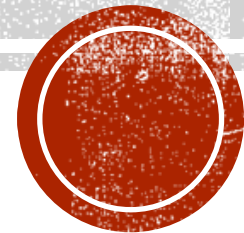


CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN TO SUPPORT ESSDP 2021-25

ESWG Meeting: technical level

15 October 2021



BACKGROUND

- The ESSDP 2021-25 was endorsed by the Executive ESWG in August 2020, although the subsequent economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic means that revisions will need to be made. However, significant reforms introduced by ESSDP will continue in the areas of administration and management, such as the introduction of school clusters, future use of Fundamental Quality Standards (FQS) for local resource allocations, and more generally increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of human and financial resource allocation to improve equity. These reforms are critical in managing the now scarce human and financial resources that will likely continue through to 2025 as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Therefore, a capacity development plan for administrators and managers, linked to the shifts outlined in ESSDP is required and this document outlines such a draft plan.



ACTIVITIES TO BE COVERED

- To study the capacity of education administrators at both central and local levels, as well as to study the need for upgrading of technical knowledge and education administration and management;
- Define details of specific training topics and overall curriculum content;
- Identify the details of the target people who will be trained at each level;
- Provide guidance on training formats and methods;
- Assess the capacity of IFEAD;
- Study the number of courses and types of training courses for education administrators that are being implemented within the Ministry of Education and Sports under the assistance of various projects;
- Prioritize topics and targets for training from 2021-2025, etc .;



EXPECTED RESULTS

- A report on the Education Administrator Capacity Development Plan 2021-2025 includes:
 - Current capacity of education administrators;
 - Advantages, Challenges and Opportunities for Capacity Building for Education Administrators;
 - Details of the Education Administrator Capacity Development Plan, which includes training topics, participants' goals, training methods, as well as budget estimates required and
 - Other recommendations related to capacity building of education administrators.



KEY FINDINGS

- The ESSDP 2021-25 provides sufficient information to identify priority areas for capacity building leading to identification of three major training programmes:
 - (i) Financing of the education sector.
 - (ii) Human resource management.
 - (iii) Quality and efficiency improvements.
- There is a need to build a sustainable group of trainers who can provide initial and on-going capacity building in administration and management. This group will include existing trainers from IFEAD but also specialist staff from central line departments, NUOL and other GoL ministries if required.



KEY FINDINGS (CONT.)

- Initial capacity building to support administration and management reforms required by ESSDP 2021-25 should be directed to central, provincial and district levels.
- Many staff need to be trained to ensure sustainability, but this is costly. Transition from face-to-face training workshops to greater reliance upon on-line approaches needs to be explored, piloted, and evaluated.
- Due to high turn-over of administrators and managers, there is a need for on-going capacity building, however, this should be delivered on-line where possible due to cost-benefit considerations.



KEY FINDINGS (CONT.)

- There is a need for capacity building of this core training team. The new EU TA Project can provide key experts and non-key experts under their ToR to provide the required capacity building and other development partners may also provide technical or financial support.
- A rigorous independent evaluation of the outcomes of the capacity development plan implementation should be conducted to understand the cost-benefit of this high-cost training plan.
- This capacity building plan for administrators and managers should be considered at a meeting of ESWG with an objective to gain support for all development partners to follow this plan to coordinate different funding sources to support the single MoES capacity development plan.



PROPOSED CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- The plan identifies three major training programmes and for each there are three different priority levels of training. Priority 1 training modules are those which will have most impact on the effective implementation of ESSDP. All priority levels are required to support full implementation of ESSDP, but the economic crisis created by fall-out from the COVID-19 pandemic suggests that some areas are of lower priority by 2025.
- Capacity development for administrators and managers is not new in Lao PDR and staff are familiar with training workshops and understand how group work comprises an important element of training. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused lockdowns in the country, forcing MoES and development partners to use on-line platforms to connect remotely. Use of these new platforms has brought challenges and opportunities for capacity building and these are discussed below. A major opportunity is the ability to provide capacity building to a larger number of people at a much-reduced unit cost.



MAJOR TRAINING PROGRAMMES AND PRIORITY MODULES

- Following the recommendations of the Capacity Development Planning Coordinating Committee, the training topics were organized into three major topics with indicator training modules defined for each topic.
 - Finance of the education sector
 - Human resource management
 - Improving the quality and efficiency of education services



TARGET TRAINEES AND OPTIONS FOR TRAINING

- At central level, trainees will typically be from line departments and centres, the relevant Deputy Director General/Deputy Head, the relevant Division Head and one or more technical staff. At PESS, trainees will typically be the Head, Deputy Head, the relevant Section/Unit Head(s). The Head of the Administration Section/Unit and Head of the Statistics and Planning Section/Unit will be heavily involved.
- Two options are provided for training at PESS and DESB levels. The preferred option is one described as “deep” training where a broader range of trainees from PESS and DESB participate: Heads, Deputy Head of PESS/DESB and Heads of relevant sections/units. This will potentially have greater impact but will be more costly to implement if traditional face-to-face training is used.
- A second “shallow” option will be to rely on Heads and Deputy Heads of PESS and DESB participating in training with an expectation that they will train their own staff from relevant sections/units. This approach will cost significantly less but its impact is likely to be much lower.



OPTIONS FOR DELIVERY OF TRAINING PROGRAM

- IFEAD will need significant capacity building for it to be able to deliver the planned training to other departments of MoES, PESS & DESB.
- To be sustainable, a permanent group of local trainers needs to be available and IFEAD is the appropriate organisation within MoES to take on this mandate,
- MoES may want to consider staff transfers to IFEAD to form a training group that has suitable backgrounds, skills and knowledge. A limitation of IFEAD staff to deliver practical training is that only one staff has worked as a teacher and only three have worked at a PESS.
- From the survey received from IFEAD, there are very few IFEAD trainers who can implement the draft capacity development plan: This largely due to ESSDP identifying new areas for capacity building, separate and different from previous and current training work by IFEAD.



THE CDP COORDINATING COMMITTEE HAVE RECOMMENDED A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT TRAINING TEAMS, AS FOLLOWS:

- Establish three separate teams each with three staff from IFEAD. Each team will be bolstered by the addition of other staff from MoES line departments, as follows:
 1. Planning and budgeting: Staff from IFEAD, DoP, DoF, ESSC (statistics center), Dol;
 2. Human resource management: Staff from: IFEAD, DoOP, DTE; and
 3. Quality and efficiency improvements: Staff from IFEAD, LEQA (FQS), ECE, DGE (School clusters).



CAPACITY OF IFEAD TO DELIVER TRAINING

- The CDP Coordinating Committee acknowledge that there will be a need for strengthening of IFEAD and other members of the core training team. It is recommended that the EU-TA Project include in its implementation plan provision of any required capacity building by its “key experts” and “non-key experts”.
- At the same time, technical and financial support from other DPs should be also needed to assist the core training team in developing training materials for both face-to-face meetings and on-line follow-up support.



OPTIONS FOR DIFFERENT DELIVERY OPTIONS



OPTION 1: TRADITION LAO APPROACH TO CAPACITY BUILDING

Advantages	Disadvantages
Familiar approach for Lao participants.	Relatively high cost.
Social interactions between participants and trainers are culturally part of training programs. Face-to-face workshops are also an opportunity for interaction between central trainers and sub-national managers.	A one-off training event that has limitations of such one-off trainings.
Participants are familiar with the group work included in workshops.	Training materials are typically limited to PowerPoint presentations and group discussions linked to presentations.
DSA acts as an incentive for participants to engage in training.	Limited education budget makes DSA payments difficult to sustain and often relies on financing by development partners. It accounts for a significant part of the central non-wage recurrent budget. In the longer-term, financial incentives should not be required for staff to want to improve their skills and knowledge.
Fiduciary risks can be managed by central administrative staff.	Fiduciary risk management requires technical staff to attend workshops, adding to costs.
	The COVID-19 pandemic makes this approach difficult to implement.
	Trainers spend considerable time travelling to workshop venues, reducing the number of workshops that can be conducted weekly.



OPTION 2: MODIFIED TRADITIONAL LAO APPROACH WITH BLENDED LEARNING

Advantages	Disadvantages
Familiar approach for Lao trainees.	High cost but significantly lower than Option 1.
Social interactions between participants are culturally part of training programs.	A one-off training event that has limitations of such one-off trainings.
Participants are familiar with the group discussions included in workshops.	Training materials are typically limited to PowerPoint presentations and group discussions linked to presentations.
DSA acts as an incentive for participants to engage in training.	Limited education budget makes DSA payments difficult to sustain and relies on financing by development partners. In the longer-term, financial incentives should not be required for staff to want to improve their skills and knowledge.
Unit costs are much lower when trainers are not travelling to workshop and more efficient use of time possible due to no travel days required.	Sub-national staff are not very familiar with on-line meetings (Zoom) and social interactions between central trainers and sub-national managers is not possible.
Fiduciary risks are higher but can be managed by direct payment of DSA and expenses by bank transfers.	The COVID-19 pandemic makes this approach difficult to implement.
Blended learning component	
Face-to-face training is limited in time (and cost) but on-line materials can be used for follow-up.	Enhanced learning materials will increase the cost of the training program.
Learning materials can be enhanced beyond PowerPoint presentations and be available to trainees over an extended period of time	Trainees may not access follow-up materials due to work pressure in their own offices, following the face-to-face component

OPTION 3: PESS AND DESB PARTICIPANTS CONNECT TO IFEAD VIA ON-LINE PLATFORM.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Significantly lower costs and no working days lost to travel days.	MoES staff are not familiar with such an approach and the culturally significant social interactions are not possible.
Potential for higher cost-benefit of training workshops once participants become familiar with the new approach.	Not all PESS and DESB have high-speed internet access.
Introduces the use of “modern” approaches to capacity building, including on-line group discussions using “break-out rooms”. Digital forms of capacity building will be the norm in the future and this program is an opportunity to introduce the new approach.	A one-off training event that has limitations of such one-off trainings.
	Workshop materials are typically limited to PowerPoint presentations and group discussions need to be conducted using on-line “break-out rooms”, an unfamiliar concept. This can be offset by developing on-line materials for follow-up.
	Engaging on-line increases the risk of interruptions by non-participants in PESS and DESB offices and less attention to training presentations.
	No financial incentives for trainees to engage in training.
Blended learning component	
Face-to-face training is limited in time (and cost) but on-line materials can be used for follow-up.	Trainees may not access follow-up materials due to work pressure in their own offices, following the face-to-face component.
Learning materials can be enhanced beyond PowerPoint presentations and be available to trainees over an extended	There is a cost to developing effective follow-up materials to be available on-line.

