

# Lao People's Democratic Republic

# **Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity**



# **Ministry of Education and Sports**

# Partnership Compact

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As we transition into the implementation phase, the Ministry would like to emphasize how much we will continue to rely on the active cooperation and partnership of the DPs. Thanks to your efforts, our compact is now in an excellent position to bring about a meaningful and positive difference in addressing barriers through leveraging resources and expertise for an inclusive and high-quality education system that empowers every child in Lao PDR.

The Ministry would also like to express gratitude to the Australian Embassy, the European Union, JICA, Save the Children International, UNICEF and World Bank for their exceptional dedication and hard work. Your commitment to the advancement of education is truly commendable, and we are confident that together we can achieve remarkable outcomes.

Ministry of Education and Sports

# **Acronyms and abbreviations**

AOP Annual Operational Plan

ASLO Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

CBSR Community Based School Readiness
CCDG Community Child Development Group
CPD Continuing professional development

DOP Department of Planning
DPs Development Partners
ECE Early Childhood Education

ESSDP Education and Sports Sector Development Plan ESSWG Education and Sports Sector Working Group

FQS Fundamental Quality Standards
GPE Global Partnership for Education
IPS Internal Pedagogical Support
JSRM Joint Sector Review Mission

LESMIS Lao Education and Sports Management Information System

LSIS Lao Social Indicator Survey
MHM Menstrual Hygiene management
MoES Ministry of Education and Sports

MoF Ministry of Finance MTR Mid-term Review

NSEDP National Socio-Economic Development Plan
PEIR Public Expenditure & Institutional Review
PTDC Provincial Teacher Development Center

RRP Reading Readiness Program

SBG School Block Grant SCG System Capacity Grant

SDG Sustainable Development Goal

SEA-PLM Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics

STG System Transformation Grant
TLM Teaching and Learning materials

TTC Teacher Training College

#### **Preamble**

The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) is pleased to present the Partnership Compact, which outlines the collaborative efforts with our valued Development Partners (DPs). The Compact aims to strategically focus and align our collective endeavors towards achieving foundational learning outcomes for all children, including the most disadvantaged children and students in lower secondary in Lao PDR. It provides a comprehensive framework, describing the desired outcomes, key actions, and coordination mechanisms required to overcome persistent bottlenecks hindering the achievement of this transformative goal.

The priority reforms and actions outlined in the Partnership Compact are fully aligned with the findings of Education and Sports Sector Development Plan (ESSDP) 2021-2025 Midterm Review (MTR) and the findings of the 2023 Joint Sector Review Mission (JSRM) as well as the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) 2021-2025 Midterm Review. The primary objective of the Partnership Compact is the improvement of foundational learning outcomes for all children, including the most disadvantaged children, while specifically addressing the needs of female students in lower secondary education.

This objective aligns with the priority that the MoES submitted to Lao PDR's First Human Capital Summit which was endorsed by the Prime Minister in May 2023. To this end, we have defined a set of long-term outcomes that aim to improve access to quality Early Childhood Education (ECE), improve primary foundational learning outcomes and improve transition to, and retention in, lower secondary by addressing gender and learning barriers to education. We will also tackle systemic enabling factors such as teacher management and domestic financing.

To effectively address the key issues and challenges identified through the ESSDP MTR, JSRM and diagnostics, we have recognized persistent barriers to improving literacy and numeracy learning outcomes in Lao PDR. These barriers include limited access to quality ECE, language barriers, inadequate investment in teacher education, lack of teaching materials, historical disparities in access and learning outcomes between provinces, high levels of absenteeism, elevated dropout rates due to poverty, suboptimal learning outcomes, and the absence of inclusive education approach. By acknowledging these challenges, we are committed to implementing targeted strategies and interventions to overcome them. By leveraging our collective expertise, resources, and partnerships, we aim to bring about positive and sustainable change to the education system.

We eagerly anticipate collaborating with all stakeholders to create an inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education system in Lao PDR. This document will guide government agencies and DPs towards achieving the National Development Goals by implementing education programs that enhance quality and align with respective mandates and responsibilities. The Compact will act as a unifying force for encouraging the Government of Lao PDR and DPs to explicitly commit to aligning their programs and resources in support of priority reforms in the education sector. The Partnership Compact is for all partners, incorporating the resources from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

We look forward to working closely with all stakeholders involved in this crucial endeavor. Together, we can create an inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education system that empowers every child in the Lao PDR to accomplish their full potential.

Vientiane Capital
Minister of Ministry of Education and Sports

#### 1. Introduction

The Partnership Compact articulates how the Ministry of Education and Sports, and all Development Partners will focus and align efforts to improve quality and equitable learning outcomes in Lao PDR. It aims to strategically focus and align our collective endeavors towards improving foundational learning outcomes for all children, especially the most disadvantaged children, and supporting female students in lower secondary. The document describes the outcomes, actions, and coordination mechanisms needed to overcome persistent bottlenecks to achieving this transformational goal. Grants from the GPE will support the implementation of some of the Compact's interventions based on the prioritization and mapping of other DP resources.

#### 1.1 Policy framework

The priority reform and actions are aligned with the Education and Sports Sector Development Plan 2021-2025, current Annual Costed Sector Plans and the national outcomes in the 9<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2021-2025 with a focus on ECE, primary and lower secondary levels since these are consistent with GPE priorities Achievement of the outcomes will contribute to the country's commitments to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets, including:

- 4.1.1 Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics.
- 4.2.2 Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex.
- 4.5.1 Eliminate disparities.
- 4.c.1 Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications.

#### 1.2 Data sources

The Partnership Compact draws on the latest data and evidence on enrolment, equity, efficiency, and learning outcomes, including:

- MoES Annual Reports;
- Mid-Term Review of the ESSDP Report (2023);
- Lao Education and Sports Management Information System (LESMIS);
- Education Joint Sector Review Mission Report (2023);
- Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (ASLO) (2023);
- Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) (2019);
- Education Sector Public Expenditure & Institutional Review (PEIR) and FinEducation Analysis (2023).
- Recent studies including the positive deviance research on school management <sup>1</sup> and a longitudinal study on primary learning outcomes.<sup>2</sup>
- National Teacher Policy supported by UNESCO.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF. 2023. School principals in highly effective schools – who are they and which good practices to they adopt? Data must speak: positive deviance research in Lao PDR. Policy brief 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Wong, D., Hollingsworth, H., Anderson, P., Goundar, P., & Mercer. A. 2023. Teacher development multi-year study series. Evaluation of Australia's investment in teacher development in Lao PDR: Final report. Australian Council for Educational Research.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> UNESCO. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/laws-decrees-and-strategies-teachers-lao-pdr-situation-analysis

- Lao Social Indicators Survey (LSIS) III.<sup>4</sup>
- The 5th Population and Housing Census 2025 of Lao PDR (UNFPA).<sup>5</sup>
- USAID Laos Country-Level Gender Analysis (2022).

#### 1.3 Dialogue and consultation

The development of the Partnership Compact was led by the Department of Planning (DoP) with the support of an expert Task Force that included education specialists from major DPs (Annex 1). The process involved consultations with MoES departments and the review and endorsement of key deliverables by the Education and Sports Sector Working Group (ESSWG) Technical Level and Executive Level meetings.<sup>61</sup>

### 2. Priority reform

#### 2.1 Description

#### **Priority reform objective**

#### Improving foundational learning outcomes for all and supporting students in lower secondary.

Improving foundational learning outcomes for all children in Lao PDR will require a holistic focus on equitable access to quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) to improve school readiness, improving foundational learning results in primary education, and ensuring transition to – and support in - lower secondary school to ensure students have foundational learning skills. The reform objective addresses current bottlenecks, including students who are entering both primary and secondary schools unprepared and dropping out early – particularly those from non-Lao-Tai language groups. It also seeks to address persistent issues related to poor foundational learning competencies and girls' education found in lower secondary school. The priority reform includes transformative actions to tackle priority enabling factor barriers to improving learning, equity, and efficiency.

Major policy reforms by MoES to achieve transformational change include:

- Prioritize five-year-old children, one year before-primary, and non-Lao-Tai children.
- Centralization of the allocation of new and vacant teaching positions to better serve undersupplied areas.
- Establish a specific budget line for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers.
- Strengthen School Block Grants (SBG) to make them more effective in improving learning.
- Review the lower secondary curriculum to allow remedial classes in literacy and numeracy to take place during school hours rather than after hours.
- Prepare joint briefing documents for Lao PDR Government, Ministry of Finance (MoF) and National Assembly on the need for additional domestic financing for education.

The Partnership Compact acknowledges the scope of the challenge. The MoES and DPs will concentrate scarce resources on the most disadvantaged children and districts to achieve transformational impact.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> UNICEF. https://www.unicef.org/laos/reports/lao-social-indicator-survey-iii-lsis-iii-2023-key-indicators-report

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> UNFPA. https://lao.unfpa.org/en/publications/4th-brief-5th-population-and-housing-census-2025-lao-pdr

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> ESSWG members consist of MoES line departments, other line ministries (including Ministry of Planning and Investment, Ministry of Finance and National Assembly), and DPs including donors, NGOs, INGOs, CSOs, etc.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Foundational learning refers to literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional learning skills. Assessments show that significant number of lower secondary students also have inadequate foundational learning skills

#### **Long-term outcomes**

- 1. Increased equitable access to quality ECE to improve school readiness.
- 2. Improved foundational learning outcomes for all students at the primary level, including a focus on the most disadvantaged children.
- 3. Improved transition to, and retention in, lower secondary by addressing gender and learning barriers to education.
- 4. Strengthened teacher proficiency and workforce management, including effective planning, budgetary allocation, and efficient use of domestic financing for improving learning outcomes.

#### **Intermediate outcomes**

- 1. Increased equitable access to quality ECE to improve school readiness.
  - 1.1 Increased proportion of students from non-Lao-Tai speaking, poor and/or disadvantaged households, including those with disabilities, who are enrolled in ECE one year before primary school.
  - 1.2 ECE centers have increased equitable access to inclusive quality play-based curriculum and foundational literacy and numeracy materials.
  - 1.3 ECE teachers and principals have improved skills and knowledge for inclusion and school readiness.
- 2. Improved foundational learning outcomes at the primary level for all children, including the most disadvantaged children.
  - 2.1 More primary teachers and principals have improved skills and knowledge in the new curriculum and multi-grade teaching, assessment, and inclusive education.
  - 2.2 Primary schools have equitable access to quality and inclusive materials.
  - 2.3 Non-Lao-Tai language group children are increasingly supported to learn Lao language.
- 3. Improved transition to, and retention in, lower secondary by addressing gender and learning barriers to education.
  - 3.1 Schools have strategies and resources to support girls' education.
  - 3.2 Strengthened system for supporting disadvantaged girls to enroll in lower secondary.
  - 3.3 Improved access to remedial education in targeted lower secondary schools.
- 4. Strengthened teacher proficiency and workforce management, including effective planning, budgetary allocation, and efficient use of domestic financing for improving learning outcomes.
  - 4.1 Strengthened teacher management system.
  - 4.2 Strengthened Continuous Professional Development (CPD) system.
  - 4.3 More effective planning and efficient use of domestic financing.

#### 2.2 Rationale

The ESSDP, JSRM, MTR, and recent diagnostics have identified persistent barriers to improving literacy and numeracy learning outcomes, including:

- Limited access to quality ECE for poor or rural families due to fees and a lack of places, resources, and qualified ECE teachers.
- Language barriers for students who do not speak Lao-Tai as a mother tongue language.
- Underinvestment in pre-service and in-service teacher education, leaving teachers with insufficient content knowledge and pedagogical skills to teach and assess inclusive, effective foundational literacy and numeracy lessons. No national-scale teacher training programs, with donor-supported programs fragmented across districts., although national orientation to the new primary curriculum has been implemented.
- Lack of teaching and learning materials (including structured lesson plans, reading books, textbooks, and accelerated/recovery or remedial programs), except at primary level where a project has recently supplied materials, although these will need replenishment in the future,
- Persistent historical disparities in access and learning between provinces and particularly across districts, with large numbers of students out-of-school or vulnerable to dropping out after the economic crisis and COVID-19 pandemic.
- Although gender differences are not obvious in national data across ECE and primary levels, the 2023 LSIS-III reported differences and inequity among ethnolinguistic groups. Participation at secondary level is lower for non-Lao-Tai speaking girls compared to boys, although overall rates show attendance is higher for girls across primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary.
- Reduced time for learning due to high levels of student and teacher absenteeism, and low timeon-task among teachers.8
- High drop out rates leading to low completion rates due to poverty, poor learning outcomes, a lack of accelerated/recovery/inclusive education programs, and – in later grades – early marriage and pregnancy.
- Inadequate government funding that has led to an inequitable shortage of teachers and limited fiscal space for MoES quality improvement projects to be implemented.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> MTR summary, Pg. 7: Recommendation 3.9 Strengthen the monitoring of teacher attendance and time on task. JSRM, pg. 10: 3.3 Themes for immediate action, Strengthened enforcement of 45-minute lesson timing.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> About five percent of primary and ten percent of secondary students in 2021-22. Source: PEIR, 2023.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Primary completion rate was lower than comparator countries at Lao PDR' income level.

#### 2.2.1 Increased equitable access to quality ECE to improve school readiness.

Global and regional evidence on the impact ECE has on future learning outcomes is also consistent with findings in Lao PDR, where data shows that participation in pre-primary education translates into higher student assessment scores in later years. The latest 2023 ASLO Grade 5 data reinforces this association, citing evidence that pre-primary attendance and support from parents improve test scores. Regarding gender equity, the 2017 LSIS found that more girls than boys attended ECE, urban students participated more than rural, more Lao-Tai students than other ethnicities, and more students from wealthier families. Thus, significant disparities exist.

While the government has offered ECE services to children aged 3-5 (not universal), a policy priority will be to focus on expanding access and participation to children from age 5 to 6 years old for a full year before entering Grade 1 to improve school readiness. According to a recent study, dropout rates are high in Grade 1 at 5.4 percent for the 2020-2021 school year demonstrating readiness and early learning issues. <sup>12</sup> Another key element for school readiness will be attention to equity, acknowledging that children from non-Lao-Tai speaking families face challenges in the early years of primary school and will require additional support to learn Lao language. <sup>13</sup> A recent (2023) longitudinal learning study suggests that students require intensive ECE stimulation and oral Lao language instruction for at least 6-9 months before they are prepared to learn the curriculum for Grade 1. The role of home learning and community engagement will also be critical. <sup>14</sup> Additionally, those from poor or otherwise disadvantaged households and children with disability will need to receive additional support to ensure that they enter school prepared to learn.

# 2.2.2 Improved foundational learning outcomes at the primary level for all children, including the most disadvantaged children.

Multiple assessments show that learning outcomes are very low and well below other countries in the region. The 2017 ASLO for Grade-3 and the 2019 SEA-PLM for Grade-5 found that the vast majority of children are not achieving foundational learning outcomes in primary school. For reading, only 2.5 percent demonstrated the highest proficiency and expected reading skills in the language of instruction by Grade 5, while for writing 63 percent could produce only "very limited writing with fragmented and inadequate vocabulary". The 2017 Grade 3 ASLO shows significant disparities across provinces with some provinces more disadvantaged than others, although girls performed better in literacy than boys in all but one province. The ASLO report concludes that there is a significant need for identifying students who are falling behind early and provide them with remedial learning support, recommending a "strong focus on formative assessment". Preliminary analysis from the 2023 ASLO for Grade-5 conclude that across subjects those meeting the criteria for proficiency and promotion to lower secondary remain very low. Only 23 percent of students are proficient in reading, 16 percent in writing, and a worrying 1 percent in mathematics. The proficiency are proficient in reading, 16 percent in writing, and a worrying 1 percent in mathematics.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> SEA-PLM, Pg. 11: "Students whose parents reported they had two or more years of pre-primary scored about one half standard deviation higher than students who did not attend any pre-primary."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Primary and Secondary Dropout Study: Findings from Six Districts in Lao PDR.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Approximately 36.6 percent of the population are from different ethno-linguistic groups.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> eas-laos-final-report-highlights.pdf (dfat.gov.au) Pg. 6

<sup>15</sup> https://www.unicef.org/laos/media/7516/file/SEA-PLM%20Lao%20PDR%20National%20Report%20.pdf Pgs. 8-10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Ibid Pg. 16

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> RIES. 2023 ASLO Grade-5.

Both the ASLO and the SEA-PLM reinforce the issues around equity, providing evidence that children from non-Lao-Tai speaking families, in rural areas, and from poorer socio-economic status far worse than their peers. Furthermore, evidence is provided on proficiency levels across provinces, demonstrating some stark disparities in learning outcomes across the country.

# 2.2.3 Improved transition to, and retention in, lower secondary by addressing gender and learning barriers to education.

The 2015 Education Law stipulates both primary and lower secondary levels are to constitute compulsory education. Thus, the transition to, and completion of lower secondary education, are legally required. However, according to LESMIS, only 80 percent of students who enrol in Grade 1 complete Grade 5, which means an average drop out rate of about 4 percent per year, and only 84 percent of those who complete Grade 5 transition to lower secondary Grade 6 with little difference between boys and girls. This data demonstrates that many students do not make it to lower secondary school, with enrolment rates dropping to 67.3 percent (and a further drop to 36.2 percent for upper secondary) according to 2023 LESMIS data.<sup>18</sup>

The 2019 ASLO for Grade-9 provides useful evidence for understanding foundational learning achievements in lower secondary. The overall results are consistent with assessments completed at Grade levels 3 and 5, with almost all learner proficiency classified as 'basic' or 'below basic' for all subjects. Results for math and science were "extremely low" and there are "significant gaps between socioeconomic status, ethnic, and other groups" pointing to persistent equity issues. <sup>19</sup> These findings reinforce the policy priority actions to focus on school readiness and achieving foundational learning in primary school, but also reinforce that more is needed to prevent dropouts and improve remedial learning support in lower secondary schools. Lower secondary dropout rates are high throughout Grades 6,7, and 8 at 11 percent with a slight improvement in Grade 9 at 9.1 percent. <sup>20</sup> This data demonstrates that more is needed to ensure lower secondary students have achieved foundational learning.

Dropout rates are increasing as an impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and wider socio-economic crisis in the country, as well as due to early marriage and adolescent pregnancy. According to a recent study, girls are slightly more likely to drop out due to financial pressures (32 percent of girls vs. 28 percent of boys) and to get married (26 percent of girls vs. 20 percent of boys). Other reasons that lead girls to drop out are teenage pregnancy, helping with household chores, long distances to secondary school, including hazardous travel, and the lack of safe and affordable boarding facilities. Despite efforts to achieve gender equality – including achievement of gender parity in primary and lower secondary – there are still specific gender barriers facing girls and boys, especially adolescents, that will require attention to achieve the priority reform. Although national drop-out rates are similar for boys and girls, there are significant disparities in some districts.

<sup>18</sup> https://lesmis.edu.la/en/LA/dashboard?subDashboard=Student+Enrolment&year=2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> 2019 ASLO Grade-9. Pgs. 7-8

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> European Union, REIS, and UNICEF. 2022. Primary and Secondary Dropout Study: Findings from Six Districts in Lao PDR.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> NCAWMC and Plan International. 2023. Child marriage, early union and adolescent pregnancy in Lao People's Democratic Republic: Investigating drivers and recommendations for action.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> UNICEF and UNFPA. 2023. Understanding pathways to adolescent pregnancy in Southeast Asia: Findings from Lao PDR.

# 2.2.4 Strengthened teacher proficiency and workforce management, including effective planning, budgetary allocation, and efficient use of domestic financing for improving learning outcomes.

Teacher proficiency, both content knowledge and pedagogical skills as well as equitable and efficient deployment of teaching staff, need to be considerably improved to enhance equitable learning outcomes. Teacher improvement is needed at all levels, including improved knowledge and skills to teach, assess, and support children for foundational learning and those at risk of dropping out or returning to school for remedial and accelerated learning, respectively. A recent survey by JICA<sup>23</sup> demonstrated that teacher knowledge of numeracy was inadequate to teach the primary curriculum which will need to be addressed through continuing professional development and stronger pre-service teacher training.

There are large differences across provinces in availability of teachers. The pupil teacher ratio for primary varies from 19-1 to 29-1; and for secondary, from 15-1 to 22-1.<sup>24</sup> In 2022/23, MoES was allocated 292 new teacher positions while the Department of Personnel estimated that annual attrition rate was over 2,000 positions, thus deepening the teacher shortage crisis across all education levels. Allocation of the few new teacher positions was uneven with 40 percent allocated to secondary, 25 percent to ECE and 23 percent to primary. Not surprisingly, the incidence of primary multigrade classes is increasing (37 percent of all primary classes in 2022/23). This policy reform focusses on strengthening teaching workforce systems, including the equitable and efficient distribution of existing teachers rather than expanding teacher numbers. The increased role of Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) in continuing professional development (CPD) will require increased capacity building of TTC staff, including the use of digital tools.

Since 2021, the primary share of the government budget to education has decreased from 14.8 percent to 9.1 percent in 2024, constituting just 1.4 percent of Gross Domestic Product (from 2.2 percent in 2021). The share on non-wage recurrent budget is 6 percent and is inadequate for quality improvement projects. The education sector has the largest number of civil servants in the country and is disproportionately impacted by the government's strategy to reduce the proportion of the wages in the overall recurrent budget, leading to an increasing shortage of teachers. The MoES has developed guidelines for reallocation of teachers from schools with an over-supply of teachers to those with an undersupply. These guidelines have been implemented by districts, but the reallocation of teachers seems possible only within districts and not across districts.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Reported at the Teacher Education Focal Group meeting 12 June 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> LESMIS.

# 2.3 Theory of change

Figure 1 Theory of change

Priority reform goal				Improvingfo	undational learnin	g outcomes for all	and supporting st	tudents in lower s	econdary.			
Long-term outcomes	Increased equitable access to quality ECE to improve school readiness		Improved foundational learning outcomes for all students at the primary level, including a focus on the most disadvantaged children.		Improved transition to, and retention in, lower secondary by addressing gender and learning barriers to education.					nning, budgetary stic financing for		
											Enabling factors	
Intermediate outcomes	1.1 Increased proportion of students from non-Lao-Tai speaking, poor and/or disadvantaged households, including those with disabilities, who are enrolled in ECE one year before primary school.	1.2 ECE centers have increasingly equitable access to inclusive quality play- based curriculum and foundational literacy and numeracy materials	1.3 ECE teachers and principals have improved skills and knowledge for inclusion and school readiness.	2.1 More primary teachers and principals have improved skills and knowledge in the new curriculum and multi-grade teaching, assessment, and inclusive education.	2.2 Primary schools have equitable access to quality and inclusive materials.	2.3 Non-Lao-Tal language group children are increasingly supported to learn Lao language.	3.1 Schools have strategies and resources to support girls' education.	3.2 Strengthened system for supporting disadvantaged girls to enrol in lower secondary.	3.3 Improved access to remedial education in targeted lower secondary schools.	4.1 Strengthened teacher management system.	4.2 Strengthened Continuous Professional Development (CPD) system.	4.3 More effective planning and efficient use of domestic financing
Actions	Parenting program Updated laws and policies Expand one-year pre-primary classes and programs	Revised TLMs and teaching guides New lesson plans RRP for non-Lao-Tai speakers Improved ECE environment including WASH	Develop ECE teacher competency framework Revised M&E tools Monitor FQS CPD for ECE teachers & principals	CPD for primary teachers and principals on foundational learning, inclusion & multigrade Manual and tools for formative assessment Inclusive education approaches in TCs and inservice	Supplemental TLMs Remedial classes More child- friendly environment Increased teaching hours for Lao and mathematics	Strengthened parent and community engagement Supplementary reading materials Programs for non-Lao-Tai speakers	CPD for teachers and principals on counselling and support Scale up scholarships and other supports Girls' Clubs & MHM programs	Strengthened gender- responsive school management and planning Early warning system TVET options Integrate gender, reproductive health and life skills into lessons Updated policy	Develop and distribute remedial TLMs, teacher guides and assessment tools CPD for teachers and principals on remedial programs Review curriculum to allow remedial classes during school time	Centralization of teacher allocation Strengthened principal selection Strengthen teacher assessment system	Specific recurrent budget line for CPD Teacher training needs analysis Teacher training monitoring system Strengthen gender- responsive school planning and cluster training	One-year of kindergarten Review lower secondary staffing approach Advocacy and briefing for government and National Assembly More effective use of SBG
Bottlenecks	Lack of school fees for poor families. Geographical and social disparities in ECE enrolment.	Lack of teaching resources for play-based learning. Language barriers for students.	Teachers with insufficient content knowledge and pedagogical skills.	Teachers and school heads with insufficient content knowledge and pedagogical skills.	Lack of remedial programs to help students catch up.	Reduced time for learning due to high levels of absenteeism	Adolescent girlsat risk of early marriage and dropping out of school. Lack of support at school.	Lack of resources to support girls' enrolment in secondary school.	Lack of remedial education and materials in secondary schools.	Inequitable and inefficient distribution of teachers. Weak management systems.	Domestic underinvestment in pre-service and in-service teacher education.	Difficulties implementing programs due to lack of budget.
Root causes	Poverty. Isolated rural communities.	Insufficient domestic investment in ECE materials. Multilingual population.	Lack of domestic investment in ECE teacher training.	Inadequate pre- service teacher education. Fragmented in- service programs. New curriculum.	Not enough time spent on foundational skills. Students falling behind curriculum.	Poor health, poverty, and work and family demands. Multilingual population.	Cultural and social barriers to girls' completion	Inadequate policy and system-level monitoring of secondary girls' education.	Poor foundational skills in primary school.	Capacity to manage workforce disparities due geography and socio-economics.	Debt crisis. Constrai Reliance on	ned national budget. external aid.

#### 2.4 Actions

The Partnership Compact selects policy reforms and interventions from the ESSDP and recent recommendations from the MTR and JSRM to address the persistent bottlenecks to achieving foundational learning outcomes and improved girls' education in lower secondary.

# Outcome 1 Increased equitable access to quality ECE to improve school readiness.

Barrier	Actions	Reference	Funding
1.1 Increased prop	ortion of students from non-Lao-Tai speaking, poor and/or disadvantaged households including	those with	
disabilities who are	enrolled in ECE one year before primary school.		
Lack of access to	1.1.1 Implement a parenting program to provide basic knowledge of foundational learning,	ECE 1.1.1.6	UNICEF
quality ECE for	promote holistic child development, and increase parental engagement.		
disadvantaged	1.1.2 Develop or update ECE policies, laws, and regulations to address equitable access gaps,	ECE 3.1.1	MoES
families.	quality issues, governance, and financing.		UNICEF
	1.1.3 Strengthen the establishment of one-year pre-primary education in disadvantaged districts	ECE 1.1.1.1	STG
	by expanding proven ECE models including the one-year pre-schools, Community Based School		UNICEF
	Readiness (CBSR) programme and 10-week pre-school courses for 5-year-olds.		
1.2 ECE schools ha	ave increased equitable access to inclusive quality play-based curriculum and foundational	literacy and	
numeracy materials	5.		
Non-Lao-Tai	1.2.1 Increase access to, and improve quality of, teaching and learning materials (TLMs) for ECE	ECE 1.1.1.3	STG
speaking children	with a focus on Lao-Tai language, gender equity, disability, and social inclusion.		UNICEF
lack school			GPE III
readiness for Lao	1.2.2 Expand the Reading Readiness Program (RRP).	ECE 1.1.2.2	STG
language.			GPE III
Lack of teaching	1.2.3 Improve Child Friendly School learning environments for the one-year programs including	ECE 1.1.4.5	MoES
resources for	safety provisions, playground facilities, toilets, hand washing stations, etc.		GPE III
inclusive play-			
based learning.			
1.3 ECE teachers an	d principals have improved skills and knowledge for inclusion and school readiness.		
Teachers with	1.3.1 Develop and implement the ECE teacher competency framework.	ECE 2.2.1	MoES
insufficient	1.3.2 Review the ECE monitoring and evaluation tools to improve the monitoring of ECE services	ECE 2.3.1	MoES
content	and implement the ECE Fundamental Quality Standards (FQS).	ECE 3.1.1	UNICEF

knowledge and	1.3.3 CPD for teachers and principals <sup>25</sup> on ECE standards and school readiness, including for TLMs,	ECE 2.1.1	STG
pedagogical skills,	RRP, FQS, assessment, inclusive learning approaches, and foundational skills for school readiness.	ECE 2.1.2	UNICEF
especially for			GPE III
teaching non-Lao-			
Tai speaking			
students.			

# Outcome 2 Improved foundational learning outcomes at the primary level for the most disadvantaged children.

Barrier	Actions	Reference	Funding	
2.1 More primary te	achers and principals have improved skills and knowledge in the new curriculum and multi-grade	de teaching,		
assessment, and inc	lusive education.			
Teachers with	2.1.1 Improve content knowledge, pedagogical and classroom management skills of Grades 1	PRI 2.1.2	DFAT	
insufficient	to5 teachers and principals on the use of primary school curriculum, with a focus on literacy,	PRI 2.2.2	GPE III	
content knowledge	numeracy, and multi-grade teaching.		USAID	
and pedagogical	2.1.2 Scale the roll out of tested manuals, tools, training, and mentorship (as part of the CPD)	PRI 1.2.3	UNICEF	
skills.	for utilizing formative assessments for teaching and learning.	PRI 1.3.4	WB (AF)	
	2.1.3 Strengthen pre-service and in-service training on inclusive education approaches for non-	PRI 2.1.2	STG	
	Lao Tai speaking children and children with disabilities.			
2.2 Primary schools	have equitable access to quality and inclusive materials.			
Limited access to	2.2.1 Strengthen and scaling-up nation-wide teacher training on remedial classes,	PRI 1.4.3	UNICEF	
remedial	supplementary TLM/programmes for the students with remedial learning needs and ensure		WB (AF)	
programs. Limited	sufficient TLM's are distributed to target schools. <sup>26</sup>			
access to TLMs.	2.2.2 Promote child-friendly environment to support students' learning on reading, writing,	PRI 1.3.3	MoES	
	mathematics, and social-emotional learning skills – including through an improved school	PRI 1.4.2	JICA	
	timetable that allocates sufficient teaching hours for Lao language and mathematics.		WG (AF)	
2.3 Non-Lao-Tai language group children are increasingly supported to learn Lao language.				
Language barriers	2.3.1 Strengthen non-Lao-Tai speaking parent's participation and wider community	-	UNICEF	
for students who	engagement in their children's learning.		USAID	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Including village facilitators and other ECE workers who support community-based ECE programs and services. <sup>26</sup> GED has published a decree on this transformational change with MOES teacher guide and the approach is currently being piloted.

do not have Lao-Tai	2.3.2 Scale up the pre-service and in-service teacher training on teaching methodologies for	PRI 2.1.2	DFAT
as a mother tongue	non-Lao-Tai speaking students (such as the Spoken Lao Program), informed by evidence and		STG
language.	evaluation on the most effective ways to teach non-Lao-Tai speaking students.		

# Outcome 3 Improved transition to, and retention in, lower secondary by addressing gender and learning barriers to education.

Barrier	Actions	Reference	Funding
3.1 Schools have stra	ategies and resources to support girls' education.		
Girls at higher risk	3.1.1 Train teachers and principals to provide counselling, Girls' Clubs <sup>27</sup> and support services to	-	-
of not completing	female students.		
lower secondary	3.1.2 Review and scale-up scholarships, stipends and other resources to adolescent girls who	MTR 2023	ADB
school (e.g. risk of	are at risk of dropping out.	LSEC 1.3.4	STG
early marriage).		LSEC 1.4.1	
3.2 Strengthened sy	stem for supporting disadvantaged girls to enroll in lower secondary.		
Girls at higher risk	3.2.1 Strengthen gender responsive policy, school-based management, infrastructure, and	LSEC 3.1.1	UNICEF
of not completing	school planning to meet national girls' education standards.	LSEC 3.1.3	
lower secondary	3.2.2 Improve early warning dropout risk assessment system and immediate response plans,		-
school (e.g. risk of	including engagement with Village Development Committees, PTA and parents.		
early marriage).	3.2.3 Pilot optional TVET curriculum for girls and disadvantaged groups. 28	LSEC 1.3.6	ADB
	3.2.4 Integrate gender, reproductive health, and life skills (including decision making,	LSEC	MoES
	negotiation and managing relationships) into national curriculum.	1.1.1.1	
3.3 Improved access	to remedial education in targeted lower secondary schools.		
Persistent	3.3.1 Develop, distribute, and train teachers and principals on remedial education support	LSEC	ADB
historical	programme; including teacher guides, TLMs, and classroom-based assessment tools.	1.3.5.6	
disparities in			
retention and	3.3.2 Review the lower secondary curriculum to ensure sufficient time for remedial classes in	-	MoES
learning between	literacy and numeracy.		
provinces.			

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Girls' Clubs provide safe spaces, peer support, menstrual hygiene management, socio-emotional life skills, and learning and career advice. <sup>28</sup> GED has published a decree on this transformational change and the approach is currently being piloted.

# Outcome 4 Strengthened teacher proficiency and workforce management, including effective planning, budgetary allocation, and efficient use of domestic financing for improving learning outcomes.

Barrier	Actions	Reference	Funding
4.1 Strengthened te	acher management system.		
Inequitable and	4.1.1 More centralization of the allocation of new and vacant teaching positions to improve	ECE 1.2.1	SCG
inefficient	allocation of teachers and newly qualified teachers to undersupplied areas.	PRI 3.3.1	
deployment of		LSEC 3.3.1	
teachers.	4.1.2 Strengthen systems for school principal selection and appointment, including increasing	-	SCG
Weaknesses in	female principal appointments.		
planning and			
monitoring	4.1.3 Strengthen annual teacher assessment system based on the national teacher competency	ECE 2.3.1	-
teaching	standards for all levels (ECE, primary and secondary), including use of a teacher attendance	PRI 2.3.2	
workforce.	system.	LSEC 2.3.3	
4.2 Strengthened Co	ontinuous Professional Development (CPD) system.		
Domestic	4.2.1 Establish a specific budget line for in-service training/CPD and set a percentage allocation	PRI 3.2.1	MoES
underinvestment	from the recurrent budget.	LSEC 3.2.1	EU BS
in pre-service and			SCG
in-service teacher			
education.			
	4.2.2 Develop teacher training needs assessment, including teacher competence in curricula	ECE 2.1.2	DFAT
	content and digital literacy, and monitoring system (pre-service and in-service).	PRI 1.2.3	JICA
		PRI 2.2.2	UNICEF
		LSEC 2.2.4	GPE III
	4.2.3 Strengthen gender-responsive School Development Plans and school-based management	ECE 3.1.1	DFAT
	using data from formative assessments and self-assessment against the FQS.	PRI 3.1.3	GPE III
		LSEC 3.1.3	
	4.2.4 Strengthen pedagogical support system through cluster-based approach and internal	PRI 1.4.1	DFAT
	supervision.	LSEC 2.1.1	UNICEF
			JICA
			GPE III

Barrier	Actions	Reference	Funding
4.3 More effective p	lanning and efficient use of domestic financing.		
Insufficient	4.3.1 Review the current balance between provision of 3-year kindergartens and 1-year pre-	-	SCG
domestic financing	primary classes to determine ways to expand access to ECE, within existing budget and staffing		
for three-year	constraints and modify staffing allocation procedure for ECE to prioritize one-year pre-primary		
kindergarten.	classes (see Action 1.1.3).		
Inefficient ECE			
models.			
Inefficient	4.3.2 Review the current staffing approach to lower secondary schools to identify ways to use	-	SCG
secondary staffing	teaching workforce, pre-service and CPD more efficiently.		
allocation with			
many small lower			
secondary schools.			
Domestic	4.3.3 Advocacy and joint briefing documents to influence Lao PDR Government, Ministry of	-	ESSWG
investment in the	Finance and National Assembly to increase domestic budget for teaching workforce and		MoES
education sector.	teacher training.		
	4.3.4 Strengthen the management, disbursement, and utilization of School Block Grants (SBG)	-	SCG
	to improve learning and standards. <sup>29</sup>		

<sup>.</sup> 

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 29}$  Based on the findings of the GPE III evaluation of the SBG.

#### 2.5 Evidence

#### 2.5.1 Pre-primary interventions

Lao PDR data shows that participation in pre-primary education translates into higher student assessment scores in later years.<sup>30</sup> An independent evaluation of the UNICEF-supported CBSR programme (2013-2018), found that access to CBSR increased the proficiency in Lao language and reduced repetition and drop out at primary level.<sup>31</sup>

#### 2.5.2 Continuing Professional Development

The Government of Australia has implemented an assessment of learning outcomes at Grade 1 level after the introduction of the new primary curriculum.<sup>32</sup> Overall, teacher development is making some positive contributions to improving teaching quality, but there is yet to be an impact on student learning outcomes. The new curriculum requires significant change, and more time and support are needed before teachers can comprehensively understand these new approaches and integrate them into their teaching practice. Thus, while Australia and GPE III are providing more training for principals and teachers in their target districts, more training is necessary at the national level.

The World Bank supported GPE III assessed Grade 1 teacher performance through classroom observation (using the TEACH tool), after introduction of the new curriculum.<sup>33</sup> It found that teachers were good at respecting students and setting expectations and lesson objectives, but that more training was needed to help teachers address gender bias, connecting classroom activities to other content knowledge or students' daily lives, and to enhance critical thinking questions.

A Room to Read report<sup>34</sup> found that following training in their pilot districts, the average understanding of teachers regarding the revised grade 1 and 2 Lao language textbooks is good. The report found that more training was needed on the new teaching techniques, use of rubric assessment tools and conducting supplementary reading activities.

#### 2.5.3 Supporting non-Lao-Tai speakers.

The Government of Australia is supporting MoES to implement a Spoken Lao Program<sup>35</sup> in primary Grade 1 in four provinces. A 2021 evaluation of the pilot found that more students in treatment schools improved their scores compared to students in control schools. Almost all teachers reported that students learned Lao language much better than before and that all teachers wanted to continue the program. Scaling up this programme is therefore seen as an effective intervention.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> SEA-PLM, "Students whose parents reported they had two or more years of pre-primary scored about one half standard deviation higher than students who did not attend any pre-primary".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Cambridge Education. 2019. Formative evaluation of UNICEF supported CBSR programme Lao PDR.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Hollingsworth, H., Wong, D., Cassity, E., Anderson, P., & Thompson, J. (2022). Teacher development multi-year study series. Evaluation of Australia's investment in teacher development in Lao PDR: Interim report 1. Australian Council for Educational Research. https://doi.org/10.37517/978-1-74286-674-1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> https://drive.google.com/file/d/1l7kklQJsADqkoyTmie0dAuX77sBnktap/view

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> https://drive.google.com/file/d/1I7kkIQJsADqkoyTmie0dAuX77sBnktap/view

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> SLP for non-Lao speaking Grade 1: https://www.bequal-laos.org/a-new-spoken-lao-program-for-non-lao-speaking-grade-1-students-being-piloted-in-4-provinces/

#### 2.5.4 School-based management actions

A recently conducted study on 'positive deviance' in school management in Lao PDR by UNICEF found that the use of various pedagogical approaches and the application of formative assessment, including checking classwork and providing remedial support to low performing students, results in higher learning outcomes.<sup>36</sup> Teacher capacity is also a critical factor, with the study noting that teacher content knowledge in mathematics and Lao language is low across all schools. In highly effective schools, principals promote a collaborative learning culture by engaging teachers in decision making processes and supporting outreach to parents to become more involved in student learning.<sup>37</sup>

#### 2.5.5 Supporting lower secondary girls' education.

The Asian Development Bank has supported MoES to improve enrolment of disadvantaged girls in lower secondary through the provision of stipends, remedial learning classes and secure dormitories which resulted in increased enrolment in poor target districts. <sup>38</sup> Improved quality was evidenced by improved learning outcomes measured in test scores. <sup>39</sup> It was found that weak learning outcomes contribute to student dropout, but remedial learning support can address low level achievement. The initial ESSDP midterm review also noted a link between learning outcomes and poor participation in lower secondary, for both boy and girls.

#### 2.5.6 Strengthening teacher education approaches.

The Government of Australia has supported MoES to replace the costly and inefficient District Education and Sports Bureau-based Pedagogical Adviser approach with a pilot of a continuing professional development system of 'internal pedagogical advisors. This includes 150 personnel from three TTCs who participated in training workshops in supporting Internal Pedagogical Support (IPS)<sup>40</sup> personnel. In total, 1,044 IPS staff have participated in three rounds of training to build confidence in their roles as internal pedagogical support personnel. Pre and post-test results show improvements in knowledge and confidence of IPS.

The evidence cited above show positive outcomes in learning outcomes from various pilot projects. However, for these to become transformative, the MoES requires a budget to scale up the more promising pilot approaches. In 2022 the MoES received only 6.5 percent of the national non-wage budget, and this has proven to be insufficient to fund quality improvement interventions.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> DMS Research, Lao PDR. What can we learn about the practices and behaviors of highly effective schools in the Lao PDR? Pg. 10

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Ibid. See also DMS Policy Brief on Principals Pg. 3

<sup>38</sup> https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-documents/40368/40368-022-pcr-en.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> 6 Independent Consultant Report. 2019. Lao PDR, Secondary Education Sector Development Program: Project Impact Evaluation. Vientiane

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Ministry of Education and Sports, with support from Australia, establishes teams of over 1,000 Internal Pedagogical Support providers across 30 target districts. | BEQUAL (bequal-laos.org)

# 3. Enabling factors

The MoES and DPs assessed which enabling factors were bottlenecks to achieving the priority reform:

Table 1 Enabling factor rating.

Enabling factor	Priority
Data and evidence	Medium
Gender-responsive sector planning, policy, and monitoring	High
Inclusive sector dialogue and coordinated action	Medium
Coordinated financing and funding	Low
Volume, equity and efficiency of domestic public expenditure on education	High

#### 3.1 Data and evidence

The situational analysis of data and evidence found this enabling factor benefited from substantial external support. The LESMIS was well-established and informed by annual data collection. Statistical bulletins have been regularly published for several decades. The MoES can also draw upon a rich body of evidence from projects and household surveys, including the recent Lao Social Indicator Survey,<sup>41</sup> teaching and learning studies, investigations of positive deviance, and public expenditure analysis.

The country currently conducts the ASLO for grades 3, 5 and 9 and takes part in the regional SEA-PLM. However, there is a lack of up-to-date and comparable data on learning assessments with long gaps between assessments and heavy reliance on external financing. Additional capacity is needed to interpret and make recommendations based on the findings to ensure the lessons learned and corrective measures are taken at the systems level and reach all teachers.

The analysis identified two gaps in support: i) utilizing the new population census projections to analyze enrolments; and ii) capacity support to convert the grade 5 examination into a low-stakes assessment, where the results have little or no effect on the final grades. There is also a lack of data about students with a disability. Overall, as there are already major commitments from DPs, including support for ASLO grade 3 and 9 in 2024, data and evidence was rated as a medium priority for the priority reform.

#### Policy actions to address gaps and bottlenecks.

- Strengthen MoES ability to sustainably conduct, analyse and disseminate the findings of largescale student assessments, including support to standardise and convert the Grade 5 examination into a low-stakes assessment that does not impact final student grades.
- Utilizing data on households living in poverty and in disadvantaged conditions to better plan the delivery of quality ECE.
- Update ESSDP simulation model with new population projections from the Lao Statistics Bureau to inform the new ESSDP.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> The survey has been conducted in 2011-12, 2017 and 2022 by the Lao Statistics Bureau with support from UNICEF and other DPs and combines the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey and Lao Reproductive Health Survey. Education findings from 2022 will be reported in a MICS-EAGLE report.

#### 3.2 Gender-responsive sector planning, policy, and monitoring

The analysis highlighted several major bottlenecks in planning, policy, and monitoring. Firstly, the ESSDP, although comprehensive, is a central document and not owned at the subnational level where priorities may be different. While central planning systems are well-established, subsector and subnational planning are not as developed as needed, and these plans need to be regularly updated. Although the ESSDP lists 40 priority districts, the equitable targeting of resources to where they are required is sometimes inadequate. Provincial resourcing by MoF is historically based leading to an inability to direct additional resourcing to districts where education performance is lowest. The very low share level of non-wage budget to the education sector also limits priority funding to low performing districts. As noted under data and evidence, further investment in the capacity to interpret and use data to implement policy recommendations, including a reassessment of the list of most disadvantaged districts using the latest data on students' low learning outcomes, high dropout, and low enrolment rates. Results of the 2017 LSIS show that access to educational services by non-Lao-Tai ethnolinguistic groups is significantly below that of Lao-Tai students, for both girls and boys. Development of the next education sector plan will place greater emphasis on gender planning and will involve consultations with the Division of the Advancement of Women. The structure of budget allocations at the sub-national level also needs to be reviewed.

Second, there is the need to strengthen the mechanism for monitoring the education sector. The last JSRM took two years to complete, a length of time which would pose a major barrier to "course correct" the Partnership Compact. There is a need for an annual joint review mechanism to provide accountability on progress towards the targets of the ESSDP.

The sector benefits from technical assistance from DPs to improve monitoring, evaluation, and planning but the domestic budget is highly constrained. Very little domestic funding is provided to subnational education administrations for tailoring their plans and support to schools. A gap will emerge when the Australian government-funded education support grants to the original Phase 1 19 districts are phased out in 202, although other grants will be provided to 30 Phase 2 target districts. 4. As these challenges combine to prevent responsive planning at the subnational level, this enabling factor was rated as a high priority.

Third, more attention is needed to addressing gender barriers and social norms at the outset of the education system and engagement of parents and communities from ECE through to secondary. Lao PDR has some of the highest rates of maternal mortality and adolescent fertility in the region and the highest rate of child marriage, which affects learning outcomes for child parents – particularly girls.<sup>42</sup> Women are under-represented in the political sphere and for decision making processes. At the national level only 22% of seats were held by women in 2021 and at the subnational level none of the provincial governors and under 3% of village chiefs are women.<sup>43</sup>

While gender equity has almost been achieved in terms of specific proxy education indicators, for example 58% of girls are enrolled in secondary and 58.1% of boys, this may mask inequities between gender and ethnicity.<sup>44</sup> In terms of performance, according to recent learning assessments boys perform slightly worse than girls in secondary schools, and non-Lao-tai speaking children perform worse than those who speak

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en/publications/understanding-pathways-adolescent-pregnancy-southeast-asia

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> United Nations Lao PDR (2021). *UN Common Country Analysis for the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022-2026 and the 2030 Agenda.* 

<sup>44</sup> https://liveprod.worldbank.org/en/economies/lao-pdr

Lao-tai. <sup>45</sup> GPE Compact activities will need to explicitly engage parents from non-Lao-Tai speaking communities and overall ensure parent and community engagement on addressing social norms and sexual and gender-based violence.

#### Policy actions to address gaps and bottlenecks.

- Technical assistance for national and subnational planning and coordination to improve learning and enrolment, including developing the next gender responsive ESSDP in 2025.
- Conducting and reporting on regular JSRMs.
- Reassess the list of most disadvantaged districts.
- Develop or update ECE policies, laws and regulations (Action 1.1.2).
- Review the ECE monitoring and evaluation tools (Action 1.3.2).
- Improve early warning drop out risk assessment system (Action 3.2.2).
- Update policy to prevent the drop-out of pregnant and married girls and adolescent mothers (Action 3.2.1).

#### 3.3 Inclusive sector dialogue and coordinated action.

Sector dialogue and coordination benefits from the well-established, government led ESSWG mechanism including the Executive, Technical and Working Group levels. Various Working Groups focusing on areas such as teacher education, ECE and general education are operational and well attended. There have been consistently high levels of engagement from DPs who co-chair the meetings, although there is still room for improvement in extending membership to the private sector and organizations who represent people living with disabilities. The analysis also noted that the approach of some of the meetings could be improved to increase the depth and robustness of policy dialogue, with more time spent discussing and contesting policy proposals. However, this change is within the scope of the current support to the MoES and does not pose a significant barrier to the priority reform.

Furthermore, the analysis highlighted the need to coordinate DP funded projects to ensure a wider coverage of districts, reduce duplication, and reduce the implementation constraints on departments of MoES. Due to the size of the country most projects have a limited targeted subset of districts. Promising pilots are rarely taken to scale due to the weaknesses in data utilization noted in the planning enabling factor analysis. The Partnership Compact itself is a major attempt to focus attention on a smaller number of priorities but more needs to be done to support the MoES to coordinate and direct external financing and scale up effective interventions.

Overall, inclusive sector dialogue and coordinated action was rated as a medium risk to the priority reform as support was available but improvements had to be made early in the lifespan of the Compact.

#### Policy actions to address gaps and bottlenecks.

Map and align donor-funded projects to the disadvantaged districts<sup>46</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> https://www.seaplm.org/images/DOWNLOADS/SEA-PLM 2019 National Report Lao PDR.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> The district with students' low learning outcomes, high dropout, low enrolment rates. This will be reassessed by MoES in 2024.

#### 3.4 Coordinated financing and funding.

The country benefits from substantial aid to the education sector and a diverse range of DPs and donors. Currently, there is no operational joint financing arrangement and most external aid is delivered through standalone projects, sometimes utilizing non-government financial management and procurement systems. The European Union utilizes budget support with conditionalities (an increase in domestic financing to education in the 2024/25 budget cycle) and the Learning and Equity Acceleration Project (funded by the World Bank and GPE) uses performance-based conditions and financing of project activities.

One issue that the MoES is currently addressing is improving the tracking and reporting of external aid for education. The current Official Development Assistance Management Information System is not yet linked with LESMIS. Overall, the rating for this enabling factor is low.

#### Policy actions to address gaps and bottlenecks.

Strengthen the aid management information system and tools.

#### 3.5 Volume, equity, and efficiency of domestic public expenditure on education

The volume, equity, and efficiency of domestic public expenditure is the highest priority enabling factor and is recognized as a significant bottleneck to achieving the priority reforms. Due to the constrained national budget, a low proportion of the government budget is spent on education, leaving the sector reliant on external aid for quality improvements. In 2024, just 9.1 percent of the national budget was allocated to education (excluding debt servicing) or 1.4percent of Gross Domestic Product. The recent public expenditure analysis stated that the government needed to undertake far-reaching reforms in economic management, prioritize human capital development, reduce inequities to better balance the education system, and reduce inefficiencies to improve learning outcomes.<sup>47</sup>

As noted in the rationale section above, teacher deployment is inefficient and inequitable, and coupled with the large number of small schools, has a serious impact on the quality of teaching. There is low funding for subnational education administrations, and a very limited budget for quality improvements such as continuing professional development for teachers or grant funding for school development plans. Domestic resourcing for non-wage items such as textbooks is very low. Recent reforms such as a revised SBG formula for smaller schools (which favors more disadvantaged schools), updated government financial management system, and the village consolidation scheme (which aimed to reduce the number of inefficient small schools) have been promising but significant barriers remain.

The government is supported by DPs with technical assistance on teacher allocation planning, financial management, grants, and planning. The European Union budget support incentivizes additional domestic resources for the education sector. There has been high-level dialogue and public commitments on increasing the country's funding for education (for example, at the recent Human Capital Summit). However, failing to unlock more efficient and equitable domestic financing will severely reduce the likelihood of achieving the priority reform so this enabling factor is rated as high.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> World Bank. 2023.

# 4. Delivering system transformation

# **4.1** Alignment of partner resources

Partners have completed the table below for their current and pipeline education sector projects (including budget support).

Table 2 Partner mapping

Donor	Implementing partner	Project	Start	End	Budget US\$m	Brief description of project	Provinces	Compact outcomes	Intermediate outcomes
ADB	MoES	Education for Employmen t Sector Developme nt Program	2020	2024	45	TVET education for employment.	8 provinces 12 districts	3	3.1, 3.2
Australia	TetraTech	BEQUAL Phase 2	2022	2026	22	Supporting the MoES to improve quality education, build a new system for teacher professional development and curriculum reform.	CPD in 7 provinces. Curriculum reform nationwide (18 provinces)	2 & 4	2.1, 2.2 & 2.3 4.1 & 4.2
Australia	To be determined	BEQUAL Phase 2.2	2026	2030	TBD	Builds on the success of BEQUAL Phases 1 and 2. At this stage, a possible continuation of the BEQUAL phase 2 to improve the acquisition of Lao language in primary school.	TBD	2 & 4	2.3 Others to be determined
European Union	MoES & MoF	EU Partnership in Education and Skills for Inclusive Green Growth Budget	2023	2025	33	Budget Support programme focusing on 3 components:  1. Equitable access and learning outcomes  2. Enhance effectiveness of TVET.	Nationwide	4	4.1 & 4.2

	nplementing artner	Project	Start	End	Budget US\$m	Brief description of project	Provinces	Compact outcomes	Intermediate outcomes
		Support Programme (EU PESIG				3. Improve education sector performance			
		BS				With a strong focus on			
		Programme				budget allocation to			
		)				support the MoES (SBG,			
						CPD, TVET teacher			
European Lu	uxDev	Skills for	2023	2025	7.7	trainings, TVET funds).  Vocational skills	Nationwide	_	_
Union	uxbev	tourism,	2023	2023	7.7	development for two key	Nationwide	-	-
Official		agriculture				areas of current and future			
		and forestry				economic growth: tourism			
		aa				and hospitality and			
						agriculture and forestry.			
European HI	I	Sowing the	2020	2024	1	Improving access to quality	Champassak	1 & 2	1.1, 1.2
Union		Seeds of				inclusive education for the	Houaphan		2.1
		Inclusive				most marginalized children			
		Education				in Lao PDR.			
		(SOS-IE) by				Reinforce the capacity of			
		building the				CSOs, educators and			
		capacity of				relevant Provincial			
		Civil Society				Education and Sports			
		Organizatio				Service to enable access to			
		ns' (CSOs)				quality inclusive primary education.			
European Ch	hildFund	Promoting	2020	2023	0.5	Strengthen the role and	Houaphanh	1 & 2	1.1
Union In	nternational	Accountabili				capacity of local village-			
		ty and				level civil society groups in			
		Education				promoting human rights in			
		Rights				Lao PDR.			
•	1oES, SCI	Quality	2025	2028	TBD	Enhancing access to quality	TBD	3	3.1 & 3.2
Union		Basic				basic education with			
		Education				special focus on girls'			
						education.			

Donor	Implementing partner	Project	Start	End	Budget US\$m	Brief description of project	Provinces	Compact outcomes	Intermediate outcomes
FCDO British Council	MoES, SCI	Strengtheni ng Girls' Education	2025	2027	1	Boosting education opportunities for girls, with special focus on out of schoolgirls and girls with disability across 3 countries within SE Asia	TBD	3	3.1 & 3.2
Green Leaves & Plan Internation al Switzerland	Plan International Lao PDR	Ready Set Go	2022	2025	0.3	Building sustainable school readiness for ethnic minority children through the Summer Pre-Primary course to improve primary student learning outcomes and on-time primary enrolment. Supporting the institutionalization of the program at the national and provincial level.	Bokeo	1	1.1, 1.2, 1.3
GPE Knowledge & Innovation Exchange	Plan International Canada & Lao PDR	Learn Plus	2021	2024	0.52	Adapting, testing and scaling the proven pre- primary model in Lao PDR, Cambodia and Tanzania, targeting vulnerable children in underserved communities.	Bokeo, Oudomxay, Saravan, Houaphanh, Khammouane, Champassak	1	1.1, 1.2, 1.3
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan	Plan International Lao PDR	Gender responsive hygiene improveme nt at primary and lower secondary schools	2023	2026	2	Improve female-friendly Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities and sanitary and hygiene practices. Create a comfortable and safe school sanitation environment for all children, including menstruating girls, through improved access to water	Oudomxay 2 districts	2 & 3	2.1, 2.2 3.1

Donor	Implementing partner	Project	Start	End	Budget US\$m	Brief description of project	Provinces	Compact outcomes	Intermediate outcomes
					·	and sanitation facilities including gender-segregated toilets for primary and lower secondary schools.			
JICA	PADECO	iTEAM Phase2	2023	2026	3	Promoting the classroom-level implementation of new math textbooks supported by the iTEAM project.	CPD for Math in 7 districts of 7 provinces.  Strengthening CPD for 3 TTC and 4 TTC demonstration schools.  Pilot ICT education in classroom for 4 TTC demonstration schools.	2 & 4	2.1 & 2.2 4.2
JICA	TBD	Project for Improving Provincial Teacher Developme nt Centers (PTDC)	TBD	+3 years	TBD	Support construction of PTDCs and provision of equipment.	9 provinces where TTC is not located according to DTE priorities and fund availability.	4	4.2
JICA	Asian Development with Disabled Persons (ADDP)	Inclusive Education and Teacher Training Programme for Children with Disabilities	2021	2025	0.5	Providing teachers qualified to teach children who are deaf of who have other disabilities through teacher training course on inclusive education.	Vientiane Capital and Savannakhet	2	2.1

Donor	Implementing partner	Project	Start	End	Budget US\$m	Brief description of project	Provinces	Compact outcomes	Intermediate outcomes
						Assisting children with disabilities to get training in job skills.			
New Zealand	MoES, SCI	Safe Schools	2021	2025	1.1	Ensure children in Lao PDR are safe and protected from violence, natural and everyday hazards when in and around school.	Luang Prabang 3 districts	1 & 2	1.1 & 1.3 2.1
Save the Children	MoES, SCI	Safe Back to School and Learning	2023	2024	0.1	Addressing clime threats to integrate vulnerable children into education.	Savannakhet	1	1.1
Pestalozzi Children Foundation (Switzerlan d)	Dongkhamxang Teacher Training College	Improveme nt of Quality Education in Pre- and Primary Schools	2020	2023	0.27	Aims to address two main root causes 1) low quality of teaching (Lao Language and math and 2) lack of green and clean school learning environment.	Bolikhamxay	2	2.1, 2.2, 2.3
UNICEF	MoES	UNICEF- Governmen t Country Programme 2022- 2026 <sup>48</sup>	2022	2026	Max Ceiling 20.5 <sup>49</sup>	Support implementation of the 9th ESSDP, through a system strengthening approach to ensure: (a) coverage and quality of early learning opportunities are expanded; (b) children access and complete nine years of basic education with improved learning outcomes and 21st century skills; and (c) the quality of teaching is improved.	Nation-wide (system-based approach)	All outcomes	Depending on the finalized list of compact actions, can support any actions as far as it is relevant to the UNICEF-GOL Country Programme and to be reflected in the UNICEF-MOES

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> UNICEF operates through a programme-based approach based on the UNICEF-Government of Lao PDR Country Programme.
<sup>49</sup> The Max Ceiling includes both UNICEF-own funding and external funding. The existing external financing (that partly, not fully, contributes to the budget ceiling) is listed below.

Donor	Implementing partner	Project	Start	End	Budget US\$m	Brief description of project	Provinces	Compact outcomes	Intermediate outcomes annual work
EU through UNICEF	MoES	Partnership to Strengthen the Education System	2018	July 2024	10.6	Support to equitable access to basic education, quality of basic education by strengthening the quality of teaching, human resource management and policy planning and financing while contributing to the realisation of the budget support variable tranche indicators.	Nationwide	All outcomes Policy reforms, data & system strengthening	plans.  M&E Teacher management and quality Evidence base studies COVID-19 emergency Others
USAID through UNICEF	MoES	All Children Learning: Improving Education Outcomes for Children in Lao PDR, especially the most disadvantag ed	2022	2024 (2025 if exten ded)	2.6	Ensure that more children, especially the most disadvantaged, are prepared for school and are acquiring the knowledge and skills needed for continued education and a better future.	Nationwide (system strengthening at national and sub-national level); Xiengkhuoang: Khoun, Nonghed, Mok Mai; Vientiane Province: Feaung; Savannakeht: Sepon, Phin, Nong; Saravane: Saravan, Ta-oi; Attapeu: Sanamxay, Sansai; Xaisettha.	1 and policy reforms	ECE and data & policy reforms related

Donor	Implementing	Project	Start	End	Budget	Brief description of project	Provinces	Compact	Intermediate
	partner				US\$m			outcomes	outcomes
Japan through UNICEF (emergency -response- based)	MoES	Project for Rehabilitati on and Reconstruct ion of School	2019	2024	2.25	To support rehabilitation and reconstruction of school systems and strengthen disaster risk management and resilience in flood affected	Khammouane, Bolikhamxay, Houaphanh, Phongsaly, Xiengkhouang, Vientiane,	N/A	N/A
buscu,		Education Sector in Flood Affected Areas				areas.	Xayaboury, Sekong, Savanakhet and Champassak		
UN	MoES	UNFPA	2022	2026	1	UNFPA activities	4 provinces 14 districts	3	3.1, 3.2
USAID through SCI	MoES & SCI, Humanity and Inclusion and Room to Read	Learn to Read	2018	2025	30	Improve reading skills of children from kindergarten to grade 2.	Vientiane, Xiengkhoung, Champassak and Attapue) 20 districts	1 & 2	1.1, 1.2, 1.3 2.1. 2.2, 2.3
USDA through WFP	MOES, WFP, and CRS	School Meal Program FFE FY20	2021	2025	25	School meals, nutrition, wash in school, readiness, and literacy.	12 provinces 18 districts	1, 2 & 3	1.1, 1.2, 1.3 2.1. 2.2, 2.3
USDA through CRS	MoES, CRS, SCI	LEAPS 3 Learning and Engaging all in Primary Schools	2021	2026	23	Food for education and children's nutrition. School meals, wash in school, community based school readiness and literacy boost.	Savannakhet 6 districts	1 & 2	1.1, 1.2, 1.3 2.1, 2.2, 2.3
USDA through WFP	MoES, WFP, CRS	School Meal Program FFE FY24 (TBC)	2024	2029	27	School meals, nutrition, agriculture, wash in school, readiness, literacy, and inclusive education.	12 provinces 17 districts	1 & 2 & 3	1.1, 1.2, 1.3 2.1, 2.2, 2.3
World Bank GPE	MoES	GPE III LEAP	2021	2027	46.9	Improve learning outcomes in primary grades and strengthening	Nationwide for system strengthening.	1, 2 & 4	1.1, 1.2, 1.3 2.1 4.1 & 4.2

Donor	Implementing partner	Project	Start	End	Budget US\$m	Brief description of project	Provinces	Compact outcomes	Intermediate outcomes
						teacher performance and management.	71 districts for component 1. 60 districts for remaining activities.		
World Bank	MoES	Additional financing LEAP	-	-	10	As above	-	-	-
World Bank	MoES & MoSLW	Priority Skills for Growth	2022	2027	46	Enhance access, quality and relevance of skills development and employment services for youth and other vulnerable groups in priority sectors (agriculture, logistics, and ICT)	Nationwide 23 public and 67 private TVET institutions and 18 Job Centers.	-	-
World Bank	MoES, MoH and MOHA	Improving Frontline Worker Performanc e in Education and Health	2025	2030	35	The project will aim to enhance primary education quality through comprehensive CPD for teachers, advisors, and principals; capacity-building support for teacher training colleges and local authorities; and improved management and measurement of preand primary education effectiveness.	TBD	4	4.1 & 4.2

#### 4.2 GPE support

GPE support will be used strategically on actions to improve frontline service delivery and education outcomes and tackle the high priority bottlenecks identified in the enabling factors analysis. The proposed projects will be designed collaboratively with the ESSWG to ensure the GPE financing is coordinated with current or pipeline projects. The majority of System Transformation Grant (STG) and Multiplier financing will be directed to the most disadvantaged districts based on a new targeting assessment conducted by MoES. Once the Grant Agent is identified MoES will work with the Grant Agent to identify areas from the actions outlined below that will be funded by the GPE STG, including indicative budget lines and target districts selected in coordination with other DPs. Once identified, the actions will be discussed at ESSWG for endorsement.

#### 4.2.1 System Capacity Grant (US\$2.6 million)

The System Capacity Grant (SCG) will finance policy actions and capacity building activities related to the enabling factors, with a focus on the two high priority enabling factors and improved sustainability of learning assessments. Activities will be coordinated with other capacity building activities funded by the government and DPs and refined during project preparation. The SCG will operate as a flexible financing source for technical assistance, consultation and coordination, and monitoring, and will include support for several transformational reforms including more equitable deployment of teachers, stronger monitoring systems, and more efficient use of the SBG. The SCG will also lay the foundation for the next ESSDP. The indicative support areas are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3 Indicative System Capacity Grant focus areas

Enabling	Indicative areas	Action
factor		
Data and	Building national capacity to implement and utilize the large-scale student	EFA
evidence	assessments for education policy making in support of improving learning	
	outcomes including budget allocation.	
Gender-	Capacity building for annual sector planning, budgeting, and execution at	EFA
responsive	the national and subnational levels.	
planning,		
policy, and	Development of the next gender responsive ESSDP and subsector plans,	EFA
monitoring	including sub-national coordination and consultations in ESSDP	
	development.	
	Regular JSRMs.	EFA
Domestic	Reforms to the SBG, including linking the FQS and SBG to school-based	4.2.3
financing	management reforms, foundational learning and gender equity.	4.3.4
	Supporting teacher management reforms, including more equitable and	4.1.1
	efficient deployment of teachers, and more effective CPD.	4.1.2

#### 4.2.2 System Transformation Grant (US\$10 million)

The System Transformation Grant (STG) will focus on transforming learning outcomes and access to ECE in disadvantaged districts. The interventions will be led by government and closely coordinated with existing or pipeline DP projects, utilizing the new primary curriculum, aligned TLMs and monitoring and assessment tools.

Lao PDR is fortunate to have strong evidence for interventions which can be scaled across the disadvantaged districts and beyond. The STG will be used to co-finance actions across all four outcomes, with the bulk of the investment being targeted at scaling proven gender-responsive interventions for ECE quality and access, primary literacy outcomes for non-Lao-Tai speakers, and lower secondary female students. There will be a strong focus on formative assessment in each sub-sector, helping schools to use regular assessment data and FQS self-assessments in their school planning and use of the SBG to improve teaching and learning. In the event the country is not successful with an application for the Girls' Education Accelerator, a proportion of the grants will be allocated to intermediate outcome 3.1 to address the needs of vulnerable adolescent girls in lower secondary schools.

Table 4 Indicative System Transformation Grant focus areas

Outcome	Indicative actions to be financed by the grant	Actions
1 ECE	Expansion of evidence-based ECE programs for one-year before	1.1.3
	primary school.	4.3.1
	Expansion of reading programs for non-Lao-Tai students, including	1.2.1
	provision of TLMs and lesson plans.	1.2.2
	CPD for principals and teachers on improving inclusion and	1.3.3
	foundational skills.	
2. Primary	CPD and the distribution of reading TLMs to improving teaching of non-	2.1.3
	Lao-Tai students.	2.3.2
3. Lower	Targeted scholarships and support programs for girls at risk of dropping	3.1.1
secondary	out of secondary school.	3.1.2

#### 4.2.3 Multiplier (up to US\$15 million)

If Multiplier funds become available in the future, activities would be designed alongside the co-financing and STG to align with the Partnership Compact and Multiplier co-financing priorities.

#### 4.2.4 Girls' Education Accelerator (US\$5 million)

The government intends to apply for the Girls' Education Accelerator when this fund is replenished. The grant would finance intermediate outcomes 3.1 and 3.2 which has a focus on the retention and welfare of adolescent girls in lower secondary education, particularly girls who are at risk of dropping out due to early marriage or adolescent pregnancy. The interventions include school-based activities such as scholarships and student welfare support and system-level reforms to policy, curriculum, monitoring, and school-based management.

#### 4.2.5 Climate Smart Education System Initiative

Climate change is having a significant impact on children's education in Lao PDR, affecting various aspects of their learning environment and access to quality education, including disruption to teaching time, and impacts on students' and teachers' health and well-being. These effects are particularly felt in rural communities, with increased vulnerability for marginalized groups. To safeguard children's right to education and mitigate the impact of climate change on the education system, it is crucial to develop and implement climate-resilient education strategies, invest in disaster risk reduction measures, and promote community engagement to build resilience and adaptability in the face of changing climate conditions. The government will apply for and implement activities funded through the initiative.

#### 4.2.6 Incentive-based financing

The government has experience of results-based financing with the current GPE III project and is open to the use of similar instruments in the STG and Multiplier. The approach strengthens government systems, ownership, and sustainability, and can promote local solutions to policy reform bottlenecks. Key lessons from GPE III include the need to work closely with the Ministry of Finance during the design phase to ensure that indicators, triggers, reimbursements, and eligible expenses are clearly understood, well-sequenced, and agreed between the ministries and grant agent.

#### 4.3 Roles and responsibilities of country partners

#### 4.3.1 Ministry of Education and Sports

The MoES, in coordination with DPs, will be responsible for carrying out the priority reform implementation. Each line department will develop their sub sector plans. Annually, they will create an Annual Operational Plan (AOP) and take responsibility for the implementation of activities. The DoP will take the lead in coordination among line departments and ensure smooth implementation of AOP. While line Departments will implement day to day activities, the respective technical groups including DPs will discuss and provide support for the implementation (Table 5).

Table 5	Compact	implementation	arrangements
Tubic 3	Compact	IIIIpicilicilication	arrangements

Outcome	Line Department	Technical Group
Coordination	Department of Planning	ESSWG Secretariat
1	DECE, DTE, RIES, DEQA	ECE Focal Group
2	DTE, DGE, RIES, DEQA	General Education Focal Group
3	DGE, DEQA, RIES, DTE	General Education Focal Group
4	DOOP, DTE, DOF, DECE, IFEAD, DEQA, DoP,	Teacher Education Focal Group,
	DGE, RIES, ESSC	Administration and Management
		Focal Group
M&E	DoP, DOI	ESSWG Secretariat, Administration
		and Management Focal Group

The JSRM mechanism will be used as a preferred tool to monitor the progress of project implementation, reviewing data and lessons learned, and providing recommendations to improve planning and implementation. The MTR of the compact will be integrated within the Education and Sports Sector Development Plan (2026-30) development process. The ESSWG secretariat will take the lead for conducting the MTR.

#### 4.3.2 ESSWG and technical groups

The ESSWG mechanism will serve as a coordination platform between MoES and DPs to ensure complementarity and support to priority reform. The ESSWG is led by MoES, and the co-chairs are the Australian Embassy and European Union delegation. The ESSWG mechanism includes sub-sector focal groups and technical working groups. The ESSWG Technical Level group meets at least four times per year and the ESSWG Executive Level group meets once or twice a year. The sub-sector focal groups and technical working groups usually meet 3 – 4 times a year.

# 5. Monitoring, evaluation, and learning

The Partnership Compact will be monitored and evaluated through existing MoES systems (Figure 2). Wherever possible, the core indicators are selected from the ESSDP monitoring and evaluation framework (ESSDP Table 10) and relevant SDGs to reduce duplication in data collection and analysis. Where bespoke indicators are used, these will be further defined in the project design.

Reporting phase Strategic reflection phase Annual reports consolidated into ASPR ESWG and focal group meetings Implementation Q1 |Q2 Annual Q4 Q3 **Finalized** Conference annual plans Implementation Annual reviews **JSRM** Legend ESWG and focal group meetings Document Activity **Planning** JSRM report

Figure 2 ESSDP 2021-2025 annual monitoring and planning cycle

#### **5.1 Monitoring the priority reform.**

Progress towards the priority reform outcomes and actions will be monitored through the data system listed in Table 6. Monitoring indicators will be disaggregated by sex, district, and disadvantage.

Table 6 Monitoring the priority reform.

Monitoring system	Туре	Frequency	Responsibility
LESMIS statistical bulletin	Annual school census	Annual	Education and Sports
			Statistics Centre
Annual Sector Performance	Annual report	Annual	Department of Planning
Report			
Inspection reports <sup>i50</sup>	School visits	Annual	Department of Inspection

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Which can include the TEACH Classroom Observation Tools developed by DTE under GPE III.

Monitoring system	Туре	Frequency	Responsibility
Education and Sports Annual Conference	Annual review	Annual	Department of Planning
Joint Sector Review Mission	Joint sector review	TBD	ESWG secretariat, Administration and Management Focal Group
ESSWG	Local education group	ESSWG Technical Level: at least 4 times per year ESSWG Executive Level: 1 – 2 times a year	Department of Planning
Education Sector Working Groups:  Focal Group 1: Early Childhood Education  Focal Group 2: General Education  Focal Group 3: Post Secondary Education  Focal Group 4: Education and Sport Management and Administration  Focal Group 5: Education Research and Evaluation  Focal Group 6: Sports	Technical working groups	3 – 4 times a year	Various departments with different DPs as co-chairs.

#### **5.2 Evaluations and reviews**

The dates for the Partnership Compact crosses the implementation periods of the current (2021-2025) and future ESSDP (2026-2030) so will benefit from the final evaluations of the current sector plan in 2025. The national and regional learning assessments will measure the impact of the priority reform actions on learning outcomes. Evaluation activities are listed in Table 7.

Table 7 Evaluating the priority reform.

Evaluation system	Туре	Frequency	Responsibility
ASLO	National learning	Every 5 years	Research Institute for
	assessment G3, G5 and G9		Educational Sciences
Early Grade Reading	National early grade	Every 3 year	Research Institute for
Assessment/ Early Grade	assessment		Educational Sciences
Mathematics Assessment			
SEA-PLM	Regional learning	Data	Southeast Asian Ministers
	assessment G5	collection	of Education Association
		2024 and the	

Evaluation system	Туре	Frequency	Responsibility
		final report	
		2025/2026	
ESSDP 2021-2025 Final	Evaluation	2025	Department of Planning
Review			
ESSDP 2026-2030 Mid-term	Evaluation	2028	Department of Planning
Review			
STG baseline and endline	Studies	2024 & 2028	Department of Quality
	• TLMs		Assurance
	<ul> <li>Lesson</li> </ul>		
	observations		

# **5.3 Learning and adaptation**

The Partnership Compact includes activities to improve knowledge sharing and adaptation. Major milestones will be shared at the ESSWG and annual conference. Key studies are listed in Table 8.

Table 8 Learning activities for the priority reform.

Activity	Туре	Date	Responsibility
1.3.2 Review the ECE monitoring and	Review	2024	Department of ECE
evaluation tools.			
4.3.1 Review the current balance	Review	TBD	Department of ECE
between provision of 3-year			
kindergartens and 1-year pre-primary			
4.3.2 Review the current staffing	Review	TBD	Department of General Education
approach to lower secondary schools			
to identify ways to use teaching			
workforce more efficiently.			

#### **5.4 Results framework**

Targets will be established prior to implementation during the development of the next ESSDP or during the development of the STG.

Table 9 Results framework

Outcome	Indicator	ESSDP/SDG	Disaggregation	Baseline	Target	Data source
1. Increased equitable access to quality ECE to improve school readiness.	Proportion of 3-5 years old children attending school readiness.		Sex <sup>51</sup> District Ethnicity	National: 61.3% 40 districts: 48.3% NDD <sup>52</sup> : 65.9%	Increased	LESMIS
1.1 Increased proportion of students from non-Lao-Tai speaking, poor and/or disadvantaged households including those with disabilities who are enrolled in ECE one year before primary school.	Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex. <sup>53</sup>	SDG 4.2.2.	Sex <sup>54</sup> District Ethnicity	National: 81.7% 40 districts: 72.1% NDD <sup>55</sup> : 85.1%	Increased	LESMIS
1.2 ECE centres have increasingly equitable access to inclusive quality play-based curriculum and foundational literacy and numeracy materials.	Percentage of ECE pre-primary schools with minimum allocation ratio of TLMs.	-	District Type of program	National: TBD <sup>56</sup> 40 districts: TBD NDD: TBD	Increased	FQS (ECE) survey
1.3 ECE teachers and principals have improved skills and knowledge for inclusion and school readiness.	Percentage of ECE teachers demonstrating minimum teaching standards.	SDG 4. c.1	Sex District Type of program	National: TBD 40 districts: TBD NDD: TBD	Increased	FQS (ECE) lesson observation
2. Improved foundational learning outcomes at the primary level for	Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 3 and 5 (b) at	ESSDP 2,3 SDG 4.1.1	Sex Grade	Lao language G3 (2017) 34%	Increased	ASLO

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Disaggregation by disability or mother tongue is not currently available. District and ethnicity will be used a proxy for mother tongue.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Non-disadvantaged districts.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> 'Organized learning' is attendance in a pre-primary class at a primary school, ECE school or CBSR.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Disaggregation by disability or mother tongue is not currently available. District and ethnicity will be used a proxy for mother tongue.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Non-disadvantaged districts.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> To be determined at baseline.

Outcome	Indicator	ESSDP/SDG	Disaggregation	Baseline	Target	Data source
all children, including the most disadvantaged children.	the end of primary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics.		Province	G5 (2023) 23%  Mathematics G3 (2017) 28% G5 (2023) 1%		
2.1 More primary teachers and principals have improved skills and knowledge in the new curriculum and multi-grade teaching, assessment, and inclusive education.	Percentage of primary teachers demonstrating minimum teaching standards.	SDG 4. c.1	Sex Grade District	National: TBD 40 districts: TBD NDD: TBD	Increased	Classroom Observation Tool
2.2 Primary schools have equitable access to quality and inclusive materials.	Percentage of primary schools that are more than 80 percent compliant with the national textbook policy.	ESSDP 25	District Subject <sup>57</sup>	National: TBD 40 districts: TBD NDD: TBD	Increased	FQS (primary)
2.3 Non-Lao-Tai language group children are increasingly supported to learn Lao language.	Proportion of Non-Lao-Tai students proficient / attaining grade level minimum competencies in Lao	-	Sex Grade	TBD	Increased	ASLO
3. Improved transition to, and retention in, lower secondary by addressing gender and learning barriers to education.	Transition rate to lower secondary.	ESSDP 6.c	Sex District	Male National: 84.6% 40 districts: 72.5% NDD: 88.4%  Female National: 84.3% 40 districts: 72.0% NDD: 88.1%	Increased	LESMIS
	Completion rate lower secondary	ESSDP 1. b	Sex District	Male National: 65.7% 40 districts: 50.4%	Increased	LESMIS

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Literacy and numeracy textbooks and reading books.

Outcome	Indicator	ESSDP/SDG	Disaggregation	Baseline	Target	Data source
3.1 Schools have strategies and	Proportion of female students	Proxy to SDG	Type of support	NDD: 70.5%  Female National: 64.9% 40 districts: 50.2% NDD: 69.5%  TBD	Increased	Survey
resources to support girls' education.	receiving support.	4.7.2	(e.g. scholarship)	טטו	increased	Survey
3.2 Strengthened system for supporting disadvantaged girls to enroll in lower secondary.	Percentage of schools with gender-responsive School Development Plans.	-	Sub-sector	TBD	Increased	FQS
3.3 Improved access to remedial education in targeted lower secondary schools.	Proportion of children and young people (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics.	ESSDP 9 SDG 4.1.1	Sex District	Lao language G9 (2019) 28% Mathematics G9 (2019) 1%	Increased	ASLO
4. Strengthened teacher proficiency and workforce management, including effective planning, budgetary allocation, and efficient use of domestic financing for improving learning outcomes.	Government expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure, excluding debt service.	SDG F.2	Sub-sector	11.4% (Domestic Financing Matrix 2023)	Increased	National budget
4.1 Strengthened teacher management system.	Pupil-qualified teacher ratio by education level.	ESSDP 24 SDG 4. c.4	Sub-sector District	Primary National: 72.2% 40 districts: 85.2% NDD: 78.3%	Improved	LESMIS
	Proportion of female primary principals.	ESSDP 2	Sub-sector District	19%	Increased	LESMIS
4.2 Strengthened CPD system.	Percentage of teachers receiving in-service CPD annually.	ESSDP 16	Sub-sector District	TBD	Increased	Survey

Outcome	Indicator	ESSDP/SDG	Disaggregation	Baseline	Target	Data source
4.3 More effective planning and	Updated list of disadvantaged	-	-	No	Yes	Document
efficient use of domestic	districts published.					
financing.						

#### 6. Statement of endorsement

We, the Ministry of Education and Sports, DPs and civil society, are delighted to endorse the Global Partnership for Education Partnership Compact. This compact represents a significant milestone in our collective efforts to transform education in the Lao PDR.

The Ministry of Education and Sports has exhibited remarkable leadership and vision in the development of this compact with the support from all DPs. We commend untiring commitment to improving learning outcomes and the dedication to ensuring that every child in Lao PDR has access to quality education. With the inclusive approach, which prioritizes the voices and needs of learners, has been truly inspiring and sets a commendable precedent for educational reform.

The Partnership Compact aligns seamlessly with the Ministry of Education and Sports' mission and values. By addressing key challenges such as limited access to quality education, language barriers, and insufficient teacher training. This compact shows a clear path towards an inclusive, equitable, and accelerated education system. It offers a roadmap for collaborative action, enabling us to leverage our resources, expertise, and partnerships effectively.

We pledge with the full support of DPs, stakeholders, civil society, and the wider community in implementing the actions outlined in the Partnership Compact can meet the outstanding outcomes. Together, we will strive to create an education system that empowers all learners, fosters their holistic development, and prepares them for a bright future.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the DPs for their input for the development of the compact namely Australian Embassy, European Union, JICA, Save the Children International, UNICEF, and the World Bank.

We are confident that, by working collectively, we can make a lasting and positive impact on the learning outcome of students and the education of the Lao PDR.

Vientiane Capital

Minister of Education and Sports

# **Annex 1 Dialogue process**

Table 10 Consultation meetings

Date	Title	Participants
30-Aug-23	ESSWG Technical Level Meeting	ESSWG Technical
31-Aug-23	1st Technical Meeting of GPE Task Force	Task Force
07-Sep-23	2nd Technical Meeting of GPE Task Force	Task Force
15-Sep-23	3rd Technical Meeting of GPE Task Force	Task Force
04-Oct-23	4th Technical Meeting of GPE Task Force	Task Force
17-Oct-23	5th Technical Meeting of GPE Task Force	Task Force
19-Oct-23	1st Consultation Workshop on Priority Reform Actions & Theory of Change	Departments
26-Oct-23	6th Technical Meeting of GPE Task Force	Task Force
01-Nov-23	ESSWG Technical Level Meeting	ESSWG
13-Nov-23	7th Technical Meeting of GPE Task Force discussed proposed reforms.	Task Force
17-Nov-23	ESSWG Executive Level Meeting endorses EFA for submission to GPE.	ESSWG
05-Dec-23	2nd Consultation Meeting with the concerned Department for the Development of the Partnership Compact	Departments
12-Dec-23	8th Technical Meeting of GPE Task Force	Task Force
22-Dec-23	9th Technical Meeting of GPE Task Force	Task Force
08 Jan-24	10 <sup>th</sup> Technical Meeting of GPE Task Force	Task Force
26-Jun-24	11 <sup>th</sup> Technical Meeting of GPE Task Force	Task Force
01-July-24	ESSWG Technical Level Meeting	ESSWG
11-July-24	12 <sup>th</sup> Technical Meeting of the GPE Task Force	Task Force

Table 11 Task Force membership

Organization	Name and title		
Department of	Dr. Bounphanh Xaymountry, Director-General		
Planning, MoES	Mr. Sithong Sikhao, Deputy Director-General		
	Mr. Anoupheng Keovongsa, Deputy Director-General, GPEIII: LEAP Director		
	Mr. Vongvilay Sounthavong, Deputy Head of Education Coordination Unit		
Australian Embassy	Ms. Vanessa Hegarty, First Secretary		
	Ms. Davone Bounpheng, Program Manager for Education		
	Dr. Mike Lally, Senior Education Advisor		
European Union	Mr. Vincent Vire, Head of Cooperation		
	Mr. Bouasvan Bouasy, Attaché Cooperation		
	Ms. Saymano Sanoubane, Programme Manager		
	Mr. John Virtue, Consultant-Team Leader		
JICA	Mr. Hashimoto Yuho, Representative		
	Mr. Yasumasa Nagaoka, Education Policy Advisor		
Save the Children	Mr. Luke Ebbs, Country Manager		
International	Dr. Namrata Jaitli, Strategy, Program Quality and Impact Director		

Organization	Name and title
	Mr. Richard Jones, Pacific Education Specialist
	Mr. Somxay Inthasone, Education Technical Expert
	Ms. Oulayphone Dethkongxay, Senior Education Specialist
UNICEF	Ms. Takaho Fukami, Chief of Education
	Ms. Trine Petersen, Education Manager
	Mr. Andrew Dunbrack, Education Specialist
	Mr. Anolack Chanpasith, Education Officer
World Bank	Ms. Tara Béteille, Programme Leader
	Mr. Michael Drabble, Senior Education Specialist
	Mrs. Chindavanh Vongsaly, Health Specialist, Nutrition and Population