

COUNTRY REPORT

Community Learning Centres in Lao PDR

I Background Information:

a) Overview:

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (LAO PDR) is centrally located in Southeast Asia. It is a landlocked country bordering China in the North, Viet Nam in the East, Thailand and Myanmar in the West and Cambodia in the South, Land area: 236,800 square kilometers. It consists of 1 municipality and 16 provinces, 145 districts and 10,552 villages, Population: 5,621,982: Female 2,821,731 (50.1%); Male 2,800,551 (49.9%), Population density: 24 pers/km². Population growth rate: 2.8%, Ethnically diverse country with 82 languages spoken and 49 ethnic groups, 34% of population <\$1.25 per day and Predominantly rural, 75 % subsistence agriculture, related to the education mater 22.1 % for ECCE of 3-5 y, Primary: NER **85.3%** for P.1 NER **90.1 %** for primary Completion Rate **94.1%** GER **95.2%** for lower-secondary GER 3, 6.8% for upper-secondary and the Literacy rate of 15 above: 73% (2005), Female 48%, Male 74%, 78% (2010), Female 65%, Male 87% 81.3% (2012), Female 87.5%, Male 75.3%

b) The legal foundations of NFE policies:

Major legal documents of the Lao PDR that serve as foundations for EFA policies in general and for NFE policies in particular include: National Education Strategic Vision up to 2020, The National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy (NGPES), The EFA National Action Plan 2003-2015, The National Education Sector Reform Strategy 2005-2015, The Revised Education Law 2008, The Education Sector Development Framework 2009-2015, The Seventh Five-Year Plan of National Socio-economic Development 2011-2015, The revised Non-Formal Education Policy 2011-2015. In order to fulfil the commitment concerning the goals set at the Education for All (EFA) International Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000, the Ministry of Education and Sport of Lao DR requested the government for the approval of the National Education for All Action Plan for Lao PDR 2003-2015). The plan succeeded in rallying the government, international organisations, bilateral donors, NGOs and civil society into the effort to accelerate and ensure the quality of EFA activities. As stated in the plan, Non-Formal Education (NFE) is identified as one among the priority components of the educational system .

c) To what extent is NFE formally supported and managed

NFE, within the EFA in Lao PDR, is under the unified management of the Lao Government. Particularly Ministry of Education and Sport will take concrete responsibilities and tasks in implementing NFE in particular and EFA in general. Specifically, Non formal Education Department will implement literacy, post-literacy and continuing education. It has been accepted that human development is lifelong process to ensure a satisfactory standard of living with a continuous process of improving quality of life. The main objective of implementation Non Formal Education (NFE) in Lao PDR is to provide an equal access to education for out of school learners through the lifelong learning process.

And several implementation strategies have been operated through literacy programs, basic education programs, post literacy programs, continuing education programs, and vocational and life skills training in order to promote the lifelong.

1. Community Learning Centre Programme in Lao PDR

1.1 Basic Information

CLCs have proved to be an efficient as well as effective non-formal education delivery mechanism to improve people's quality of life. Transparency, accountability and active community participation are keys to successful CLC operation.

A Community Learning Centre (CLC) is a local educational institution outside the formal education system, for villages or urban areas, usually set up and managed by local people to provide various learning opportunities for community development and improvement of people's quality of life. The ultimate goal of the CLC is empowerment of individuals and communities and improving people's quality of life through education and community development activities

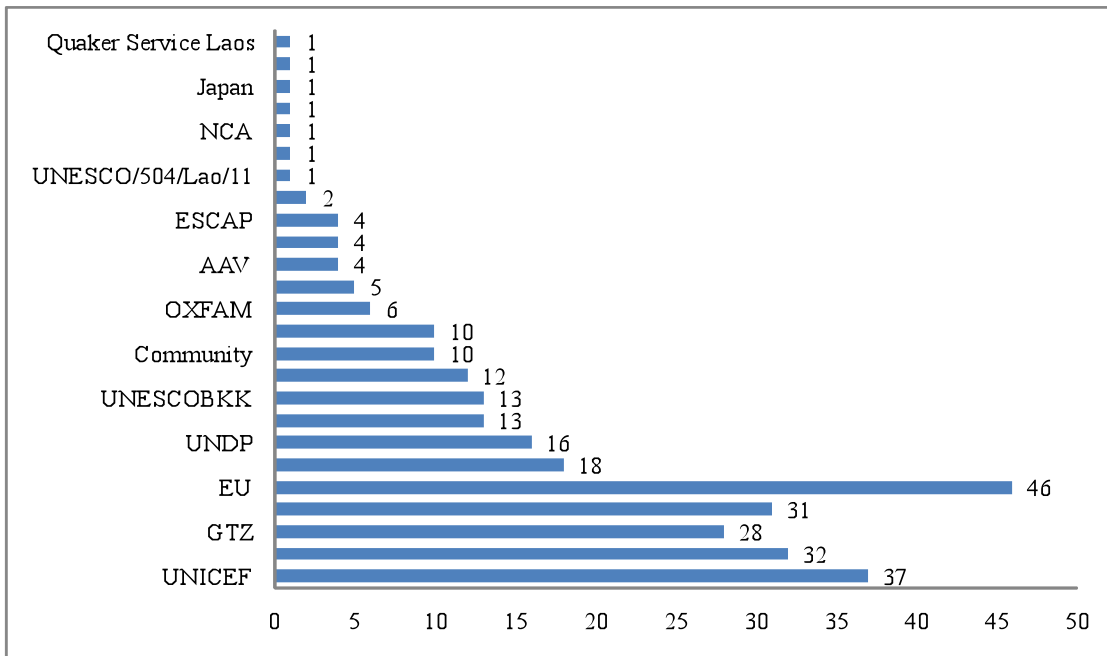
Within Lao PDR, the concept of CLCs:

CLC program was officially introduced to Lao PDR in 1993, which rooted from the pilot project that the Department of Non-Formal Education in cooperation with UNESCO Paris carried out a project called "Pilot Literacy and Basic Skill Training for Ethnic Minority Girls and Women" in Luangnamtha province during 1990 – 92 by setting up 3 centers which could be said as roots of subsequent Community Learning Center (CLC). Through the implementation till 1993, the concept of CLC has been promoted in Lao PDR by UNESCO APPEAL, and the first 2 CLCs in Lao PDR were officially launched in Vientiane province. Since then, CLC program has been supported by various organizations including non-government organizations (NGOs) and international development agencies. As a result, numbers of CLCs has been increasing throughout the countries. Currently, there are 298 CLCs scattered in the country. CLCs, as stated on the Education Law 2008, are educational institutes carry out non-formal education. The aim is to provide literacy programme, continuing education and basic vocational skills for the target groups. Literacy, increase in social and community awareness, active participation of women members in CLC committees, meetings have contributed to the enhancement of the status of women in their family and society. Women members feel their status in the family and society has been raised after their involvement in CLC. This CLC is generally recognized as a useful gathering place for community people where they can read newspapers, use library, discuss on social problems

As in other countries, nearly all CLCs in Lao PDR were established and are being managed by the local people. Similarly, the CLC programme in targets out-of-school children, youth and adults from marginalized rural and urban communities. The implementation of the CLC programme is guided by the basic principle that the main purpose of education is, not only to enable people to read and write, but also to provide them with knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable self-reliance and to improve their living standards. literacy (basic and functional literacy; continuing or lifelong education) as following the communication and social interaction skills training, livelihood skills training and support to establish income generation activities/projects for example, handicraft production, carpentry, poultry farming, horticulture and cash crop production, health (HIV/AIDS, family planning, personal hygiene, sanitation, reproductive health and family nutrition), Leadership training, human rights awareness, management and resolution, gender education, environmental management/conservation.

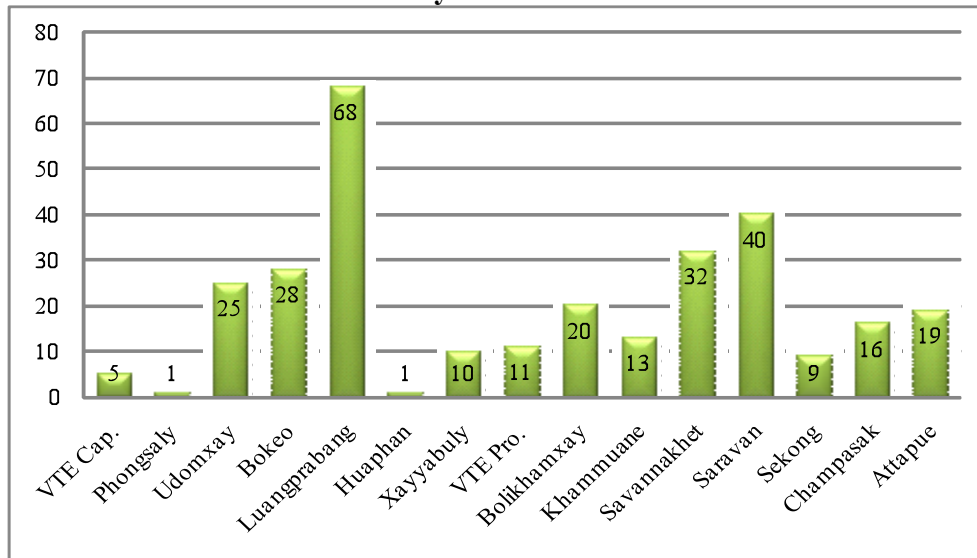
The Objective of CLC: to promote literacy development and lifelong learning in order to combat illiteracy in the country, empower communities to solve their local problems and promote gender

Chart 1: Number of CLCs supported by different donors/agencies



The NFE programmes run through CLCs are literacy, post-literacy, basic vocational training, and for other development purposes as multi-functional centers for community used by different agencies, both governmental and non-governmental organizations, for learning resource center, meeting venue, and so on.

Chart 2: Numbers of CLCs distributed by Province



1.2 Activities Run Through CLCs

Various activities are carry out in central, district and community levels such as technical resources development, trainings and advocacy campaigns to popularize the concept of CLC, literacy classes, income-generating activities, skill and vocational trainings, and various other programs for culture preservation and the environment

CLC programme is recognized as multi-purpose centres. There are many activities of non-formal education – literacy programme, post literacy programme and equivalent education programme – as well as community activities including information dissemination of different organizations. The following table shows main activities run through CLCs.

Table 1: Type of main activities taking places at CLC.

Item	Lesson, training, activities at CLC
1	Literacy programme
2	Post literacy programme (Non-Formal Primary Education)
3	Livelihood Skill Training (both by NFE, NGOs and other sectors)
4	Early childhood care and education
5	Equivalency Programme (NFE Lower Secondary)
6	Community dialogue and meetings
7	Others (information dissemination of different organizations)

To promote Education for All and lifelong learning for improving the quality of Lao people lives and by our responsibility, the Non-Formal Education department has promoted CLC by offering a program of activities appropriate to the needs of the community and resources available in the community. These activities include education and skills training, library service and information, which respond to the needs of the people in each community

1.2 Challenges and Lessons Learnt

The main challenge of the CLC program in Lao PDR, which has been facing till now, is not sustainable. There are many CLCs have not been functioning and even disappeared particularly when there is no external donors support. There are different viewpoints between sponsors and communities. Donors often claim that community people neither have ownership nor interest in the project, while community people complain that funding is the most important key to keep CLCs functioning. Dealing to the issue, the Ministry of Education and Sports, particularly Department of Non-Formal Education as the responsible organization for the CLC program has put great efforts in facilitating support from different resources (both external and internal) in order to improve human resources for the CLC at provincial, district and community level through short-training courses whilst developing guidelines on CLC management. However, CLC facilitators are often changed after training due to various reasons while funding for training new CLC facilitators are lacking. Similarly, resource books and CLC management handbooks for CLC facilitators are not adequate in terms of quantity and not updated in terms of relevance to the situation/needs. Thus, the way forward to improve the CLC programme will be focusing on the following aspects:

- In general, people have little perspective and understanding toward CLCs that they are learning sources/centres for community people. Apparently, they understand that a CLC is a primary school for adult and once all adult in the community complete primary education, there is no need a CLC and they even change the name CLC into village meeting hall. Thus, it is needed to publicize the roles and mandates of CLCs to all development sectors and to the People's.

- Although on official document, CLCs are considered as grassroots unit to undertake NFE studies, there is no recruiting NFE staff at this level. Thus, most CLCs depend on community people whom do not understand well about function of CLC. As a result, CLCs leave unused and unmaintained. Thus, there is needed to recruit full-time CLC facilitators (Government officials) for CLCs particularly the CLC in the most needed-areas and seeking for budget support from the Government and other sources to support the CLC programme.
- As advisors/supervisors/leaders, district officers' capacity about CLC is not sufficient. Many of them never receive training on NFE and CLC. Thus, it is needed to seek funding support for such training (for short term solution), and to consider the NFE and CLC in the higher education curriculum (for long-term solution).

In addition, there should be different type of CLCs – ideally subsidized, autonomous, NGO/NPO, and private CLC as to promote all sectors involve in providing basic non-formal education and basic livelihood skill development. The most important is subsidized CLCs which the Government should provide regular budget to these CLCs and these CLCs should be established in the areas where necessary such as rural and remote areas. These centres should be recruited at one permanent staff working full time (24/7).

2. Trends and Innovations to Reduce Poverty

In developing the learning types of skill training for income generating programme for the community learners , the Department of Non formal Education with cooperation with stakeholder concerned determined the suitable frame work for undertaking the programme by mobilizing the related personnel from the policy level to practitioners as well as people in the community for programme participation. The community data are used to analyze the conditions of the community and learning needs of learners in order to set up learning groups for learners, career development so facilitators of the programme could conduct the training courses or learning activities. The provincial non-formal education centers provided learning materials, resource persons, designed the vocational education curriculum, and helped learners organize income-generating groups

There are complex relationships between CLC programme and poverty reduction at community level. Most CLC programme is to improve people's quality of life. For example, livestock farming for villagers aims to increase their household comes; the health care aims to make people consensus to protect them from illness which cost money and waste their time for earning living. Social civic aim to encourage people to improve their living conditions as to contribute to social-economy development. In short, CLC programme aim to change people's attitudes and behavior for better life aiming to contribute to poverty reduction. By consideration of these relationships, the Department of Non-Formal Education will improve contents of CLC programme and cooperate with different sectors to provide different skills to people by using holistic approach, particularly at the practitioner level (cluster and district level).

3. Contents of Life Skills Development:

As the objective of EFA goal 3 is to ensure “ that the learning needs of all young people and adult are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skill program

Helping people and giving them opportunities to learn and practice the skills they need to improve their living condition. However Basic skills that are not transmitted through formal school. Life skills include Technical manual skills that are required to secure gainful employment, skills of the kind that enable people to look after family to keep them healthy and to protect them from illness. For example: in rural areas farmers needs to learn how to profitably market the fruit of their labour, people must learn to earn a living as self-employment. They also need acquire practice in protect interest

As well as to learn how to find common solution and to implement decision reached by consensus.

An appropriate adequate life skills contents as to reflecting the above mentioned value add, need to link general education with vocational and employment oriented education so that a wide range of knowledge skills and competencies must be acquired not in isolation but rather in a holistic approach in the same way that all facets of life skills.

To improve the employment potential of young people and adult and help them to learn the skills they need to sustain a meaningful accupation and earn their livelihood. The strategic importance of literacy and lifelong learning in reaching national and global EFA target. Non formal education has been identified as a core component of Non formal education policy and strategic will contribute significantly to achieving as following:

- Provide illiterate youth and adult across the country with access to basic literacy and lifelong learning
- Provide opportunities for comprehensive literacy education integrating vocational skills, skills to develop own economic initiatives, agriculture and health component.
- Provision of vocational and productive skills training at 30% of NFE programme
- The revision process of the present National Literacy, EP primary and upgrading course curriculum should include new definitional of skills and competences at difference levels and should come up with new system for assissing the levels of literacy and NFE learning achievement.

It will increase the value and the importance of literacy skill in combination with Non formal education skill training. Literacy skills training programmes that we provide incorporate additional components like health, awareness and prevention, child care, care for the sick, nutrition and sanitation, gender, development of own economic initiative productive skills to properly to properly address the learners needs and to improve the relevance and values as well as the motivation of the learner to continue participating in programme.

Although there are various life skills needed for the target groups, the basic skills including health care/sanitation, agriculture (growing crops and raising animal), and saving skills are important for the people living in rural areas. This is due to most people relay on natural agriculture. These skills are necessary to make for their daily consumption and increase products for their household incomes and saving. In the urban areas, such life skills are also important. However, other life skills may be needed including using Information Technology devices and trading skills. Therefore, Department of Non-Formal Education will identify and consider these different skills for CLC development in coming years.