



# Technical Assistance Report

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Project Number: 47171-001  
Capacity Development Technical Assistance (CDTA)  
December 2013

## Lao People's Democratic Republic: Policy and Capacity Support for Improved Aid Effectiveness

## CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS

(as of 30 November 2013)

Currency unit	–	kip (KN)
KN1.00	=	\$0.000125
\$1.00	=	KN7,950

## ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	–	Asian Development Bank
CPS	–	country partnership strategy
Lao PDR	–	Lao People's Democratic Republic
MPI	–	Ministry of Planning and Investment
NSEDP	–	National Socio-Economic Development Plan
ODA	–	official development assistance
PRF	–	project readiness filter
SOP	–	standard operating procedure
TA	–	technical assistance

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CLASSIFICATION

<b>Targeting classification</b>	–	General intervention
<b>Sector (subsectors)</b>	–	Public sector management (economic and public affairs management, public administration)
<b>Theme (subthemes)</b>	–	<b>Capacity development</b> (institutional development, organizational development); governance (public administration)

## NOTES

- (i) The fiscal year (FY) of the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic ends on 30 September. "FY" before a calendar year denotes the year in which the fiscal year ends; e.g., FY2013 ends on 30 September 2013.
- (ii) In this report, "\$" refers to US dollars.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. Despite the country's average annual economic growth rate of 7.8% during 2007–2012 and its significant wealth in natural resources, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) remains highly dependent on official development assistance (ODA) to fund overall government expenditures and its public investment programs.<sup>1</sup> ODA disbursement totaled \$431.6 million in FY2012.<sup>2</sup> Although ODA will continue to be important in the short and medium term, it is likely to become less available as the Lao PDR moves toward graduation from least-developed country status by 2020. This projected decline in ODA in the face of the country's continued dependence on external assistance requires not only that ODA be used more effectively but also that a dialogue on policies to achieve that effectiveness be institutionalized.<sup>3</sup>

2. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) country partnership strategy (CPS) for the Lao PDR for 2012–2016<sup>4</sup> has sought to maximize efficiency and sustainability by implementing larger operations over longer periods. During its initial 18 months, the CPS, which aims at poverty reduction and inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic growth, was successful in this approach. ADB has continued to focus on four core sectors and made a successful transition to fewer and larger projects in response to the government's capacity constraints. Nonetheless, challenges remain in maximizing development effectiveness in implementing the CPS, macroeconomic management and policy dialogue, continued start-up delays of projects, and the absence of effective project readiness filters.

## II. ISSUES

3. The Lao PDR has a well-developed aid effectiveness framework.<sup>5</sup> It includes the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness,<sup>6</sup> which is a localized version of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness; a country action plan; and a round table meeting process with development partners. The government is committed to the Accra Agenda for Action. A secretariat at the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) monitors progress made in improving aid effectiveness. With the support of development partners, the government developed a results-based management framework for the Seventh National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) for 2011–2015. It includes a monitoring and evaluation system. Preparations for the eighth NSED, 2016–2020 are underway. Although the aid effectiveness framework provides a solid foundation, implementation has been uneven. Further support is needed to build capacity to make assistance more effective in a rapidly growing economy with challenges of inclusiveness and to use public resources, including ODA, more efficiently. Support for 10 sector and thematic working groups established in April 2006 and co-chaired by representatives of the government and of development partners will be instrumental in achieving this and helping the government prepare the eighth NSED. The working groups are the main mechanism for coordination and policy dialogue at the sector and thematic levels in health, education, governance, macroeconomics, trade and private sector development, infrastructure,

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<sup>1</sup> A. McCarty and A. Julian. 2009. *The Developmental Effectiveness of Untied Aid: Evaluation of the Implementation of the Paris Declaration and the 2001 DAC Recommendations on Untying ODA to the LDC's: Lao PDR Country Study*. Hanoi: Mekong Economics.

<sup>2</sup> Government of the Lao PDR, Ministry of Planning and Investment. 2012. *Foreign Aid Implementation Report*. Vientiane. For more details see: [www.rtm.org.la](http://www.rtm.org.la).

<sup>3</sup> The TA first appeared in the business opportunities section of ADB's website on 27 November 2013

<sup>4</sup> ADB. 2011. *Country Partnership Strategy: Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2012–2016*. Manila.

<sup>5</sup> An overview of this framework can be found at [www.rtm.org.la](http://www.rtm.org.la).

<sup>6</sup> The Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was signed by the government and 22 partner countries and organizations during the 9th Round Table Meeting in Vientiane in November 2006.

action on unexploded ordnance, illicit drug control, agriculture and rural development, and natural resources management and the environment. Some working groups meet regularly but some do not.

4. ADB co-chairs the infrastructure sector and the macroeconomic working groups. The technical assistance (TA) will provide support to help both these groups plan and manage in their areas of responsibility more effectively. The macroeconomic working group plans to create a better understanding of issues and options through macroeconomic analysis and policy dialogue. Areas of focus will include a macroeconomic framework, coordination of the country's fiscal and monetary policies, preparation of the eighth NSEDP, linking planning with budgeting, the Lao PDR's trade policies, and its responses to international developments. The infrastructure sector working group will undertake studies and facilitate dialogue on improving the prioritization of new infrastructure projects and the maintenance of existing assets.

5. By strengthening the ability and performance of these two working groups in directing policy, the TA will also help boost country ownership of development efforts and decisions. In line with the objectives of the Paris Declaration, the government will thus be able to exercise higher quality leadership in development policies and strategies and better coordinate the efforts of development partners. The TA will also support core government programs that emphasize the need for capacity development. The Vientiane Declaration has introduced capacity development frameworks to better align technical assistance and other capacity development measures with the needs of the government. The government also wants better sharing of good practices between sectors.

6. A country assistance and program evaluation of 2010 prepared by ADB's Independent Evaluation Department reported that continued project start-up delays in the Lao PDR showed a need to formalize, harmonize, and mainstream project readiness criteria.<sup>7</sup> It stated that the performance of ADB's portfolio in the country could deteriorate given its continuing expansion, and recommended that existing joint portfolio management practices of the government and ADB's resident mission be strengthened. In 2012, 13% of ADB's projects in the Lao PDR were considered at-risk—two actual problem projects and one potential problem project. The number of projects rated as potential problems during 2013, while fluctuating, has increased. The key issue was implementation delay, which in turn is mostly due to delays in establishing project teams and recruiting consultants.

7. The MPI drafted standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the government in 2009 that outlined specific steps in ODA-supported project development to strengthen governance, but did not translate them into Lao or disseminate them widely to the agencies expected to implement them. They have been used only by some line ministries. In addition, line ministries have been reluctant to use project readiness filters (PRFs) introduced by ADB in 2011 to enable advance action to contract consultants immediately after a fact-finding mission. This reluctance reflects the view in the government that the PRFs should first be integrated into the SOPs and that knowledge about the PRFs should be made available to staff of the line ministries before being applied.

8. This TA project will build on previous TA for Capacity Strengthening for Enhancing Aid Effectiveness and will further enhance the MPI's capacity for development planning and

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<sup>7</sup> ADB. 2010. *Country Assistance Program Evaluation: Lao PDR—Sustainable Growth and Integration*. Manila.

formulation of sound policy advice.<sup>8</sup> The previous TA built capacity to make dialogue between the government and development partners on transport and macroeconomics more effective and strengthened the ability of the Department of International Cooperation to more effectively manage aid. The TA supported the development and delivery of training in institutional and regulatory frameworks and ODA management. The government has asked ADB for the new TA to further strengthen implementation of the aid effectiveness framework for ODA, to create a more participatory process for systematic portfolio review, and to adopt formal project readiness criteria. The TA will not only help improve the effectiveness of ODA but also further institutionalize and mainstream the outcomes of policy dialogue between the government and development partners; address systemic challenges in portfolio management; and enhance government ownership of portfolio performance. The strengthened systems will be readily applicable to the ODA portfolios of other development partners.

### III. THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

#### A. Impact and Outcome

9. The TA impact will be improved alignment of ODA and government priorities and processes. The TA outcome will be strengthened country systems and mechanisms for policy dialogue to improve aid effectiveness.

#### B. Methodology and Key Activities

10. The TA outputs will be (i) improved policy dialogue on aid effectiveness, (ii) reduced project start-up delays, and (iii) strengthened government capacity for portfolio management of ADB-financed projects.

11. **Output 1: Policy dialogue on aid effectiveness improved.** The working groups on infrastructure and macroeconomic management co-chaired by ADB with the relevant ministers and vice ministers are meeting only occasionally and with mixed results. Experience with other working groups has shown that providing technical and logistical support can greatly enhance the functioning of working groups and contribute strongly to better dialogue between the government and development partners. The TA will help deliver high-quality policy recommendations that will help the MPI formulate strategies and policies for the eighth NSEDP and strengthen the policy environment for infrastructure investments. The TA will build country capacity to ensure consistency in the setting and sequencing of priorities in NSEDPs, beginning with the eighth. It will also strengthen coordination structures and processes through wider stakeholder participation. Most of these activities will easily be absorbed by the regular budgeting process and provide a model for improvements that other working groups can replicate.

12. **Output 2: Project start-up delays reduced.** Harmonizing the start-up arrangements between the government and those of ADB will lead to better implementation of ADB projects and better management of public finances. This will allow advance action, including the recruitment of consultants and the finalization of the procurement plan for the first year of project implementation during the fact-finding stage of project preparation. The application of harmonized SOPs by line ministries is essential to reinforce advance contracting between the fact-finding stage and loan effectiveness and thereby to reduce project start-up delays. The TA

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<sup>8</sup> ADB. 2008. *Technical Assistance to the Lao People's Democratic Republic for Capacity Strengthening for Enhancing Aid Effectiveness*. Manila.

will help the MPI revise its current SOPs through consultations with government agencies and development partners, translate them into Lao, and disseminate them widely throughout the government. Through similar consultations, the TA will also help revise the existing PRFs before they are integrated into the SOPs. The SOPs themselves will be strengthened. The TA will also develop technical working papers to improve portfolio performance.

**13. Output 3: Capacity for portfolio management of ADB-financed projects strengthened.** Improving portfolio performance and the predictability of disbursements is important to support government ownership, accountability, and transparency. The TA will enhance the capacity of the government, particularly the MPI, to monitor project performance by strengthening institutional capacity to conduct portfolio reviews and improving coordination between ADB, the MPI, and the Ministry of Finance during quarterly and joint annual portfolio review meetings with the World Bank. The government's capacity for managing this joint monitoring system will be enhanced by improving the quality of the background documents and enhancing its ability to implement the reviews and monitor the decisions made. Case studies of sample projects will be undertaken and technical working papers prepared and shared by line agencies and development partners.

### **C. Cost and Financing**

14. The TA is estimated to cost \$475,000, of which \$450,000 will be financed on a grant basis by ADB's Technical Assistance Special Fund (TASF-V). The government will provide counterpart support in the form of remuneration of counterpart staff, office accommodation, utilities, and other in-kind contributions.

### **D. Implementation Arrangements**

15. The MPI will be the executing agency. The implementing agencies will be the Department of Planning and the Department of International Cooperation. A project management unit will be established in the Department of International Cooperation to manage day-to-day activities, monitor progress, and submit progress reports to ADB and the Lao PDR Resident Mission. Disbursements under the TA will be made in accordance with ADB's *Technical Assistance Disbursement Handbook* (2010, as amended from time to time). The TA will be implemented from January 2014 to December 2015.

16. The TA will provide a total of 46 person-months of consultancy on ODA and portfolio management, comprising 5 person-months of services from international consultants and 41 person-months of services from national consultants. All consultants will be recruited on an individual basis and engaged in accordance with ADB's Guidelines on the Use of Consultants (2013, as amended from time to time), and all procurement will be also done in accordance with ADB's Procurement Guidelines (2013, as amended from time to time).

## **IV. THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION**

17. The President, acting under the authority delegated by the Board, has approved the provision of technical assistance not exceeding the equivalent of \$450,000 on a grant basis to the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic for Policy and Capacity Support for Improved Aid Effectiveness, and hereby reports this action to the Board.

## DESIGN AND MONITORING FRAMEWORK

Design Summary	Performance Targets and Indicators with Baselines	Data Sources and Reporting Mechanisms	Assumptions and Risks
<p><b>Impact</b></p> <p>Improved alignment of ODA and government priorities and processes.</p>	<p>By 2018:</p> <p>Use of country system for planning and budgeting of ODA increases</p> <p>Macroeconomic framework clearly defines sector and ODA financing priorities</p>	<p>MPI progress reports</p> <p>Draft and final version of the eighth NSEDP</p>	<p><b>Assumption</b></p> <p>ODA commitments to Lao PDR are sustained in the medium term.</p> <p><b>Risk</b></p> <p>Potential global macroeconomic challenges adversely affect ODA commitments.</p>
<p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p>Country systems and mechanisms for policy dialogue strengthened to improve aid effectiveness</p>	<p>By 2015:</p> <p>Meetings of the two working groups co-chaired by ADB held regularly and on schedule</p> <p>Working groups' papers and proceedings published</p> <p>ADB project start-up periods reduced to 2 months from an average 5 months (2005–2012)</p> <p>ADB Disbursement ratio increased to 24% from 18% in 2012</p>	<p>Government website: <a href="http://www.rtm.org.la/">http://www.rtm.org.la/</a></p> <p>Website and printed publications</p> <p>PCR and other monitoring reports</p> <p>Country assistance and evaluation reports</p>	<p><b>Assumption</b></p> <p>The government remains committed to strengthen aid effectiveness.</p>
<p><b>Outputs</b></p> <p>1. Policy dialogue on aid effectiveness improved</p>	<p>By 2015:</p> <p>At least four MWG and ISWG meetings co-chaired by the government and ADB held annually</p> <p>Proceedings and action plans followed-up annually and posted on the MPI website <a href="http://www.rtm.org.la/">http://www.rtm.org.la/</a></p>	<p>Working papers published in preparation of the working group meetings</p> <p>Progress reports by sector working groups to the RTM secretariat and reported on <a href="http://www.rtm.org.la/">http://www.rtm.org.la/</a></p>	<p><b>Assumption</b></p> <p>The recommendations of the sector working groups are monitored and followed up by the government.</p>



Design Summary	Performance Targets and Indicators with Baselines	Data Sources and Reporting Mechanisms	Assumptions and Risks
2. Project start-up delays reduced	Government's SOPs revised  PRFs revised and integrated in the new SOPs  SOPs translated and made available to staff of the line ministries	Regular reports by MPI and UNDP  Revised and approved SOPs  Prepared SOP guidelines	<b>Assumption</b> Relevant staff in line ministries who receive training on project readiness criteria are retained.  <b>Risk</b> The government's adoption of the new regulation on project readiness criteria is delayed.
3. Government capacity for management of ADB-financed project portfolio strengthened	Four quarterly portfolio reviews conducted annually and recommendations adopted  One joint country portfolio review with World Bank and relevant development partners held annually  Portfolio performance aligned with the results framework for managing development results specified in ADB's Strategy 2020 <sup>a</sup>	Memoranda of understanding of quarterly portfolio reviews and joint portfolio reviews	<b>Assumption</b> Government remains committed to jointly monitor project implementation with development partners and addresses risks.

Activities with Milestones	Inputs
<b>Output 1: Improve policy dialogue on aid effectiveness</b>	<b>ADB: \$450,000</b> (TASF-V)
1.1 Support the secretariats of the working groups for macroeconomics and infrastructure, from January 2014 onward.	
1.2 Organize and co-chair at least four meetings annually for each working group, focusing on the identification of policy issues and enabling policy dialogue between government and development partners, from February 2014 onward	
1.3 Prepare detailed reports for each working group for publication on the RTM website upon government and development partner clearance, from February 2014 onward	
1.4 Prepare at least three knowledge products, by July 2015	
1.5 Prepare report on working group experience to disseminate to other working groups, by July 2015	
<b>Output 2: Project start-up compliance achieved</b>	
2.1 Revise SOPs with government and development partners, by January 2014	
	Note: The government will provide counterpart support in the form of staff remuneration, office space, and other in-kind contributions.

Activities with Milestones	Inputs
2.2 Revise PRFs through consultative meetings and integrate in revised SOPs, by March 2014 2.3 Translate SOPs into Lao, by May 2014 2.4 Disseminate SOPs to line ministries, by August 2014 2.5 Prepare at least two knowledge products, by January 2015	
<b>Output 3: Strengthen capacity for management of ADB-financed project portfolio</b>	
3.1 Conduct quarterly portfolio performance review meetings, focusing on underlying systemic issues, and prepare reports on outcome and priority actions, from January 2014 onward	
3.2 Monitor the implementation of action plans agreed upon during quarterly and annual country portfolio performance reviews and report progress to LRM and MPI regularly, from February 2014 onward	
3.3 DIC and MPI staff facilitate at least 3 provincial and/or district consultation meetings during review missions, from January 2014 onward	
3.4 Conduct annual country portfolio review meetings of ADB, the World Bank, and the MPI in 2014 and 2015, including the preparation of joint ADB and World Bank background papers outlining an analysis of systemic portfolio performance issues and solutions, from January 2014 onwards	
3.5 Support provincial and/or district level consultation meetings on portfolio performance as part of regular review missions, from January 2014 onward	
3.6 Prepare and approve guidelines on mainstreaming the results framework into M&E systems of line ministries, by June 2014	
3.7 Conduct training for line ministries on these guidelines (see 3.6), by December 2014	
3.8 Strengthen MPI's monitoring of targeted sector outputs using the results framework, by March 2015	
3.9 Prepare at least two knowledge products, by June 2015	
3.10 Prepare report on the process of strengthening portfolio management for dissemination to relevant working groups, by July 2015	

ADB = Asian Development Bank; DIC = Department of International Cooperation; ISWG = infrastructure sector working group; Lao PDR= Lao People's Democratic Republic; M&E = monitoring and evaluation; MPI = Ministry of Planning and Investment; MWG = macroeconomic working group; ODA = official development assistance; PCR = project completion report; PRF = project readiness filter; SOP = standard operating procedure.

<sup>a</sup>. ADB. 2008. *Strategy 2020: The Long-Term Strategic Framework of the Asian Development Bank, 2008–2020*. Manila.

Source: Asian Development Bank

**COST ESTIMATES AND FINANCING PLAN**  
(\$'000)

Item	Amount
<b>Asian Development Bank<sup>a</sup></b>	
1. Consultants	
a. Remuneration and per diem <sup>b</sup>	
i. International consultants	130.0
ii. National consultants	130.0
b. International and local travel	30.0
c. Reports and dissemination	5.0
2. Workshops, training, and seminars <sup>c</sup>	75.0
3. Office equipment <sup>d</sup>	20.0
4. Miscellaneous administration costs <sup>e</sup>	20.0
5. Contingencies	40.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>450.0</b>

Note: The technical assistance (TA) is estimated to cost \$475,000, of which contributions from the Asian Development Bank are presented in the table above. The government will provide counterpart support in the form of remuneration of counterpart staff, office accommodation, and other in-kind contributions. The value of government contribution is estimated to account for 5.3% of the total TA cost.

<sup>a</sup> Financed by the Asian Development Bank's Technical Assistance Special Fund (TASF-V).

<sup>b</sup> Estimate for four experts.

<sup>c</sup> Venues for workshops, training, and seminars will be decided during TA implementation.

<sup>d</sup> Includes computer, printer, and scanner. On completion of the TA, all equipment will be turned over to the government.

<sup>e</sup> Including translation costs, administrative expenses, the cost of office stationery, and communications costs.

Source: Asian Development Bank estimates.

## OUTLINE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR CONSULTANTS

### A. International Consultants

1. **Aid management specialist and team leader** (5 person-months, intermittent). The aid management specialist and team leader will have a postgraduate degree in public sector management or public policy or any other relevant field and at least 12 years of relevant experience working on aid effectiveness, portfolio management, and institutional development.

The expert will work closely with the resident mission of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) and will provide overall guidance for implementation of the technical assistance (TA) and oversight for all TA activities. She or he will ensure that all outputs are of good quality and delivered on time and that the consultant team coordinates with the resident mission and the national counterparts. Previous work experience in the Lao PDR will be an advantage. More specifically, the specialist will

- (i) develop an implementation plan for the TA, including a schedule with milestones;
- (ii) oversee the development of detailed annual work plans for the national consultants and supervise their implementation;
- (iii) provide a background paper or papers for discussions with the government and development partners organizations on enhancing official development assistance (ODA) effectiveness, and lead one or two workshops on this topic;
- (iv) oversee and provide inputs for the preparation of the standard operating procedures (SOPs);
- (v) provide recommendations on improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the macroeconomic work group (MWG) and the infrastructure sector working group (ISWG), as well as support the resident mission in policy dialogue;
- (vi) oversee the preparation of working papers and other knowledge products;
- (vii) prepare quarterly and annual progress reports, including a final report for public disclosure; and
- (viii) organize a midterm and a final TA workshop with the government and development partners and prepare workshop proceedings for public disclosure on ADB's website.

### B. National Consultants

2. **Aid management specialist and deputy team leader** (24 person-months). The specialist will be proficient in English and have a degree in public sector management or any other relevant field and at least 6 years of experience areas related to ODA management. Under the guidance of the team leader and in close coordination with resident mission, the specialist will

- (i) provide support for improving the effectiveness of the working groups, the scheduling and organization of the working groups, and the preparation for working group proceedings;
- (ii) collaborate with the team leader in preparing the background paper or papers on ODA effectiveness and the associated workshops;
- (iii) organize, together with the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), consultation workshops with government agencies and development partners to finalize the project readiness filters (PRFs) and disseminate these PRFs;
- (iv) assist the MPI in revising the SOPs, including incorporation of the PRFs, through consultations with government agencies and development partners (the World Bank, in particular), and provide recommendations on harmonization;

- (v) administer workshops, training, and seminars;
- (vi) oversee the translation into Lao and the proofreading of the SOPs, and assist the MPI disseminate the translated SOPs to line ministries;
- (vii) support the team leader in the preparation of working papers and other knowledge products, including the required translations; and
- (viii) undertake any other work identified by the team leader in consultation with the MPI and the resident mission.

3. **Portfolio management specialist** (12 person-months, intermittent). This specialist will have a degree in public sector management or the equivalent and at least 6 years of experience in ODA projects, preferably projects funded by ADB or the World Bank. Under the guidance of the team leader and in close coordination with the resident mission, the specialist will

- (i) provide support to the MPI to strengthen and implement the quarterly and annual portfolio review process;
- (ii) provide support for the consultation on and the dissemination of the PRFs and SOPs;
- (iii) support the team leader in identifying mechanisms that will enable the line agencies to apply the SOPs efficiently;
- (iv) support the team leader in the preparation of working papers and other knowledge products, including translations;
- (v) provide inputs to quarterly TA progress reports on systemic portfolio management issues;
- (vi) prepare a final report on portfolio management that assesses key issues and progress made and provides recommendations for improvement; and
- (vii) undertake any other work identified by the team leader in consultation with the MPI and the resident mission.

4. **Translator and editor** (5 person-months, intermittent). A professional editor experienced in translating from English into Lao and vice versa will be engaged to undertake all tasks normally associated with those of an editor. He or she will be responsible for the translation of documents, letters, memos, and reports. She or he will also support the development of publications, edit materials that will be publically disseminated or published in Lao language, and act as an interpreter when required.