



Lao People's Democratic Republic

Education for All 2015 National Review

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National EFA 2015 Review Report



Country Report of Lao PDR

EFA 2015 Review Group and Secretariat Group,
Lao PDR

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List of Acronyms

ASLO	Assessment of Student Learning Outcome
CIED	Community Initiative for Education Development
CLC	Community Learning Center
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DNFE	Department of Non Formal Education
DPPE	Department of Pre-primary and Primary Education
DSE	Department of Secondary Education
DTE	Department of Teacher Education
DVV	German Adult Education Association (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V)
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EFA-NPA	Education for All – National Plan of Action
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESDP	Education Sector Development Plan
ESWG	Education Sector Working Group
GoL	Government of Lao PDR
ITSME	Improving In-Service Teacher Training for Science and Mathematics Education
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LECS	Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey
LSIS	Lao Social Indicator Survey
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MOLSW	Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGPES	National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy
SBG	School Block Grant
SDP	School Development Plan
SoQ	Schools of Quality
TTC	Teacher Training College
TTS	Teacher Training School
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization
VEDC	Village Education Development Committee

Forewords

The 1991 Constitution of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, in its preamble, emphasizes the needs to educate the life of the people. In Article 19 of the Lao PDR Constitution states: "The State emphasizes the expansion of education in conjunction with building a new generation of good citizens. Education, cultural and scientific activities are the means to raise the level of knowledge, patriotism, love of the people's democracy, the spirit of solidarity between ethnic groups and the spirit of independence. The pursuit of compulsory primary education is important. The state permits private schools that follow the state curriculum".

Thus, giving education is a responsibility that should be realized by the government and all people of Lao PDR. This national commitment becomes the driving force for all elements of government and community members to implement education, as an integral part to meet the twin goals of (i) exiting the Least Developed Country Status by 2020 and (ii) achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Aiming at the goals, the GoL is committed to education as a national development priority to help meet the twin goals.

In line with the national commitment, Lao PDR as one of UNESCO Member States is strongly committed to ensure the achievement of the six goals of Education for All (EFA). In achieving the goals, Lao PDR has developed EFA National Plan of Action (2003 – 2015) in 2002 and taken a number of measures to harmonize EFA planning and implementation within its broader medium and long term development. There has been a significant progress in achieving EFA goals and targets in Lao PDR over the past years after the Dakar Agreement was launched. The coordination on the implementation and achievement of EFA goals has been formalized through the coordinating with internal agencies such as all 20 departments belong to MoES and other relevant departments from line ministries and external agencies including all educational development partners of the GoL.

This report, National EFA 2015 Review Report, presents the progress made in achieving the six EFA goals with available disaggregated information. Furthermore, it describes the current difficulties and emerging challenges in order to fulfil the respective targets of the EFA goals as well as recommended agendas for education development in 2015 and beyond.

We are thankful to the EFA Review Team consisting of the key stakeholders from MoES and Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB) for their proper leading and supportive comments and recommendations. We would also like to highlight the important works of EFA Review Secretariat Group comprised with technical staffs from MoES leading by Dr. Mithong Souvanmixay Director General, Department of Pre-primary and Primary Education, and National EFA Coordinator and Mr. Somkhanh Didaravong Deputy Director General of Planning Department, Director of EMIS Center and Mr. Khin Kyu the International Education Statistics Specialist of EMIS Center of MoES. Hopefully, this report will be an asset of the process of regional and global EFA review 2015.

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Introduction

Background:

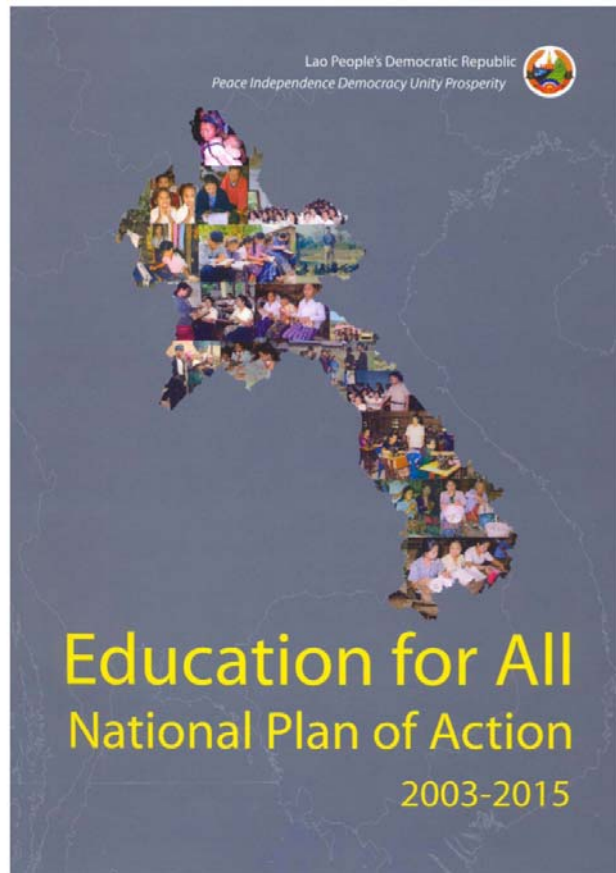
The Lao People's Democratic Republic is located in the heart of the Indochinese peninsula. It is a landlocked country with population of about 6.5 million and with around 1.14 million households (Statistics Yearbook 2012). Lao PDR has an area of 236,800 square kilometers and it is sharing borders with China to the north, Myanmar to the north-west, Thailand to the west, Cambodia to the south, and Vietnam to the east. Recently, the Lao PDR is divided into 17 provinces and one capital, (former Xaysomboon special region was approved as a province in late 2013), 145 districts, and 8,600 villages (Statistics Yearbook 2012).

The Lane Xang ('Million Elephants') Kingdom was formed by King Fa Ngum in 1353. The kingdom was invaded and controlled by Siam (Thailand) in 18 century and it was colonized by French by later half of the 19 century. In the early 20th century, resistance movements were fought against the French. On 12 October 1945, following the withdrawal of Japan, Lao PDR declared independence. However, the French returned and maintained their control until 1954 when their defeat at Dien Bien Phu forced them to sign the Geneva Accord. This peace was short lived; not long afterwards the Americans became involved in Indochina. Although the US was never officially at war with Lao PDR, from 1961 to 1973, the US Army dropped over two million tons of bombs on the country as part of its campaign against Vietnam. Following US withdrawal from Vietnam in 1975, the Pathet Lao movement successfully gained control of Lao PDR. The Lao People's Revolutionary Party was declared the ruling party of the Lao People's Democratic Republic¹.

The Lao PDR is composed with 49 distinct ethnic groups with a relatively young population, nearly 60 percent of population under 25 years of age. 69% of population lives in the rural area (Agriculture Census 2010-11). The proportion of poor household is still high even if it is slightly reduced from 46% (LECS 1992/93) to 27.4 % (LECS4 2007/08) and to 23% (LECS 5 2012/13). The labor force, however, still relies on agriculture, dominated by rice cultivation in lowland areas, which accounts for about 30% of GDP and 75% of total employment.

Policy context

The Government of Lao (GoL) is striving to meet the twin goals of (i) exiting the Least Developed Country Status by 2020 and (ii)



¹ Lao PDR Overview – UNV – Lao PDR

achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Aiming at the goals, the GoL is committed to education as a national development priority to help meet the twin goals.

The Education for All – National Plan of Action (EFA–NPA, 2003–15) has been developed to drive the educational development activities enabling to reach the commitments and goals committed by the GoL. The (EFA–NPA) laid down three major goals: equitable access, improved quality and relevance, and strengthened education management for formal and non-formal education at all levels. It seeks to accomplish these goals through: implementing universal basic and primary education; reaching disadvantaged population groups in rural and urban areas; promoting community participation of basic education and literacy at the grassroots level; and improving relevance and quality of basic education through learning opportunities for children, youth and adults. The EFA-NPA covers: Early Childhood Care and Education, Primary Education, Lower Secondary Education, and Non-Formal Education and Skills Training. The EFA-NPA (2003–2015) sets the overarching goals and actions to be taken to meet EFA commitments.

As reconciliation with EFA commitments, the National Education System Reform Strategy (2006–2015) which called for systematic change required enabling the MoES to improve its effectiveness in reaching those commitments was developed. In connection with the strategy, the GoL has started reengineering the organizational structure of the MoES to enhance the implementation process of the educational development.

As a further enhancement, the GoL, in collaboration with development partners, developed the Educational Sector

Development Plan (ESDP - 2011- 2015) which is based on the resolutions of the 9th Congress of the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party; the 7th National Socio-economic Development Plan (2011-2015); the 20-year Education Strategic Vision (2001-2020); the National Education System Reform Strategy (2006 – 2010). Recently, the mid-term review of the ESDP was completed in 2013.

As a country striving to success, the socio-economic development including the education sector is full with various challenges. Up till now, the education indicators in Lao PDR reveal significant gender disparities, large disparities between rural (especially off-road) and urban areas, and among ethnic groups. The incidence of these disparities is unevenly spread across different parts of the country.

The education expenditure (refers to the current operating expenditures in education, including wages and salaries and excluding capital investments in buildings and equipment) has increased

The MoES has reorganized for more efficient management of education services. Some of them are;

- In 2008, the Department of General Education was split into Department of Primary and Pre-Primary Education (DPPE), and Department of Secondary Education (DSE) for ensuring access to and quality of basic education
- Set up the Inclusive Education Centre, and National Education Standards and Quality Assurance Center, National Research Institute for Educational Science, Education, Statistics and Information Technology Center and Institute of Education Administration Development
- Department of teacher training, Department of Inspection and Department of Personal Administration are parts of the MoES's reorganization structure

significantly in absolute terms over the past several years (from US\$ 15 million in 2000 to US\$ 81 million in 2011²) and the quota of public service places committed to the education sector has also seen a substantial increase (for example; ECCE classrooms increased from 2,557 in 2007 to 5955 in 2013, and completed primary school increased from 48% of the total in 2008 to 70% in 2012). However, while there has been significant improvement in resource flows over the past decade, the gap between needs and resources remains large. The volume of domestic investment budget in the sector is still relatively low at 6.2% of all investment (2010/11), and over 80% of the education recurrent budget is for wage-related costs. Thus the sector is dependent upon a significant increase in external funding to help bridge the financing gap in its education plan for the short term³.

The availability of the information which can be transformed into the EFA indicators and assessed the achievement of the inputs is still limited. For example, the information related to the quality of education, inclusive education, teachers training (in-services/pre-services) and effectiveness of the training are still yet to emerge in the system. Addressing this issue, the MoES, in collaboration with a private technical group, has developed an interactive programme which can be connected among the modified Education Management Information System (EMIS), newly created Personnel Management Information System (PMIS) and Financial Management Information System (FMIS) so as to retrieve more in-depth statistics and respective indicators. It is expected that utilization of the said interactive programme will be functioning well before 2015. Again, some initial discussion on collection of the inclusive education statistics through the existing EMIS. Furthermore, after establishment of the district NFE centers in all districts, the Department of Non-Formal Education and the EMIS center will explore how to collect the NFE statistics through the district NFE centers and how to incorporate it into the EMIS.

Additional supports

Some additional supports to achieve the EFA goals and national goals, the MoES has implemented many interventions individually as well as with some international agencies in education sector. Along the EFA journey, there were a few hundred of projects and programmes implemented and being implemented by MoES together with the development partners. Only a few examples will be highlighted in this report.

Teachers' quality

To improve the quality of teaching and learning by building the capacity of the teacher training system and improving teachers' incentives, The MoES, in collaboration with Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, intervened a project called Teacher Training Enhancement and Status of Teachers (TTEST) during 2002 to 2010. The project conducted 6 main activities: Strengthened and Improved National Teacher Training Plans, Course Development, Training of Trainers, Teacher Training Colleges (TTC) and Teacher Training School (TTS) Management, Operational Studies, Improving Teacher Incentives (including Salaries) and Working Conditions⁴. From a survey conducted by Japan International Cooperation Agency's (JICA), it was found out that there are many unqualified teachers; - teachers who have not mastered the subject contents enough; - teachers who are not equipped with an effective way of teaching to encourage students' learning. To fulfil the gap, the project called "Improving In-Service Teacher Training for Science and

² Source: Index Mundi

³ EFA-Country Report – 13th Regional EFA Coordinator Meeting 26-27 Feb 2013

⁴ Final Evaluation Report - Teacher Training Enhancement and Status of Teachers Project, (2002-2010)

Mathematics Education (ITSME)” was implemented by the Department of Teacher Education (DTE) with the technical assistance of JICA from February 2010 to October 2013 in 3 provinces in the south region of the Lao PDR⁵.

Schools’ quality

The Schools of Quality (SoQ), based on the Child Friendly School approach initiated by UNICEF, was an initiative that addresses access and quality in basic education as the country strives to meet its commitments to the MDGs and EFA. Now it has been integrated into the GoL’s long term policy as Education Quality Standard. After a certain year of the SoQ approach, it was firmly established in the Lao education reform. The training modules and other implementation tools are developed with the support of Community Initiative for Education Development (CIED) I and II supported by JICA for the sustainability of the implementation⁶.

Grassroots participation

In December 2011, the Ministry of Education introduced a decree prohibiting schools from charging official fees in primary schools⁷ after introducing a School Block Grant (SBG) programme. In the school year 2011-2012, the GoL implemented an ambitious, nationwide school block grant programme (SBG). This programme provides financial resources to schools to support improvements in education quality. Schools can choose to apply the grant to their most pressing necessities, from minor renovation of their infrastructure and facilities, acquire teaching and learning materials, or paying overdue utility bills. A novel feature of the SBG programme in Lao PDR is that it is to be managed jointly by the school principal, teachers and a community based group called Village Education Development Committee (VEDC). The SBG is one component of a growing number of School Based Management (SBM) programmes being implemented and evaluated around the world. The SBG programme increases the amount of funding for schools and authorizes local decision-making. Now it has been extended to the secondary education level.

Quality improvement in remote areas

A component of the Education For All – Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) programme addresses the unreached group with an equivalency programme delivered through mobile teachers; and community-based school readiness programmes. The equivalency programmes through mobile teachers will support the deployment of mobile teachers to villages without a school in priority districts. These villages will be among the poorest and most remote in the country, will have very low literacy rates and few individuals with any formal education. The Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) leads the implementation of this component building upon experience with equivalency programmes through ongoing cooperation with UNESCO. Mobile teachers are recruited from new graduates from Teacher Training College and experienced teachers, preferably from the same ethno-linguistic group. The programme provides additional capacity building and monetary incentives for the teachers undertaking this difficult work.

⁵ Project Completion Report - Improving In-service Teacher Training for Science and Mathematics Education (ITSME)

⁶ Child Friendly School – Case Study: Lao PDR, UNICEF 2011

⁷ School Based Management in Lao PDR - RAND EDUCATION – Feb 2013

Partnership Strengthening

As an effective coordination mechanism with development partners, the MoES set up a functioning working group at the central level commonly known as Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) led by the deputy minister of MoES and comprising with representatives from development partners and key officials from MoES. In this forum, the ESWG partners submit comprehensive and informative reports or statements about the status of interventions, reviewing the achievement, effectiveness of the aid and submission of the new initiatives for the all-round development of the education sector. Lao PDR appears to have an extensive aid coordination structure overall based on several documents, plans, sector working groups, an aid management platform, and a National Round Table process. The National Round Table process serves as the primary platform for aid effectiveness in Lao PDR, of which the ESWG is part. It is led by the Government of the Lao PDR and co-chaired by the UNDP.

The Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, calling for harmonization of support provided by development partners, is an important tool for ensuring a coordinated donor response that is fully aligned with government policy and programming priorities.

EFA - Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI)

Introduction

The MoF signed the grant agreement with the Fast Track Initiative Catalytic Fund in August 2010 and grant agreement of AusAID Trust Fund in July 2011 to support the implementation of the Lao PDR's EFA - Fast Track Initiative Programme. The programme will terminate at the end of August 2014.

Programme components

In the EFA-FTI programme, there are two components. The component A - Access and quality for pre-primary and primary education - is comprised with 5 sub-components named "Community-Based Contracting for School Construction", "Community Grants", "Quality Inputs", "National School Meals Programme", & "NFE".

The component B - Stewardship of education sector at local, provincial and central levels - is endeavored with 5 sub components such as "Strengthen Policy Planning and Implementation Capacities at central and local levels", "Strengthen Functioning of EMIS", "Student Assessment", "Strengthen M & E Capacity", & "Programme Management".

General status (As of April-May 2014)

As per mission report as of April-May 2014, 98% of the targeted schools were completely constructed. The two rounds of SBG for all schools have been implemented. Under the quality inputs sub-component, out of targeted 10,500 VEDC members, 9,533 (91%) members have been trained. The training for school principals and head teachers under the sub-component 3 has been completed only 1%. The in-service teacher training and training scholarships are in progress. Under the national school meals programme, 316 primary and pre-primary schools were covered. The mobile teacher programme belongs to NFE is in progress covering 282 villages out of 300 villages targeted. Being an initiative approach, it is being implemented only in some selected districts in three provinces. A new concept community based school readiness programme (playgroup) began in April 2013 in a few villages as a pilot.

The EMIS, under the component B is functioning well and the education statistics are regularly update and available through Lao Edu-Info. ASLO and EGRA are products of the student assessment sub-component. The M & E and programme management sub-components are still continued with some progress.

Progress towards the EFA Goals

Goal 1: Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

Lao PDR is very much aware of the essential period of the development of children. Children's overall development depends on the environment and experiences what they are treated, particularly in the first three years of their lives. The early childhood is the most significant period for brain development for their cognition, language skills, social and educational skills.

In Lao PDR, Articles 14 and 15 of the Education Law of 2007 refer to early childhood education or ECCE, dividing ECCE into two subcomponents: crèches and kindergartens. Crèches receive infants from the age of 3 months and children up to age 2 years. Kindergartens provide services for children aged 3–5 years. Some strategies for efficient pre-primary and primary education include an enhanced ECCE school readiness curriculum as part of a comprehensive inclusive education curriculum, and implementing village and community-based ECCE programmes to enhance school readiness. Community caregivers were trained to deliver the programme in existing community location, targeting 5 years old children in the villages. Despite human resources and other constraints such as insufficient ECCE facilities, poor awareness of parents and care takers on ECCE, misconceptions of some ethnic minorities on ECCE, the approach provides school readiness programme for children in some remote and poor communities.

During this period, the MoES, particularly, the Department of Pre-primary and Primary Education implements various programmes for ECCE including expansion of the ECCE centers, training for ECCE care takers and teachers, and community based ECCE centers as well. The NGOs and other development agencies also participated in this area such as ECCE project jointly implemented by Aide et Action and MoES.

EFA NPA main targets:

- Reach an enrollment rate of 11% for 3- and 4-year-olds in 2010, and 17% in 2015.
- Reach an enrollment rate of 30% for 5-year-olds in 2010, and 55% in 2015.
- Attain a share of enrollment of 25% in private KG in 2010, and 30% in 2015
- Attain a share of enrollment of 20% in community kindergarten (KG) in 2010, and 30% in 2015.
- Reach New Admissions Rates for those with ECCE experience of 27.1% (girls), 27.5% (boys) and 27.3% (total) in 2010/11, and 50.3% (girls), 50.2% (boys) and 50.2% (total) in 2015/16.

Table 1: Assessment of target indicators and performance indicators distance to the achieving EFA goals of ECCE

Key Indicators	Target set in EFA-NPA in 2015	Performance indicators		Gaps
	(a)	2006 (b)	2014 (c)	d= a-c
GER (5 years old children)	55.0%	16.1%	60.8%	5.8%
% of new entrants to primary Grade 1 who have attended some form of organized ECCE Programme	50.2%	10.8%	45.4%	4.8%
Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR)	15	17	18	3

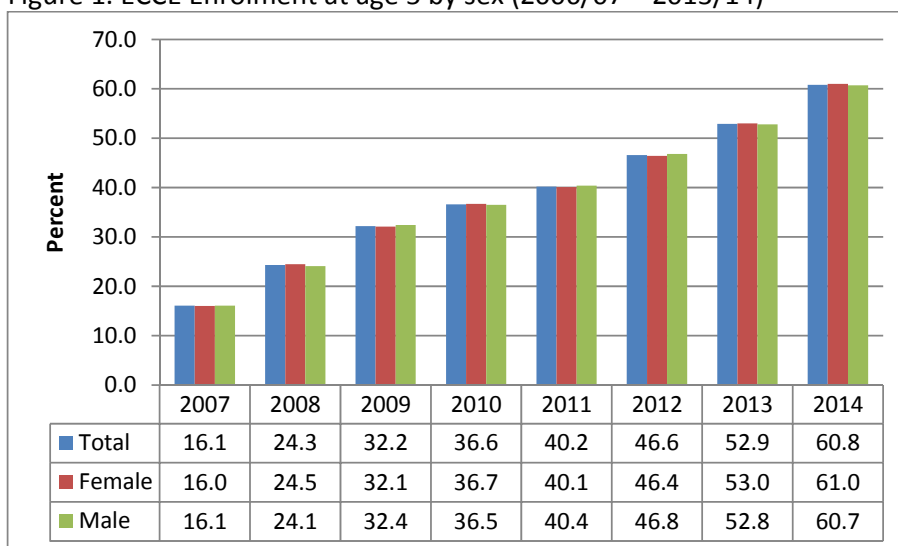
Source: Lao EduInfo + EMIS 2013-14

● yet to achieve ● achieved

Access to ECCE

According to the EFA-NPA, Lao PDR's ECCE programme aims to reach an enrolment rate of 11% for 3 - 4 years old children in 2010 and 17% in 2015. The ECCE enrolment of aged 3 - 4 years old children in 2013-14 is 27.0% (female 27.3% and male 26.8%). It is already met the target set in the EFA-NPA. The increment of the ECCE classrooms (2,557 in 2006-07 and 6,837 in 2013-14)⁸ could be one of the supporting facts, but most of the increment took place in urban villages and private sector. For 5 years old children, the ECCE enrolment in 2013-14 is 60.8% (Male 60.7% and Female 61%) which indicates that the ECCE enrolment of age 5 children is also met the 2015 target (55.0% in total).

Figure 1. ECCE Enrolment at age 5 by sex (2006/07 – 2013/14)



The gender disparity does not see in the ECCE enrolment at age 5 and the progress of the enrolment within less than 10 years is very noteworthy, 44.7%. The average yearly growth rate is around 6%.

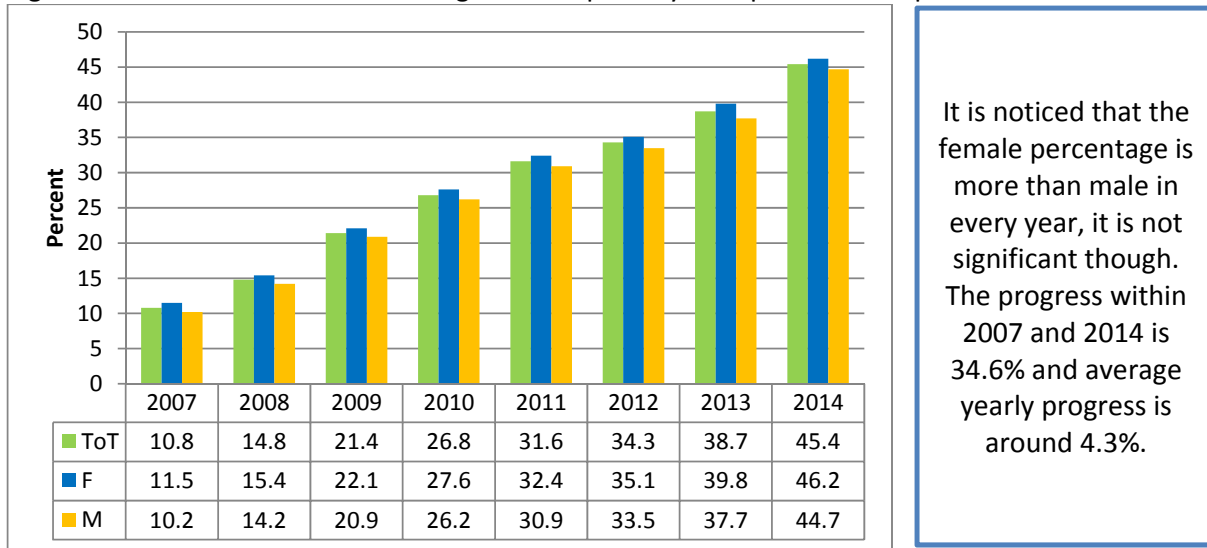
Source: Lao EduInfo + EMIS 2013-14

⁸ Source: Lao EduInfo + EMIS 2013-14

New Entrants to grade 1 of primary with pre-school experience

Since the trend of the ECCE enrolment is an upward trend as shown in the figure 1, the trend of the percentage of new entrants to grade 1 of primary with pre-school experience is also an upward trend in Lao PDR. It was 10.8% in 2006-07 and became 45.4% in 2013-14. It is already met with the target set for 2010 (27.3%), and it is also strongly believed that the target will be met in 2015 (50.2% in 2015-16).

Figure 2. Percent of new entrants to grade 1 of primary with pre-school experience

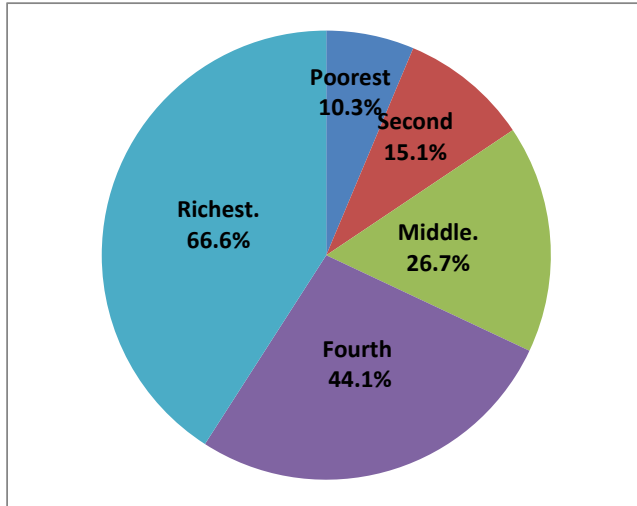


Source: Lao EduInfo + EMIS 2013-14

However, the disparity of the grade 1 entrants with pre-school experience was clearly seen among the rich families and the poor. According to a recent survey called “Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS – 2011-12 - which is based on the technical framework of Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)), the households were classified into 5 categories of the wealth level: richest, fourth, middle, second, and poorest, depending on the assets of the sampled households in the study such as possession of house, owning of the lands for agriculture, and having some household accessories (car, motorcycle, telephone, furniture and so on). According to the LSIS, 67% of children living in the richest family attended pre-school while only 10% of children from the poorest families did so. It was found out that the correlation between the wealth index and the percentage of new entrants to grade one of primary was highly positive correlation (Correlation coefficient = 0.9). Furthermore, this survey highlighted that it was positively correlated with the education level of mother as well. The higher the mothers’ education level, the more new entrants to grade 1 of primary with pre-school experience.

Figure 3. Grade 1 entrants with pre-school by wealth index

Source: LSIS – 2011-12



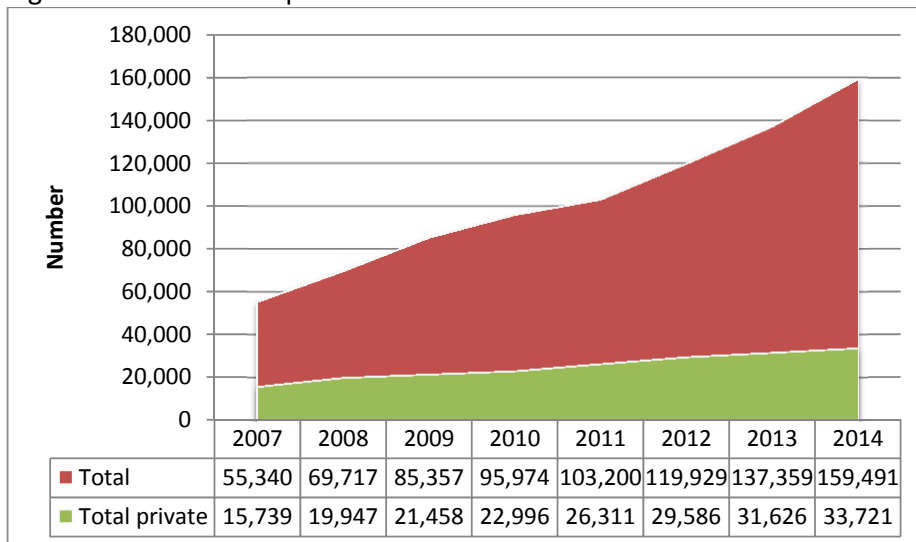
Picture: Khin Kyu (At a pre=primary school in Vang Vieng)



Similarly, the disparity between the four ethnic language groups can be seen obviously according to the LSIS (2011-12). 35% of children from Lao-Tai group joined the grade 1 of primary education with pre-school experience. It was higher than the double of children from other 3 groups: Mon_Khamer (13.4%), Hmong-Mien (12.6%) and Chinese-Tibetan (14.5%). The distribution of the ECCE facilities (mostly in urban areas), slow expansion of the community based school readiness (e.g. play groups), limited advocacy dissemination of ECCE to the parents especially in the ethnic groups (parents do not send their children to the ECCE centers) are possible contributing factors.

Private vs. Public ECCE

Figure 4. Enrolment in private ECCE



It is noticed that the enrolment in public ECCE is around 4 times of the private sector so far. It is linked with number of ECCE centers /schools in both private and public (1,668 vs. 7,294 in 2013-14)

Source: Lao EduInfo + EMIS 2013-14

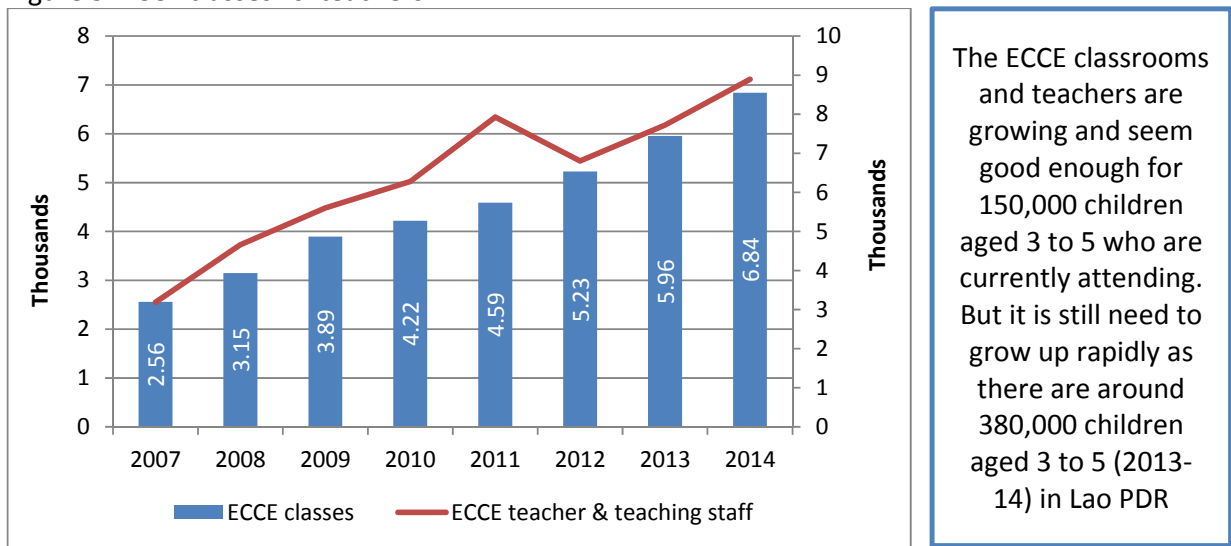
The ECCE enrolment is increasing in both public and private sector as a whole country. Due to the expansion of the community based ECCE programme and extension of the ECCE centers, the

annual growth rate of enrolment in public ECCE is slightly higher than the private one⁹. The enrolment in private centers was about 21% of the total ECCE enrolment in 2013-14. It is also indicated that the share of enrolment in private sector is still yet to reach 2015 target set in the EFA-NPA (30% in 2015). From the aspect of the average size of ECCE centers (students divided by number of classes), the public school size is about 17 students per class while the private center size is about 20 students per class in 2013-14. But the spread of the private pre-school was very skewed as nearly 60% of them housed in Vientiane Capital and there were no private pre-school in Saravan and Phonsaly Provinces so far¹⁰.

ECCE classes vs. teachers

Mainly due to the construction component of the EFA-FTI project, the ECCE classes are rapidly increased. It was only 2,557 in 2006-07 and became 6,837 in 2013-14 (Source: EMIS). According to the EFA-NPA, new ECCE classes are to be created about 200-300 annually. According to the EMIS, the annual growth of ECCE classrooms is more than 300 every year (starting from 2006-07 to 2013-14).

Figure 5. ECCE classes vs. teachers



The ECCE classrooms and teachers are growing and seem good enough for 150,000 children aged 3 to 5 who are currently attending. But it is still need to grow up rapidly as there are around 380,000 children aged 3 to 5 (2013-14) in Lao PDR

Source: Lao EduInfo + EMIS 2013-14

The trend of ECCE teachers, however, is not straight as the classroom increment. It was distorted in year 2010-11. At 2010-11, the GoL allowed MoES to recruit more teachers not only for ECCE but also for basic education as per the demand made by MoES. In the following years, some ECCE teachers did not involve in the ECCE sector and transferred to other sectors and primary level.

The pupil teacher ratio (PTR) in ECCE in Lao PDR was 17 students per teacher in 2007 and 18 students per teacher in 2014. In some provinces, the gap PTR in ECCE between 2007 and 2014 is noteworthy, for example, in Xiengkouang province, it went down from 29 to 19 while 25 to 19 in Laungnamtha. In contrast, it was increased from 14 to 17 in Attapeu and 15 to 19 in Saravan¹¹. The

⁹ Based on the Lao PDR EMIS, the Geometric Mean of growth rates of public ECCE enrolment from 2006-07 to 2013-14 was 0.16 while the private one was 0.10.
¹⁰ EMIS 2013-14
¹¹ EMIS 2012-13

underlying causes of the variation of PTR in ECCE especially in those areas need to be explored. The underlying causes and issues are very likely to be guidelines for the improvement of not only the ECCE but also general education. The attrition of the ECCE teachers, increment of the ECCE children, unbalanced distribution of ECCE children at ECCE facilities (many children in some facilities while the other facilities have not many children) are interesting facts to explore as a further analysis.

It can be proudly concluded that almost all ECCE targets set in the EFA NPA (2003- 2015) are met. As most of the targets met are closely related to the access, the learning and quality of the ECCE are issues still yet to address. The equity issue is also still remained especially among the ethnic groups, remote areas and some provinces. In addition, there are some data gaps in ECCE. For example, the data from private sector ECCE is very limited so that the analysis between public and private sector cannot be comprehensive. Similarly, due to the lack of community based ECCE information, the EFA NPA main target number 4 is not able to measure. Obviously, the finance data on ECCE such as public expenditure on ECCE should be in a database so as to make analysis easily. To describe well the ECCE of Lao PDR, the data gaps mentioned need to be fulfilled.

Goal 2. Universal Primary Education

The Article 19 of the Lao PDR Constitution states:

“The State emphasizes the expansion of education in conjunction with building a new generation of good citizens. Education, cultural and scientific activities are the means to raise the level of knowledge, patriotism, love of the people’s democracy, the spirit of solidarity between ethnic groups and the spirit of independence. The pursuit of compulsory primary education is important. The state permits private schools that follow the state curriculum”.

In response, the Prime Minister issued the Decree of Order on Compulsory Primary Education in Lao PDR in 1996, which identified the 5 main principles of compulsory primary education including five years of schooling, all citizens at age 6 receive primary education without any discrimination, all enrolled children must complete primary education, allow public and private education, and the services in the public schools are free of charge.

EFA NPA main targets:

- Convert 80% of incomplete primary schools to complete schools by 2010.
- Reach an Apparent Admission Rate of 100% for both girls and boys by 2010.
- Reach a Gross Enrollment Rate of 95.8% (girls), 97.8% (boys), and 96.8% (total) in 2010, and of 100% for both girls and boys in 2015.
- Reach an Effective Enrollment Rate of 89.7% (girls), 91.4% (boys), and 90.6% (total) in 2010, and of 97.8% for both girls and boys in 2015.
- Reduce Repetition Rate in Grade 1 to 10% for both girls and boys in 2010, and to 3% in 2015.
- Reduce Dropout Rate in Grade 1 to 5% for both girls and boys in 2010 and to 2% in 2015.
- Reduce Dropout Rate in Grade 5 to 1% for both girls and boys in 2010.
- Increase Primary Completion Rate to 75.4% (girls), 79.5% (boys), and 77.4% (total) in 2010, and to 88% (girls), 88.3% (boys), and 88.1% (total) in 2015.
- Increase the survival rate to Grade 5 to 79.4% (girls) and 77.9% (boys) in 2010/11, and 94.9% (girls) and 93% (boys) in 2015/16.

Table 2: Assessment of target indicators and performance indicators distance to the achieving goal of EFA universal primary education

Key Indicators	Target set in national plan and policies in 2015	Performance indicators		Gaps
	(a)	2006 (b)	2014 (c)	d= a-c
Net Intake Ratio (NIR)	100%	70.4%	96.3%	3.7%
Net Enrolment Ratio (NER)	97.8%	86%	98.0%	0.2%
Survival Rate to last grade of primary	95%	61.6%	77.5%	17.5%
Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR)	33	31	24	7

Source: Lao EduInfo

 yet to achieve  achieved

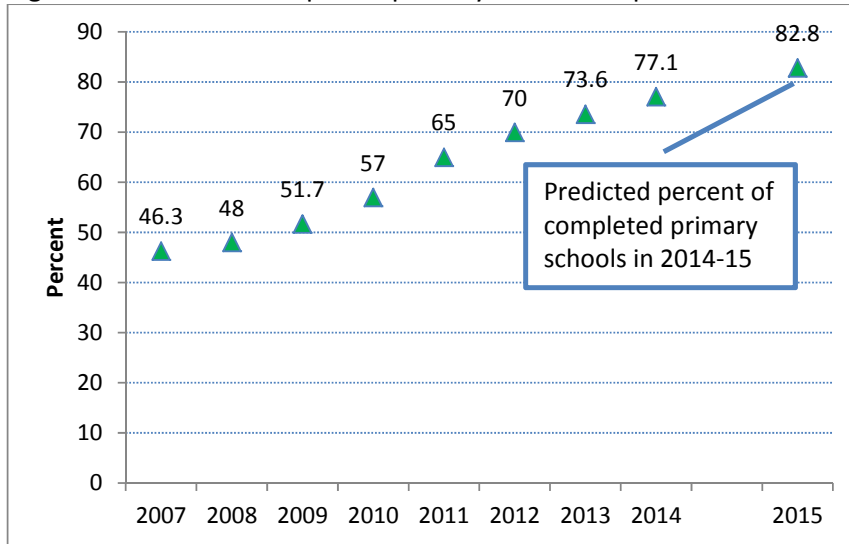
Completed vs. total primary schools

In Lao PDR, there are 2 types of primary school: complete and incomplete primary schools. Due to some infrastructure constraints, some primary schools do not provide a complete primary cycle (up to grade 5), then it is labelled as incomplete primary school. The majority of incomplete primary schools reside in rural and remote areas. As some students are not comfortable to pursue their education in other place, they drop the schools before their primary education is completed. The MoES perceives that it is one of the contributing factors affected the retention of students in the system. The MoES, therefore, targeted to increase the percentage of the complete primary school. According to the available data in the Lao EduInfo (a published education database using the DevInfo¹² platform), it is unable to calculate the percentage of the conversion rate or incomplete to complete primary school. However, the percentage of complete primary school out of total primary schools can be used as a proxy indicator for the first main target (convert 80% of incomplete primary school to complete primary school in 2010). In the EFA-FTI project (2010 – 2014), one of the components focused on construction of the primary schools. It could be a main reason to increase the complete primary schools in Lao PDR at present.

As per current trend, the percent of completed primary schools in Lao PDR is steadily increased. By using the Least Square Method, the predicted percent of the completed primary schools in Lao PDR is nearly 95.6% in 2015.

¹² DevInfo^[1] is a database system developed under the auspices of the [United Nations](#) and endorsed by the [United Nations Development Group](#) for monitoring human development with the specific purpose of monitoring the [Millennium Development Goals](#) (MDGs),^[2] which is a set of [Human Development Indicators](#). DevInfo^[3] is a tool for organizing, storing and presenting data in a uniform way to facilitate data sharing at the country level across government departments, UN agencies and development partners – Source: Wikipedia

Figure 6. Percent of completed primary school and prediction

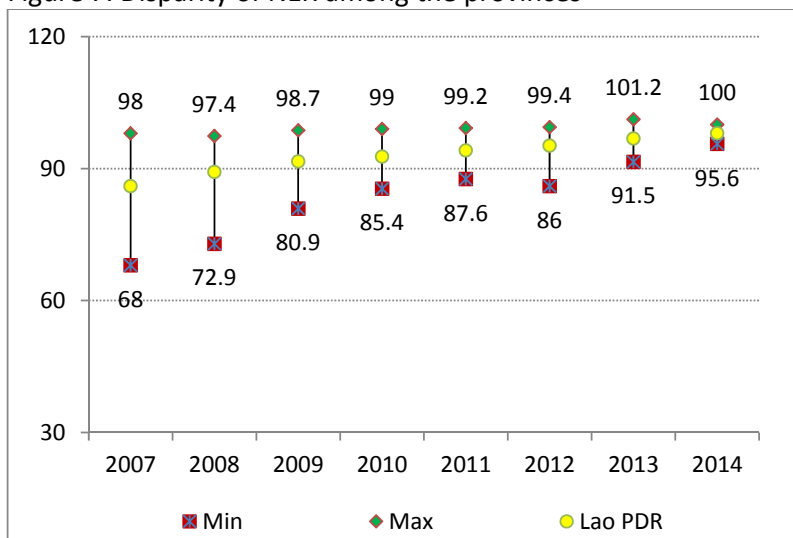


As per current increment, about 83% primary schools will be completed schools in 2014-15. It is also meant that about 1,500 primary schools yet to be completed schools. Moreover, the phasing out of major projects with school construction component is an emerging challenge.

Net and adjusted Enrolment of primary education

To measure the achievement of the goal 2, one of the main indicators, net enrolment ratio (NER) will be presented. The NER in primary education of Lao PDR is steadily increased and it indicates that the improving NER has been reached the target (98% in 2015). The gender disparity of primary NER is very minimal (97.6% for female and 98.4% for male in 2013-14). The disparity of primary NER among the provinces was obviously seen in the previous years. However, it became smaller and smaller over the last years (see figure 7). It is approved by a minimum and maximum analysis of primary NER among the provinces by year in Lao PDR.

Figure 7. Disparity of NER among the provinces

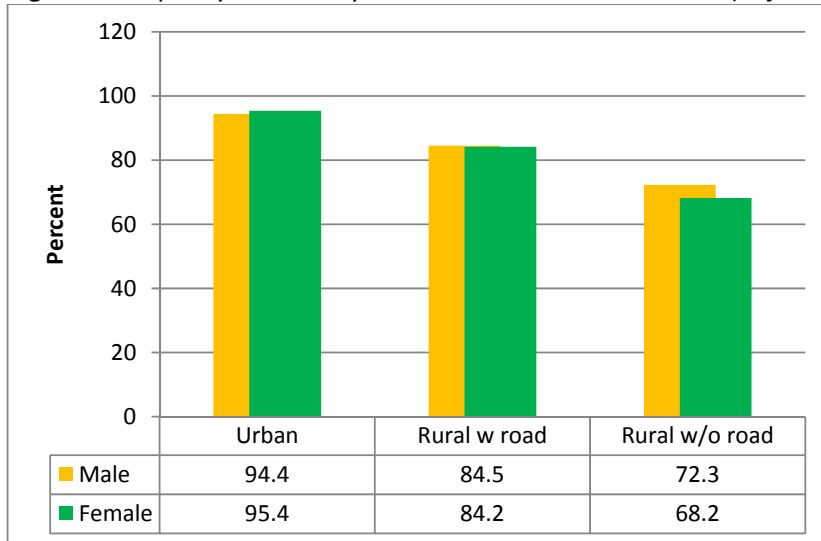


Source: Lao EduInfo + EMIS

Primary NER in Luangprabang Province was 101.2% in 2012-13. It was found out that the migration of many novices (young monks) who were not counted in the head count population, but as students

The disparity of primary school attendance was existed between urban, rural with road and rural without road according to the Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS 2011-12).

Figure 8. Disparity of Primary School Net Attendance Ratio (adjusted)



The disparity particularly for female was obvious. While there were about 5 out of 100 primary- school-going aged girls in urban, over 30 girls at the same age group in rural without road were out of schools.

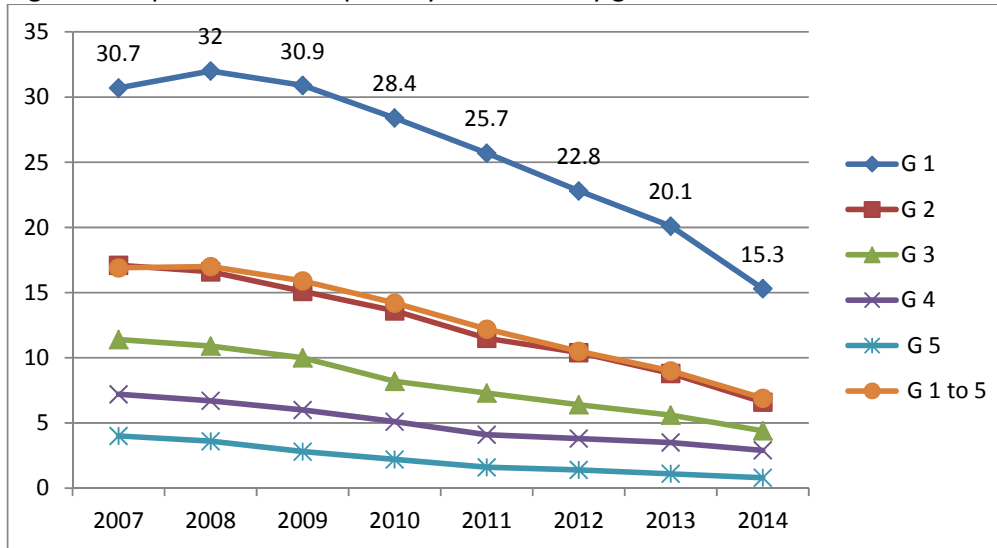
Source: LSIS (2011-12)

As a preventive measure, the MoES currently emphasises in primary and secondary schools construction in rural areas together with dormitories particularly for the secondary level. The recruitment of teachers for remote areas is being increased by giving additional incentives. From the other side of a coin, The Department of Non Formal Education (DNFE) increases their efforts on the Non-formal Education programme especially for the dropped out children from formal schools in rural area by recruiting the mobile and part-time teachers, provision of the NFE primary and secondary level education and so on.

Repetition in primary education

The repeaters of primary education in Lao PDR is an issue to achieve some EFA and national strategies targets such as survival rate and completion rate of primary education. The biggest portion of repetition occurs at grade 1 of primary level. Although absolute number of repeaters of the first graders is going down (85,598 in 2006-07 to 35,479 in 2013-14), but the repetition rates in grade 1 is still higher to date.

Figure 9. Repetition rate of primary education by grade

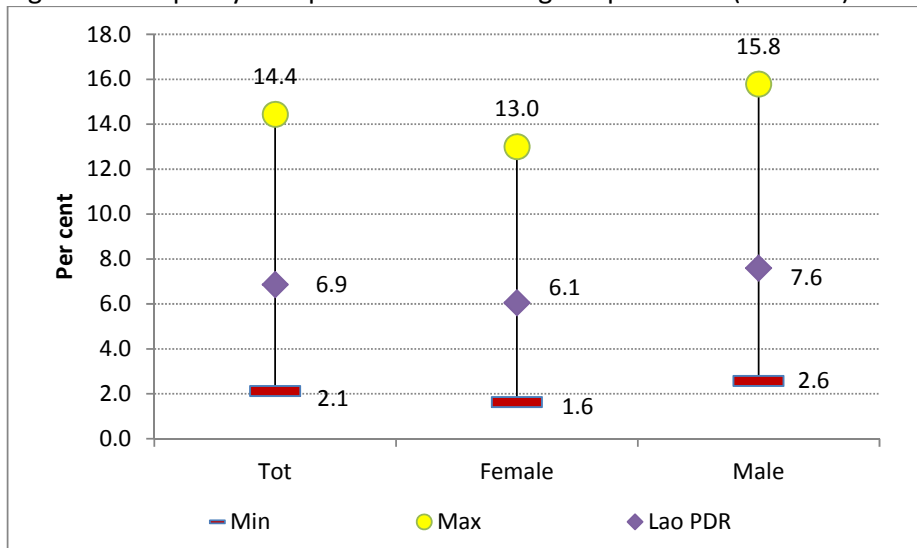


Male repetition is always higher than female at every grade in every year. The repetition rate of primary level (G 1 to 5) is somewhat similar with the grade 2.

Source: Lao EduInfo + EMIS

The gender disparity in repetition rate is not significant, the male repetition rate, however, is always higher than the female's rate in every grade so far. The repetition rate among the province is relatively varied. The lowest repetition rate occurs in the capital and the higher ones happened in Attapeu, Saravan, Khammouan and Phonesaly provinces. As per observation from LSIS, those provinces were with lower school readiness and lower Net Intake Ratio as well.

Figure 10. Disparity of repetition rate among the provinces (2013-14)



The range (max - min) of repetition rate by sex can be observed. The male repetition was slightly higher than the female. But the disparity between provinces was obvious.

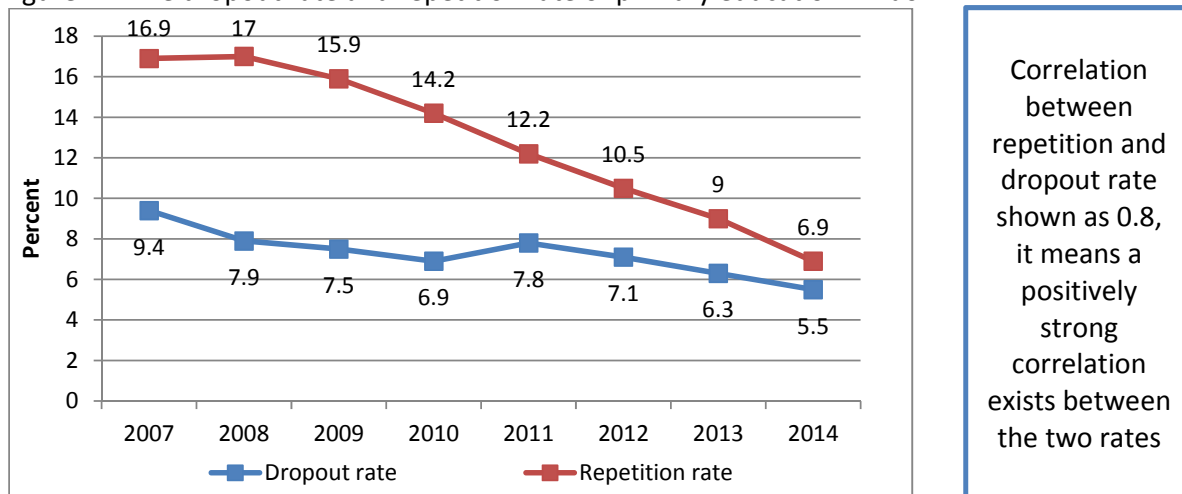
Source: EMIS 2013-14

In terms of the primary repetition rate, there were disparities among the provinces. While a province had only 2% repetition rate, the other was 14% for both sexes. Although it was not obvious the disparity between male and female, it was clearly seen the disparity among the provinces.

Dropout in primary education

As like as the repetition rate, the primary education dropout rate is also a downward trend. The dropout rate in grade 1, however, is still the highest one compared to other grades in primary level. The early and late starters in grade 1, lack of readiness for primary level, and poverty are the possible reasons of the higher dropout rate at grade 1 of primary level. According to the findings from LSIS, the school readiness of under 5 children in Lao was about 24% only in 2011-12. The Net Intake Rate was also 64%. Based upon the said points, most of the children at grade 1 are repeaters and their drop out is also higher. In addition, due to their parents' business, they are forced to drop from their schools, for example, the parents usually bring their children into the fields where they have to go and do their works. In fact, it looks that the reduction of dropout rate is still remained in the past years. The dropout rate in primary education was dropped from 9.4% in 2006-07 to 5.5% in 2013-14. Although the rate is going down, the magnitude of the dropouts in primary is notable as more or less 10,000 primary students drop from primary education every year.

Figure 11: The dropout rate and repetition rate of primary education in Lao PDR



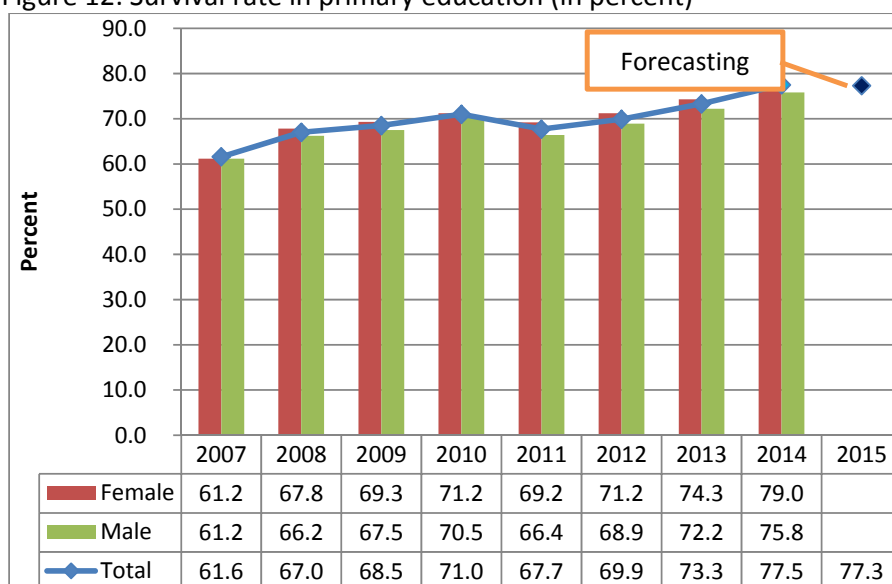
Source: Lao EduInfo + EMIS 2013-14

As a simple analysis, the correlation of the dropout rate and repetition rate is 0.8, meaning the two rates are positively correlated with a higher degree. Conceptually, if the repetition rate is lower, then the dropout rate will also be lower. It generally indicates that if we can reduce the repetition rate, the dropout rate will also be relatively reduced.

Survival Rate in primary education

The survival rate or percentage of children who enrolled at the grade 1 of primary education eventually reached the grade 5 and its forecasting value for 2015 is presented in Figure 12 as shown below. The Least Square Method was used to forecast the survival rate in 2015. Over the period, the survival rate is not significantly improved although the repetition rate is decreased.

Figure 12: Survival rate in primary education (in percent)



Since the forecasting of survival rate for 2015 is 77.3%, the EFA-NPA target is yet to achieve, unless a remedial action is in place by now.

Source: Lao EduInfo + EMIS 2013-14

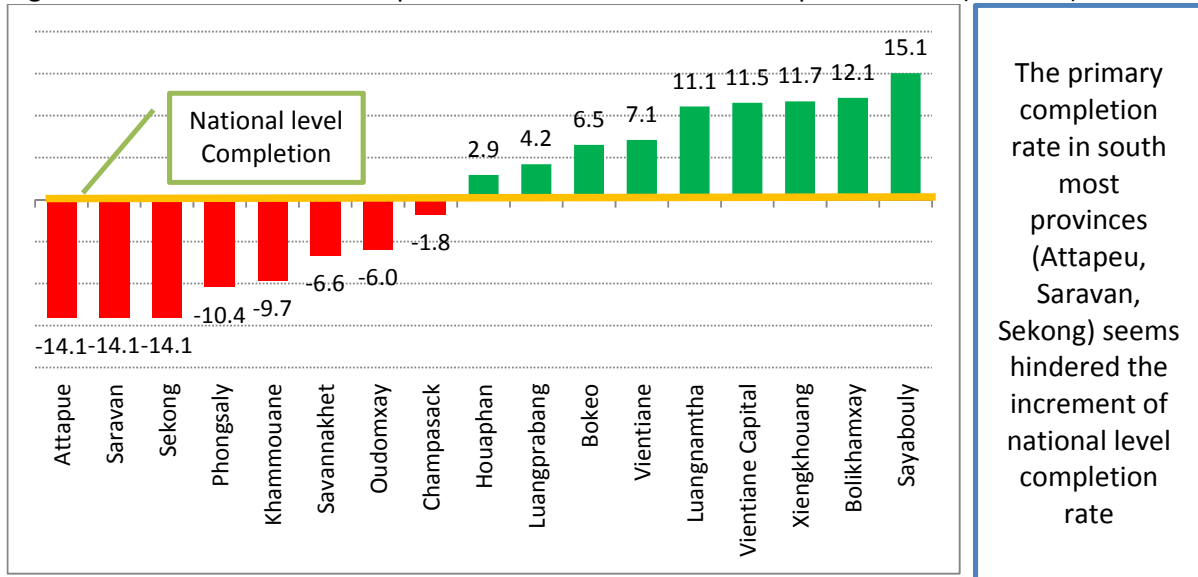
To achieve the universal primary education by 2015, increasing of survival rate must occur at a much more rapid pace than it has been experienced in previous years. According to the past years observation, the Least Square Method shown the forecasting for 2014-15 is 77.3%. Therefore, the target of survival rate, 95% by 2015, is not able to achieve unless a strong remedial action is in place by now particularly the activities which will support the retention of the student in the education system such as school feeding, school block grant, (the activities have been recently implemented), and flexible school calendar for some places. Furthermore, the survival rate is strongly correlated with mother’s education level as well as wealth index (LSIS 2011-12). According to the Spearman’s Rho correlation, it is around 0.9 for both survival vs. mother education and survival vs. wealth of households. It is obvious that the survival rate is strongly and positively correlated with mother’s education level and wealth of family as well.

Primary Completion Rate

The structure of cohort completion rate in Lao PDR is similar with the survival rates. Likewise the survival rate, the completion rate set in the EFA-NPA will not meet with the target according to the past years observation. The disparity between male and female of primary completion rate is not significantly different (Female 77.0 vs Male 72.8 in 2014)¹³. However, the difference between the sub-national level (provinces in particular) can be seen obviously. Nearly half of the provinces need to be enhanced their completion rate as they were lower than the country’s completion rate. In some areas, the difference between the province and country completion was very noteworthy (14% and above).

¹³ EMIS - MoES

Figure 13. Differences between provinces and national level completion rates (2013-14)



Source: EMIS 2013-14

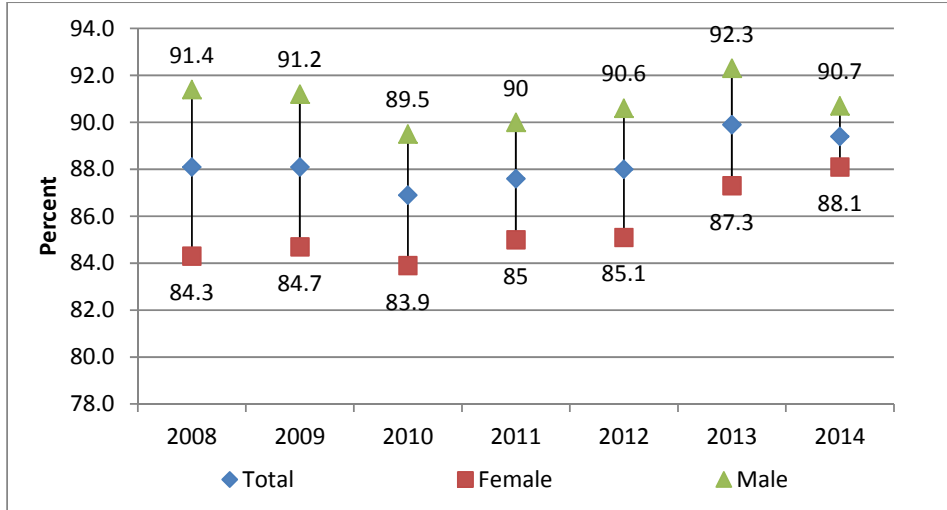
The range of primary completion rate for total (both sexes) among the provinces in 2013-14 was 29.2% and the coefficient of variation is about 14%. These two statistics indicate the measures of dispersion of completion rates among the provinces. According to the said statistics, the dispersion of the completion rate among the provinces in 2013-14 is not widely spread among the provinces. If the completion rates of primary schools in some provinces such as Attapeu, Saravan and Sekong, the completion rate of Lao PDR can be increased.

Transition Rate from primary to lower secondary level

The trend of transition rate from primary to lower secondary was not improved expressively over the past years, it went down and up again in the recent years, especially for male students. Before 2010, the availability of secondary schools with dormitory was very limited and it was affected the accessibility to lower secondary schools, mainly for the students from remote areas. After 2010, the secondary school construction with dormitories was emphasised in order to promote the enrolment of primary school completed students at lower secondary schools. Furthermore, in recent years, the NFE also provides secondary education especially in rural and remote areas. Since the total academic years of lower secondary level provided by the department of NFE is shorter than the formal, many students who completed the primary enrolled in lower secondary level of the NFE programme.

The average (Geometric Mean) of transition rate was only 88.3% over the past years. In the survival rate and completion rate, the female contribution is always higher than the male. Contrarily, the transition rate from primary to lower secondary, the female transition rate is somewhat lower than the male's transition rate. It generally indicates that a certain number of girls who complete the primary education are not able or allowed to pursue the secondary education. It should be one of the agenda to be diagnosed as an activity beyond 2015.

Figure 14. Disparity of transition rate from primary to lower secondary by sex



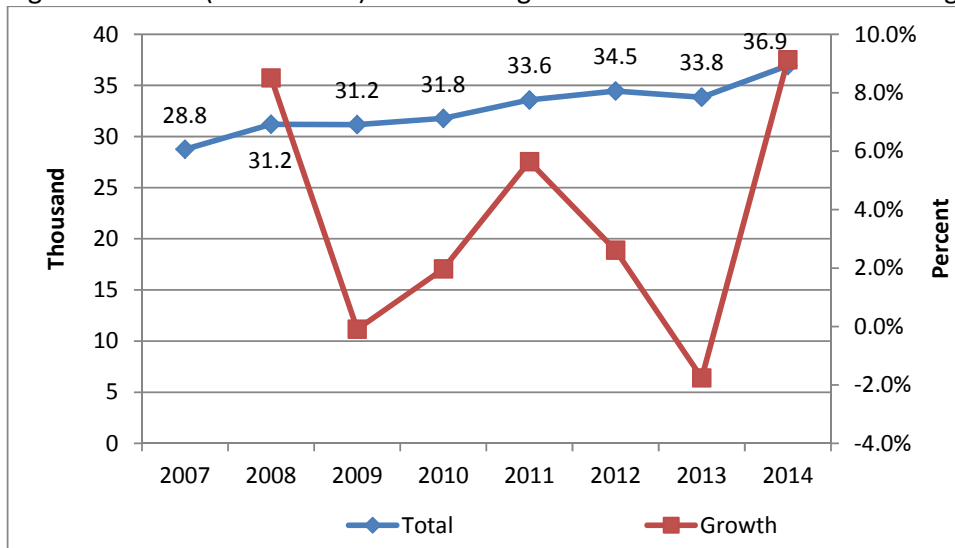
It is an obvious disparity between male and female. A qualitative study is recommended to carry out to explore the causes.

Source: Lao EduInfo + EMIS 2013-14

Teachers in primary education

In Lao PDR, especially for primary level, the classification between teachers and other staff who usually do both administration and teaching responsibilities is not easy, for example, principals, general workers, admin clerks and physical trainers who occasionally involve in teaching at their schools. The current EMIS agreed to compile the teacher and teaching staff instead of teacher only. The total number of teachers and teaching staff was increased from 28,751 in 2006-07 to 36,938 in 2013-14. The female teachers and teaching staff also went up from 13,664 in 2006-07 to 19,757 in 2013-14 while the male were from 15,087 in 2006-07 to 17,181 in 2013-14. However, the annual growth rate of teacher and teaching staff was fluctuated and even went down in the last 3 years.

Figure 15. Total (in thousand) and annual growth rate of teacher and teaching staff



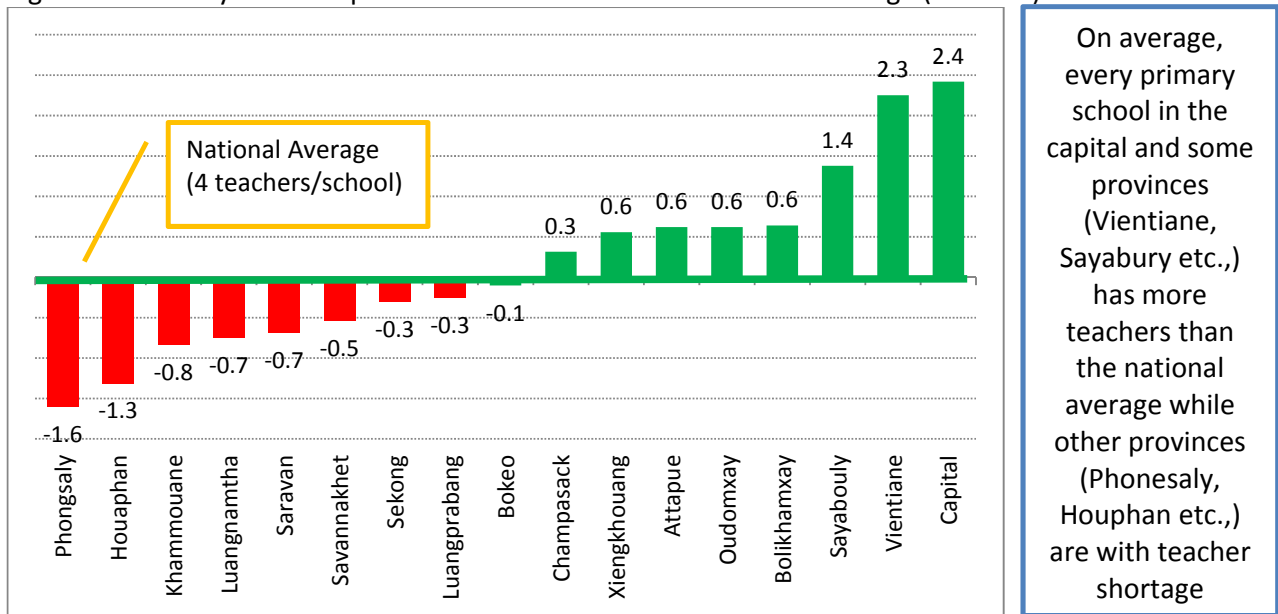
The annual growth rate of primary teachers and teaching staff was fluctuated in the past years depending on the absolute number of primary teachers and teaching staff

Source: Lao EduInfo + EMIS 2013-14

It is probably due to the primary teacher recruitment strategy of MoES. Since 2005-06 to 2012-13, the percentage of education expenditure against the GDP was under 4.0% (against government expenditure was less than 16%)¹⁴. It is one of the main reasons for a plateau of teacher recruitment. Since then the GoL raised the government expenditure on education, increased the teacher salary, and subsidy and provision of stipend for the eligible people who enrolled at the teacher training schools and colleges. It results that the recent teacher growth rate was up again. At present, the MoES has focused on the issue of the shortage and surplus of primary and secondary teachers in some areas. The MoES has been reviewing distribution of teachers by maintaining the increment of teachers in both primary and secondary level.

For Lao PDR as a whole, the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) was around 29 (a mode value of the PTR from 2006-07 to 2013-14). It is acceptable information without taking into account the equity spread of teachers among the primary schools. However, as mentioned above, the distribution of teachers is not well spread. To present the inequity of deployment of teachers among the provinces can be seen in the following graph.

Figure 16. Primary teachers per school deviated from the national average (2013-14)



Source: Lao EduInfo + EMIS 2013-14

The MoES, thus, is still finding an appropriate way of reallocation of the teachers. It is also can be seen as an emerging issue addressing to the equity of the primary schools.

Finance in primary education

The GoL planned to increase public expenditures on education from 13.7 percent in 2010/11 to around 18 percent by 2015. According to data from the Department of Finance of the Ministry of Education and Sports, educational expenditure as a percent of total government expenditure was 16.7 percent in 2012-2013. However, non-wage recurrent expenditure in education such as the expenditures on school materials, equipment, and teacher training and so on remains low

¹⁴ National Education System Reform Strategy (2006-2015) – Annex and Annual report of MoES 2012-13

(Ministry of Finance, 2012). The total spending on education as a percentage of GDP was only 4.7 percent in 20012-13.

The public expenditure on primary education as % of total public expenditure in education was increasing from 28.7 % in 2007/08 to 31% in 2012/13. In this regard, the public current expenditure per primary students was increased from 111,973 Lao Kip in 2007/08 to 1,242,706 Lao Kip in 2012/13.

Table:3. Expenditure on education

Key Indicators	Performance indicators		Growth (% point)
	2006 (a)	2013 (b)	c= b-a
Public expenditure on education as % of total Govt. expenditure	13.6	16.7	3.1
Public expenditure on education as % of GDP	3.0	4.7	1.7
Current expenditure on primary education as a % of GDP	na	1.4	
Public expenditure on primary education as a % of total public expenditure on education	na	31	

Source: Annual Reports, MoES

Education expenditure represented 16.7 per cent of the national budget and 4.7 per cent of GDP in 2013. This indicates a relatively remarkable growth from 2.4 per cent of GDP in 2002 to 4.7 per cent of GDP in 2013.

Goal 3: Life skills and Lifelong Learning

To support the EFA goal 3: “Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programme”, the GoL strives various programmes within the 3 aspects such as non-formal education, secondary education and life skills education including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

The non-formal education programme aiming at increasing the learning opportunities for children, youth and adults who are not enrolled in school or who dropped from schools so as to increase their literacy skills, improve their daily life and reduce their poverty. The programme also provides outreach services such as mobile teachers for those groups who are not able to enrol or access to any formal education system. Furthermore, to be a sustainable opportunity and lifelong skills, the programme laid down a proper transferring system: from NFE to the national education system, meaning a NFE group who completes a respective level of NFE is entitled to join a corresponding grade of the national education system.

The Prime Minister’s Decree on TVET and Skills Development (2010) clearly mandates cooperation among the key TVET ministries; the MOES and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MOLSW). The decree identifies synergies and complementarities between the ministries and provides the basis for stronger cooperation. Under the MOES, there are 22 TVET institutions and 13 institutions belong to others Ministries (in 2013-14). At present, there are only 2 private TVET

providing some programmes such as TVET diploma-level courses in English learning, Information Technology (IT), business, automotive and electrical engineering.

Satisfying the learning needs of young people and adults in the context of lifelong learning are generally enhanced through greater access to post-primary education.

- EFA NPA main targets (youth and adult literacy):**
- Annually enroll 2% of the illiterate adults and 20% of the primary dropouts in non-formal primary courses.
 - Annually enroll 2% of the illiterate adults in adult literacy programme.
- EFA NPA main targets (Lower secondary education)**
- Achieve parity between girls and boys in access to lower secondary education, globally and in the ethnic group and poorest areas.
 - Reach a national transition rate from Grade 5 to Grade 6 of 82.5% in 2010/11, and 85% in 2015/16.
- EFA NPA main targets (Skills development)**
- Annually enroll 2% of the illiterate adults and 3% of primary school dropouts in basic vocational and life skills programme.

Table 4: Assessment of target indicators and performance indicators distance to the achieving goal of EFA youth and adult literacy, TVET and life skills training

Key Indicators	Target set in national plan and policies in 2015	Performance indicators		Gaps
	(a)	2006 (b)	2014 (c)	d= a-c
Youth (15 – 24 years old) literacy rate (Only for female)	99%	67.3% (MICS 2006)	68.7% (LSIS 2011-12)	30.3%
GER in lower secondary education (general)	75%	53.3%	74.4%	0.6%
Enrolment in workplace-based programs and youth skill building training	At least 50,000	n.a.	n.a.	
Enrolled in NFE (primary level)	n.a.	n.a.	61,126	
Enrolled in NFE (lower secondary level)			64,420	
Gender Parity Index of lower secondary GER	1	0.80	0.91	0.09
Transition rate from primary to lower secondary	85%	88.1% (2007-08)	89.4%	4%

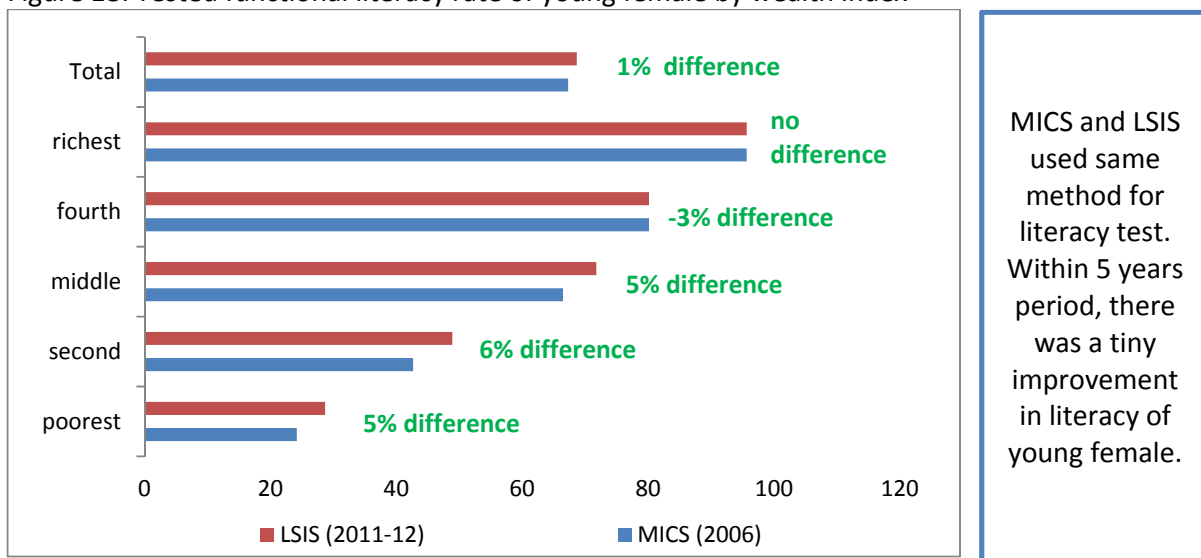
Source: Lao EduInfo + DNFE

● yet to achieve ● achieved

Youth (15 – 24 years old) Literacy Rate

The literacy rate cannot be generated from any routine data collection system including the EMIS in Lao PDR. For the literacy rate, the surveys and censuses conducted in Lao are the main sources. Again, the methodology of literacy data collection is different in censuses and various surveys. Mainly, the censuses collect the self-reported data and the other surveys collect the information with a certain test for literacy. In Lao, there are no literacy surveys after 2002. Currently, the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP), technically supported by UIS/UNESCO is being implemented by MoES. Nevertheless, the following chart displays the tested functional literacy status of the young female (age 15 – 24 years) by the wealth index generated from MICS 2006 and LSIS (MICS/DHS -2011-12). MICS - 2006 did not administer the male questionnaire so that a comparative analysis can be made only for female.

Figure 18: Tested functional literacy rate of young female by wealth index



Source: MICS (2006) + LSIS (2011-12)

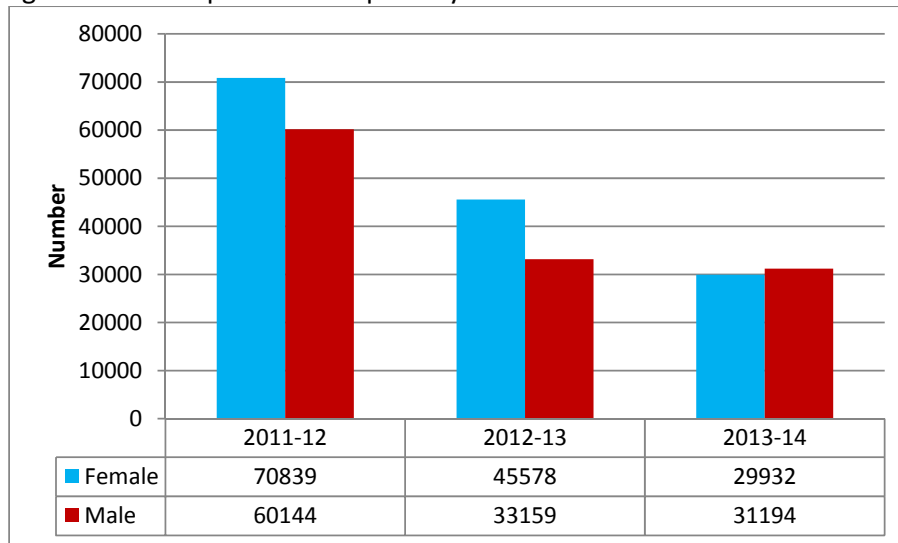
The young female literacy rate is almost same according to the MICS and LSIS survey (both used same test), but interestingly, a slight increment were found out in the poor and middle families.

Non Formal Education (NFE)

The NFE programme provides primary level non-formal education, secondary level non-formal education and some vocational training at the NFE centers or appropriate centers. The education cycle of NFE in Lao PDR is 3 years for primary, 4 years for lower secondary and 3 years for upper secondary. Any participants who completed any NFE level can join the corresponding level of the formal education. For example, a participant who completed the level 3 of the primary NFE can join the lower secondary as similar as a student who completed 4 years of the formal education. The NFE programme accepts the dropouts from the formal education and place them in an equivalent level in the NFE programme.

According to the statistics from department of NFE, the enrolled at NFE primary level were 104,163 in total in 2006-07 and the percentage of completed NFE primary education was 28%. In 2012-13, the total participants of primary NFE was 78,737 and about 38% of them completed the NFE primary level.

Figure 19: Participants in NFE primary level



Apart from 2013-14, the female in the NFE primary level education was higher than male. It seems that the females were more streamed to participate in the NFE where cost is low and time is shorter

Source: Department of Non-formal Education (DNFE), MoES

The participants of primary NFE programme went down in the last three years. It was consistent with the number of NFE teachers in those years. The total number of primary NFE teachers in 2011-12 was 5,116 (844 females and 4,272 males) and it went down to 2,922 (493 females and 2,429 males) in 2013-14. According to the statistics from DNFE, in both years, the male teachers were more than female teachers in NFE programme. It could be the nature of the NFE teachers as most of them were mobile, part-time and usually stay at the remote areas although they receive good incentives. Therefore, most of the male teachers served as NFE teachers other than the females.

The DNFE collects the NFE statistics through sub-national NFE centers. They, however, do not have any proper data collection system and most of their information and statistics are derived from the various reports provided by the centers. The establishment of a data collection in the NFE area is an issue. Due to the lack of proper data collection system, some data are not available to measure the EFA-NPA targets such as “annually enroll 2% of the illiterate adults and 20% of the primary dropouts in non-formal primary courses” and “annually enroll 2% of the illiterate adults in adult literacy programmes”.

Furthermore, there are no proper database systems to record all the statistics related to the NFE programme so that it is very difficult to generate some statistics and indicators and make analysis on NFE. The DNFE usually keeps their statistics in excel files which are also not in a standard format, use different Excel format in different years. For example, in some years, their excel files are with completed participants by level, but it is different with another year and so on. Obviously, it is urgently necessary to improve in the area of data and information management of the NFE programmes.

The NFE centers have been established at central, regional and all provinces. Currently, the NFE centers are expanding up to the district level. It is expected that the district NFE centers will cover all districts in 2014. It will be an enhancement of the management of the NFE programmes being implemented in Lao PDR. Usually, the literacy programmes and NFE vocational training were being

held at the Community Learning Centers. As per current record, 321 CLCs are established, but only half of them are functioning¹⁵.



A Community Learning Center (CLC) and Vocational Training at the CLC

Lack of appointed responsible-person or NFE facilitator at CLCs is one of the main reasons of malfunctioning of the CLCs.

Vocational Training

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is clearly specified as one of the four sub-sectors of the education system in the revised version of the Education Law of Lao PDR promulgated in July 2007. The TVET is divided into three levels: primary or first level (at upper secondary level), middle level and high level (at post-secondary level). Thus TVET belongs partly to upper secondary education and partly to post-secondary education, which is formally part of higher education according to the definitions.

Satisfying the learning needs of young people and adults in the context of lifelong learning are generally enhanced through greater access to post-primary education. The transition rate from primary level to lower secondary schooling has increased from 78.8% in 2007/08 to 89.4% in 2013/14 (Male - from 80.3% to 90.7% and female - from 76.9% to 88.1%).

Out of 37 vocational & technical schools in 2013/14 (22 under MoES, 2 under Ministry of agriculture and Irrigation, 4 under Ministry of Information & Culture, 5 under Ministry of Public Health, 2 under Ministry of Justice and 2 private schools), the students enrolled at the 22 TVETs belong to MoES seemed increased in the last 5 years. The annual growth rate, however, was not obviously increased. Moreover, the proportion of female enrolment is around 37% of the total enrolment over the period. From this observation, a general conclusion can be made as the GoL's expectation - 50% of female participants in the TVET in 2015 - is still yet to meet.

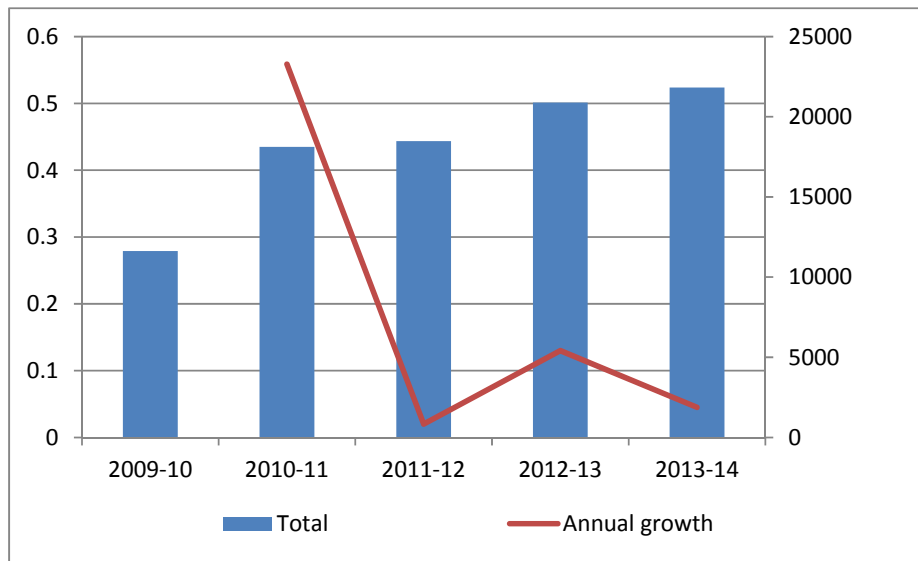
Table 5: Number of students enrolled at 22 TVETs belongs to MoES

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Female	4352	6686	6990	7717	8288
Male	7273	11,435	11,494	13,169	13,538
Total	11,625	18,121	18,484	20,886	21,826

Source: Department of TVET, MoES

¹⁵ TVET policy review, UNESCO, 2013 and discussion with NFE team

Figure 20: The total enrolment in public TVETs and annual growth rate



The absolute number of enrolment was increased, but the growth rate of the enrolment indicated as a downward trend.

Source: EduInfo + EMIS 2013-14

In fact, there are enough spaces at the public TVET institutions to accommodate the enrolled students as planned. But the challenge is in the demand side, most of the student interests to continue their study in higher education rather than going to the post-secondary non tertiary (at the TVET). Even they fail from the entry exam to public higher education institutions where there are with limited spaces, they are welcomed from the private institutions for their higher education.

In terms of quality, the education and training provided in TVET institutions is generally poor. This is due to several factors, including shortages of appropriately qualified and trained teachers and a lack of textbooks and teaching aids. The TVET institutions often lack of facilities such as laboratories, IT laboratories and modern equipment.

It is one of the areas in education sector to be strengthened. It obviously indicates that the goal 3 is not able to achieve in 2015 from the aspect of quality and quantity of the technical and vocational training being implemented in Lao PDR. The major issue is that although several strategies and policies have been developed, most of them are still yet to materialise. To achieve the expectation related to the TVET, a detailed action plan, including specific annual interim targets are necessary to prepare in the near future.

Secondary Education

As per education cycle of Lao PDR, the lower secondary is for 4 years and upper secondary is for 3 years. Altogether, both private and public, 962 lower secondary schools, 33 upper secondary schools and 591 complete secondary schools (1,586 in total) are functioning in Lao PDR in 2013-14 Academic Year.

The current GER of lower secondary in 2013-14 was 74.4% (72.0% female and 76.7% of male), it indicates that the lower secondary GER is almost reached to the EFA-NPA target (75%). In the meantime, the upper secondary GER was 41.3% in 2013-14 (38.1% of female and 44.3% of male).

Another key indicator, the transition rate from primary to lower secondary has met with the EFA-NPA target as mentioned in the Table 4 above.

In accordance with the Basic Education Sector Development Plan (BESDP – 2007-2012), the MoES, in collaboration with development partners, completed the construction of 68 secondary schools with 144 classrooms and 28 teacher rooms in 20 districts belong to the selected 6 provinces of the country. Furthermore, the School Block Grant (SBG) has covered all secondary schools currently. In addition, the stipend scheme for secondary students is still in progress.

Goal 4: Literacy- Adult Literacy Rate

This goal calls for an increase in adult (age 15 and above) literacy by 50 per cent by 2015. According to the population census 2005 of Lao PDR, the adult literacy rate (age 15 years and older) was 73% (Male 83% and female 63%) while it was in 60% in 1995 population census. The adult literacy rates in the population censuses were generated from the self-reported answers of the respondents and based only on the Lao language.

- EFA NPA main targets (youth and adult literacy):**
- Annually enroll 2% of the illiterate adults and 20% of the primary dropouts in non-formal primary courses.
 - Annually enroll 2% of the illiterate adults in adult literacy programme.
 - Reported adult literacy 98.8% and tested adult literacy 61.3% in 2015-16 (Table 8 – Non Formal Education, EFA-NPA Plan)

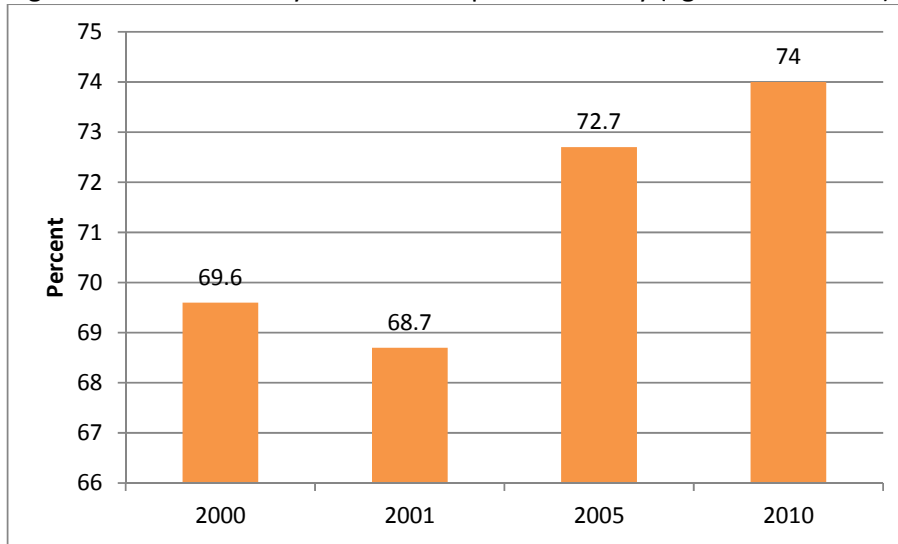
Table 5: Assessment of target indicators and performance indicators distance to the achieving goal of EFA adult literacy

Key Indicators	Target set in national plan and policies in 2015	Performance indicators		Gaps
	(a)	2006 (b)	2014 (c)	d= a-c
Annual enrolment of the illiterate adults in adult literacy programme	2% annually	n.a.	n.a.	
Reported adult literacy rate	98.8%	73% (Census 2005)	74% (Labour Force Survey 2010)	25%
Tested adult literacy rate	61.3%		63.3% (LSIS)	2%

Source: Census 2005 + Labour Force Survey + LSIS ● yet to achieve ● achieved

In general, the availability of information related to the literacy rate is limited. According to the information from some available sources, there was no significant progress in literacy over the period. For example, according to the results obtained from Population Census (2005) and Labour Force Survey (2010), both exercises used similar method of literacy data collection, were very closed each other and no significant progress was seen over the period (73% in population census (2005) vs. 74% in Labour Force Survey (2010)).

Figure 21: Adult Literacy Rate – self reported literacy (age 15 and above)



Population Census 2005 (self-reported) as well as LSIS (Tested Results) commonly indicated that nearly half of population living in rural without road area were illiterate

Source: UNESCO – UIS and Labour Force Survey (2010)

At present, the Department of Non-formal Education (DNFE) is a main agency implementing the literacy programme. In Lao PDR, the literacy programme and campaigns were stopped in 1981 as the country made a literacy declaration. Although the declaration was out, some people were still illiterate and some literate people also became illiterate during the stopping period. The literacy programmes resumed early 2000s.

In the NFE programme, there are 3 levels; level 1 focuses on literacy skills and level 2 and 3 uses the curriculum of primary level of the formal education. Any participants who complete the NFE level 1 to 3 can enroll at the first grade of lower secondary level. However, most of the participants stop their study after NFE primary level. One of the reasons is the curriculum of the lower secondary is very difficult for the students who graduated from the NFE primary level (The DNFE uses the curriculum from the formal education). Therefore, the Department of Non-formal Education is preparing a flexible secondary level curriculum for the NFE students. The development of the flexible secondary curriculum for NFE students is linked with the GoL's objective which is "all citizens must complete at least lower secondary level in 2020". According to the current information and situation, it is a very ambitious objective.

In the meantime, lack of proper data collection system in the Department of Non-formal Education is a hindering factor to estimate the literacy and measure the EFA-NPA targets related to the youth and adult literacy. The establishment of a data collection system at the department or incorporating the core information collection into the existing EMIS system will be a beyond 2015 agenda. The department is now expanding the district NFE centers to cover all districts in Lao PDR, it is targeted to complete in 2014-15. If every district is with NFE center, then the implementation of the NFE programme and data collection will be more feasible to reach some targets and fill the current data gap.

Goal 5: Gender parity and equality in education

The GoL keeps their awareness on gender equity and gender balance in education sector as like as other sector. Therefore, EFA-NPA clearly guided to focus the gender parity as following;

- Establish a gender and education policy
- Systematically use sex-disaggregated data
- Set target goals specifically for girls and women, in addition to overall targets
- Encourage and train parents to support girls' education
- Promote girls' school attendance based on various incentives

Being a cross-cutting issue, the aims and targets are highlighted in various levels of education sector. The education statistics and indicators are also available with sex disaggregation.

EFA NPA main targets (Gender parity and equality):

- Reach a primary level Apparent Admission Rate of 100% for both girls and boys by 2010
- Reach a primary level Gross Enrollment Rate of 95.8% (girls), 97.8% (boys), and 96.8% (total) in 2010, and of 100% for both girls and boys in 2015
- Reach a primary level Effective Enrollment Rate of 89.7% (girls), 91.4% (boys), and 90.6% (total) in 2010, and of 97.8% for both girls and boys in 2015
- Achieve parity between girls and boys in access to lower secondary education, both globally and in ethnic group/the poorest areas
- Increased enrolment in Grades 10-12 (upper secondary) with parity in gender enrolment (ESDF)
- In workplace-based programs and youth skill building training, minimum of 50,000 students per annum from 2012 with 50% female (ESDF)
- 50% female enrolment across higher education and teacher education (ESDF)

Table 6: Assessment of target indicators and performance indicators distance to the achieving goal of Gender parity and equality

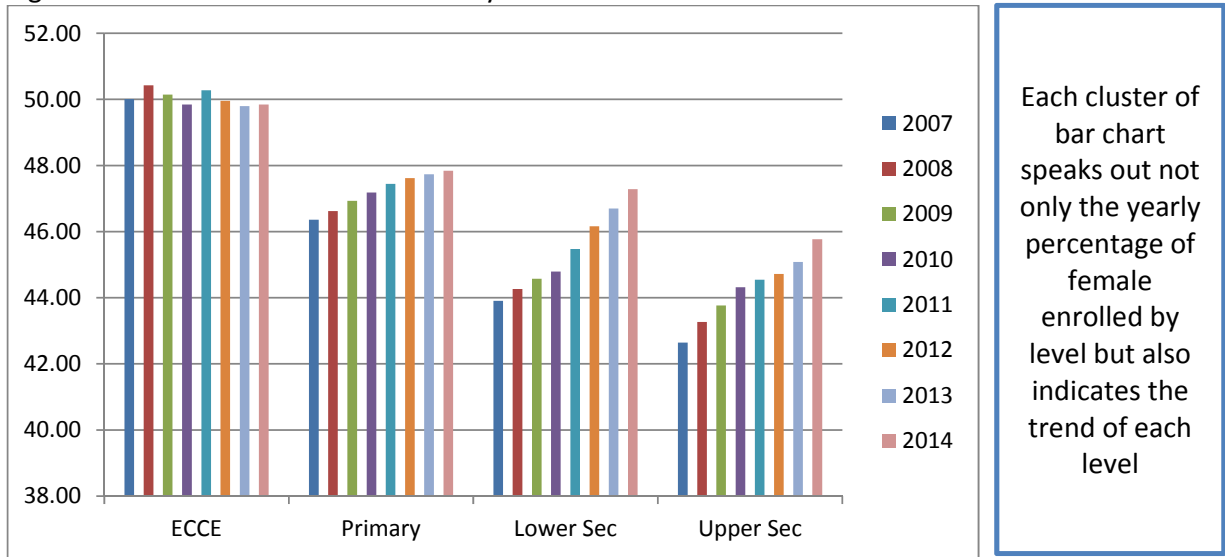
Key Indicators	Target set in national plan and policies in 2015	Performance indicators		Gaps
	(a)	2006 (b)	2014 (c)	d= a-c
Primary level GIR for girls	100%	121,2%	120.7%	20.7%
Primary level GER for girls	95.8%	112%	117.4%	21.6%
Primary level NER for girls	89.7%	85%	97.6%	7.9%
GPI of the NER of Lower secondary	1	0.81	0.94	0.6
GPI of the NER of upper secondary	1		0.86	0.14

Source: Lao EduInfo + DNFE

● yet to achieve ● achieved

The female enrolled as percentage of total enrolment by various education levels can be seen in the chart below;

Figure 22. Percent of female enrolled by education level



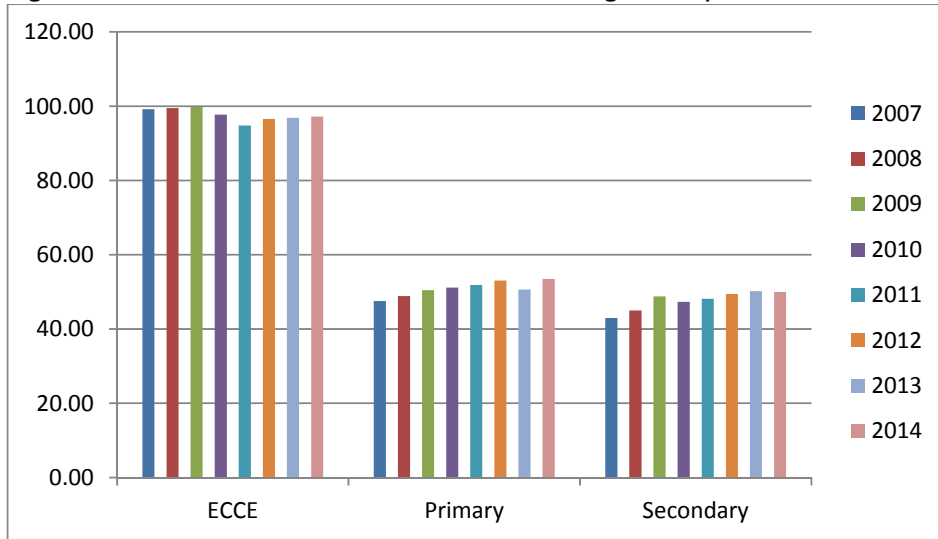
Each cluster of bar chart speaks out not only the yearly percentage of female enrolled by level but also indicates the trend of each level

Source: EduInfo + EMIS 2013-14

The percentage of female enrolled in ECCE was fluctuated around 50% starting from 2006-07 to 2013-14. However, the percentage of female enrolment in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary were apparently lower than the ECCE. But within each level, except ECCE, the percentage of female enrolled was gradually increased throughout the year 2006-07 to 2013-14. Traditionally, there was an attitude that the primary level education is enough for girls. Nowadays, this attitude has been gradually changed due to the various advocacies and media. It results that parents or guardians want their girls to continue further education as possible as they can. Furthermore, the construction of the new schools and dormitories at secondary schools is another driving cause of uprising of the female enrolment in lower secondary and upper secondary.

The similar observation is applied for yearly percentage of teachers and teaching staff of ECCE, primary and secondary level respectively.

Figure 23. Percent of female teacher and teaching staff by education level



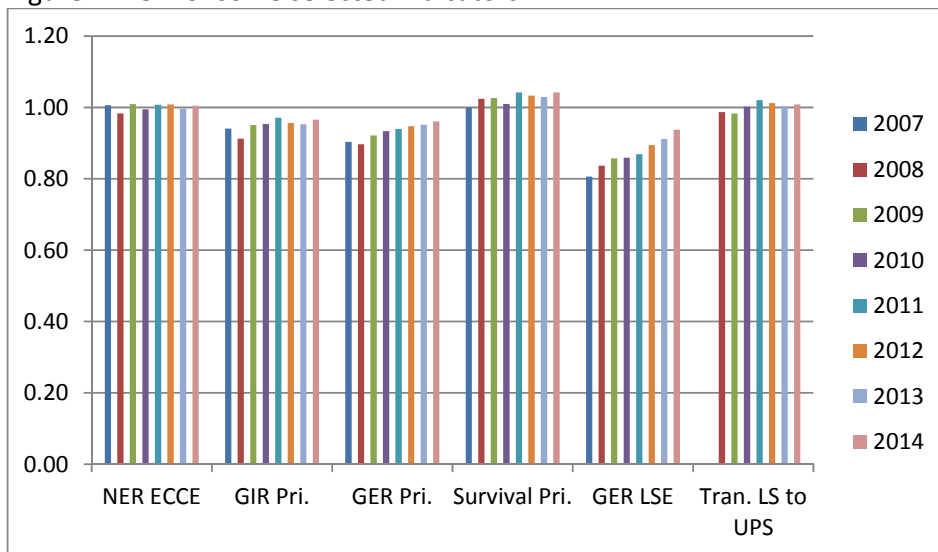
Percent of female teachers in ECCE is close to 100% in every year while it is around 50% in primary and secondary level

Source: EduInfo + EMIS 2013-14

It is obviously seen that the portion of female ECCE teachers was almost 100% in all years (from 2006-07 to 2013-14). The percent of female teacher at primary and secondary level was almost half and it is fluctuated around 50%. Nowadays, the teacher career in Lao PDR is also attractive professional from the aspect of nature, stability and incentives of the job, so not only female but also male teachers emerging into the teaching professional especially in the primary and secondary level.

Again, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) of some selected indicators can be observed from the following chart in which the GPIs of some indicators in ECCE (at age 5), primary and secondary level.

Figure 24. GPI of some selected indicators



Each cluster of bars speaks out 2 information, the GPI of the corresponding indicator as well as trend of the GPIs

Source: EduInfo + EMIS 2013-14

It can be seen that the GPIs of the NER of ECCE level was quite closed to 1 over the period of 2006-07 to 2013-14. Again, the GPIs of GIR in primary level and of GER in primary level can be observed from the Figure 24. It can be easily see that the GPI was not reached at the even stage. However, the GPI of survival was up again and closed to 1 or over 1 even. It indicates that female survival rate is higher than the male survival rate in primary level. In other words, females were retained more in the education system than their counterpart males. The GPI of GER in lower secondary was increased over the period of 2006-07 to 2013-14. It indicates that female involvement in lower secondary is obviously improved during this period. By looking at the GPI of transition rate from lower to upper secondary level, the female transition rate was almost at the even stage. As a whole observation, this graph speaks out the educational path of females from ECCE to upper secondary level.

Goal 6: Improved Quality of Education

During the long journey of EFA, the Ministry of Education has reorganized for more efficient management of education services. In order to improve the vertical management structure and capacity, the MoES has set up and strengthened the Provincial Educational Services and District Education Bureaus in all provinces and districts and implemented many capacity building programmes. Horizontally, the MoES replaced and formed some departments and centers to improve the quality of education. For example, the General Education Department was replaced with Department of Pre-primary and Primary Education (DPPE) and Department of Secondary Education (DSE) in 2008. A number of centers were also formed with their specific terms of reference such as Inclusive Education Centre, National Education Standards and Quality Assurance Center, National Research Institute for Educational Science, Education, Statistics and Information Technology Center.

From software part of the education reform, aiming to improve the education quality, the MoES has been implementing many programmes in the whole country as well as in some selected areas, in collaboration with development partners. The Schools of Quality (SoQ) is an initiative that addresses access and quality in basic education as the country strives to meet its commitments to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA). Now the SoQ has been integrated in the national ministry's long-term plans as Education Quality Standard (EQS), and the consequently high profile EQS has gained in development discourse between the GoL and development partners.

The GoL also paid attention on the enhancing of the school facilities as a part of the access and quality of education. The percentage of complete primary schools improved from 48% of total primary schools in 2007-08 to 73.6% in 2012-13. Similarly, the percentage of primary schools with water sources improved from 44.4% in 2007-08 to 57.3% in 2012-13. The primary schools with sanitary latrines became from 46.1% in 2006-07 to 59.6% in 2012-13.

EFA NPA main targets (Gender parity and equality):

- Improve the management and coordination of the delivery of teacher education
- Develop a comprehensive but flexible teacher training curriculum
- Capacitate all teacher trainers through a training of trainers programme to suit the different modalities of teacher training
- Improve management capacity in Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) through management training
- Provide research evidence to underpin the planning and implementation of the Teacher Training Enhancement and Status of Teachers (TTEST) component
- Increase the recruitment of and rate of retention of teachers, and improve their status through teacher incentives.

Table 7: Assessment of target indicators and performance indicators distance to the achieving goal of quality of education

Key Indicators	Target set in national plan and policies in 2015	Performance indicators		Gaps
	(a)	2006 (b)	2014 (c)	d= a-c
Female enrolment across teacher education (ESDF)	50%			
Percent of students enrolled at Teacher Education Institute who received scholarship (ESDF)	40%			
Percent of teachers receive in-service training annually	20% (annually)			
Decrees issued over 2010 in support of strengthening teacher training and enabling teacher education institutions to offer a 12+3 degree programs	Yes, done	No	Yes	
New teacher training curriculum developed over 2010-2012 reflecting the 5+4+3 school organizational structure	Yes, done	No	Yes	

Source: MoES

yet to achieve  achieved 

Teacher Qualification

As one of the important parts of the quality of education, the teachers' professional development is an area focused by the MoES. The total number of teacher by education level for pre-primary schools is given as follows;

Table 8: Trained Pre-primary Teachers by education level

YEAR	Less than (8 + 3)	Graduate (8 + 3)	More than (8 + 3)	Others	Total
2009-2010	514	790	1,808	67	3,179
2010-2011	526	798	2,101	91	3,516
2011-2012	1,332	1,821	873	81	4,107
2012-2013	558	858	3,096	87	4,599
2013-2014	561	993	3,699	219	5,472

Source: EMIS

According to the EMIS, the total pre-primary teachers and teaching staff in 2013-14 were 8,893 (8,648 female vs. 245 male). The female teachers in pre-primary level were more than 50% of the total pre-primary teacher in 2013-14. Out of the total, 5,472 (62%) have been trained by a training system (from education training institutions and education colleges). Again out of the trained pre-primary teachers¹⁶, 68% were "more than 8+3" education level and it was followed by "graduated 8+3" level (19%).

Table 9: Trained Primary Teachers by education level

YEAR	Less than (8 + 3)	Graduate (8 + 3)	Graduate (11 + 1)	More than (11 + 1)	Others	Total
2009-2010	8,778	8,268	13,214	1,212	155	31,627
2010-2011	8,278	8,653	13,386	2,184	110	32,611
2011-2012	7,434	8,745	13,303	3,926	114	33,522
2012-2013	6,781	9,596	13,403	5,616	102	35,498
2013-2014	5,681	10,023	12,880	7,387	338	36,309

Source: EMIS

In 2013-14, there were 36,938 primary teachers and teaching staff with 19,757 females and 17,181 males according to the EMIS. The proportion of female primary teacher and teaching staff was 54% and GPI of the primary teacher was 1.2. The trained primary teachers in 2013-14 were altogether 36,309 (98% of all teachers). Among the trained teachers, most of the primary teachers were with education level of "Graduate (11+1)" (35.5%) and it was followed by the primary teachers with education level "Graduate (8+3)" (27.6%).

¹⁶ Trained teacher refers the teachers who have been trained at Education Training Institutes and education colleges in Lao PDR

Table 10: Trained Secondary Teachers by education level

YEAR	Less than (8 + 3)	Graduate (8 + 3)	Graduate (11 + 1)	Graduate (11 + 2)	Graduate (11 + 3)	More than (11 + 3)	Others	Total
2009-2010	83	4,487	1,257	234	10,636	3,650	63	20,410
2010-2011	93	4,818	1,289	285	13,367	4,382	52	24,286
2011-2012	75	4,236	1,050	309	16,116	5,734	44	27,564
2012-2013	64	3,731	750	327	18,691	7,156	44	30,763
2013-2014	68	3,153	532	621	19,214	8,832	205	32,625

Source: EMIS

There were altogether 32,746 lower and upper secondary teachers and teaching staff in Lao PDR in 2013-14 comprising with 16,378 female teachers (50%) and 16,368 male teachers (50%)¹⁷. Among them, 32,625 secondary teachers (99.6% of the total) were trained teachers in 2013-14. The most trained secondary teachers (59% of the trained secondary teachers) were with education qualification “Graduate (11+3)”. It was followed by the trained secondary teachers with education level “More than (11+3)” (27% of the trained secondary teachers).

Table 11: Pupil teacher ratio (PTR) in Lao PDR

Year	Pre-primary	primary	secondary
2007	17	31	25
2008	15	29	22
2009	15	29	24
2010	15	29	21
2011	13	27	20
2012	18	26	19
2013	18	26	18
2014	18	24	18

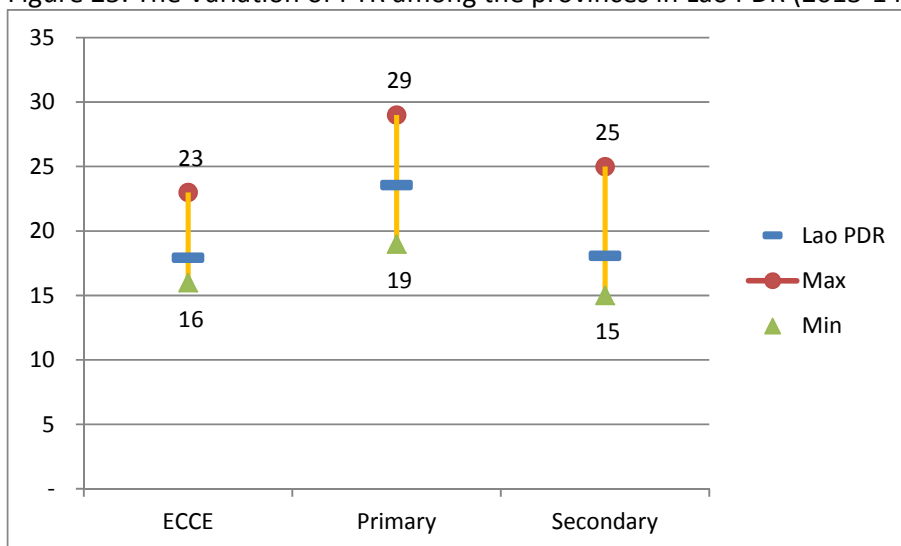
Source: EMIS

As a whole, the pupil teacher ratio in Lao PDR for pre-primary, primary and secondary seems good as the average PTR is 16 in pre-primary, 27 in primary and 21 in secondary level respectively. The range of PTR over the period is 3, 7, and 7 in pre-primary, primary and secondary level respectively.

The PTR among the provinces is varied. In some provinces, the PTR is obviously higher than the national average. It indicates two possibilities; there are surplus teachers in the particular area or it may be few students attending at schools. The variation of PTR among the provinces was obviously seen in primary and secondary level, according to the EMIS data of 2013-14 Academic Year.

¹⁷ EMIS

Figure 25: The Variation of PTR among the provinces in Lao PDR (2013-14)



The ranges of PTR among the provinces at ECCE, Primary and Secondary level were described.

Source: EMIS 2013-14

Learning Achievements

From the aspect of measuring the learning achievement of students in Lao PDR, the National Assessment of Student Learning Outcome (ASLO) for primary grade 5, conducted in 2006 and 2009 were developed by the Research Institute for Educational Sciences of MoES.

According to the findings from ASLOs, over three-quarters of fifth grade students were functional (Levels 3 & 4) in Lao language (78.5% in 2006 and 77.5% in 2009). However, over 50% of fifth graders were at level 2 in 2009. The learning outcomes in mathematics were particularly poor, and declining in 2009 (as 49.1% at level 2 in 2006)¹⁸.

Overall progress

As per current observation, most of the targets particularly for access to ECCE and primary were already met the EFA-NPA targets of Lao PDR. For example, the targets of enrolment ratios, transition rates are already met. Some targets such as expansion of the completed schools, Gender Parity Index, student flows and survival rates, participation in TVET and life skills training are on the track and very possible to achieve on 2015-16 or a few years beyond 2015. The target related to the youth and adult literacy, NFE programmes, quality improvement of education services are areas need to be enhanced with some new initiatives. The data gaps and lack of proper data collection system still exist in some sub-sectors of education. For example, the community based ECCE, Literacy and NFE progress, TVET and life skills and higher education are the areas need to strengthen their data and information collection. In along with the routine data collection system, some spot check surveys and qualitative oriented surveys are necessary to describe the achievements and progress of education sector in Lao PDR.

¹⁸ ASLO 2006 and 2009

Review of EFA Strategies and Sector Management

Goal 1: Early Childhood Education

The ECCE aiming at the development of children in school, and to prepare 5-year-old children to learn before going to primary education has been introduced in Lao since early years of 2000. In addition to the school-based ECCE programme, the Community-Based ECCE programme has been initiated to support parents to stimulate children for early learning. The objectives of early childhood care and education in Lao PDR are: (i) providing cognitive, physical, and social stimulation, and (ii) preparation for primary school. Moreover, the inclusive education programme is a part the ECCE component too. In order to achieve the objectives, the MOES developed a policy on ECCE and designed a long-term low-cost and sustainable ECCE strategy, including the promotion and establishment of both community and private crèches and kindergartens. Consequently, the number of ECCE schools was increased from about 1,100 ECCE schools in 2006-07 to 2,100 ECCE schools, in addition to the ECCE classes situated in some primary schools¹⁹. Recruitment, training and deployment of ECCE teachers to meet increased demand are another objective of the ECCE strategy. In connection with this, MoES increased the capacity of pre-school teacher training institutions, allocated scholarships to students-teachers agreeing to sign a contract with the Government for teaching in a government or community KG centre for a minimum duration of 3 years and increased the salary of the ECCE teachers.

Although the construction of the ECCE schools and classrooms is increased at present, it is still yet to meet the target of the GoL's strategy for ECCE sector development. The community based ECCE programme is currently being implemented with the supports from AusAID, FTI and World Bank in some selected areas. The community based ECCE programmes are monitored and mentored through regular visits by the early childhood development focal point from the DESB (District Education & Sports Bureau). However, the functioning, regularity and quality of the community based ECCE centers and service providers there are still in question. According to the observation, some trained ECCE teachers are not involved in the ECCE sector after their training as they can earn more in other business.

A prerequisite for introducing school- readiness programme is willingness by the community to establish the programme and to provide space for the class, either in a home or community space. The community-based school readiness programme targets 5 year-old children in villages with an incomplete school (grades 1-2 or 1-3) that has no pre-primary classroom. In practical, the school readiness programs are taught by caregivers who are with at least five years primary education and they use a condensed version of the formal pre-primary curriculum. They are provided a small monetary incentive to implement the readiness program. Although the programme is led by the Department of Pre-primary and Primary, it is acknowledged that the community based school readiness programme is not same standard as formal pre-primary classes, as the caregivers are not qualified teachers. This is a pragmatic approach that acknowledges the serious human resource constraints in Lao while still offering some form of school readiness programme for children in very remote, poor communities.

So far the statistics related to the community based ECCE programmes and school readiness programme in Lao PDR and at province level are very limited and dynamic. In general, the

¹⁹ Exact figure can be available from the Annex tables of EMIS

necessary statistics and information reflecting the community based ECCE programmes are very limited to measure their achievements.

Interestingly, to measure the development of early childhood, the LSIS developed an index called “Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI)”. The baseline measurement of the index generated by the LSIS was 81.3%, it means that out of 100 children aged 36 to 59 months, about 80 were developmentally on track in Lao PDR²⁰.

Goal 2: Universal Primary Education.

The policy planning matrix will be main reference for the review of the education strategies and management structure particularly for the primary education. The policy planning matrix is based upon the 3 pillars of the ESDP: Expand equitable access, Improve quality and relevance, and Strengthen planning and management (governance).

Under the pillar 1, Expand equitable access, the first policy is reducing cost barriers for education. Under the policy, the GoL has launched a school block grant (SBG) for all primary schools in Lao PDR since 2011-12 school year with the purpose of enabling informal fees to be abolished and to improve quality of learning by providing an operating budget for schools. It has been expanded to the early childhood and secondary education since 2012-13 academic year. Due to the SBG, the participation of community in the school affairs has been increased in general especially for the school plan and allocation of the budget. As a nationwide implementation, the challenges such as timely transfer of the money to schools, monitoring and accounting, and capacity of Village Education Development Committee (VEDC) are being encountered.

Another policy is strengthening of community participation in primary education. It is being encouraged through the VEDC. The VEDC has a critical role in developing of the school development plan and participation in the school level financial management, for example, how to utilise the school block grant effectively in their village. It can be seen as the initial step of the decentralization of education management and governance in Lao PDR. Assessments from provincial and district consultation meetings, however, indicate that much more capacity building for VEDCs is necessary.

20 A 10-item module is used to calculate the ECDI. The ECDI is based on benchmarks that children are expected to reach if they are progressing in their development as the majority of children in their age group develop. Each of the 10 items is used in one of four domains to determine if children are developmentally on track in that domain. The domains in question are:

- **Literacy-numeracy:** Children are identified as being developmentally on track based on whether they can identify/name at least ten letters of the alphabet, whether they can read at least four simple, popular words, and whether they know the name and recognize the symbols of all numbers from 1 to 10. If at least two of these are true, then the child is considered developmentally on track.
- **Physical:** If the child can pick up a small object with two fingers, like a stick or a rock from the ground and/or the mother/caretaker does not indicate that the child is sometimes too sick to play, then the child is regarded as being developmentally on track in the physical domain.
- **Social-emotional:** Children are considered to be developmentally on track if two of the following are true: If the child gets along well with other children, if the child does not kick, bite, or hit other children, and if the child does not get distracted easily.
- **Learning:** If the child follows simple directions on how to do something correctly and/or when given something to do, is able to do it independently, then the child is considered to be developmentally on track in this domain.

ECDI is then calculated as the percentage of children who are developmentally on track in at least three of these four domains.

Out-of-school Children Decreased dramatically with the Community Participation

Village Education Development Committee (VEDC) is the organisation that includes seven village leaders from various sectors in the village and has been promoted by Ministerial Decree since 2008.

Collaborating with VEDC, 90 primary schools in three southern provinces, namely, Sekong, Salavan and Attapeu, decreased out-of-school children from 2,420 (1,150 girls) in 2007 to 106 (67 girls) 2011 with the 4-year assistance of the Project for Supporting Community Initiatives for Education Development (CIED) supported by JICA.

Average NER of the 90 schools increased from 73.42% to 98.82%. School teachers and principals checked the absence of students every day and reported to VEDC to visit the parents of absent students to prevent dropout. The dropout students decreased from 412 (170 girls) to 98 (44 girls). Average dropout rate of 90 schools decreased from 4.13% to 0.74%.

The continuous care and assessment of students by teachers and VEDC had influence on decreasing repetition students reflected in the decrease of repetition rate from 22.24% in 2007 to 9.76% in 2011. Even after the CIED Project, schools continue its development by continuously planning, implementing and reviewing School Development Plan by themselves and frequent meeting of VEDC to follow-up the implementation of School Development Plan.

Although the National Policy and National Strategy and Action Plan on Inclusive Education was endorsed in November 2011, it has been difficult to mobilize a supporting budget for its implementation and the data and information availability is very limited. Some INGOs conducted a number of pilot surveys and initiatives, but national level implementation is yet to happen. For example, AusAID supported a Catholic Relief Services pilot project to train schools and communities in how to help children with disability to access and participate in education from 2012 to 2014. At present, the AUSAid, UNICEF, WB and MoES are collectively seeking a possible way to collect the statistics related to the inclusive education.

The next policy under the first pillar is reducing repetition and dropout rates. In primary education, to reduce the repetition rate, a progressive promotion has been introduced since 2009 which includes provision of additional remedial classes at the schools. Due to the low participation rate in primary school readiness, the early starters at the primary grade 1, language barriers (especially for children from ethnic groups) and so on, the repetition rate especially grade 1 of primary level is still high. Similarly, the dropout rate is also a big challenge. As per observation from the various consulting meetings, the parents take their children with them to their land plot during the schooling time so as to complete their plantation. Without some key interventions to improve alignment of the school year with the agricultural cycle, the drop out will be still remained as a challenge²¹.

²¹ Mid Term Review of ESDF - 2013

Lack of teachers at the schools particularly at the primary schools and low percentage of the complete primary schools due to the small in number of pupils in each school in the rural areas contributes the increasing of dropout of children. It produces the poor survival rate which is significantly far behind the target of the goal 2.

Another factor which makes slower the increment of the survival rate is domino effect of the educationally disadvantage districts. Unless the situation of those areas is improved, the national progress will be still slower. The MoES has identified the 56 most disadvantaged districts of the country (with a total of 144 districts) through ranking districts according to female primary net enrolment ratio and female survival rate to Grade 5. The MoES and Development Partners have agreed that in order to achieve EFA goals, the immediate priority is to focus on these 56 priority districts.

The EFA-FTI Programme is focusing on these 56 districts and provides funds to enable construction of new classrooms, renovation of existing classrooms, targeted community grants and school meals to alleviate barriers due to poverty, and improved quality through upgrading of qualifications of existing teachers and introduction of the schools of quality model. Therefore, in order to achieve the universal primary education, the Lao PDR needs to put some more efforts before and after 2015.

Goal 3: Life skills and Lifelong Learning

Non Formal Education

The GoL makes efforts to improve the literacy skills and enabling the lifelong learning through an increased investment in village-based community lifelong learning centres and adaptation of the Equivalency programmes: a converting system from NFE to the formal education system. The mobile teachers programme also supports the life skills and lifelong learning especially for the out of school children and over aged students. The major issue to measure the achievement of the programme is lack of information. The absence of proper data collection system and integration of the life skills and lifelong learning and the EMIS system is still missing. Percentage of the NFE students who completed their corresponding level, how many of them enrolled to the formal education system are a few indicators to be able to measure the achievement of the NFE and success of community lifelong learning centers.

To complete the primary level, a student needs to spend at least 5 years in the formal education system, but it is only for 3 years to complete the primary level of NFE. Both of them can join the lower secondary school together. In this regards, some parents prefer to enrol their children in NFE other than the formal education system as it can reduce two years for their investment in education and timeline of their children. If it is the case, the quality of the students converted from NFE in primary to the formal education in secondary need to be addressed. So far a comprehensive monitoring system for the equivalency programme between NFE and the formal system is not on the stage.

Lower secondary education

Aiming at the improvement of the transition rate of primary to lower secondary and from lower secondary to upper secondary, the MoES introduced a technical stream for upper secondary after adding the extra year at lower secondary. This, together with a renewal of the secondary curriculum is designed to make learning at the secondary level more relevant to improve both economic and social rates of return of secondary education.

To improve the situation of TVET, the Government of Lao PDR has undertaken a number of actions in the TVET area in recent years, including:

- Preparation of the *Strategic Plan for the Development of Technical and Vocational Education and Training from 2006 to 2020*, which was approved by the Prime Minister in May 2007;
- Preparation of the *Master Plan for the Development of TVET from 2008 to 2015*, which was approved by the Minister of Education in November 2008. The Master Plan identified a range of TVET projects, along with associated indicators, budgets and implementation plans; and
- Development of an Education Sector Development Framework, which provides an overarching strategy for education sector reform.

Absorbing the growing numbers of school leavers and providing the skills needed in the fast-growing economy represent emerging challenges and pose risks for the country's longer-term development prospects. However, the quality of education and training provided in TVET institutions is generally poor. This is due to several factors, including shortages of appropriately qualified and trained teachers and a lack of textbooks and teaching aids. The absence of skill standards and teaching standards means there is no benchmark against which to assess student learning or to assess the performance and development needs of teaching staff. TVET institutions often lack facilities such as laboratories, IT laboratories and modern equipment. Female enrolments are concentrated in traditional female skill areas, despite significant opportunities for employment in non-traditional areas such as carpentry and automotive. In rural areas women and ethnic groups face barriers to TVET access due to a lack of dormitories due to required travel distances.

Goal 4: Adult Literacy Rate

Although it is hard to see a tangible achievement of the goal 4 for Lao PDR, The government still contributes the large amount of the government budget in literacy to be able to sustain the current improvements of literacy.

With the support of DVV International (German Adult Education Association - Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband), a mixed Reflect Methodology has been introduced in adult learning in Laos in since 2003. Training was provided to prepare trainers, and a number of pilot projects were launched with Community Learning Centre. The introduction of the Reflect Methodology to adult learning in 2003 was heartily welcomed in Laos. The impact on the non-formal education sector has been positive.

NFE policy is put in place in order to ensure that, upon completion, participants of NFE programmes are able to obtain equivalency certificates to primary schooling. *Reflect* evaluations continue to praise the empowerment gains, especially for women.

Goal 5: Gender Equality

As per current nation-wide survey, the LSIS, the gender parity index for primary and secondary school adjusted NARs (Net Attendance Rates) of Lao PDR is 0.99 and 1.00 respectively. It is not only supported the findings of the EMIS but also certify one of the achieving targets of the goal 5. However, as we have seen in the table 5, TVET and higher level education are the sub-sectors where gender parity is decreasing.

With the assistance of ADB, the Ministry of education is acting to increase access to formal TVET at certificate and diploma levels for students from remote areas, including girls, through: (i) establishing a national training assistance voucher Programme; (ii) increasing access for students, particularly girls, from remote areas by financing the construction of student friendly dormitory facilities; and (iii) broadening access to vocational training by carrying out a review of TVET certificate entry qualifications to reduce academic barriers to training, as well as the development of new entry qualifications, procedures for the recognition of prior learning and special assistance Programmes. All of these will improve gender parity in enrolments within TVET.

Goal 6: Improved Quality of Education

In order to develop a harmonized approach to quality improvement, the Department of Primary and Pre-School Education (DPPE) has adopted a “Schools of Quality” concept, an approach developed into Education Quality Standard (EQS). The underlying principle for EQS is that all social systems which affect children, particularly schools should be based on the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Lao acceded in 1991. Such rights-based schools not only must help children realize their right to a basic education of good quality but help children learn what they need to learn to face the challenges of the new century; enhance their health and well-being; guarantee them safe and protective spaces for learning, free from violence and abuse; raise teacher morale and motivation; and mobilize community support for education.

The Ministry of Education and Sports now has a policy that all primary schools, supported by Development partners should adopt this holistic approach based on the Ministry’s training module supported by CIED I and II and a minimum set of standards of education along six dimensions of educational quality: a) Inclusive of all children; b) Effective teaching and learning; c) Healthy, safe and protective school environment; d) Gender equity; e) Local ownership and community participation; and f) Effective school management and leadership has been developed to ensure this. Expansion of this holistic model to secondary schools is now beginning.

Lao Australia Basic Education Project (LABEP – 1999- 2007) mainly focused the assistance in the areas of ethnic teacher education, supplementary curriculum development, teaching materials for the needs of ethnic children, teachers’ guides on the use of training materials, training of pedagogical advisors, and on-site advice to, and supervision of, teachers. However, according to the evaluation of the project, supplementary materials, teacher guides and teaching learning kits are no longer used in the schools due to the lack of continuous training and lack of replenishment of the materials.

Emerging and continued challenges

The economic growth of Lao PDR is rapidly growing as the GoL has started decentralise control, encourage private enterprise and accelerate the foreign investment since early years of 2000s. Currently, the growth rate is around 8% according to the World Bank's estimation. In connection with the growth, higher cost of living and bigger economic gap among families are emerging. Urban-rural gap is gradually growing and it is followed by the rural to urban migration. According to the Population Census 2005, about 73,000 population moved into Vientiane capital. In the coming housing and population census (2015), it will be definitely higher. In which many young people who dropped their education and looked for the job opportunities in the city were included. Along with the economic growth, the education especially for young generation is affected. Unless some remedial actions such as lifelong study centers - not only in the rural area but also in the urban area - need to be established for those young people. Furthermore, some educational institutions where the young migrant people pursue their unfinished education should be provided.

According to the population projection based on the 2005 level of fertility, mortality and net migration, the Lao population in 2020 will be around 7.9 million with around 3.4 million of children under age 15 (approximately 40% of total population)²². A proper foundation of educational infrastructure of basic education sector for the future population is an emerging challenge of the MoES by now. In this context, it is necessary to take into account not only the hardware parts such as buildings, materials but also the software parts such as capacity of teachers, quality of education services and so on. The GoL will begin an enabling plan to cope this challenge in a very near future something like "Education Sector Development Plan", "Beyond EFA Plan" and so on.

Another challenge is related to the financial allocation in education sector. The operating budget (non-wage recurrent) is only around 10% of the total budget²³. It will create challenges for district level staff to support schools to improve quality through up-to-date pedagogical advice, monitoring of school block grants, teaching materials, textbooks etc. The insufficient operating budget will also extend to limited financial support for provincial officials and central departments to monitor the sector. The GoL is aware this issue so that necessary actions are in place recently such as nation-wide school block grant for early childhood education, primary education and secondary education. The following challenge of the action is efficient management of the grant and sustainability of the intervention.

Whether incomplete schools can effectively adopted the multigrade pedagogy to enhance the quality of education is a major challenge. It substantially contributes the fact of 10% of children never attend primary school and of those who do attend, only about 70% survive to grade 5. They are unavoidable challenges and the MoES has to focus a quantitative expansion of facilities and utilization of the human resources effectively.

To improve the situation of the educationally disadvantaged districts is also another key area for future education. The current policy Education Sector Development Framework (ESDF) and implementation strategy (EFA Programme) is to focus on the 56 most disadvantaged districts since

²² Housing and Population Census, Lao PDR - 2005

²³ MTR Report – ESDP 2011 - 15

it is in these districts where the gap between EFA goals and current reality is greatest. The GoL, in collaboration with development partners such as World Bank, AusAids, EU continues the Global Partnership for Education Phase III (GPE III) in the coming years.

The current PTR of primary level looks impressive in Lao PDR. The allocation and quality of teachers, however, is a continuous challenge. Currently, the MoES is preparing an exploratory survey of primary and secondary teachers focusing the two major points: (i) distribution of teachers - to explore where the heaping of teachers occurred, and (ii) seeking an appropriate way to reallocate the teachers to be able to equity distribution at a school.

The Lack of comprehensive and practical monitoring and evaluation of education Programmes is also one of the key challenges. A Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) linked to the ESDF has been developed and a sector-wide monitoring and evaluation network has been established to be able to assess sector performance. In reality, the utilisation of the monitoring tools is still yet to question. A monitoring and evaluation matrix needs to be derived from the ESDF and to be applied as the tool to ensure policy driven monitoring.

The capacity building is an obviously continued challenge in education sector. The capacity of staff from district and provincial education services is still need to be enhanced. Utilization of statistics and information in planning, collection, analysis and interpretation of data, dissemination of the information and statistics possessed are some examples of the areas need to be strengthened. In this regards, the MoES will draw an implementation plan how to strengthen the capacity of the human resources in their system vertically and horizontally. The statistical literacy Programme in education system will be one of the components of the MoES's plan related to the capacity building. The other component will be strengthening of EMIS including data collection, analysis, interpretation, dissemination and application in the planning process.

Due to the poor coordination among the central level departments and projects, the data collection exercises are overlapped in some situation which produce different results and make the policy makers confused for their decision process. The utilisation and dissemination of the processed data and information is another room to improve. Furthermore, the data flow between the central departments is an emerging issue. Currently, the Department of Planning, Department of Finance, Department of Personnel and Department of Inspection have initiated to establish management information systems so as to make information flow among the departments. As a first step of the data flow exercise, the MoES has developed a database system known as EMIS, PMIS (Personnel Management Information System), and FMIS (Financial Management Information System).

The participation of the development partners and line ministries are also the continuous agenda. Currently, the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) has been established and acts to implement the Country Action Plan of the Vientiane Declaration (the localized version of the Paris Declaration). By doing so, the MoES will continue their strategic vision on education sector. In general as well as technical education, increase all aspects of the quality of education; have a suitable curriculum framework; ensure high standards of knowledge and skills; provide learning facilities for the development of knowledge and the abilities of the students; and recognize the importance of cognitive development to actual performance of tasks.

Conclusions and recommendations

In general, a number of EFA goals and targets are still yet to meet in 2015. Although there are a lot of achievements during the EFA journey in Lao, many rooms to improve and challenges to face in future. Nonetheless, due to the primary efforts of the MoES in collaboration with development partners, the Lao PDR is able to improve the basic structure of education sector such as access to education, gender equality, school rehabilitation and construction, support school facilities (classrooms, dormitories, water and sanitation), expansion of the school grants and stipend scheme, increment teachers' salaries and incentives and so on.

As a cross cutting agenda, the availability and reliability of education statistics have been significantly improved over the period. Currently, the education statistics and indicators are available through online and offline version of Lao EduInfo. In addition, the Lao EduInfo can be installed on the smart phones so as to access and review the education statistics and indicators in a convenient way.

Having said all these achievements, there are many rooms in superstructure of each and every sub-sector of education sector. The obvious ones are learning achievements of students, quality of teachers, improvement in student flow rates, capacity of local implementers such as Village Education Development Committee, Community leaders participated in community based programmes, and effective participation in technical and educational training education and so on.

In terms of cross cutting agenda, the utilization of the statistics and indicators in the planning, dissemination of the information and monitoring and evaluation are rooms to be improved in the future.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

As mentioned in the assessment of target indicators of ECCE (Table 1), the gap, between the EFA target and 2013 status of GER (5 years old children) was about 2.1% as the EFA NPA target was 55.0% while the status in 2013 was 52.9%. In terms of the readiness of primary education (% of new entrants to primary grade 1 with ECCE experience) was a big gap between target and 2013 status. The EFA NPA target was 50.2% while the 2013 achievement was 38.7%. Although there are some gaps, a number of achievements in ECCE are very noteworthy. The enrolment of children at aged 5 to ECCE has been steadily increasing since 2006. It can be expected that the target will be achieved in 2015. Similarly, the percent of new entrants to grade 1 of primary education with pre-school experience is very likely to reach the target according to the current increasing rate.

The ECCE classes are increased over doubled in 2013 compared to 2006. There has been considerable expansion of access to formal ECCE, achieved through the construction of new pre-primary classrooms located in existing complete primary schools. However, the roll-out of community-based school-readiness Programmes has not proceeded as planned. There is as yet no clear system for sustainable payment of the caregivers for community-based modalities. The expansion of ECCE is not yet being used in a strategic way to further inclusive education. The practical difficulties of reaching remote communities and managing inter-sectoral interventions

means that so far wider ECCE initiatives such as parenting education initiatives have received limited attention²⁴.

The attrition rate of ECCE teachers and unbalanced distribution of students at ECCE centers are additional issues to be addressed.

Recommendation:

- Further exploration of attrition of the ECCE teachers, unbalanced distribution of students at the ECCE centers, strength and weakness of the community based school readiness approach so far before expanding the ECCE centers (formal as well as community based ECCE centers)
- Define a set of minimum competencies for teachers and caregivers and further strengthen training design and coverage
- Priority should be given to enabling all 5-year olds in the catchment area to attend

Universal Primary Education (UPE)

As mentioned in the assessment of target indicators of UPE (Table 2), The gaps between the EFA NPA and status of 2013 of NIR and NER were very minimal (gaps for NIR and NER were 6.1% and 1.0% respectively). According to the current increasing rate, the two targets for NIR and NER are very likely to meet in 2015. The major challenge was survival rate of primary education as the gap was 21.7%. Unless some additional interventions, it is very hard to meet with the target according to the current increasing rate of survival rate in primary education.

The improvements in NIR and NER suggest some success of efforts to ensure that children enter school at the correct age and stay in the system. However, it was frequently raised during the district and provincial consultation meetings that children of many rural communities and ethnic groups miss critical periods of the school year because they travel with their parents to fields distant from the village and remain there over an extended period. It leads to the higher repetition and lower survival rate in primary education.

74% of primary schools are now complete (from 46% in 2007), thus progress is being made towards the 84% target. The School Block Grants (SBG) has started since 2011-12. Due to the SBG intervention, it can be expected that some considerable improvements of UPE will be probably on the scene in 2015. However, the capacity of Village Education Development Committee (VEDC) on utilization of the SBG for their schools effectively and efficiently needs to be linked with School Development Plan (SDP) to bring up the betterment of the primary education.

The additional issues such as unbalanced distribution of teachers, lack of textbooks especially in the rural areas, sufficient school facilities such as furniture, safe drinking water sources and improved sanitary latrines are still remained as challenges for improvement of the primary education.

²⁴ ESDF Mid Term Review Report 2014

Recommendation:

- While supporting the right age enrolment, the progressive promotion should be enforced by providing clear and simplified guidelines to the teachers as well as provide training in implementation of these guidelines
- Continue implementation of school grants based on SDP and scholarships, considering ways to improve targeting
- Identify strategies to improve the teacher deployment with establishment of an appropriate monitoring mechanism on teaching and learning activities at schools
- Provide a better school environment with at least safe drinking water source and improved sanitary latrines
- Not only focus on the curriculum revision and development, but also the availability of textbooks
- Promoting School Development Planning with participation of VEDC and with the use of school block grant to improve the survival of students and quality of teaching-learning and school management
- To conduct qualitative oriented surveys focusing on lower transition rate of female, possible causes of drop out at primary level, performance or quality of teachers and others

Life skills and lifelong learning

Due to the various definition and concept of the literacy, the achievement of literacy skills of youths is difficult to make a conclusion. The literacy rate of youths (age 15 – 24) given by the censuses based on the self-reported responses was impressively higher. However, the functional literacy, a rate based on a literacy test, the current status of youth literacy rate is lower than the national target (can be seen in the table 4: Assessment of target indicators of EFA goal 3 in this report). The GER in lower secondary was on track as the gap between the target of EFA NPA and the status of 2013 was very closed each other. It is very similar to the transition rate from primary education to lower secondary as well.

In connection with the life skills and lifelong learning, the primary-equivalency, LSE- equivalency, and vocational training courses have been implemented over the period. In 2013, around 140,000 learners in total are enrolled in the various courses. Having said that there are good initiatives, there are some issues are still existed. Assessment of literacy and data collection on NFE requires improvement and is not currently included in EMIS. Similarly, the data and information availability of TVET is also still needed to be enhanced as the TVET information included in the EMIS is very limited. NFE regional centres face significant management challenges and there is limited supervision/support from District Education and Sports Bureaus. As the number of community learning centers (CLCs) is fewer, there is limited opportunity for people to use their new literacy skills. General speaking, the TVET enrolment is still lower and the gender parity in TVET is uneven.

The transition rate from primary to lower secondary is being increased and it was exceed the EFA NPA target in 2013. For Lower Secondary Education students, block grants have been introduced since 2012/13 but only 20,000 kip per student has so far been possible. So far, around 2.3% of students are being reached by scholarships under various Programmemes. The new lower secondary curriculum is being rolled out and there are challenges in finding sufficient qualified

teachers to cover all the different subjects. At lower Secondary level, there are insufficient teaching-learning materials to cover the broader subject curriculum, especially science, the arts etc.

Recommendation:

- A comprehensive assessment system on literacy rate should be established
- There needs to be improved data collection on youth and adult NFE Programmes
- Student support (accommodation, teaching-learning instruction and laboratories, financial support) needs to be significantly upgraded
- Focus on consolidating recent expansion and improving boarding facilities for lower secondary education
- Improve the TVET system in order to improve the quality of TVET graduates
- Teacher training to implement the new curriculum

Adult Literacy Rate

According to the currently available statistics, it is behind the target. It is a challenge to find and train suitable volunteer facilitators and teachers in the most disadvantage communities. The Community Learning Centers and NFE regional centers have been established in some areas to be able to support the literacy skills of the community. But, the number of CLCs and NFE regional centers has been declining and some are not being used. Lack of literacy campaign and less priority on adult literacy rate is also an issue.

Recommendation

- There is a need to explore an effective adult literacy campaign
- There is also a need to agree a system for re-assessing and then monitoring adult literacy rates, which should make use of learning from other countries in the region
- Reactivate existing CLCs by improving the capacity of management and provision of some assistance for CLC and NFE regional centers
- Strengthen coordination of support and resource mobilisation for youth and adult basic education

Gender Equality

The percentage of female enrolled in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary were still lower than the male in the observed period (2006 to 2013). As a consistent finding, the GPI in GER of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary was not reached as the equality stage (i.e. GPI = 1). However, the GPI of GER in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary were gradually improving through out of the years. However, the GPI in survival rate in primary, GPI in transition rate from lower secondary to upper secondary were reached the equality stage. It indicates that the female participation in various education levels, except ECCE, is still lower than the male participation. However, in terms of educational achievements such as survival rate, completion rate in various level of education, the results of female is equal and sometimes higher than their male counterparts.

The lack of specific gender responsive personnel and promotions policies, together with insufficient gender indicators and targets, the improvements to women's participation in education and decision-making will improve slowly. Some national level strategic plan, the gender parity is not included and the targets set related to the gender equality are not consistent among the national plans. For example, there are no gender parity in the Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP – 2011-15) and the overall targets in ESDP (2011-2015) is inconsistent with a national level policy namely the National Strategic Plan for Women's Advancement (2011-2015). The utilization of the sex-disaggregated data is in a question for improved gender responsive planning and Programme implementation.

Furthermore, there are some policies in place that may discriminate against girls and boys, women and men and their access to education based on their marital status. For example, the married female students or trainees at schools or at teacher training centers must discontinue their studies.

Recommendation

- Gender awareness raising and women's and children's rights at local level
- Consideration be given to changing education policies to allow married young girls and boys, pregnant women and those with young children to complete their courses and be retained within the system at all levels of education and in teacher training
- Capacity strengthening at all levels of MoES in utilising sex-disaggregated data for programme design, planning, implementation and evaluation

Improved quality of education

The MoES initiated a number of reforms to improve the education sector efficiency and governance by upgrading and changing the departments and setting up new centers over the periods. For more efficient service delivery, strengthening the decentralization and enhancing transparency by increasing the quality of information and improving the decision-making process through consultation and participation; restructuring/rationalizing the relationships both within the central government and between the central and local authorities.

However, the competencies of the local staff to take part in the decentralization strategies are very limited especially in the areas of planning, budgeting and management.

The curriculum of primary education was revised in 2009 and it is being used at all grades in primary education. It is also observed that the instructional hours has not generally increased, thus the curriculum appears crowded and teachers frequently resort to using the rote learning. Most teachers need to deepen their understanding of how children learn and broaden their repertoire of teaching approaches according to the subject, age, ability and context of the learners. The critical shortage of textbooks in rural areas is another drawback of the quality education. In addition, the uneven distribution of teachers at various levels of schools especially in the rural areas is another concern of MoES in the quality education. According to the ASLO 2011, there was an important observation stating that teachers' qualification background did not influence student maths scores—i.e. the students of more highly qualified teachers did no better than low qualified teachers. The Government's Rapid Assessment on Dropout and Textbook

Management in 2011 also reported no difference in the effectiveness of teachers by qualification level.

Recommendation

- Identify options for increased efficiency of teacher deployment and usage
- Further capacity development of local officials at province, district and school levels in planning, management, finance and budgeting, data collection, and M&E
- Teacher Education Institutes are developed as centres of excellence for teacher practice
- Strengthening the relationship between the Teacher Education Institutes and Department of Teacher Education and District Education Services Bureau from the aspect of school-based professional development