



Lao People's Democratic Republic  
Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity

**Minutes of ESWG Technical Level Meeting  
Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2021 at 13:00-16:30**

Meeting modality: Blended - Face to Face and Online

Chair: Vice Minister Khanthaly Siriphongphanh  
Co-chairs: Mr. Vincent Vire, Head of Cooperation, European Union  
Ms. Anna Dyason, First Secretary, Australian Embassy

**Participants:** Total number of participants: 96 (17 face to face and 79 online) and detailed list of participants and organizations will be attached.

**Meeting Objectives:**

- To discuss the Round Table Meeting Report;
- To discuss the budget reallocation for 2021;
- To discuss the revised mandate of PBC;
- To discuss the Capacity Development Plan for Education manager and administrator;
- To hear update and agree on no-cost extension for the GPE COVID-19 Accelerated Grant.

**1. Opening remark Chair: Vice Minister Khanthaly Siriphongphanh**

Mme Khanthaly expressed thanks to Co-Chairs, Mr. Vincent Vire, EUD Head of Cooperation and Ms. Anna Dyason, the First Secretary of Australian Embassy for participating today meeting. She also expressed her appreciation to the ESWG Secretariat and all stakeholders for participation in this meeting amid the tight situation of Covid-19 in Laos and around the world as well, which causes a huge impact to the world social and economic development, especially in the education sector at all levels.

The Chair also recognized all technical and financial support provided by Development Partners to Ministry of Education and Sports, especially the EU and the Australian Government.

The Chair informed the meeting objectives and recommended to have further steps to approve and acknowledge the RTM education report 2021 at the ESWG Executive Level Meeting prior its submission to MPI. She also urged all participants, both face-to-face and online, to provide support to the meeting in a constructive and consensus manner.

Her final remark is to express thanks to all participants for proactive participation and wished the meeting a fruitful discussion and success.

**2. Remark of the Co-Chair:**

Mr. Vincent expressed a pleasure to co-chair the meeting with the Vice-Minister and Australian First Secretary, on behalf of all Education Development Partners and Education Sector Working Group Technical Level Meeting.

Mr. Vincent also noted challenges facing the education sectors which highlighted in RTM report including the combined learning, budget and teacher quota crisis that are fully intertwined in the

sector, and there is a need to work together to address these issues. With the current financial constraints, we need to alter how to use limited resources more effectively. I believe the efficiency of education expenditures can be increased, and the Education Public Expenditure Review (EPER) can be the key. At the same time, we need to keep advocating at all levels the importance of protecting education expenditures that are essential to improve education teaching and learning. In addition, there are some opportunities coming along with Covid-19 such as e-meetings and e-training with provincial/district offices; launched a digital education platform called Khang Panya Lao.

### 3. Presentations

#### 3.1 Round Table Meeting Report by DoP (Mr. Sithong Sikhao, DDG of DoP, MoES)

DDG of DoP briefed the main issues in the MoES report to be presented at HLRTM. The detailed components would be elaborated in the main document. The main issues are as follows:

- Universal primary education is at risk with access to primary teachers declining.
- Low learning outcomes as the consequence of (i) inadequate capacity of teachers; (ii) challenges for teachers to adapt to the new primary curriculum; and (iii) low investment on teacher training.
- COVID-19 impacts on education are the following:

#### 3.2 Presentation on the budget reallocation for 2021 (Presented by Ms. Dara Phakonekham, DG of DoP)

Director of Department of Finance presented the 2020 budget reallocation for MoES, especially increased budget allocation for School Meal. The main issues raised in her presentation were financial issues regarding a reduction of non-wage recurrent (Chapter 62 and Chapter 63) including school block grants (SBG). Ms. Dara Phakonekham went into detail that the education and sport sector budget line Chapter 62 and 63 was cut by 10% which would affect to a wider extent to education section.

#### 3.3 Presentation on the revised mandate of PBC by DoP (Presented by Mr. Sithong Sikhao, DDG of DoP)

Mr. Sithong briefly informed the meeting of the current status of PBC and its mandates. He expressed that PBC has not been fully effective due to some defects in its management. Based on this situation, different components of the mandate have been revised and strengthened as follows: 1. Joint Steering Committee – Chaired by Vice-Minister; 2. Mandates of Joint Steering Committee – also revised; 3. Mandates of technical committee – were also elaborated; 4. Mandates of Secretariat; and 5. Meeting Agenda - PBC -twice a year – also extra-ordinary meeting.

#### 3.4 Presentation on Capacity Development Plan for Education manager and Administrator by IFEAD (Presented by Dr. Lamphoune LUANGXAY, DDG of IFEAD)

The presentation covered the main sections of CDP:

- Background based on based on ESSDP 2021-2025 and Covid-19 situation in Laos,
- Activities covered in the plan drafting process
- Findings: Three major training programmes: (i) Financing of the education sector. (ii) Human resource management. (iii) Quality and efficiency improvement
- Training modalities: Current modality (face-to-face), lesson exchanges, mixed face-to-face and online: trainees can use for local, training in their local areas conducted by local authorities

#### 3.5 To hear update and agree on no-cost extension for the GPE COVID-19 Accelerated Grant (Presented by Dr. Daravone Kittiphan, MoES Permanent Secretary).

Daravone Kittiphan updated information on the GPE COVID-19 Accelerated Fund project with UNICEF as Grant Agent. The main objective is to keep and enhance Lao children's and young people's *learning*, while safeguarding their *health and safety* by supporting measures to prevent and

control the spread of COVID-19. The presentation put more focus on important points such as specific objectives, outcomes, challenges and key progress and achievement of the project. It was also noted that the project fund utilization is at 62% and still 38% of funding has to be absorbed. However, as the project validity will end in 31 Dec. 2021 and several activities have been delayed due to the impact of the COVID 19, including school closures and travel restrictions. Because of this, there is a need to propose for the extension of the project for another 6 months until 30 June 2022 (no cost extension) in order to continue and complete activities as per the work plan without any changes in the activities and budget. The extension request, which is already approved by the Minister of Education and Sports, is presented to the ESWG for endorsement before it is submitted to the GPE Secretariat for approval.

#### **4. Remarks and summary by Co-chairs**

After presenting 4 topics followed by constructive and fruitful discussion of the participants Ms. Anna Dyason, First Secretary of Australian Embassy to Lao PDR, Co-Chair summarized the outcomes of the meeting as follows:

Ms Anna Dyason, First Secretary of Australian Embassy to Laos, Co-chair summarized the outcomes of the meeting. She expressed thanks to the presenters from DoP, DoF, IFEAD and MoES Cabinet the presentations and to all the participants for a fruitful discussion in this important meeting. She reiterated the important points of Mme khandaly and Mr. Vincent Vire's remarks in the Opening section so that the meeting should also take into consideration and acknowledgement. (See opening remarks of above).

Regarding the presentation on the 5 topics followed by discussion amongst the participants, the Co-Chair provided a summary and agreed actions as follows:

##### **4.1 The general items on the draft RTM education report**

Ms. Dyason, Co-Chair, shared with the meeting that it is not a comprehensive sector report, but responds to specific MPI template based on purposes of 2019 RTM recommendations. The meeting agreed that RTM key priorities and messages are that universal primary education is at risk. There is a shortage of teachers due to low quota for attritions. There are low learning outcomes at primary level in Laos. All these have also affected secondary education, TVET and higher education. There is inadequate funding specifically the reduce of non-wage recurrent budget which will the impact on teacher recruitment and training. There is a need of public expenditure reform and there is a signification impacts of Covid-19 on education outcomes. Vincent emphasized issues with primary teacher shortages and Lao learning results and the need to backup this with data and the need for suggestions on how to increase funding to assist these areas. DDG of ECE noted the impact of Covid-19 has affected Early Childhood Education along with other school children. ESWG meeting suggested MoES to request MPI to include three key challenges in the first section of the education sector report in the RTM background paper. The meeting suggested that the education sector RTM report is endorsed and need further approval in the ESWG Executive Level meeting prior to its finalization and submission to MPI.

##### **4.2 The revised budget reallocation for 2021**

The presentation highlighted a major cut of non-wage recurrent (Chapter 62 and Chapter 63) budget line by 10% impacting school block grants (SBG), allowances and school facilities. More importantly is the impact on quality enhancement activities, especially teaching and learning, materials, teachers training and publishing textbooks. The DG of DoP talked about huge difficulties the sector will be facing due to a huge reduction of the budget in social sectors, especially for education which needs to reduce the targets in the education sector development plan (ESSDP). He also acknowledged the support of EU and requested for additional assistance that could help fill up these gaps. There is a need to better coordinate with MoES to identify approaches to address the gaps in ESSDP for implementation. A participant from the EUD queried about the increase of chapter 61 and decrease of chapter 62 and 63, and expressed concerns about managing Chapter 62

and 63 budget line and also talked about a huge reduction of the number of teacher quota and have further explanation of how the chapter 62 and 63 budget line and the level of number of teachers can be maintained. The DG of DoF responded that regarding the budget line Chapter 62 and 63 the government has prioritized teacher salaries to ensure stability. To make up the losses of each chapter (62 and 63) MoES will make adjustment in two chapters with approval from the National Assembly and the adjustment can be made once a year. Overall, there is limited budget ceiling which cannot be changed. It is noted that the National Assembly has a plenary session at the end of the year and suggests the direction to address the issues which will be further scrutinized and discussed in the National Assembly Forum.

#### **4.3 The revised mandate of PBC**

As suggested that there will also include the revised financial plan at the Executive Level of ESWG meeting to get direction from the Minister on how to efficiently use the limited resources, it is necessary to strengthen its mechanism. This presentation focused on the revised mandates of the Planning and Budgeting Committee which is linked to discussion on the reduced budget in the education sector and how the ministry can use the limited resources more efficiently within the budget envelop to achieve the most cost-effective interventions. The mandates of the Joint Steering Committee, Technical Committee and Secretariat were elaborated in detail. Many participants discussed the upcoming mandates of PBC would be a valuable mechanism to assist the ministry for prioritizing strongly between the need for effective management of ESSDP plan and budget allocation.

#### **4.4 Capacity Development Plan for Education manager and Administrator**

The meeting also heard from the Institute for Education Administrators Development (IFEAD) on Capacity Development Plan for education managers and administrators to support ESSDP 2021-2025 and how the ESSDP can be implemented effectively during this tight environment. The ESSDP clearly identified capacity building and training priorities in education sector which includes financing, human resource management, quality and efficiency improvement. There is a need to explore how to manage the cost of face-to-face training remote and look at the most appropriate and efficiency, effectiveness and cost-savings. Three delivery options were discussed and the possibility of adoption for “option 2” - a modified one which allows a blended learning was discussed. The participant from Pestalozzi Children's Foundation agreed to the recommendation and adoption of CPD option 2 and recommended capacity building from grassroots level or bottom-up approach to be adopted from remote ownership and sustainability. He also noted decentralization of authorities has a gap between theory and practice coming from national level roll-out and also gaps between trainers and participants due to language differences. It is important to acknowledge this plan as the official capacity development plan for education sector and the development partners should align their capacity building and training activities with this plan.

#### **4.5 Update on no-cost extension for the GPE COVID-19 Accelerated Grant**

The meeting was updated on the progress and key achievements the GPE Covid-19 accelerated grant which is delayed due to the impact of Covid-19 and budget utilization of the project is at 62%. The extension of the project is proposed for another 6 months until 30 June 2022 to implement the remaining activities. ESWG Technical Meeting participants supported the extension request. The participants also talked about how schools can benefit from the broader government priority on digital transformation and the participant from National Assembly supported the use of Lao set of technology to support remote learning. Director-General of Department of Higher Education raised the issue of rural and remote students and teachers with difficulties to access to remote learning opportunities and should be elevated to the levels including government, private sectors and DPs. Other participants also noted the difficulties of rural and remote learning opportunities. The participants also talked about the importance of preparation for the safe reopening of schools. Ms. Dyason, Co-Chair suggested support to the extension of GPE Covid-19 Accelerated Plan from ESWG meeting participants.

The Co-Chair expressed thanks to the Chair, Co-Chairs and all the participants for making the meeting meaningful to achieve the main objectives.

## 5. Closing remarks by Chair

Upon the Co-Chair providing a summary of the five presentations, points of discussion and agreed actions in a complete manner. The Chair on behalf of MoES expressed appreciation and thanks to the EU and the Australian Embassy as Co-Chairs and all participants from MoES, line Ministries, National Assembly and development partners for active and constructive participation in this ESWGTLM and contribution to the success of the meeting. The Chair reiterated key points from the presentations and called for further concrete actions.

She congratulated DoP for the preparation of recommendations to be included in the MoES report for HL RTM. She reiterated the issues on 2021 budget cut which sends a major impact to all sectors at both central and local levels including education sector. In order to manage the allocation of the limited budget, the Department of Planning updated on the revised mandates of PBC so that limited budget can be allocated with a focus on prioritized activities. She confirmed that the Chair of the new PBC would be Vice-Minister.

The Chair also valued that the Capacity Development Plan is an important guideline for capacity building of education administrators and staff who need to be equipped with management and leadership skills.

She also emphasized that the extension of GPE COVID-19 Accelerated Grant is of objective necessity and expressed thanks to donors for providing support to this project.

She expressed congratulations to Co-Chair, Ms Anna Dyason, for her excellent and complete summary of the meeting agenda, which covered all the points of discussion and agreed points. To strengthen to report of the meeting, the Chair encouraged the participants to have more reflections in writing and send them to the ESWG Secretariat for further improvement.

### **In conclusion, Chair proposed the important points as follows:**

- MoES report to HLRTM should be acknowledged and approved by high level administrators. There is a need to submit this document to Minister of MoES, EU Delegation and Australian Ambassadors through Executive Meeting of ESWG prior to submission to MPI;
- MoES report should be broadly disseminated at HLRTM. There is a need to develop a brochure or different forms of media for distribution to participants in the meeting and other stakeholders.
- As there is an issue of budget cut and a sharp decrease in number of new civil servant quota, the PBC revised mandates should be presented for approval by Executive Level of ESWG.
- The Chair also called for technical and financial support by international organizations and DPs representatives to education sector, especially equipment for Covid-19 prevention as well as facilities for remote teaching and learning as well as for teacher training.

In conclusion, Chair expressed gratitude to all participants and Development Partners for invaluable support to education development in Lao PDR, especially at the time of Covid-19 pandemic, which has so far contributed considerably to the achievement the set targets and sustainability.

She expressed thanks to Mr. Vincent Vire, Head of Cooperation of EUD to Lao PDR, Ms. Anna Dyason, First Secretary of Australian Embassy, representatives of DPs and all participants for their participation in the meeting and expressed wishes for good health, success and be free from Covid-19.

Vientiane Capital, Date:

02/11/2021

Co-Chair of the meeting  
**Vincent Vire**  
Head of Cooperation  
European Union

Vientiane Capital, Date:

02/11/2021

Co-Chair of the meeting  
**Anna Dyason**  
First Secretary  
Australian Embassy

Vientiane Capital, Date:

03/11/2021



Chair of the meeting  
**Khanthaly Siriphongphanh**  
Vice Minister  
MoES