go to the village office. But it’s usually resolved at the local level,” said a representative of the Market Development Division.

If vendors or market owners fail to follow regulations, they receive a warning. If the problem persists, they receive a fine. In the worst-case scenario, their operations will be suspended.

Women market vendors in Phonsavang Market have faced exuberant rent and electricity costs since the market was required to adhere to new government standards. In addition, the market owners set rules requiring vendors who want to register to pay 50 per cent of the total annual rent in advance. Even after paying, some vendors had to wait for their shops to be registered. Some women vendors had already raised this issue at the district level in Vientiane, but were still waiting on a response. “This causes a bad reputation for the market and I’m afraid there will be less vendors in this market as the affected vendors will look for a new market,” noted a representative of the Phonsavang Market Management Committee.

“We have tried to unite them to join our organization. We can train them on how to access the market even though they may not have capital to produce by themselves. We also would like to assist them in terms of how to access affordable financing options,” claimed a representative of the Lao Women’s Business Association.
Changes
There have been significant changes in the past 10 years related to market management policies. In the past, there were no formal policies or market regulations, such as zoning for vendors selling shoes, food, clothes, meat and vegetables. Today, markets are more organized, but the question persists: What role did women market vendors play during the time of change, and what has been their contribution?

Vendors played a part in pushing for change. They had an incentive to develop the markets. “Policy alone can’t make any change if vendors don’t take action,” emphasized a representative of the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women.

Previously, when markets were less crowded, it was relatively easy to manage the marketplace, provide parking and so on. As the markets grew, with significantly more vendors and customers, parking and waste management became major issues. Generally, markets have to be clean and safe, have parking and access roads, maintain fire extinguishers and meet other requirements as specified in the market agreement. Other requirements included in market regulations are no gambling, no littering and no encroachment beyond the allocated space of the stall.

“...Phonsavang used to be one of the worst markets. There was no shade. Vendors had to bring their own umbrellas; goods for sale were displayed on mats on the ground. Now the market has a building with a roof, an office, and tables and chairs are provided to vendors. It’s cleaner than before,” said a representative of the Phonsavang Market Management Committee.

For the standard facilities set out by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, please see Annex II.
This section looks at the perspectives of women market vendors on the economic, social and political gaps they face. It also considers their engagement with key actors to claim their rights.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant Profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total interviews</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of interview locations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 ( see also Table III )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background of vendors</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work as a market vendor</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o All women been working as a market vendor for more than one year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o <strong>Most had been working between 2 to 5 years.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Only one woman had been a market vendor 20 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial situation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Based on screening criteria, <strong>most women (17)</strong> had lower socioeconomic status, determined by not being able to afford sufficient food and new clothes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o None were economically well off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main income earner in a household</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Around 20 women indicated that they were the main income earner for their family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hometown</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Vientiane (20 women)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Savannakhet province (2 women)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Luangprabang (2 women)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o <strong>Most women were aged 25 to 35.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o The youngest was 23 years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o The oldest was 65 years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest level of education</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o <strong>Most women (16) completed primary school.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o The rest completed:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Secondary school (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Vocational training (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Only two women had never gone to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital status</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o <strong>Most women (18) were married.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o 2 women were single, and 4 women were divorced.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Social and family status

| Extended family/nuclear family | o Most women were in extended families of 6 to 8 people.  
|                               | o Only 8 women were in nuclear families of 2 to 3 people.  
| The head of the family        | o 12 women said that their husbands were the head of family.  
|                               | o 8 women identified themselves as the head of family.  
|                               | o The rest indicated their father as the head of the family.  
| Number of children            | o Most women had to take care of 1 to 4 children.  
|                               | o 15 women had children who were still in school.  
| Main source of income         | o Most women said that their main source of income was selling products at markets.  
|                               | o Some claimed their husbands also made contributions by working at construction sites, as truck drivers and traders.  
| Average income                | o Most vendors earned around 100,000 - 500,000 kip (US $12-62) per day from selling produce at markets.  
|                               | o 6 women claimed that they could earn up to 1 million kip (US $12-62) per day from selling cooked food and fish.  
| Sources of financial support outside the family | o **Formal support from organizations**  
|                               | Six women stated that they received financial support outside their family.  
|                               | - One woman said that she received financial support from Orphan School where her son studied. This included 1.5 million kip (US $185) to invest in her business and cart worth 700,000 kip (US $83). She explained that the school also paid half of her son’s school fees and 12 months of her rent.  
|                               | - Another woman said that she received a grant from the Women’s Union of Vientian Capital Development fund. She mainly used this grant to cover household expenses and her daughter’s tuition fees.  
|                               | o **Informal support through moneylenders**  
|                               | 4 women indicated that they relied on informal moneylenders.  
|                               | - 2 claimed that they borrowed from a group of moneylender and paid it back on a daily basis with around a 20 per cent interest rate.  
|                               | - 2 women said that they borrowed from a group borrowed from informal moneylenders was used to invest in their business and cover household expenses.  

Experience of Being Women Market Vendors

General Information

Most of the women had been working as market vendors for a long time. Previously, most worked at home, and sold elsewhere before their current markets. Three women stated that they were selling food and drinks in front of factories and schools in Vientiane. Some were farmers and freelance labourers before becoming market vendors. Products sold included: cooked food, snacks, fruits, vegetables and meats (e.g., chicken, duck, shrimp, small fish, etc.). Most women sold their products at one market. Only a few women said that they sold products at additional markets. One explained that she would go to other markets if she had unsold products, stating: "I will bring my goods to Nongphaya Market if someday my vegetables are not finished. I go to sell in this market because it is on the way back home."

Most women sold their products during weekdays, with some working seven days a week. Most women started selling in the early morning at 5 am or 6 am, and would stay at the markets through 7 pm to 8 pm. Only two women stated that they had other jobs; one was a cleaner at a post office and the other a seasonal mushroom grower.

Challenges Facing Women Market Vendors

Daily realities for women market vendors involve a number of economic, social and political challenges.

A. Economic Gap

Production

Women used different means to obtain products to sell at the market:

- **Home-grown products**
  Some women grew products at their homes, such as vegetables and fruits.

- **Products from other markets**
  Some women sourced their products from other markets in the early morning. The following wholesale markets were mentioned: Lao-Aussie, Sikhai, Thongkhankham, Thatluang and Khuadin.

- **Products from suppliers**
  Some women explained that they sourced their products from their home village or nearby villages, from farmers and fishermen who delivered products to their home or at the market. "There are owners of fish farms that come to sell their fish at my house or I can call to order the fish that I want and they will bring it to my house," one vendor said.
The costs of products that women bought varied depending on the type and available capital. Herb vendors mentioned the lowest costs, from 50,000-100,000 kip (US $6-12.3) per day. Those selling fruits and meats noted costs around 1 million to 3 million kip (US $123-370) per day. Women who sold vegetables claimed that they spent approximately 200,000-500,000 kip (US $24-62) per day. Those selling cooked foods claimed that they spent around 450,000-700,000 kip (US $55.5-86.4) per day to buy ingredients such as meat and vegetables. Women who sold organic vegetables said that their products were home grown and they only spent around 500,000 to 1 million kip (US $62-123) per month to buy seeds.

Vendors who purchased products from suppliers mentioned challenges with shortages of products and delivery delays. All said that these challenges were manageable, because if suppliers ran out of products, they would inform vendors in advance. In such cases, most women would go to other markets to buy what they needed from other suppliers.

**Transportation**

Women market vendors used different modes of transport to bring their products to market. Public transportation, including minibuses and small trucks, was the most common form. Some women used their own motorbikes and had a cart in which they could load their products. Some claimed that they had products delivered to the market by suppliers. Three women who lived near their market said they could walk to it, pulling a cart with products.

After transporting their products to the market, some women had to hire labourers to help them carry products to their stalls. This service would cost around 3,000-5,000 kip (US $0.3-0.6). In other cases, the women would help each other carry the products.

"I have to use a small truck service and hire a worker at the market to carry my produce to the stall. This costs me around 5,000-10,000 kip (US $0.6-1.2) each time," said one vendor.

"My husband and I bring vegetables from our farm using public transport. When we arrive, market vendors help each other to carry the products [to stalls]," added another.

In terms of transportation costs, women who used public transport stated that the cost depended on how long the journey was and on the type of vehicle. For example, the cost of transport on a small truck was around 50,000 kip (US $6) per trip. Those who used their own motorbikes said that the cost of petrol ranged from 10,000 to 50,000 kip (US $1.2-6) per trip. Some women also had to pay for parking at around 3,000 kip (US $0.3) per day. Those who had their products delivered by suppliers claimed that normally the delivery cost was included in the cost of the products. They explained that delivery costs were roughly 30,000-40,000 kip (US $3.7-5), depending on how much they ordered.
Most women said that transportation costs were not a burden, but would like to reduce all costs to increase profits. Only two women argued that transportation costs were a burden as they accounted for a daily expense. The following challenges associated with transportation were the most common:

- **Loss or damage of products**
  
  Some women mentioned that products were sometimes lost or damaged when they fell off motorbikes. Those who used public transportation also experienced this problem. They explained that drivers sometimes piled all vendor products, causing damage. Some vendors tried to prevent this by better packing their products or putting them in boxes for protection.

- **Too many products to carry**
  
  Some women said that they had some difficulties with transportation due to a large and heavy load of products. This meant they had to conduct several trips to carry all their products or hire a worker to help them.

"Yes, there's a lot of things I have to carry into the market to set up my stall and from my stall to the storage when I close my stall," one vendor explained.

### Market Registration

- **Stall, space and cart set-up process**
  
  All women who sold products in the municipal and private markets referred to the market management committee as the main contact point for stall registration. The information from key actors added more details on the market registration process. The district office branch of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce takes responsibility for vendor regulations by supporting the committees, which help to contact all vendors. The committees also check vendors’ products to see if they are allowed. Vendors have to submit some documents, such as a letter of acknowledgement of market regulations, to the committees, which forward these to the district.

Two women at the organic market said they received support from the head of the Organic Vegetable Group. Once they became members, the group facilitated the set-up process at the market. They added that they were invited by Vientiane’s governor and district governor to join the Organic Vegetable Group. Before joining, their gardens had to pass inspection to verify whether they used chemicals or not.

Most street vendors said that they just parked their carts on a footpath and did not contact anyone in order to sell their products. Two sold products outside the market, a practice that is not allowed, meaning they would sometimes be chased away by the police. Some street vendors in Sisavath and Savang villages said that they had to contact village authorities to obtain permission to set up their stalls.

All women stated it was more convenient to sell their products at their current markets. Having regular customers and a large number of potential clients were cited as reasons for staying in current locations.

"Yes, there's a lot of things I have to carry into the market to set up my stall and from my stall to the storage when I close my stall," one vendor explained.
Market requirements for stall registration

Most women selling their products at municipal and private markets stated the only requirement they had to fulfill was payment of market fees to the market management committee. This information is consistent with that gained from key actors. Some markets require a registration fee determined by the district office of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce.

According to the women, market fees include: rental space (10,000-30,000 kip or US $1.2-3.7 per day); garbage collection and cleaning (1,000-5,000 kip or US $0.12-0.6 per day); taxes (2,000 kip or US $0.24 per day); and electricity, water and bathroom facilities (2,000 kip or US $0.24 per use). This information was similar to that given by the Thongphanthong Market Management Committee, where the market fee ranged from 2,000 to 20,000 kip or US $0.24-2.4 per day, including the cost for market maintenance and rental space.

At the organic market, vendors had to provide documentation ensuring product quality control, such as a certificate from the Organic Vegetable Group, and a product list detailing the type, quantity and price of vegetables to be sold at the market. They also paid market fees similar to vendors in municipal and private markets.

Consistent with information from the Management Market Committee, the women vendors said that market fees tended to vary depending on the size of stalls. One woman confirmed this by saying: “I sell more produce and have a larger space than nearby vendors so I have to pay more.”

Apart from the size of the stall, types of product sold can also affect the rental fee. Another woman pointed out: “I sell fish, and even though I have the same space [as other vendors] I pay a higher market fee than those who sell vegetables.”

Space assigned

Most vendors in municipal and private markets claimed that the market management committee assigned the spaces for stalls. Markets tended to be divided into zones, with separate areas for cooked food, fruits and vegetables, meat and clothes. Most women said that they could not select their own space. Only one vendor in Huakhua Market said that vendors there could select their space based on a first-come, first-served system. Still, their spaces have to be within a market management committee assigned zone.

Most women were happy with their current space because they already had regular customers. Only a few women argued that they were not happy with their stall because the space was not in a good location. They complained about limited exposure to potential customers. One said that she would prefer her stall to be closer to the road.

As expected, there was no space allocation for street vendors. They had to pick their own space. Four women who sold products on the streets of Anou, Sisavath and Savang villages said that they had to pay rent to village authorities in order to secure a space. “[There is] no space allocation. They [authorities] just come and collect the market fee. Anyone can choose their own places,” one street vendor said.
All potential costs incurred by women vendors are summarized in Table IV.

**Table IV. Potential Costs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laotian kip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ingredients and products</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>I milion to 3 milion kip per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>I milion to 3 milion kip per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic vegetables (home-grown products)</td>
<td>500,000 to 1 milion kip per month (for seeds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingredients for cooked foods</td>
<td>450,000-700,000 kip per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>200,000-500,000 kip per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbs</td>
<td>500,000-100,000 kip per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transportation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small truck</td>
<td>50,000 kip per trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own motorbike (petrol cost)</td>
<td>10,000-50,000 kip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>3,000 kip per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product delivery cost</td>
<td>30,000-40,000 kip per trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring a worker to carry product from the front of the market to a stall</td>
<td>3,000-5,000 kip per round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Market fees</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental space</td>
<td>10,000-30,000 kip per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garbage collection and cleaning</td>
<td>1,000-5,000 kip per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom facilities</td>
<td>2,000 kip per use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax</td>
<td>2,000 kip per use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average sales from the market</strong></td>
<td>100,000 to 1 milion kip per day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Challenges

A number of challenges were mentioned in relation to setting up stalls, including:

- **Unsuitable space**
  Some women noted that when they first arrived to set up a stall, the assigned space was not very clean. One woman added that at first her space was not comfortable as there were many holes in the floor. She reported the problem to the market management committee. Due to a lack of response, she used her own money to fix the holes.

- **Permission for stall set-up**
  Street vendors mentioned they faced issues with the police and district tax officers. The following case study is a clear example.

  **Case Study 1**
  Two women who sold products near the entrance of Khuadin Market explained that they were not able to afford market fees, instead opting to sell products near the market’s entrance. Vendor stalls were not permitted in that area, however, and they had been chased away by the police on several occasions. Eventually their stalls were confiscated by district tax officers. For their items to be returned, the women were told to go to the district office. But fearing a fine, neither woman went to claim her belongings.
  
  “When I was setting up my stall, the district tax officer came and collected all of my things as well as the other vendors’ and asked us to go to the district tax office. But most of us didn’t go because we were afraid that they would give us a penalty. This is worse than not having any customers. It makes me feel terrible and insecure. This happened to me once when they took everything, and they took away my coolers twice.”

Apart from being chased by district tax officers, some street vendors stated that the police had also chased them, especially when there were high-level meetings/events that required clear footpaths. Police tended to ignore the vendors, however.

Most street vendors said they would continue to sell products at the same locations because they already had regular customers. Some said that they didn’t know other places to set up and were unsure of how many customers they would have elsewhere.

Most key actors agreed that some women had trouble setting up a stall in the market due to high market fees, so they had to sell their products outside, resulting in the authorities sometimes confiscating their goods.

The policy review confirmed that there is no provision to support street vendors or help those who cannot afford the market fee or find space in the market. At the same time, existing market regulations, associated with high market fees and complicated registration processes, likely discourage women from seeking permission to work in the market. This leads some women to set up stalls on the street and face risks such as arrest and traffic accidents.
**Storage**

Most women tried to sell all of their products in a day or trade with other vendors. Some had to keep their remaining stock at the markets and rented a storage unit. Others just left their products at their stall and used plastic sheets to cover them, or put them in boxes or baskets.

Storage security was a primary concern. Some women claimed that they had experienced losses. One woman explained that she did not have safe storage for her fish, which she could only put in plastic coolers. On one occasion a whole cooler had been stolen. She reported the incident to the market management committee, but nothing was done.

Another concern was inadequate space for storage. Some women said that they didn’t have enough storage space because they had too many products. They had to purchase more boxes to hold products or rent more storage space at the market.

The problem with storage was also mentioned by market management committee representatives. They acknowledged that having proper storage is crucial for vendors, especially those who sell perishable goods, and admitted that not all markets provided such a facility.

**Market facilities**

Most women mentioned security as their main concern at markets. While some had never experienced theft, they claimed that markets should be more responsible in the case of a robbery. One woman added that there was no night security guard at her market. Other issues included lack of proper waste collection, limited stall space, narrow walkways and uncomfortable toilets. Street vendors in particular, stressed these points.

Problems associated with market sanitation, such as insufficient clean water and toilet facilities, were also recognized by key actors. They claimed that unhygienic market conditions would undermine the health of vendors and their customers.

These challenges result in part from policies and regulations that have not yet recognized women’s distinct needs.
B. Social Gap

Experiences of violence, abuse, discrimination and exploitation

Interviews revealed that some violence and abuse had occurred in the markets, with incidents tending to feature conflicts between vendors. One woman said that she had argued with another vendor when they were competing for customers. “[The] other vendor pulled my regular customer who was about to buy herbs from me to her stall and I said to her: ‘Don’t do this. I don’t like it. She’s my regular customer.’” Another woman’s experience is summarized in Case Study II.

Aside from conflicts with other vendors, one woman claimed that she used to have arguments with a district tax officer when he came to collect taxes. “When the tax officer comes and collects taxes, even when you haven’t set up your stall yet, you still have to pay. If you try to negotiate with them, they will verbally abuse you,” she said.

None of the women mentioned experiences of discrimination. Two women said that even though they came from an ethnic minority (Phuthai), they had never experienced any discrimination in the markets where they worked.

Most women did not think that male vendors had an advantage over them. They explained that selling did not depend on gender. “Men can sell goods as well as women. This depends on skill of selling, speech and service,” one argued. Some women said that they could sell better than men because they had better cooking skills, softer speech and were perceived as more friendly.

Some 10 women noted that they did not know of any place, person or hotline to report physical violence or abuse. The rest said that they would report such cases to the market management committee, the district office or market owners.

Abuse and violence are critical challenges as markets lack conflict mediation mechanisms; all issues are handled by the market management committee. This is not always enough since conflicts can be quite sensitive and require special attention.

“When the tax officer comes and collects taxes, even when you haven’t set up your stall yet, you still have to pay. If you try to negotiate with them, they will verbally abuse you,” she said.

“Men can sell goods as well as women. This depends on skill of selling, speech and service,”
Roles at home and as market vendors
Most women stated that they shared responsibilities in taking care of their children, preparing food, cleaning and washing clothes with other family members. Only a few women said that they did all these tasks alone. Most said that they spent time during the weekend doing housework, while weekdays were dedicated to the markets. Some women woke up very early in the morning, around 3 am or 4 am to do some housework, then went to work at the markets. If they could finish work at the markets around 3 pm to 5 pm, they could go home earlier and spend time catching up on housework.

Half of the women accepted that they had more responsibilities since they worked outside their homes. Being in the markets meant they had less time for housework. “The task and responsibility is increased. There are many things I have to do in one day, more burden,” a vendor stressed. Some women identified tiredness and reduced time for housework as challenges when managing dual roles as home-worker and market vendor.

Case Study II
Ms. A is an herb vendor in front of the old post office in the Talatsao area. One day, street vendors in that area were chased away by the police, including Ms. A and her neighbouring vendor. Some street vendors left their products behind. When her neighbour came back to her stall, she found that some items had been stolen. She accused Ms. A, claiming she knew that it had not been the police who took her items because they would have taken everything.

According to Ms. A, even though she and the other vendor were of the same ethnicity, most female vendors in the area did not like her because she was the only one who was still single. Her neighbour had used very harsh language when talking to her.

The next morning, the neighbour’s husband, an alleged gang member, came to the market and beat Ms. A. Her nose was injured. No one could help her. After he beat her, others suggested she go to the police. But the couple threatened to bar her from selling at that location if she did so. She decided to just ignore them and moved her stall to another place in the area.

“The task and responsibility is increased. There are many things I have to do in one day, more burden,” a vendor stressed.
“[The] workload is high, I get so tired sometimes that I have to miss a day in the market,” one vendor said.

“Domestic work is compulsory. I have to take my time in the morning to do it before coming to the market. If I don’t have time in the morning, I have to do it in the afternoon,” another added.

Most women received support from their families. One woman said that income she generated was used for household expenses, whereas the income generated by her husband was for savings. Some family members did not want the women working as vendors due to health concerns.

“My children and husband don’t want me to be a vendor in the market because I am old and it is hard work. They said they could take care of me and my husband with the money that they earn. I love selling and this is my occupation since I was married. I don’t like to stay at home and do housework it is boring, not fun like selling in the market,” a vendor stated.

“My daughter wants me to stop because she worries about my health. But I have to come so that we can have money to buy food,” another said.

If women do not work in the market even for a day, they lose income. Most continue their job regardless of their responsibilities at home. This can potentially lead to social problems such as children dropping out of schools, conflict in the family, etc.

C. Political Gap

Assistance and support from organizations and networks

Around 10 vendors were not members of any organization because they did not have any free time. More than half of the women were members of a Women’s Union in their village. Two women were members of an Organic Vegetable Group. Information from key actors indicated that there is no membership-based organization that helps women vendors in particular.

“[The] workload is high, I get so tired sometimes that I have to miss a day in the market,” one vendor said.

“Domestic work is compulsory. I have to take my time in the morning to do it before coming to the market. If I don’t have time in the morning, I have to do it in the afternoon,” another added.

“My daughter wants me to stop because she worries about my health. But I have to come so that we can have money to buy food,” another said.
Most women have not received assistance from any organization, but have heard it is available, such as through loans with low interest rates from financial institutions. Most were reluctant to seek this kind of help as they thought it was complicated and worried about being able to repay debts.

“I have heard about low interest loans, but the process of applying for a loan is too complicated,” one of the vendors said.

“We don’t want to take loans from banks because we have to repay them in a large amount each month. We don’t have that much money. We prefer to borrow from moneylenders and pay back daily because we know how much we earn in a day. Another thing is we don’t want to secure loans with assets, once we collapse, it’s gone,” another added.

Only three women claimed that they had received assistance from organizations. Two of these were organic vendors. They said that they had received great support from the Organic Vegetable Group, which provided technical knowledge to improve their organic farms and facilitated the process to sell in the organic market.

“I have received regular training and advice on organic farming techniques from the Organic Vegetable Group. Also, the group provided some training on basic finances to members,” a vendor noted.

Another vendor said that she received a grant from the Lao Women’s Union. It covered land leasing for five years, land preparation, setting up vegetable growing facilities and electric pumps. She explained that some 4,800 square metres of land were equally distributed among 10 recipient families. Nine grew vegetables and one grew mushrooms. The grant was a one-time payment; all recipients were responsible for financing their businesses using their profits.

“I have heard about low interest loans, but the process of applying for a loan is too complicated,” one of the vendors said.

“We don’t want to take loans from banks because we have to repay them in a large amount each month. We don’t have that much money. We prefer to borrow from moneylenders and pay back daily because we know how much we earn in a day. Another thing is we don’t want to secure loans with assets, once we collapse, it’s gone,” another added.
Social protection
Most women claimed that they didn’t have social insurance or a pension. Three women said that only their husbands had medical insurance because they were government officers.

Women without insurance stated that they didn’t want to apply for it because the process was too complicated. Some argued that medical services provided by social insurance were below standard.

“It’s too complicated. The service is too slow and sometimes delayed. Doctors don’t take care of us as well as those who pay without insurance,” said one vendor.

“I don’t want to have [social insurance]. Because I heard from friends that if I have social insurance, doctors don’t want to take care of me, and they tend to delay the service,” another explained.

One woman said that she used to have social insurance but she never became ill so she cancelled her plan.

“I used to have [social insurance]. I had to pay 100,000 kip per month [US $12.3] or three months, I can’t remember. But I haven’t gotten sick and never used it, it does not accumulate either, it’s just cancelled,” she explained.

When women were asked about their needs for social protection, however, most said that they would like to have some, but didn’t have much information about the issue.

Most women mentioned health care and life insurance as desirable forms of social protection. Some said that they didn’t want any social protection services because they didn’t want to spend money on them.

“I have many things to spend on, I can’t afford it,” one woman said.

Policies and regulations
Nearly all women said that they didn’t know of any policies, laws or regulations related to women market vendors. Two women said that they knew about market regulations.

“Yes. I know what is legal and illegal to sell,” the first noted.

“The market regulations say not to go near the road too much, [we] have to keep the space clean,” the other added.

D. Goals, Dreams and Support Needs

Owning property, like houses and cars, was a goal for most women. Some added that they also wanted to have enough money to provide the highest level of education to their children and to open their own shops.

In terms of support needs, most women stated that they wanted to learn additional skills in order to improve their businesses. These skills included cooking, catering, customer services, and food safety and storage. Some women also mentioned other technical skills, such as organic vegetable-growing techniques, basic accounting and English language skills. Only a few women, especially the older ones, said that they didn’t want to learn any additional skills because they had no time and were too old to learn.
Some women street vendors said that they wanted to have safe spaces to sell their products.

"I want to be provided with a place to sell. I don't want to pack and run all the time when there are high-level events," one woman said.

"I want the government to take care of vendors who don't have a secure stall. I want them to allow us to sell for some certain days and notify us when there are any high-level meetings so we know when to sell and when not to sell," another added.

“I have heard about low interest loans, but the process of applying for a loan is too complicated,” one of the vendors said.

“We don't want to take loans from banks because we have to repay them in a large amount each month. We don't have that much money. We prefer to borrow from moneylenders and pay back daily because we know how much we earn in a day. Another thing is we don't want to secure loans with assets, once we collapse, it's gone," another added.
CONCLUSIONS

Women market vendors play a vital role in the urban economy and help keep their households out of extreme poverty. Findings of this study showed that city policies and practices tend to undermine women market vendors, however. They receive almost no protection or support, as most laws and policies are “gender blind.” Some regulations hinder women’s market activities, such as high market fees and complicated registration, which leads women to risk setting up their stalls outside designated market spaces.

The findings also showed that some key actors were aware of problems faced by women market vendors. But since most existing regulations, laws and policies do not recognize gender differences, concrete actions cannot be taken. Further, a lack of studies or specific data about women vendors in Vientiane makes it very challenging to identify actual problems. Key actors tend to generalize these and lack insight into the real situation of women market vendors.

Market realities were identified in interviews with women market vendors in Vientiane. Findings confirmed that women encountered various challenges, such as loss or damage of products during transportation, unsuitable space to sell their goods, obstacles obtaining permission for stall set-up and uncomfortable market facilities. Some women experienced abuse and violence in conflicts with other vendors or authorities. Most women tended to quietly accept conflict even when being threatened, seeing it as part of the daily work routine and thinking no one could help them. Some women had difficulties managing work at home when working in the market as they were overburdened with responsibilities. Most continued to work as vendors regardless, since their daily income was needed to support their families.

Women market vendors encountered political challenges as they lacked participation in decision-making. The market management committees, the only mechanism governing market regulations, comprise only representatives appointed from different government departments and market owners. Many women also lack information about existing assistance. Only a few of those interviewed had ever received support from any organization.
RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of ways to empower women market vendors. The following recommendations address some of their main challenges.

- **Raise awareness among women market vendors and key actors and duty-bearers about women vendors’ rights and existing assistance mechanisms.**
  Most women interviewed did not have any information about existing assistance. The policy review revealed some support options, such as loans with low interest rates offered by some microfinance institutions, and the Lao Women’s Union’s programme for capacity-building on business management and financial literacy. UN Women should consider how these could apply to women market vendors, and work with key partners to raise awareness and disseminate relevant information.

  One potential channel is the radio announcer system available in most markets. UN Women might consider collaborating with market owners and management committees to make use of this to reach women vendors.

- **Help organize a women market vendor’s group in Vientiane.**
  In many markets, women have already formed informal networks with other vendors. UN Women could build on this momentum by encouraging women vendors to form an organized group with the potential to strengthen women’s representation and bargaining power with the market management committees. An organized group also could provide members with advice on issues related to market activities (e.g., potential sources of production, affordable finance, food safety and transportation tips), and mediate conflicts between vendors.

  The success of the Organic Vegetable Group is a good example of a strong network and offers a model that could be replicated through a group for women market vendors. Collaboration with organizations that actively support women’s issues, such as the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women and the Lao Women’s Union, may be beneficial, since they already have information about vulnerable women and can identify them at the village level.
- **Promote the establishment of a financial savings cooperative for women market vendors or improve their access to reasonable financial services.**

Some women still rely on informal moneylenders and informal savings networks that result in debt and debt bondage. Creating a formal channel for accessing affordable financing is critical. In addition, a savings cooperative targeted to women vendors would help strengthen women’s networks in different market locations in Vientiane and beyond. The savings cooperative could also educate women vendors about basic financial management, and strengthen their financial situation through increased household savings and better sales margins.

- **Expand research on women market vendors beyond Vientiane and further explore specific issues.**

This baseline study provided an overview of the situation in Vientiane and identified several opportunities for improvement. Further exploration may be needed of financial management, relationships between vendors and other actors, and women’s representation and organizations. Women street vendors represent another critical dimension, as they tend to be the most vulnerable women vendors.

UN Women should consider further research on these issues to inform future initiatives targeting women market vendors, and influence decision makers to support or create appropriate policies and programmes.

- **Encourage participation of women market vendors in the market management committees.**

Without regulations requiring the inclusion of women market vendors in market decision-making, they have few opportunities to express their concerns. This lack of participation can result in the failure to identify certain problems, for instance, unhygienic facilities, and conflict and abuse in markets.

Participation of women vendors in the market management process is part of the solution. UN Women should consider advocating that key members of the market management committees promote their participation. The Ministry of Industry and Commerce could be a starting point, since it monitors market activities and the implementation of regulations.

Having a sub-committee that women vendors can participate in is a potential interim solution that could offer women a channel through which to voice suggestions and raise concerns or complaints.

- **Provide capacity-building for women market vendors.**

UN Women should consider providing capacity-building for women vendors based on their needs. Most women interviewed suggested they need more knowledge related to food processing, safety and storage, for example. Technical skills, such as techniques to grow organic vegetables, basic accounting and English language skills were also suggested. Cooking training is provided by the Lao Women’s Union in Vientiane, but like other training activities, is currently not targeting women market vendors.

- **Assist women street vendors in securing proper spaces to sell their products.**

As the most vulnerable of all vendors, women street vendors mostly cannot afford to pay market fees, or don’t have any connections in the market and are not able to set up stalls there. They are more likely to encounter risks, such as being arrested by the police or the district tax office.
UN Women should consider opening a dialogue between women street vendors and Vientiane’s City Planning Department. Potentially, it could arrange designated affordable vendor zones for these women. UN Women may also consider working with the market management committees, market owners and village authorities to support women street vendors by granting permissions for them to sell their products in the markets, or providing special conditions such as lower market fees or special permits during certain hours of the day.
ANNEX I

ANNEX I: References


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Ministry of Health. 2009a. Minister’s Decision on Food Products Labelling.


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ANNEX II: Standard Market Facilities

Standards are based on the Agreement on Markets of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce.

Standards and criteria for large-size markets:
1. Area of the building is 3,601 square metres and above.
2. The building should have a permanent structure, the foundation should be flat and strong, with no pools of water. The roof should be fire-resistant, tough and durable; the building’s height should be appropriate for natural ventilation. For building with a ventilation system, the roof cannot be too high.
3. Should consist of at least 400 stalls, each with dimensions of at least 3 square metres.
4. Products must be displayed at least 60 centimetres above the ground; the walkway for buyers within the building should be at least 1.5 metres wide.
5. Must have a market management office.
6. Has appropriate parking for buyers and vendors.
7. Has a measurement/weighing point.
8. Has storage or freezer for fresh food storage such as vegetable, meat, fish.
9. Market access road, road surrounding the market building should be at least 4 metres wide.
10. Toilet must be located at appropriate location outside the building; the toilet must be clean and sufficient and have a standard filtration system.
11. Has wastewater drainage system.
12. Has enough brightness to allow reading.
13. Has product quality control point, plants and animals hygiene.
14. Loading zone should be allocated properly to support daily products and must be located close to the building to facilitate transportation.
15. Zoning according to the types of goods.
16. Has a fire protection system and adequate water supply system.
17. Fence surrounding the market.
18. Waste storage facility.

Standards and criteria for medium-size markets:
1. Area of the building is 900 to 3,600 square metres.
2. The building should have a permanent structure, the foundation should be flat and strong, with no pools of water. The roof should be fire-resistant, tough and durable; the building’s height should be appropriate for natural ventilation. For building with a ventilation system, the roof cannot be too high.
3. Should consist of 100 to 400 stalls, each with dimensions of at least 3 square metres.
4. Products must be displayed at least 60 centimetres above the ground; the walkway for buyers within the building should be at least 1.5 metres wide.
5. Must have a market management office.
6. Has appropriate parking space.
7. Has a measurement/weighing point.
8. Has storage or freezer for fresh food storage such as vegetable, meat, fish.
9. Market access road, road surrounding the market building should be at least 4 metres wide.
10. Toilet must be located at appropriate location outside the building; the toilet must be clean and sufficient and have a standard filtration system.
11. Has a wastewater drainage system.
12. Has enough brightness.
13. Has a product quality control point, plants and animals hygiene.
14. Loading zone should be allocated properly to support daily products; must be located close to
    the building to facilitate transportation.
15. Zoning according to the types of goods.
16. Has a fire protection system and adequate water supply system.
17. Fence surrounding the market.
18. Waste storage facility.

Standards and criteria for a small-size market:

1. Area of the building smaller than 900 square metres.
2. The building should have a permanent or semi-permanent structure, the foundation should be
   flat and strong, with no pools of water. The building’s height should be appropriate for natural
   ventilation.
3. Should consist of 50 to 100 stalls, each with dimensions of at least 3 square metres.
4. Products must be displayed at least 60 centimetres above the ground; the walkway for buyers
   within the building should be at least 1.5 metres wide.
5. Must have a market management office.
6. Has appropriate parking space.
7. Has a measurement/weighing point.
8. Toilet must be located at appropriate location outside the building.
9. Has a wastewater drainage system.
10. Fire extinguishers installed as appropriate.
11. Has a waste storage facility.
12. Has a fire protection system and adequate water supply system.
13. Fence surrounding the market.
ANNEX III: Market Locations for Interviews

Photo I. Sao Market
Photo II. Thongpong Market
Photo III. Phonsavang Market
Photo IV. Night market
Photo V. Khuadin Market
Photo VI. Khuadin Market
Photo VII. Anou Street
Photo VIII. Organic market
UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women’s equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women’s leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women’s economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system’s work in advancing gender equality.