Analysis of the UN Survey

Phase 1: Development Issues and Causes
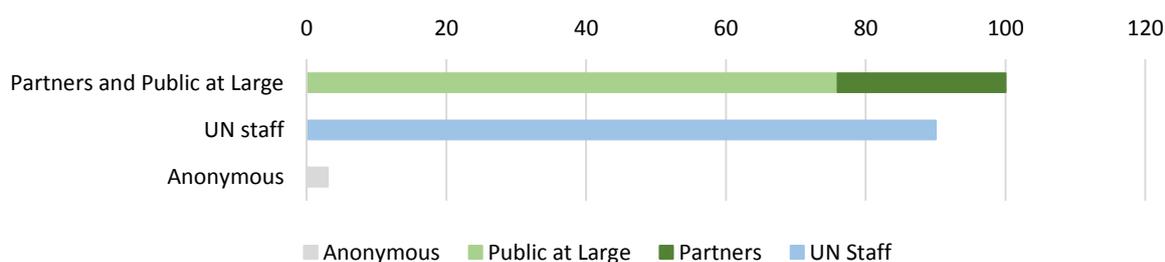
Background

In 2015, the UN Country Team in Lao PDR initiated the development of the Lao PDR–United Nations Partnership Framework (2017-2021), which articulates the collective response of the UN system to national development priorities. In order to make the country analysis - an important basis for the development of the Partnership Framework - a broader and more consultative process, the UN Country Team in Lao PDR is complementing the analysis of existing data and information with a "wisdom of crowds" approach, i.e. crowdsourcing. This approach helps to generate alternative perceptions on Lao PDR's current key development issues, their causes, effects and priorities for the future of Lao PDR to 2021.

The crowdsourcing includes three phases of consultations – i) development issues and causes; ii) effects; iii) prioritization and scenarios – through brief surveys based on the Futurescaper online platform[1].

The first phase, focusing on in-depth exploration of the existing development issues and their causes, was launched in July 2015 and was widely disseminated to all stakeholders including international development partners, civil society, the government, the public at large and the UN Country Team (all staff) through various channels, including targeted communication, UN websites, public discussion forums and social media. The respondents had an opportunity to complete the survey in English and Lao languages. The current analysis presents the results of the first phase of the survey, which is based on the Futurescaper software analytics.

Survey Participation

193 people responded, consisting of UN staff (90 respondents), public at large / citizen experts (76 respondents), Government (11 respondents), civil society (8 respondents), development partners (5 respondents) and those who did not wish to disclose their belonging to any of the target group categories (3 respondents). The graph #1 below provides the response rate by main categories.

Graph 1. Breakdown of survey respondents by main categories. Anonymous includes respondents who did not wish to disclose their belonging to any of the target group categories.
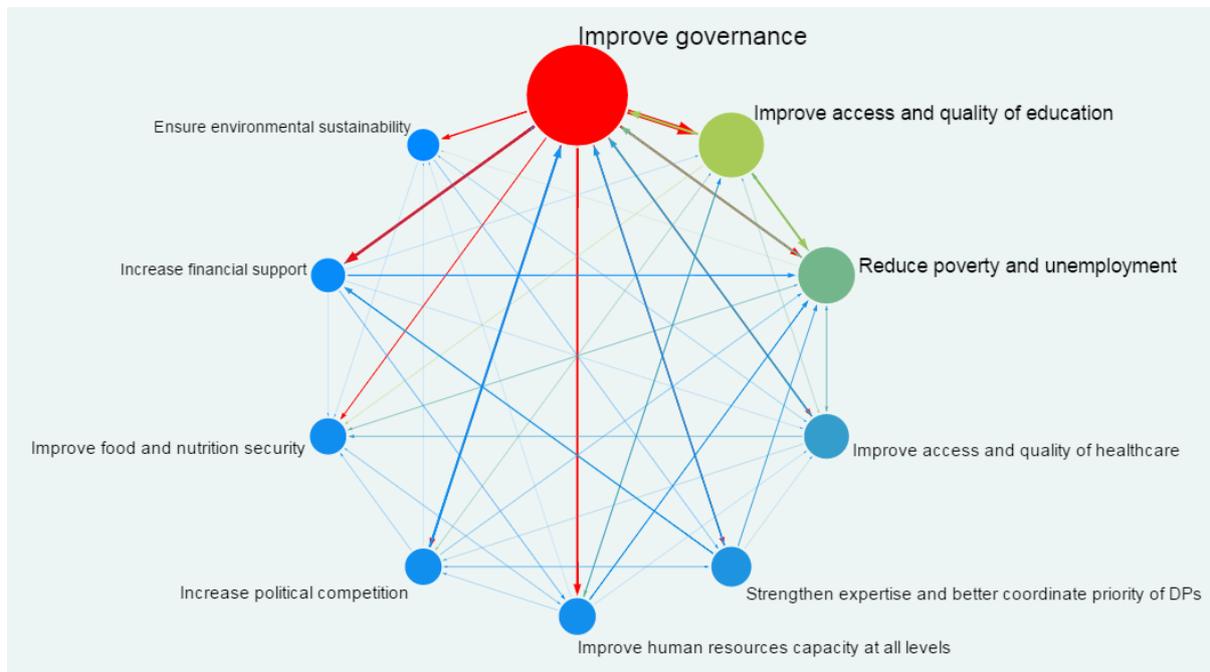
Top 10 major trends

Graph #2 displays the top 10 rank-ordered trends which are the most influential and have been highlighted more than any others in the survey responses. The arrows show the inter-linkages and causality among the factors. The bolder the arrow, the stronger is the linkage, which depends on the number of times a particular factor was mentioned by the respondents.
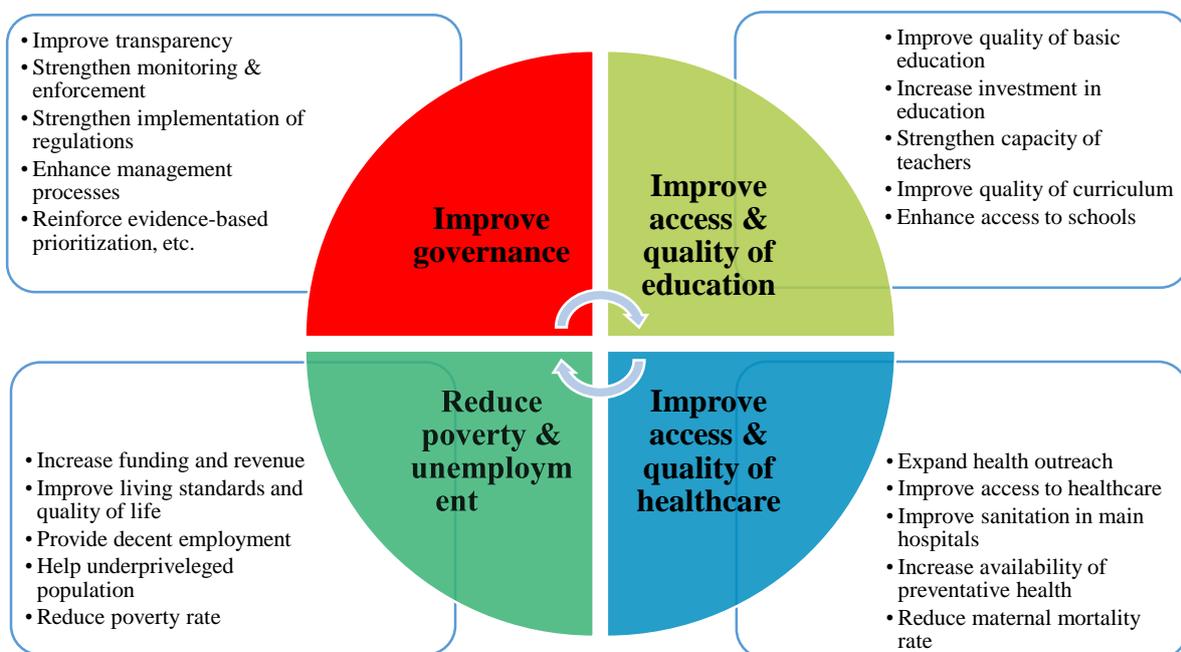
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[1] http://www.futurescaper.com/#about

For instance, the respondents identified the need to improve governance and eradicate corruption as key to ensuring environmental sustainability; reducing poverty and unemployment; increasing financial support; improving human resources capacity at all levels; ensuring food and nutrition security as well as access and quality of education. Many of the above factors are cross-referenced in terms of causality, for example, reducing poverty and unemployment is strongly inter-linked with improving governance and vice-versa.
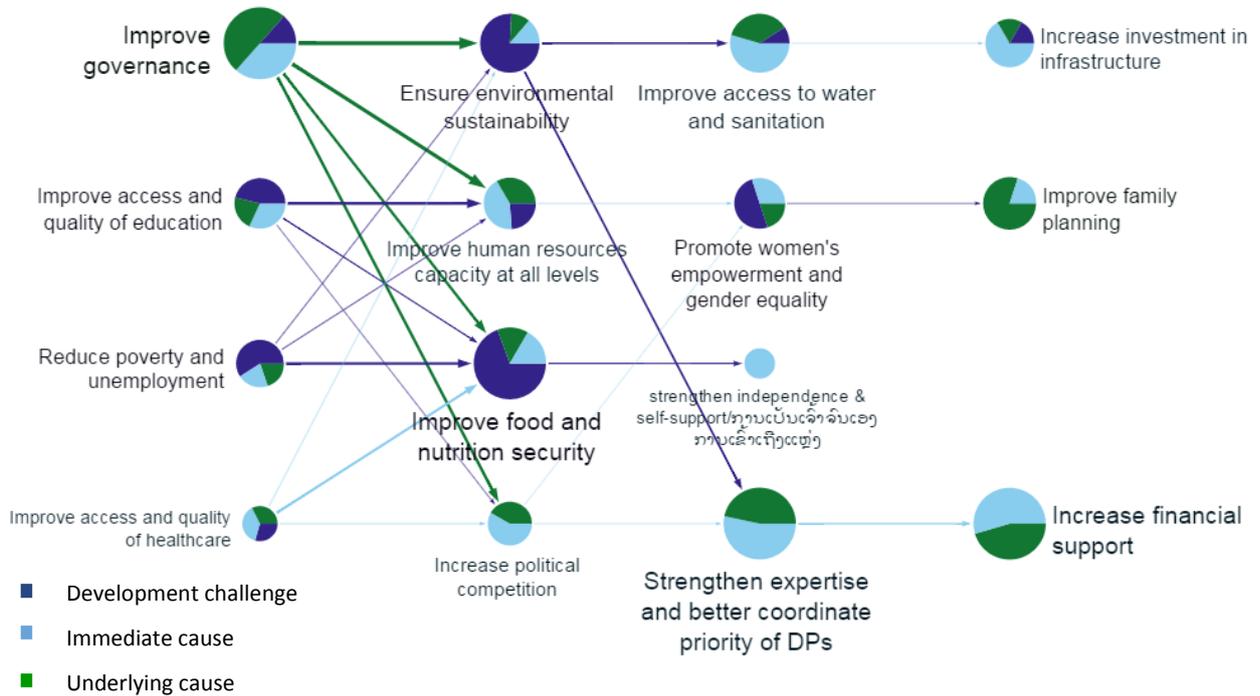

Graph 2. Top 10 major trends

The identical and similar factors entered by the respondents are merged under a 'leading' factor for ease of user reference. Below is a breakdown of constituents of the top four leading factors:

Improve governance
- Improve transparency
- Strengthen monitoring & enforcement
- Strengthen implementation of regulations
- Enhance management processes
- Reinforce evidence-based prioritization, etc.

Improve access & quality of education
- Improve quality of basic education
- Increase investment in education
- Strengthen capacity of teachers
- Improve quality of curriculum
- Enhance access to schools

Reduce poverty & unemployment
- Increase funding and revenue
- Improve living standards and quality of life
- Provide decent employment
- Help underpriveleged population
- Reduce poverty rate

Improve access & quality of healthcare
- Expand health outreach
- Improve access to healthcare
- Improve sanitation in main hospitals
- Increase availability of preventative health
- Reduce maternal mortality rate

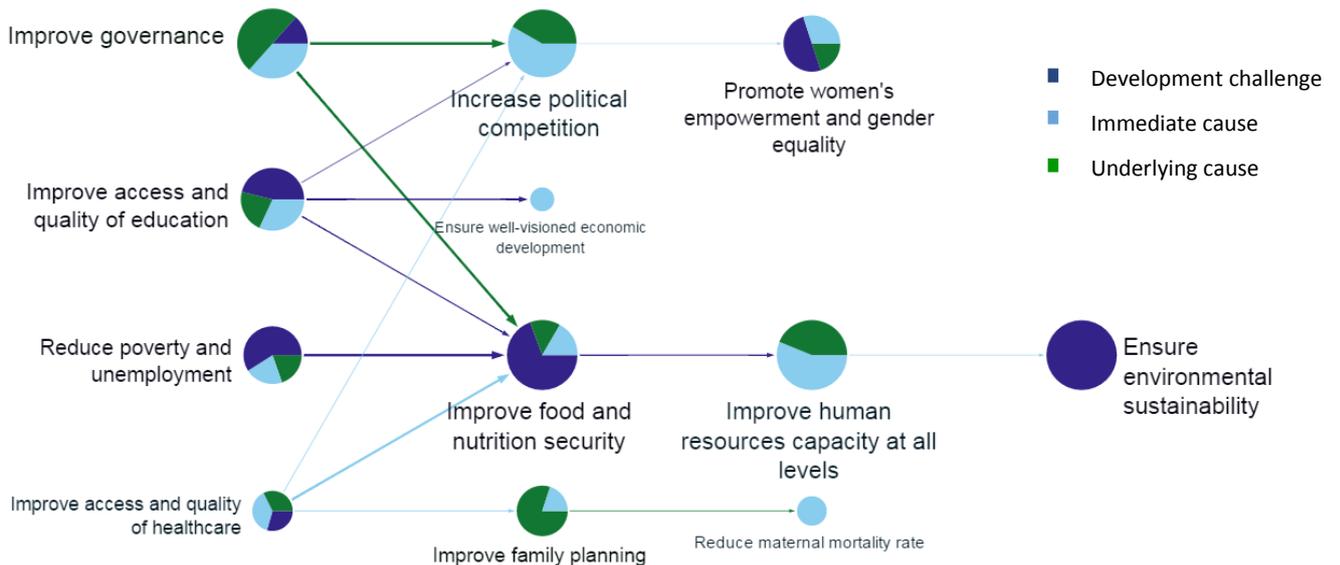**Top storylines of causality and inter-connection**

The following graph #3 presents top four storylines of causality and inter-connection of factors as selected by all survey respondents.

Graph 3. Top four major storylines (all respondents)

In this graph, the impact cascade analysis of the Futurescaper software automatically picks the most important factors and identifies the most significant effect from each. Here too, the bolder the arrow, the stronger is the linkage, which depends on the number of times a particular factor was mentioned by the respondents. The colour coding indicates the extent to which a particular factor was raised as a development challenge, immediate and/or underlying cause. For example, the respondents referred to the need to improve food and nutrition security mostly as a development challenge rather than an immediate cause and even less so as an underlying cause. It is considered to be affected by the challenges related to enhancing access and quality of healthcare and education, reducing poverty and unemployment as well as by governance.

As presented in the graph #4 below, the perception of the partners and public at large on top four factors coincide with the overall trend of the survey.

Graph 4. Top four major storylines (partners and public at large category, excluding UN staff)

Meanwhile, the storylines of causality show a notable correlation and effects of these factors. For example, the respondents of this category believe that increasing political competition will result in women empowerment and enhanced gender equality, while improved family planning will help address the issue of maternal mortality rate. Another example is the impact of human resource capacity development on ensuring environmental sustainability.

Conclusion

The causality analysis through crowdsourcing allowed to get public perception of the current development challenges and their interlinkages, thus showcasing the multi-dimensional and cross-cutting nature of challenges that developing countries are facing nowadays.

As the next step, the current phase 1 of the survey will feed into the phase 2, which will focus on the most influential effects of the identified development issues.