



CCG In Lao People's  
Democratic Republic

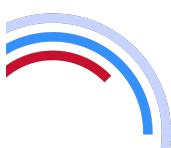
## **Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in Energy and Transport Sectors**

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# GESI LAOS REPORT, 2026

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## Glossary

**Energy system:** A combination of technical (e.g., infrastructure) and economic systems (e.g., electricity markets) designed to supply energy services to end-users

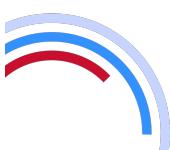
**Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI):** Improving the terms of participation in society, especially for marginalised and vulnerable groups, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice, and respect for rights.

**Intersectionality:** An analytical lens which examines how different social stratifiers (such as gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, refugee status, ethnicity, race, and income, etc.) intersect with each other and structural determinants (e.g., politics, globalisation, war, education) to create unique circumstances of power, privilege, and marginalisation.

**Marginalised and vulnerable groups:** Demographics of individuals who experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political, and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions.

**Transport system:** The vehicles, infrastructure, people, and logistics involved in moving goods or people from one location to another.

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## 1. Executive summary

The Climate Compatible Growth (CCG) programme works with partners in Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), coordinated with the National University of Laos, to support sustainable development priorities in renewable energy and transport. Lao PDR has made major strides in expanding electricity supply and improving connectivity in recent decades, yet development outcomes remain uneven. Mountainous terrain, dispersed settlements, and persistent gaps in road access continue to shape who can access infrastructure services, and who is left behind as energy and transport systems modernise.

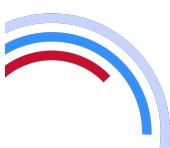
This document presents a condensed and revised version of a longer in-country contextual report. It synthesises key findings on how gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) is reflected across Lao PDR's energy and transport sectors, drawing on demographic context, policy and legal review, and qualitative insights from key informants and community focus groups. The condensed version is intended as an accessible overview of the current landscape, highlighting cross-cutting barriers, emerging opportunities, and persistent implementation gaps that shape equitable access and participation.

### Key Takeaways

- Inequalities in access are strongly shaped by the intersection of ethnicity and rurality. National electricity access is high overall, but reliability and coverage gaps persist in remote areas, where grid extension is costly and technically challenging, and which are widely populated by the country's 50 distinct ethnic minority groups.
- Women's participation remains constrained by structural and social barriers, including lower labour force participation than men and persistent wage gaps, alongside a disproportionate burden of unpaid care and household responsibilities. These dynamics shape how women experience energy poverty (e.g., biomass cooking fuel reliance) and mobility constraints (e.g., safety concerns).
- Transport exclusion is most acute where road connectivity is limited (predominantly remote areas). In provinces with high shares of roadless villages, mobility constraints restrict access to clinics, schools, markets, and administrative services, and can become more severe during the rainy season when roads are impassable.
- Accessibility and safety remain unevenly addressed in urban public transport systems, particularly for people with disabilities (PwDs) and older adults who face physical barriers. New investments – such as the planned Vientiane Bus Rapid Transit system with accessibility and safety features – signal potential progress.
- Lao PDR has endorsed a wide range of GESI international commitments and has a relatively robust domestic policy architecture referencing inclusion; however, implementation mechanisms, dedicated resourcing, disaggregated data, and sector-relevant indicators remain inconsistent, and energy/transport instruments often lack clear requirements for participation, accessibility standards, affordability safeguards, and accountability.

### Sensitivity Note

This report applies a GESI lens across all relevant population groups. However, some topics are socially and/or politically sensitive in Lao PDR, such as LGBTQIA+ identities, disability-related stigma, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence. Some topics may also be delicate because they intersect with ethnicity and land. Researchers should proceed with caution when raising these issues, both to protect affected communities and to avoid inadvertently undermining relationships or access. Sensitive identities and protection risks should be discussed only in appropriate settings and with appropriate counterparts. Engagement with GESI should be demand-led, locally anchored, and guided by a do-no-harm approach. In practice, this means using trusted local intermediaries, applying careful informed consent, building in safeguards such as anonymisation, and avoiding any approaches that could increase risk or visibility for participants.



## 2. Introduction and background

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is a landlocked country with an estimated population of approximately 7.5 million in 2023.<sup>1</sup> Over recent decades, the country has expanded basic infrastructure and services as part of wider national development priorities, including major efforts to extend electricity supply and improve transport connectivity. However, these gains have not been experienced evenly. Development outcomes remain strongly shaped by geography, where mountainous terrain, dispersed settlements, and uneven road access continue to influence who can reach services and opportunities.

In this context, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) is not an 'add-on' to energy and transport planning: it is central to whether infrastructure investments translate into real improvements in livelihoods and wellbeing. Energy access affects household productivity, education, health, and safety, while transport connectivity influences access to schools, healthcare, markets, and employment – especially for communities living far from urban centres.<sup>2</sup> Barriers linked to affordability, physical accessibility, safety, and social norms can disproportionately constrain women's mobility and time use, exclude people with disabilities (PwDs) from services and public space, and intensify disadvantages for ethnic minority communities in rural areas.<sup>3,4</sup>

Lao PDR's electricity system is shaped by a hydropower-dominant mix, with recent reports estimating that it provides roughly 76% of the country's electricity generation.<sup>5</sup> While this has supported high electrification overall, it can heighten sensitivity to seasonal water availability and dry-season constraints.<sup>6</sup> Hydropower development has created 'project-affected communities' in some areas, including cases involving resettlement and livelihood disruption of ethnic communities.<sup>7</sup>

Consistent with the aims of this study, the focus here is not on evaluating hydropower safeguards or sustainability performance in depth, but on how all marginalised and vulnerable groups experience energy and transport systems more broadly, through access, affordability, safety, and opportunities to participate in decisions that shape services and infrastructure.

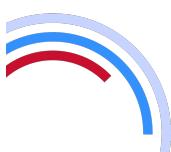
### 2.1. Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Analyse the context of marginalised groups and vulnerable groups in Lao PDR, including demographic characteristics, unique energy and decarbonised transport needs, and barriers to accessing these infrastructures.
2. Review national policies and legislation related to energy, transport, national development, and GESI.
3. Assess the extent to which policymaking processes in these sectors are participatory.
4. Map key stakeholders working with marginalised and vulnerable groups and identify active taskforces related to GESI considerations.

### 2.2. Methodology

This report draws on a mixed-methods approach combining desk-based analysis and qualitative consultation. It includes a review of more than 30 strategic, legal, and technical documents spanning GESI, energy, transport, and national development planning. To complement the desk review, key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with stakeholders from government ministries, academia, civil society, and development partners. The study also conducted focus group discussions (FGDs) with community members, including women, PwDs, and LGBTQIA+ individuals, to capture lived experiences and sector-specific barriers in access and participation. The KIIs and FGDs were conducted in the capital city of Vientiane, its peri-urban surroundings, and Xayaboury rural province.



### 3. GESI context in Lao PDR

In Lao PDR, patterns of marginalisation and vulnerability are strongly shaped by gender, ethnicity, and rurality. Approximately 67% of the population resides in rural areas, where access to infrastructure and services is limited.<sup>3</sup> Poverty rates are higher in these areas, and livelihoods are often dependent on subsistence agriculture and natural resources. Ethnic minority groups comprise a substantial proportion of the population (43.5%) and are disproportionately represented among poor and remote communities.<sup>3</sup> Geographic isolation and dispersed settlement patterns intersect with social stigmas and institutional barriers to shape unequal access, participation, and development outcomes across these population groups.

#### 3.1 Gender

Gender roles remain deeply embedded in many communities across Lao PDR, with women bearing a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work and household responsibilities, constraining their participation in education, paid employment, and community decision-making.<sup>8</sup> Only approximately 42% of women are part of the labour force and are also more likely to be engaged in vulnerable employment, such as informal work, which typically offers less job security and fewer benefits.<sup>1,9</sup> Notably, gender wage gaps persist across all age groups, with women earning 29.7% less than men on average per hour, a gap exacerbated among women with disabilities.<sup>1,10</sup>

Historically, economic liberalisation has reshaped women's traditional roles in agriculture and household management, altering power dynamics and creating new opportunities for autonomy.<sup>11</sup> However, the culture norm of gender ideology still reduces women's power in decision-making in productive domains, with women holding only 21.2% of managerial roles.<sup>1,12</sup>

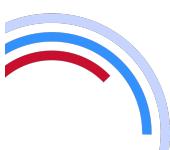
#### 3.2 Intersection of ethnic diversity and rurality

Lao PDR is characterised by significant ethnic and cultural diversity, with 50 officially recognised ethnic groups categorised into four main ethnolinguistic families: Lao-Tai, Mon-Khmer, Hmong-lu Mien, and Sino-Tibetan.<sup>13</sup> No ethnic group occupies an exclusive territory, and they differ in settlement patterns, livelihood systems, and access to infrastructure.<sup>14</sup> **Table 1** summarises the main ethnolinguistic groups in Lao PDR and highlights their relative population shares and characteristics; the full list of 50 ethnic groups can be found in the complete report.

Ethno-linguistic groups	Share of ethnic population	Typical settlement patterns	Key implications
Lao-Tai	62.4%	Lowland areas, river valleys, urban and peri-urban settlements	Generally better access to roads, electricity, and public services
Mon-Khmer	23.7%	Upland and rural areas, often remote	Limited transport connectivity and infrastructure access
Hmong-lu Mien	9.7%	Mountainous and highland regions	Geographic isolation and higher transport and energy costs
Sino-Tibetan	2.9%	Upper slopes and mountain summits	Sparse infrastructure and limited service coverage

**Table 1.** Major ethnolinguistic groups in Lao PDR and implications for access to infrastructure and services<sup>8,13,15-17</sup>

Lao-Tai groups predominantly inhabit lowland areas, particularly along the Mekong River and its tributaries, where infrastructure is more developed.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, Mon-Khmer, Hmong-lu Mien, and Sino-Tibetan groups are more likely to reside in upland and mountainous regions, where road access, electricity coverage, and transport services remain limited.<sup>17</sup> Further, language barriers and cultural preferences for traditional practices often deter engagement with modern energy and transport solutions.<sup>18</sup>



### 3.3 Groups with limited data availability

While ethnicity, rurality, and gender emerge as the dominant drivers of exclusion in Lao PDR, other marginalised and vulnerable groups are also present but insufficiently captured in data systems. National estimates indicate that PwDs represent at least 3.7% of the population, though underreporting is likely, particularly in rural areas.<sup>1</sup>

Lao cultural norms, which emphasise traditional family structures and heteronormativity, stigmatise LGBTQIA+ people, many of whom conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity to avoid social ostracism and discrimination.<sup>19</sup> While urban areas are showing signs of increased awareness and gradual acceptance, rural communities remain largely conservative.

## 4. GESI and energy

Energy access in Lao PDR is high at the national level, and the country has set a target to raise electrification to 98% by 2025.<sup>5</sup> Persistent gaps in remote and mountainous provinces, however, indicate that extending and sustaining electricity services in upland, ethnic minority, and low-income communities remains a key equity issue.<sup>20</sup> This section therefore focuses on where electricity access remains uneven, who is most likely to be affected, and how affordability and household roles shape day-to-day energy use and impacts for marginalised and vulnerable groups.<sup>21</sup>

### 4.1 Access and reliability

Lao PDR's terrain creates persistent challenges for universal electrification: rugged geography and dispersed rural populations make grid extension costly and technically difficult.<sup>6,7</sup> The 2015 census reports that 84% of households were connected to the public electricity grid; including off-grid sources (generators or batteries), around 90% of households had some source of electric power.<sup>3</sup> Households with no access to electricity often rely on kerosene, gas, or candles for lighting. More recent survey findings indicate that roughly 4% of the population still lacks electricity access.<sup>22</sup>

Access gaps are most pronounced across the urban-rural divide. In 2015, 97% of urban households had electricity (mostly grid connection), compared to 82% of rural households with road access, and only 37% of rural households without road access.<sup>3</sup> For instance, only about 74% of households in the Phongsaly province – largely populated by ethnic minorities – have access to electricity.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, in Sekong and Huaphanh, where many Mon-Khmer and Hmong-Mien communities live, grid connectivity is limited, and generators are often used to supplement unreliable infrastructure.<sup>20</sup>

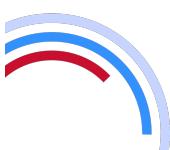
### 4.2 Affordability and economic constraints

Even where electricity infrastructure exists, affordability can limit uptake and quality of access. Upfront costs for grid connection or off-grid solutions (e.g., solar panels) are unaffordable for many households, particularly ethnic minorities and women-led households.<sup>23</sup> These individuals' limited access to credit and exclusion from formal financial institutions deepen such economic constraints.<sup>24,25</sup> Moreover, high out-of-pocket expenditures on energy services can also limit households' ability to otherwise invest in health, education, or livelihood improvement.<sup>2</sup>

These constraints are closely linked to geographic exclusion, as remote communities often face both higher connection costs and fewer options for affordable alternatives.<sup>13</sup> Within such communities, social hierarchies and unequal participation in development processes can deprioritise the needs of ethnic groups from benefiting equally from development initiatives, including hydroelectric projects that frequently result in ethnic community displacement.<sup>26</sup>

### 4.3 Gendered energy roles

Traditional gender norms, deeply rooted in Lao society, shape women's access to and ability to benefit from energy, particularly in rural and ethnic communities.<sup>12</sup> Patriarchal family structures assign men authority over key household decisions, including those related to electricity use.<sup>27</sup> Gendered divisions of labour hold women predominantly responsible for cooking and related fuel management; interviews indicate that firewood remains the primary cooking fuel in rural



communities, with charcoal also widely used. Reliance on biomass fuels can increase time poverty associated with fuel collection and elevate health risks linked to household air pollution.

Women's domestic responsibilities and caregiving roles limit their participation in infrastructure planning processes, further entrenching systemic exclusion.<sup>4,28</sup> For instance, observations and interviews at the Department of Public Works and Transport revealed that female staff are predominantly employed in service or administrative roles, rather than technical positions. Gender norms continue to influence educational pathways: women and girls are discouraged from pursuing studies in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), particularly in transport and energy sectors, thereby confining their ability to meaningfully work in such fields.

#### 4.4 Inclusion of PwDs and other groups

Electricity access is generally measured at the household level, but uneven infrastructure coverage has distinct implications for individuals with unique energy needs to ensure safety and independence. PwDs with visual or mobility impairments, who often require assistive devices, are particularly disadvantaged in rural off-grid settings. This is compounded by disability prevalence being highest in rural areas without road access (3.33%), compared to 2.48% in urban settings.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, older adults face heightened health and safety risks where basic household electricity services such as lighting or cooling are unavailable, while youth in poorly electrified households face constraints related to lighting for evening study and access to educational technologies.<sup>3</sup>

### 5. GESI and transport

While investments in roads and public transport are expanding in some areas of Lao PDR, mobility remains shaped by uneven road access in rural and mountainous provinces and by affordability, safety, and accessibility constraints in urban and peri-urban settings.<sup>29</sup> Recent initiatives – such as the Vientiane Sustainable Urban Transport Project (VSUTP) and its planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system – illustrate emerging momentum towards more accessible urban mobility, but concerns remain regarding implementation of inclusive design features.<sup>20</sup>

#### 5.1 Rural connectivity and ethnic minorities

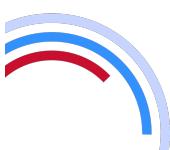
Outside urban centres, limited road access is a persistent constraint. In provinces with high shares of roadless villages, transport infrastructure is underdeveloped and public transport is sparse and costly, particularly in ethnic minority regions.<sup>14</sup> National census data highlights the scale of this challenge: 21.4% of Phongsaly's population lives in villages without road access, 23.7% in Sekong, and 34.3% in Huaphanh, with the most acute gaps affecting Mon-Khmer communities.<sup>3</sup> Budget limitations, technical capacity gaps, and uneven urban–rural development, in which urban progress is prioritised, means that overcoming such issues is a challenge.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, rural road development initiatives often fail to benefit the poorest due to entrenched social hierarchies that limit their participation in emerging markets.<sup>18</sup>

Poor transport increases isolation and reinforces poverty – especially where the lack of roads constrains the delivery and maintenance of other infrastructure and services.<sup>2</sup> As such, roadless rural communities act as a proxy indicator for multi-dimensional exclusion; they often also lack clinics, schools, and electricity, compounding consequences for wellbeing and economic participation.<sup>1</sup> Even where roads exist in mountainous areas, they are often impassable during the rainy season.<sup>24</sup>

##### 5.1.2 Intersectionality across GESI groups

These mobility impacts are not uniform across groups. For instance, limited transport options in rural areas can restrict women's and girls' access to distant healthcare facilities, a challenge compounded by social norms requiring accompaniment by men.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, public welfare programs, such as road maintenance, have notably improved women's access to paid employment and boosted their empowerment through increased financial autonomy and visibility in community roles.<sup>30</sup>

PwDs face a dearth of accessible transport options, which are either minimal or entirely absent.<sup>13</sup> Youth living in roadless villages may face long or impassable routes to school, contributing to lower



educational attainment and fewer livelihood opportunities. Further, transportation barriers and long distances can also affect girls and boys with disabilities differently: girls may be more likely to be kept at home due to concerns about sexual violence and norms that undervalue education for girls.<sup>4</sup> Finally, older adults face heightened barriers to accessing health services and social support, particularly in emergencies.<sup>18</sup>

## 5.2 Urban and peri-urban mobility

In urban areas – particularly the capital city, Vientiane – mobility constraints are shaped by weak public transport systems, affordability barriers, and limited accessibility in the built environment. Urban public transport has been described as unreliable, pushing many residents towards private vehicles (motorbikes and cars), which are often unaffordable for low-income households and can deepen mobility inequality.<sup>31</sup> Public transportation remains underdeveloped, with bus routes and services failing to meet the needs of a growing population, and many people – particularly women, youth, older adults, and PwDs – relying on walking or informal transport modes.<sup>29,32</sup>

Urban mobility constraints are reinforced by the spatial mismatch between affordable housing in peri-urban areas and employment opportunities concentrated in city centres, which increases travel time and cost burdens for low-income workers.<sup>32</sup> Where peri-urban road conditions remain poor, mobility barriers may be further compounded by unreliable and unsafe access routes, especially during heavy rainfall.<sup>20</sup>

### 5.2.1 Safety and security

Safety concerns shape how people use transport services, especially women and girls with fears of harassment and gender-based violence (GBV). These concerns are compounded by infrastructure gaps such as inadequate street lighting at bus stops and electric vehicle (EV) stations, which can increase vulnerability at night.<sup>4</sup> The absence of gender-sensitive planning in transport services can deter women from seeking employment or education opportunities due to safety concerns and time constraints.<sup>32</sup> LGBTQIA+ individuals also share safety concerns with public transport, with some reporting incidents of verbal harassment and discriminatory drivers.<sup>19</sup>

### 5.2.2 Accessibility

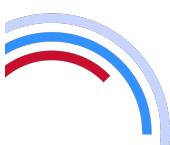
In urban environments, accessibility constraints can be severe for PwDs and older adults: public transport frequently lacks accessibility features, making it difficult for individuals with mobility impairments to navigate the city.<sup>33</sup> Public transport and fuel stations often lack inclusive infrastructure, including accessible restrooms and ramps, and low awareness among operators can result in practical exclusion – particularly for wheelchair users.<sup>34</sup>

Planned transport investments may improve accessibility if inclusive features are implemented and monitored. The government has launched the VSUTP, including a planned BRT corridor linking Chao Fa Ngum Park to the National University of Laos. The system includes design elements intended to improve inclusion, such as designated seating for passengers with disabilities and features intended to strengthen safety and user experience (e.g., smart-card fare systems and CCTV). At the same time, disability community participants raised concerns about safe crossing to stations located on traffic islands.

## 6. GESI policies and barriers

Lao PDR has endorsed a wide range of international and regional frameworks related to GESI, and these commitments are reflected to varying degrees in domestic legislation and national development planning. **Table 2** outlines the main GESI-relevant policies and frameworks and flags the key implementation gaps. This table is not exhaustive; the full report includes additional policies and further details on scope.

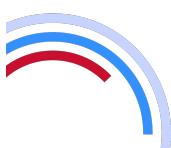
Despite this relatively robust policy architecture, several cross-cutting gaps limit meaningful GESI integration in energy and transport. Across frameworks, commitments are often expressed in broad terms without operational guidance, dedicated budgets, or accountability mechanisms – gaps that



are amplified at sub-national levels where delivery capacity is uneven. Disaggregated data requirements (beyond general statements of intent) are inconsistently specified, and monitoring tools rarely include GESI indicators. This is compounded by the limited institutional capacity to carry out GESI-focused interventions, particularly among technical ministries where training, leadership development, and monitoring systems remain underdeveloped.

Sector policy frameworks in energy and transport remain the weakest point for GESI mainstreaming. While many instruments prioritise expansion targets, investment incentives, and environmental goals, they rarely address differential access, affordability constraints, or participatory processes that enable women, ethnic minorities, and PwDs to shape decisions affecting services and projects. In practice, inclusion outcomes risk being project-dependent rather than embedded as requirements across planning, design, and implementation.

Key Policies	GESI Elements Present	GESI Gaps or Weaknesses
<b>GESI</b>		
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1981)	Commits to eliminating discrimination against women across political, economic, social, and cultural domains	Implementation uneven, with persistent barriers for rural women and women from marginalised groups
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)	Provides a global agenda for advancing women's rights across priority areas (e.g., violence, health, economic participation, leadership)	Not routinely translated into specific requirements for planning, delivery, and monitoring
Decree on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007, updated 2014 and 2019)	Establishes rights, accessibility, and non-discrimination principles for PwDs	Weak enforcement and limited mainstreaming in sector regulations (e.g., infrastructure design, rural electrification, or social protection programs)
Law on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Children (2014)	Strengthens legal protections against GBV	Weak linkage to sector obligations (e.g., safety in transport systems, public spaces)
Law on Gender Equality (2019)	Defines gender equality across rights, responsibilities, decision-making, and development opportunities	Limited intersectional application for disability, age, sexuality, or ethnicity
Fourth National Plan of Action for Gender Equality (2021-2025)	Operationalises gender policy through outcomes on leadership, violence reduction, and economic empowerment; includes attention to ethnic minority women and women in poverty	Limited explicit actions for disability inclusion, LGBTQIA+ inclusion, or age-related needs; weak sector-specific integration
ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint 2025	Promotes gender mainstreaming and social inclusion across development sectors, including infrastructure	Broad direction without binding sector-level mandates or enforcement mechanisms
<b>National Development</b>		
9th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021-25)	Promotes inclusive development benefits across 'all ethnic groups, all ages, and genders'; targets poverty reduction in ethnic and remote areas; includes commitments on accessibility to accommodate PwDs; targeted inclusion actions for older adults and disadvantaged youth; emphasis on disaggregated data	Limited resourcing for implementation; delivery capacity constraints at sub-national levels; limited integration of LGBTQIA+ (gender is stated as only women and men) and minority-language needs
Vision 2030 and 10-Year Socio-Economic Strategy	Frames inclusive development, poverty reduction, and gender equity in access to development benefits; recognises ethnic diversity and distributional disparities	Broad commitments but limited operational detail (implementation mechanisms, indicators, disaggregated data requirements) for tracking inclusion outcomes
National Green Growth Strategy 2030	Defines gender equality as a cross-cutting theme; commits to inclusive green growth, women's empowerment, and rural poverty reduction through equal access to development benefits	Lacks operational guidelines or institutional accountability for implementation; no mention of PwDs, LGBTQIA+, youth, or older adults.
<b>Energy and transport</b>		
Renewable Energy Development Strategy (2011)	Frames renewables as supporting rural development, livelihoods, and poverty reduction;	Limited consideration of gendered energy-use patterns, affordability constraints, or inclusion in



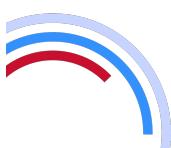
	general references to women, ethnic groups, and poor households	energy value chains; no clear disability-inclusive planning requirements
Electricity Law (2011, amended 2017)	References rural electrification and development goals; includes general references to multi-ethnic people and poverty reduction	No gender requirements; limited guidance on inclusive consultations, affordability safeguards, or benefit-sharing for marginalised communities
Decree on Energy efficiency and Conservation (2016)	Focuses on efficiency and improved living conditions; general references to all ethnic groups	Does not specify inclusion mechanisms (e.g., inclusive audits, monitoring of household impacts)
ASEAN Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation (2016–2025)	Emphasises energy equity and access, including for marginalised groups	Limited evidence of systematic integration into domestic energy policy tools (e.g., indicators, budgeting, accountability)
Energy Policy of Lao PDR (2020)	Recognises rural access and public awareness; references poverty reduction and multi-ethnic development goals	Lacks GESI indicators, budgeting guidance, and requirements for participation or monitoring
Ethnic Group Engagement Framework (2022)	Establishes approaches for engagement, GBV risk mitigation, and ethnic groups' stakeholder participation for road infrastructure projects	Donor-driven and not anchored across all national sector instruments; uneven application beyond specific projects
Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025	Encourages inclusive connectivity and rural infrastructure development	High-level framing; does not substitute for national standards on accessibility, safety, affordability, and participation
Clean Energy Strategy for Transportation: Development Plan to 2025, Strategic 2030 and Vision 2050	Emphasises low-emission transport objectives and investment incentives; general references to rural and multi-ethnic contexts	Does not embed GESI requirements for planning, monitoring, affordability, safety, or accessibility standards within transport system development

**Table 2.** Key GESI-related policies in Lao PDR and gaps affecting implementation

## 7. Key stakeholders

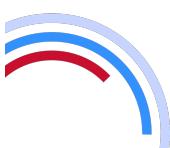
**Table 3** summarises the key stakeholders relevant to advancing GESI in Lao PDR's energy and transport sectors. Stakeholders are grouped by institutional role and assessed according to their relative power/influence and their level of interest in GESI. Central ministries, development partners, and national gender institutions hold the greatest influence over policy direction, financing, and standards-setting, while provincial, district, and village-level structures are central to implementation and community engagement. Civil society organisations and representative associations play a critical role in representing marginalised groups, supporting outreach, and providing accountability through monitoring and feedback.

Stakeholder Category	Key Stakeholders	Roles in GESI Integration	Power/Influence	Interest in GESI
Central government agencies (infrastructure)	Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM); Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT); Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI)	Lead energy and transport policy, infrastructure planning, and cross-sector coordination	High	Medium–High
GESI institutions and government agencies	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (Disability Department); Lao Women's Union (LWU); National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers, and Children (NCAWMC)	Develop gender and inclusion frameworks; coordinate awareness-raising and monitoring	Medium–High	High
Local government authorities	Provincial and District Public Works & Transport and Energy Offices; Provincial and District Women's Unions; District and Provincial Planning Offices	Translate national policy into local plans; coordinate delivery and consultations with communities	Medium	High
Village-level governance structures	Village authorities; Women's Union; Youth Union	Local gatekeepers for engagement and grievance handling; mobilise participation and information dissemination	Low–Medium	High



<b>Academic and technical institutions</b>	National University of Laos (Faculty of Engineering; Faculty of Social Sciences); Public Works and Transport Institute (PTI)	Research, training, social impact analysis, and technical support for inclusive design and monitoring	Medium	Medium–High
<b>Development partners and donors</b>	UNDP; UN Women; World Bank; Asian Development Bank (ADB)	Financing, technical assistance, safeguards oversight, and support for data and capacity building	High	High
<b>Civil society organisations and associations</b>	Gender Development Association; Lao Disabled People's Association (LDPA); disability/gender-focused NGOs	Represent marginalised groups; support community outreach; monitor impacts and strengthen accountability	Medium	High
<b>Community working groups</b>	Women; youth; older adults; ethnic minorities; PwDs; LGBTQIA+	Rights-holders and service users; provide lived experience inputs and feedback on access, safety, affordability, and inclusion barriers	Low–Medium	High
<b>Private sector</b>	Contractors; energy firms; transport operators; consultants; app-based mobility providers	Service delivery and infrastructure design; workplace practices and compliance with accessibility and safety requirements	Medium–High	Medium
<b>Media and communications</b>	State and local media; digital channels	Public awareness raising and information dissemination	Low	Medium

**Table 3.** Key stakeholders advancing GESI in Lao PDR



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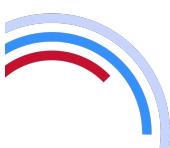
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