

Impacts of inflation on nutrition and food security in Laos

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Introduction

Families in Lao PDR have faced multiple challenges in recent years. The COVID pandemic reduced many people's livelihoods and incomes and global inflation and currency devaluation have both negatively impacted the Lao economy, with inflation reaching 41 percent in February 2023. Climate challenges including drought and floods have damaged crops and reduced agricultural incomes. These economic, health and climate challenges have made it increasingly harder for Lao families to provide for themselves and it has increased food insecurity nationally.

Objectives

The research study aimed to **1.** identify the impacts of inflation on nutrition and food security for Lao families, particularly regarding their coping strategies and future plans; **2.** Develop recommendations for stakeholders' interventions.

Methods

Survey interviews were conducted with 1316 heads of households across 14 provinces using KoboCollect app by staff from 11 member organisations of the SUN CSA Laos. The survey included the 8 questions from the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES).

By 11 different SUN CSA Organisations	In 14 Provinces	1316 interviews in February 2023	With 570 (43%) females interviewed

Results

Results from the February 2023 SUN CSA Laos Food Security survey found that, over the past 12 months, from the 1316 surveyed households:

- 91% had faced challenges to meet the cost of living
- 11% were moderately or severely food insecure
- 47% had run out of food at least once in the past 12 months
- 31% had skipped a meal
- 56% had been unable to eat healthy or nutritious diets

Food Insecurity	1075 (82%) worried not have enough food 	733 (56%) were unable to eat healthy and nutritious food 	142 (11%) have not eaten for whole day
	887 (67%) struggled because of the inflation of food cost 	874 (66%) struggled because of small income 	833 (63%) struggled because of the inflation of fuel cost
Reasons of Challenge			

Respondents attribute their food security challenges to;

- increased food costs (67%),
- insufficient income (66%)
- increased fuel costs (63%).

Respondents said their households have had to use negative coping actions, including:

- buying less food (71%)
- foraging more (65%)
- eating less (52%)
- borrow money (41%)
- selling assets (34%)



Conclusion

A large majority of households in Laos are vulnerable to inflation shocks and are currently facing economic hardship due to inflation-related increases in the cost of living, as well as other factors related to climate change and the recent COVID pandemic.

Recommendations include:

Government Review current strategies in each relevant ministry to identify which can be more focused on supporting increasing food security.

Donors Increase funding in Laos for nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive needs at the community level and systems level.

Development partners Work with civil society organisations to address food insecurity issues. Support national and provincial coordination mechanisms for food insecurity that is both sectoral and multi-sectoral.

Civil Society Monitor needs in communities and highlight specific food insecurity needs to the network and in coordination meetings.

Keywords Nutrition; food security; inflation; climate; agriculture; health

For more details
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