



Lao People's Democratic Republic  
Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity

**Ethnic Groups Development Plan for the Second Global Partnership for Education Project**

**Department of Planning, Ministry of Education and Sports**

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## 0. Background Information

1. Lao PDR has set education as a fundamental priority in its medium and long-term development plans and is taking important steps to implement a coherent sector strategy. Improving the access to, as well as the quality of education are key goals under the 7th National Social and Economic Development Plan, 2011–2015 (NSED), which centres on achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and graduating from the status of Least Developed Country by 2020. These goals are formalised in the Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) 2011–2015 of Lao PDR, which serves as the overarching framework for sector policies and guides not only government policies and programmes, but also development partners' support.<sup>1</sup> The ESDP and its policy planning matrix consist of three pillars: (i) expanding equitable access; (ii) improving the quality and relevance; and (iii) strengthening planning and management, and outlines a detailed sector plan of 96 strategies with targets, costing, legislative requirements as well as central level responsibilities, based on a set of goals, policy directions and objectives.

2. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has been vital in supporting the implementation of the ESDP.<sup>2</sup> The GPE also supported a comprehensive Mid Term Review<sup>3</sup> (MTR) of the ESDP which highlights the important progress in access to education and also the remaining challenges in the education sector, including low learning outcomes. The design of the proposed GPE II project links to recommendations presented in the MTR and will continue to support the implementation of the ESDP 2011-2015 as well as the ESDP 2016-2020, which is under preparation. However, in a context of less financial resources<sup>4</sup>, the GPE II project will focus on interventions that are in line with the main recommendations of the MTR and the Education Sector Working Group.<sup>5</sup>

3. Over the last 10 years, Lao has made notable improvement in access to basic education, but the dropout rate in the early grades is still high. At the national level, the net enrolment rate in primary school increased from 92 percent in 2008/09 to 96.6 percent in 2012-13, on track to meet the MDG target of 98 percent by 2015. The country is also on track to meet gender parity in early childhood and primary education. However, the high dropout and repetition rates in the early grades have resulted in a survival rate to grade 5 that is below the target. The dropout rate in the early grades of primary school continues to be relatively high: 11.4 percent in grade 1 in 2012-13, which is far from the goal of 5 percent by 2015. As a result, the survival rate to grade 5 is significantly off-track at 73 percent and the original target of 95 percent.

4. The results of the 2012 Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) also show low levels of reading ability and comprehension in the early grades. In the assessment, almost 30 percent of grade 2 students were unable to read a single word of a given text and a further 30 percent of those who could read at least one word did not understand the meaning of the text. Whereas the gap between home and school language goes a long way in explaining these results, many of Lao-Tai ethnicity also performed poorly in EGRA. Furthermore, the EGRA results show that the improvements in reading ability and comprehension from grade to grade are slow. These results suggest that the overall quality of education in the early grades is low.

5. Enrolment rates, dropout rates and the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) results show that there are important disparities across geographic regions (provinces, districts, urban vs. rural), ethno-linguistic groups and gender. Children from non-Lao-Tai ethnic groups living in rural and

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<sup>1</sup> The ESDP policy matrix.

<sup>2</sup> The first GPE (EFA/FTI) project was co-financed by GPE, Australia and the World Bank.

<sup>3</sup> This was conducted in 2013, with recommendations for the 2014, 2015 period and beyond.

<sup>4</sup> The first GPE grant was USD 30 million.

<sup>5</sup> ESWG is what GPE refers to as Local Education Group (LEG).

remote areas have the lowest indicators of primary education. While 89 percent of students in the capital Vientiane who enrol in grade 1 stay in school long enough to advance to grade 5, less than half of them do in the most disadvantaged provinces<sup>6</sup>. These differences in enrolment and survival are reflected in youth literacy rates in the Lao language. For example, while 90 percent of 15-24 year olds in urban areas are literate, only 41 percent of those in rural villages without road access are literate. Educational disparities widen at the intersection of gender and ethnicity. Literacy rates for young males of Lao-Tai ethnicity are 84 percent, but only 63 percent for Mon-Khmer. The disparity increases for ethnic females, with 81 percent of Lao-Tai ethnicity but only 45 percent of Mon-Khmer ethnicity are literate in the Lao language. To date, great improvements have been made for the overall development of Lao PDR in generating and sustaining inclusive growth and reducing poverty and inequality. However further attention needs to focus on issues that address the quality of education in terms of geographic boundaries, ethnicity and gender.

## 1. Objectives

6. A social assessment (SA) was conducted to obtain broad community support through free, prior and informed consultations in order to update the Ethnic Groups Development Plan (EGDP) for the ongoing GPE Programme that will be used by the project. This plan was prepared in consultation with potential project beneficiaries/communities through a participatory social assessment and in partnership with the agencies responsible for various facets of ethnic group issues. In order to get broad community/ethnic group support, consultations took place in north, central and southern regions of Lao PDR in provinces where a great number of ethnic groups reside. It was based on free, prior and informed consultations in accordance with WB's Operational Policy (OP) 4.10. The social assessment is part of the process by which the MoES informs the ethnic communities and local authorities at village, district and provincial levels about the project. The consultation and assessment ensures that social engagement, inclusiveness and ethnic groups' issues are incorporated into project planning, design, implementation and monitoring. It also ensures that the project's benefits are equally distributed in a culturally appropriate manner and that negative impacts are avoided.

7. This EGDP is intended to ensure compliance with the WB's OP 4.10 on Indigenous Peoples, which are referred to as ethnic groups in the Lao context. The World Bank's policy on ethnic groups provides guidance to ensure that ethnic groups benefit from development projects, and that adverse impacts are either avoided, or if unavoidable, are mitigated. Where ethnic groups are present, the policy requires special action to safeguarding their social and economic status and to avoid restricting their capacity to assert their interests and rights in land and other productive resources. This particular plan is to ensure that ethnic groups' issues and concerns are addressed in the project planning and implementation process and to make sure that they receive the projects' benefits in a culturally appropriate manner.

8. The overall objective of the GPE is to support Lao PDR in meeting its goals in increasing the coverage and improving the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of schools at a pre-primary and primary level, with a focus on the most educationally disadvantaged children. Improvement will focus on the following three main areas. Firstly, to improve the quality of teaching through teacher training, especially by encouraging them to adopt an effective pedagogical approach to improve reading skills in the early grades in the Lao language. Secondly, efforts will focus on improving the quality of schools through school-based-management and accountability. Finally further support will also be given to the implementation of the project's activities by training local and national education authorities in project management focusing on the improvement of planning and delivery, financial management, internal auditing as well as the schools' monitoring and evaluation system

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<sup>6</sup> Saravane, Sekong, Khammuane.

## 2. Legal Framework

### 2.1. National Legal Framework

9. The constitution of Lao PDR, ratified in 1991, uses the term “citizens of all ethnicity” throughout the document. It specifically recognizes the need to incorporate the concerns of ethnic groups in developing policy in all sectors, and has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthen the rights of all ethnic groups in various congresses, conferences, decrees, and laws since the 1980s (Articles 8 and 22). Article 75 of the constitution specifically indicates that “the Lao language and script are the official language and script”.

10. Constitutionally, Lao PDR is recognized as a multi-ethnic society, and Article 8 of the 1991 constitution states, “All ethnic groups have the right to preserve their own traditions and culture, and those of the Nation. Discrimination between ethnic groups is forbidden.” Furthermore Article 8 declares that:

“The State pursues the policy of promoting unity and equality among all ethnic groups. All ethnic groups have the rights to protect, preserve and promote the fine customs and cultures of their own tribes and of the nation. All acts of creating division and discrimination among ethnic groups are forbidden. The State implements every measure to gradually develop and upgrade the economic and social level of all ethnic groups.”

11. The 1992 ethnic group policy, Resolution of the Party Central Organization Concerning Ethnic Group Affairs in the New Era, focuses on gradually improving the lives of ethnic groups, while promoting their ethnic identity and cultural heritage. It is the cornerstone of current national ethnic group policy. The general policy of the Party concerning ethnic groups can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Build national sentiment (national identity).
- 2) Realize equality between ethnic groups.
- 3) Increase the level of solidarity among ethnic groups as members of the greater Lao family.
- 4) Resolve problems of inflexible and vengeful thinking, as well as economic and cultural inequality.
- 5) Improve the living conditions of the ethnic groups step by step.
- 6) Expand, to the greatest extent possible, the good and beautiful heritage and ethnic identity of each group as well as their capacity to participate in the affairs of the nation.

12. The Ethnic Groups Committee under the National Assembly is charged with the responsibility to draft and evaluate proposed legislation concerning ethnic groups, lobby for its implementation as well as the implementation of socio-economic development plans. Ethnic group research is the responsibility of the Research Institute of Social Sciences and Institute for Cultural Research under the National Academy of Social Sciences. The lead institution for ethnic affairs is the mass (political) organization, the Lao National Front for Construction (LNFC), which has an Ethnic Affairs Department.

13. It should also be noted that the government of Lao PDR fully realizes the importance of education and therefore has established several significant regulatory frameworks to strengthen the education sector such as the *Education for All National Plan of Action 2003-2015 (2003)*, the *National Education Sector Reform Strategy 2006-2015 (2006)*, the *Education Sector Development Framework (2009)* and the *National Strategy and Action Plan on Inclusive Education 2011-2015*.

### 2.2. World Bank Safeguards Policy

14. The WB’s OP 4.10 requires special planning measures to be established in order to protect the interests of ethnic groups with a social and cultural identity distinct from the dominant society that

may make them vulnerable to being disadvantaged in the development process. The OP 4.10 requires World Bank funded projects to employ measures that will ensure:

- 1) Affected ethnic groups are afforded meaningful opportunities to participate in planning that affects them;
- 2) They are given opportunities to receive culturally appropriate benefits; and
- 3) Any project impacts that adversely affect them are avoided or otherwise minimized and mitigated.

15. In the Lao PDR context, indigenous peoples are referred to as ethnic groups. These ethnic groups meet the eligibility criteria of World Bank's OP 4.10 *Indigenous Peoples* and can be identified by the following characteristics:

- Self-identification as members of a distinct indigenous cultural group and recognition of this identity by others.
- Collective attachment to geographically distinct habitats or ancestral territories in the project area and to the natural resources in these habitats and territories.
- Customary cultural, economic, social, or political institutions that are separate from those of the dominant society and culture.
- An indigenous/ethnic language, often different from the official language of the country or region.

16. It is likely that the World Bank's policy applies to ethnic groups belonging to the Mon-Khmer, Chino-Tibetan and Hmong-Mien ethno-linguistic families and may not apply to Lao-Tai ethnic groups. However, there are different ethnic groups included in the Lao-Tai ethnic groups, and this will mean that more intensive efforts will have to be made in implementing a culturally and linguistically sensitive consultative participatory process.

17. As a prerequisite for project approval, OP 4.10 requires its clients, in this case the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) Lao PDR, to conduct free, prior and informed consultations with potentially affected ethnic groups and to establish a pattern of broad community support for the project and its objectives. It also requires its clients to establish an appropriate gender inclusive framework that provides opportunities for consultation at each stage of project preparation and implementation, as well as uses appropriate consultation methods to the social and cultural values of the ethnic groups and their local conditions and, in designing these methods, gives special attention to the concerns of ethnic women, youth, and children as well as their access to development opportunities and benefits. The World Bank policy also addresses public disclosure, especially on the information about the project (including an assessment of potential adverse effects of the project on the affected ethnic groups) in a culturally appropriate manner at each stage of project preparation and implementation.

### **3. Social Assessment**

18. Although there are no major social and environmental safeguard issues associated with the project, a social assessment was conducted to assess the social and cultural habitats of the ethnic groups present in the project targeted areas and provide input to EGDP. The SA also assesses if the ethnic groups in the project areas broadly support the GPE II Project as required under the WB's social safeguards policy.

19. The SA process followed the legal framework for consultation, participation and disclosure of information set out by both the WB and the Lao government. This includes the Decree 112/PM (2010), General Guideline for Public Involvement (2013) and Ethnic Group Consultation Guideline (2013) of the Lao government.

### 3.1. Consultations, Methodology and Site Selection

20. It should be noted that the consultations were conducted in the same areas where the social assessment had been carried out to prepare EGDP for the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Project. The reason is because the GPE II and ECE projects will be operating in the same districts and provinces but will be addressing different issues. For instance, the GPE II focuses on quality learning outcomes, financial management, the management and maintenance of school buildings as well as the quality of education of primary education sector. Meanwhile the ECE project aims to increase the coverage and improve the quality of pre-primary education and early childhood care services for 3-5 year old children in disadvantaged districts.

21. This SA was prepared by firstly reviewing relevant secondary data such as previous education sector assessments, reports and other project preparation documents (supported by the WB) necessary for the formulation of the education projects involving Fast Track Initiative Program. Other documents included UNICEF's Child Friendly School case studies and Save the Children Norway's assessment of the quality of education in Lao PDR. This social assessment also consulted a number of education reports which have been published by the Research Institute of Education Science, MoES in the Lao language. They include but are not limited to the following: National Assessment of Students Learning Outcomes 2010, Education Challenges in Reaching MDG 2 and 3 (2012), Guidelines on Quality Education for Pre-Primary Schools and Kindergartens (2010), and Standard Requirements for Pre-Primary Teachers and Childcare Providers (2010).

22. Additionally, a review was conducted of both the WB's legal framework in reference to the WB's social safeguards on indigenous people, who are referred to as ethnic groups in this report. The review also included the GoL's legal framework on ethnic groups and strategies for improving the education sector in compliance with the MDG 2 and 3 by 2015. Together both the GoL and WB legal frameworks provided the instruction guidelines which were incorporated into the formulation of this EGDP.

23. Key informant interviews and free, prior and informed consultations with project affected ethnic group people were conducted from July 20 to August 10, 2013. The project will be implemented over a four-year period from 2015 to 2019 in 80 targeted districts and nation wide for last year of the project. These were identified through the learning outcome assessment of the previous GPE Project, as they have the lowest survival rates for girls up to grade 5. These districts have therefore been prioritised and will continue to get support from GPE II, especially to bring about improvements in the education of ethnic group girls. A list of the ethnic groups living in these districts is provided in Annex 2. Field assessments and free, prior and informed consultations were conducted in 30 villages in 5 districts. These were selected from three provinces, namely Borkeo in the north, Savannakhet in the central-southern region and Champasack in the south (listed in Annex 1). The selection of the sites, villages and schools was jointly made by the WB country task team and MoES officials at the central, provincial and district levels. The following criteria were used for the selection of districts for field assessments and consultations:

- Provinces and districts where MoES plans to expand with further pre-primary and primary education schools and/or classrooms and which have high dropout rates.
- Provinces and districts comprising of multi-ethnic groups.
- Provinces that consist in terms of wealth of poor, medium and better-off households according to the Lao National Statistic Centre's ranking system.
- Provinces and districts that are accessible by car during the rainy season, as this was when the SA was scheduled.

24. Survey provinces and districts were also selected to ensure that representatives of the ethnic groups that are affected the project were included. In total, members of 29 ethnic groups were consulted, which constitutes nearly 60% of the ethnic groups in Lao PDR. Table 1 below lists the 29 ethnic groups that were interviewed and consulted during the assessment period. As they represent the main ethnic groups in Lao PDR, there are no major ethnic groups that were excluded from the assessment.

**Table 1: Ethnic Groups Consulted in the Villages.**

Provinces and Districts	Main Ethno-linguistic Groups	Ethnic Groups
Borkeo: 1. Paktha 2. PhaOudom	Lao-Tai	Lao, Phouan, Tay Neua, Lue, Youne and Tai Dam
	Mon-Khmer	Khmu, Lamet, Sam Tao, and Phounoy
	Chino-Tibet/Hmong-Mien	Hmong, Akha, Lahu, Lu Mien/Eewmien
Savannaket: 1. Outoumphone	Lao-Tai	Lao and Phouthai
	Mon-Khmer	Taoy, Mangkong (Makong), Trey, Pako, Kaling, Laosouay (Souay), Kadang (Sadang, Katang).
	Chino-Tibet/Hmong Mien	None
Champasack: 1. Patumphone 2. Pakxong	Lao-Tai	Lao, Phouthai
	Mon-Khmer	Katang, Laven (yur), Taoy, Mangkong, Yearh, Brao, Harak, Kriang, Kaling, Souay, Ngaheun, Khamae, Syla.
	Chino-Tibet/Hmong-Mien	None

Source: Field data collection July-August 2013

25. The assessment involved free, prior and informed consultations, which are a requirement according to WB policy and the GoL's General Public Involvement Guideline (2013). The consultations also involved the use of a questionnaire (see Annex 3) as well as informal and focus group discussions. These included representatives of village authorities, women and men's groups, children/students, elderly and youth groups who were able to freely express their views on primary education.

### 3.2. Characteristics of the Affected Ethnic Groups

26. All the ethnic groups in the project's areas share a common socio-economic base, that is, they rely heavily on primary agricultural activities and natural resources for their livelihoods. However, their levels of access to modern socio-economic development varies from one location to another depending on how the government allocates common resources and provides support to such areas. The government does promote the preservation of ethnic culture including, traditional clothing and ethnic dialects. However, for the purpose of unifying the nation, the government has declared Lao to be the official spoken and written national language, as it is the most widely shared tongue amongst all of Lao PDR's ethnic groups.

27. Each ethnic group has its own dialect, custom and cultural characteristics, but not one of these groups have their own territory within the country. Instead all the ethnic groups share common territory and have lived together peacefully for many generations. Each of the groups is distinctive in ways that are sometimes readily apparent and at other times are not open to direct



observation. It is important to recognise that each ethnic group may also have their own distinctive way to conceptualize notions of education. Such notions may be sets of presuppositions, assumptions, and associations, or beliefs about the world, resulting in local ecological knowledge that has survival value for the group as a whole. The introduction of formal education as well as a modern school management system, where parents have to leave their children with teachers whom do not speak the same languages and/or share common ethnic groups knowledge, may be a challenge if cultural sensitivity is not taken into account.

28. The majority of the ethnic groups belonging to the Mon-Khmer and Chino-Tibet/Hmong live in remote rural areas and often have limited access to basic facilities including education. According to the WB's annual poverty indicator there is a substantial difference in the poverty rate among the the Lao-Tai groups which stands at about 25 percent and Mon-Khmer and Chino-Tibet/Hmong groups which rises to 42 percent. The main ethnic groups belonging to the Lao-Tai are mostly found in the urban areas. They often enjoy better public services and opportunities of socio-economic development (including education) offered by the government and private investment. One therefore needs to consider a large urban-rural divide in the provision of education.

29. Although gender gaps have narrowed in recent years, there are still significant differences, particularly if one examines literacy rates. For example in the 15-24 age group 77 percent of men are literate, compared to only 68 percent of women. These differences across gender are still quite large and this is particularly the case among some ethnic groups that have a strong social and culture bias against girls attending school.

## **4. Findings**

### **4.1. Existing Community Consultation and Participation Strategy**

30. The findings suggested that the MoES has effective communication, consultation and participation arrangements in place at the provincial, district and village level. The consulted ethnic group villagers and teachers reported that stakeholder consultations about the project had taken place during the project's preparation stage to raise awareness of the project's interventions. , The experiences from the school principals indicate that the use of existing government systems, in addressing coordination and participation issues ensures strong local ownership, and are also the preferred options by the local ethnic group villagers. Therefore, large parts of the project engagement strategies are based on the current successful programmes that have been devised to engage local communities, including ethnic groups.

31. The GPE I, under the EFA-FTI programme, had established means of outreach and engagement for the ethnic group parents, village representatives and teachers during the project's preparation stage, which included consultations on project interventions. It had successfully trained ethnic group teachers through an intensive two-year teacher training programmes and established a total of 10,620 of Village Education Development Committee (VEDC) members, including ethnic groups, out of which 2,799 were females. All of the VEDC members received an intensive ten-day training course focusing on their roles and responsibilities under the Education Quality Standards (EQS) model, which includes children's rights, concepts of EQS, gender roles, inclusive education and health. The assessment revealed that well trained VEDC members were able to help improve the management of school budgets and annual planning. They also worked hard to encourage the communities so that there was an increase in the number of families who sent their children to school at the right school age. Most of the VEDC members had prepared a map to indicate the families who had enrolled their children in school and those whose children were not in school. The map was also used to track absence and to follow up on children who were absent for prolonged

periods. Each VEDC member had their own development plan which was used as a guide to distribute the grants fairly between the community and the school.

32. During the project's implementation, there was an effective communications strategy in place which operated through the district education offices and VEDCs. It emphasised the importance of school based management as well as the publication of school implementation plans and financial reports to the local communities and thereby significantly increased the flow of information to the principal stakeholders. As a result of the implementation of GPE I, the EFA-FTI programme, was able to provide useful insights on methods of communication, consultation and participation. The GPE II project will use the same instruments to ensure compliance with the World Bank's safeguards policies and continue to promote the participation of ethnic groups.

#### **4.2. Free, Prior and Informed Consultations**

33. The assessment recognised that the ethnic groups in the project areas have the right to support or deny their free, prior and informed consultation related to the Second Global Partnership for Education Project (GPE II). The provincial education department, on the behalf of the MoES, joined the assessment and informed the district education department and ethnic group community of the GPE II project and its objectives. The information included, but was not limited to, the government's intention to support the education sector, particularly in the most disadvantaged districts with a lower rate of girls attending school. The consulted ethnic group communities were informed of the project objectives to improve the quality of schools and the teachers' teaching skills and how the GPE II project can support the government's plan to improve the education sector of Lao PDR as a whole. This project will be operating in collaboration with other partnerships and thereby be bringing in other technical expertise from Australia, the European Union (EU), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). More specifically it was also explained that the government intends to improve the quality of primary education in terms of: (i) infrastructure improvements such as the management and maintenance of school buildings; (ii) institutional strengthening by building the capacity of the education system's staff in financial and school management as well as the enhancement of teachers' teaching skills and ability to effectively teach children from multi-ethnic backgrounds; (iii) and upgrading students' learning outcomes by addressing their reading, writing and mathematical skills.

34. The consulted ethnic group communities expressed their appreciation that MoES had shared this information with them before the start of the project and agreed that the quality of education is vital for the future of their children and the country. They also gave feedback and made suggestions regarding the best ways in which their children are able to learn at school and how the teachers can effectively teach their children. These suggestions have been incorporated into this EGPD.

#### **4.3. Broad Community Support**

35. The GPE II project does not involve any physical relationship with the ethnic group communities or any other form of removal or non-removal of assets. It does not involve or interfere with their way of using land and natural resources and knowledge. All of the consulted villagers, including village authorities, teachers and students/children were unanimous in their support of the GPE II. They also understand the importance of improving the quality of education, especially the management of school infrastructure, having teachers with the skills to teach children from ethnic groups, and especially to create conditions that assist younger and primary school children to learn effectively.

36. The villagers were also unanimous in their desire to send their children to a primary school and have them complete primary school with better learning outcomes. They wished to have proper schools and classrooms for their children, as well as extra assistance in the form of school supplies, play grounds, toys and teaching materials. Additionally they mentioned the organisation of other activities to motivate their children namely special school plays, exercise and art programmes.

37. When the School Block Grant was explained as a GPE II project component, and they were informed of initiatives to improve the education system, it strengthened their support of the project. Some of the ethnic group villages in the targeted areas have a special village collection for extremely poor families who are unable to afford to send their children to school or purchase school uniforms, books and pencils. They also have a special policy to exempt the poorest children from wearing school uniforms and shoes. According to the villagers this type of allowance and assistance has a strong positive influence on the enrolment rate of poor students and especially of girls. Additionally, there were further indicators of the villages' or villagers' support for primary education, such as their desire to encourage girls to attend school as well as contribute to basic inputs like tables, chairs, toilets and other supplies on the one hand and in fining parents of children who drop out of school (100,000 to 300,000 LAK) on the other.

#### **4.4. Current School Conditions**

38. The majority of the existing schools are in a very poor condition as they are constructed out of bamboo and have thatched roofing panels. The classrooms are too small and there is not enough space to accommodate the increasing number of students/children. Some of these classrooms are also located just outside of the main school building.

39. Furthermore there are several primary schools that only cater for grades 1 to 3, and so students who are in grades 4 to 5 need to walk a few kilometres to the next village's school. Some of the other schools have recently constructed buildings through the WB supported FTI Project that were not yet being used in the 2012-2013 school year, but are scheduled to be used in the 2013-2014 school year.

40. All schools that were visited have toilets, but these are in a rather poor state and only consist of one or two rooms, which are not adequate facilities for hundreds of students during the short break times. The existing toilets do not have a water supply and so the teachers and students have to collect water from elsewhere in order to fill the water containers or small tanks.

41. All the schools that were visited have on average between 0.6 and 2 hectares of land. These pieces of land were officially issued by the Provincial Land Authority with Communal Land Use Rights certificates. Therefore land acquisition is not an issue for the building of schools and classrooms.

#### **4.5. Ethnic Groups' Issues in Education**

42. Generally it was noted that ethnic groups in all of the three provinces are poorly represented in the education system as a whole. The SA, discussions and village data show that there is not a large gap between the number of girls and boys attending pre and primary school. However, this gap is getting bigger and also the number of students attending school decreases significantly as they move up to the higher grades and onto secondary school. Low school attendance can be attributed to factors such as poverty and hunger, as children are embarrassed of being poor and having no food to bring to school and/or being poorly nourished and hungry. The other factors include the parents' education level; labour demands according to gender and that children are required to assist their mothers during the day. The actual quality of the school and the existence of

a language barrier at a very early school age are also factors that lower attendance rates. Limited access to land, public services and infrastructure as well as problems of food security also play their part. Many of the villages that were visited, especially the Khmu in Borkeo province, reported having insufficient rice to feed the family and that some families only have enough rice supply for 4-6 months of the year. The whole of the family is therefore forced to work as labourers for the rest of the year just to be able to survive.

43. In the northern part of Lao PDR, the main challenges for ethnic group children to attend school are predominantly related to poverty. They face a shortage of food, particularly rice as well as other basic ingredients including chilli, salt and cooking sauces. Additionally they lack other basic household goods such as cleaning products, toothpaste and soap as well as items of clothing. According to the villagers from the Khmu, Hmong and Akha ethnic groups, the main reasons why these groups are poorly represented in primary schools are: (i) a lack of money to buy school materials; (ii) not owning school uniforms or shoes; (iii) embarrassment of being poor and being unable to buy various items, including sweets at school; (iv) the obligation to help parents gather their daily meal from the fields and forest; and (v) the children's refusal to go to school.

44. Based on the group discussions, the other main problem causing ethnic groups' children to dropout, especially in the later years of primary school (students aged 13-16) is the issue of early marriage.

45. In the southern parts of Lao PDR, the issues ethnic groups need to contend with are very similar to those in other parts of the country. Poverty and hunger are once again the main causes of low school attendance amongst the ethnic group children. In Pakxong, Champasack province, parents often take their children with them to the coffee fields so as to pick coffee beans. By the time the season is over the children have missed so many classes so that they are unable to catch up with the other students and so they discontinue going to school because they are embarrassed of having fallen behind.

46. While all three regions shared the same view that the ethnic group's language is not a major issue for children who have reached primary school, most villagers agreed that the problem is for the pre-primary level as the children aged 3-5 do not understand the Lao Language and therefore would prefer to have their own ethnic group teachers in the pre-primary schools. All teaching materials are in Lao and this makes it difficult for the younger children, as they are also starting to learn to speak their own languages at home.

#### **4.6. The Quality of Education and Management Issues**

47. The management of the education system in remote rural areas where the ethnic communities live also present major challenges in attaining the goals of the Government's ESDP. While many positive comments were made during the discussions, especially related an improvement of the teachers' performance teaching young children and primary students, several shortcomings in the quality of education system's delivery were also noted. The major challenges according to the teachers are related to their personal knowledge levels, the limitation of teaching/learning materials and financial resources. Some teachers reported that they only completed basic teacher training and have had no further opportunities to improve their teaching ability or to continue their studies at a higher level. Many of the teachers teach multiple classes and multiple grades in one class in the schools that were examined. This is due to the limited number of teachers and the high number of students at the different levels. The teachers who participated in the discussions proposed that more funding should be made available to support teacher training programmes, which will directly improve their teaching skills and will then be reflected in the students' learning outcomes.

48. On the other hand the parents raised the issue that the most of the primary schools are only open for half of the day. This presents problems as the children are not good at self study and often prefer to play or accompany their parents to work in the fields without having done their home work. Some parents reported that their children were unable to read or write their own names even after having attending school up to the third or fourth grade.

49. The management and maintenance of the school buildings are mainly the responsibility of the education department and the teachers. The communities' contributions are limited to material donations and labour which are provided according to need as the school is being constructed and in September at the beginning of the new school year. According to both the parents and teachers limited financial resources are the main challenge both for the management and maintenance of schools and also for the payment of teachers' salaries.

50. According to the heads of the provincial and district education departments there are several factors that combine to prevent the effective implementation of high quality education programmes. These issues have been summarised below:

1. Teachers'/Ethnic Group Teachers' Teaching Skills:
  - a. There are not many teachers who want to teach in the remote rural areas where most of ethnic groups reside. This includes the ethnic group teachers themselves as they are keen to take on opportunities elsewhere including the main cities. It is for this reason that the schools often lose their most highly qualified teachers.
  - b. Teachers in the rural areas often have a lower level of education. Most of them complete secondary school and then attend intensive or short-term teacher training courses.
  - c. Cultural differences and a language barrier prevent effective communication between teachers and the younger children.
2. Management and Maintenance of School Buildings:
  - a. At the provincial, district and village level there are limited skills to build schools of an adequate quality. Most of the school buildings and classrooms are in a poor condition.
  - b. Some of the villages rely heavily on the community's contribution and other donations to improve school buildings and provide equipment like tables, chairs as well as teaching and learning materials.
3. Financial Management and Limited Budgets for Rural Schools:
  - a. A limited government budget is allocated for the improvement of school buildings.
  - b. Teachers receive low and irregular salaries which compels them to find other sources of income and sometimes results in their resignation during the school year.
  - c. A limited budget to invest in the capacity building of teachers and a school management system.
4. Assessment of Teachers' and Students' Performance - Monitoring and Evaluation
  - a. A monitoring system of the teachers' and students' performance has not been properly established or implemented due to: (i) the provincial and district offices' limited capacity for planning, implementation and monitoring, and (ii) the limited monitoring and evaluation skills as well as knowledge of the staff and principals in the education sector.
  - b. A lack of suitable vehicles of sufficient quality to access rural areas, especially in the rainy season when students are preparing for their examinations at the end of the school year.
  - c. Students are given insufficient advice regarding study skills in order to help them successfully pass examinations.
  - d. There are an insufficient amount of computerised recording systems for the students' academic achievements and there currently is a heavy reliance to record on paper.

## 5. Ethnic Groups Development Strategy

51. The overall objective of the GPE II Project is to support the Government in improving teaching and school effectiveness in the primary education sector within the target districts. The project's main beneficiaries include: (i) pre-primary and primary students and schools in the project districts who will benefit from schools with improved finance and management; (ii) Grade 1 and 2 students who will benefit from trained teachers with improved instructional materials for reading; (iii) teachers who will benefit from the training they have received in identifying gaps in instructional models and effective new reading materials; (iv) principals who will benefit from the project's capacity building and project management initiatives; (v) VEDCs throughout Lao PDR who will be encouraged to increase their participation in community-based schools; (vi) Provincial and District Education and Sports Bureaus (PESB and DESBs) in project districts who will benefit from the project's capacity building activities; and (vii) MoES staff who will benefit from further training in learning assessment as well as overall capacity development to deliver educational services.

52. The project is directly in line with the government's strategies in improving the delivery of basic education services and meeting the *Education For All* (EFA) objective that is widely regarded as fundamental to economic development and poverty reduction. The EFA goal incorporates the Millennium Development Goal 2 (MDG 2) of universal access to education.

53. The GPE II project's three main components consisting of (i) strengthening school-based management, (ii) improving learning outcomes and assessment capacity, and (iii) capacity building and project management, were identified to be relevant areas of focus to address ethnic groups issues in education during the social assessment. These components will assist and enhance the ability of the teachers' to effectively teach the students of the various ethnic groups as well as improve their learning outcomes. Additionally the third component supports the delivery of project activities and focuses on the schools' financial and management system, which were strongly requested by local schools principals and teachers.

54. The following table indicates which of the project's components and sub-components address the main issues that are currently being confronted by rural schools in the project targeted areas, and thereby which strategies will be prioritised during the project's implementation.

Quality of Education and Management Issues currently being faced by Ethnic Groups	Integrated Strategies for GPE II based on the Project Development Objectives (PDO)
1. <b>Teachers'/Ethnic Groups Teachers' Teaching Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to school financial reporting system (Component 1; 1.2 &amp; 1.3)</li> <li>• Improving reading outcomes and assessment Capacity (Component 2)</li> <li>• Teaching and learning material development specifically for ethnic groups children (Component 2.1 &amp; 2.2)</li> </ul>
2. <b>Management and Maintenance of School Buildings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity Building and Project Management (Component 3)</li> <li>• School financial reporting system, financial training, report writing and data information for measuring school effectiveness (Component 1 ; Component 1.3; Component 3)</li> </ul>
3. <b>Financial Management and Limited Budgets for Rural Schools:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School financial reporting system, financial training, report writing and data information for</li> </ul>

	measuring school effectiveness (Component 1 ; Component 1.3)
4. <b>Assessment of Teachers’ and Students’ Performance - Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve leaning outcomes and assessment capacity (Component 2; 2.1 &amp;2.2)</li> <li>• Provision of quality guidelines and self study material for both students and teachers, EQS (component 1.1)</li> <li>• SBG to ensure that schools meet four basic minimum required conditions (Component 1.2)</li> <li>• Reading development intervention (Component 2.1)</li> <li>• Develop instructional approaches that support Ethnic Students to acquire Lao Language skills (Component 2.1 &amp; 2.2)</li> </ul>

## 6. Complaint and Grievance Redress Mechanism

55. During the village meetings the consulted ethnic group villagers were informed of their rights related to grievance and the procedures that are in place to resolve such issues,. With the previous project, GPE I, they had also been advised on other selected issues such as land acquisition and the impacts resulting from the building of the school and/or classroom expansion. The villagers reported that there were no land compensation issues as the school and classrooms were built on the village’s existing school land and so no land acquisition had been involved. During the construction of the school and classroom expansion, the project provided the VEDC with an environmental management plan and there was code of conduct on how to minimising the impact of school construction. No complaints were registered during the course of the assessment from the previous GPE projects.

56. However, in the event that there is a complaint, the ethnic groups’ villagers reported that they have their own preferred mechanism for conflict resolution, which can be referred to as a grievance redress mechanism (GRM). All of the consulted villagers and school teachers shared the same view that if any issues arise, whether they are related to the school or any other social and environmental aspects, the ethnic group villagers will firstly consider amongst themselves whether the issue can be resolved internally. This first stage of mediation is preferred by all of them so as not to bring up issues unnecessarily and avoid complications. If the issue cannot be dealt with internally, they will then bring it up verbally with the village authorities. The village authorities often seek the advice of the village elders and call for a meeting which includes the complainants and the elders as mediators. If the issue cannot be resolved then the next formal step involves the village authority to either assist in drafting a written complaint or the complainant will be asked to draft the complaint by themselves. It then will go through the village authorities for comments and a referral letter will then be sent to the district authorities. The district authorities will then take up the case, investigate and mediate with the complainants and village authorities. If the issue still cannot be solved then the same steps are taken at the provincial level. If the provincial authorities cannot solve the issue, then they will be referred to the provincial courts. All of the consulted villages share the same view on both informal and formal grievance procedures.

## 7. Monitoring and Evaluation

57. Monitoring the project’s effectiveness and the results outcomes will come largely through data from the education statistics and information technology centre (ESITC) together with information



from DOI collected through its M&E network (various other centres and line departments) at all levels. The reporting of project effectiveness would be integrated into the ESDP performance assessment framework (PAF) operational cycle, including annual joint sector reviews with DPs. The PAF as a means to measure ESDP progress is the agreed whole-of-sector monitoring mechanism and is the foundation of the results framework. The DOI would be responsible for collecting all the information from different sources in a timely manner according to the PAF operational cycle and providing the ECU with the annual report for submission to the ESWG. Special attention will be paid to the community monitoring of results through the effective functioning of VEDCs. The project will continue to strengthen DOI's existing system and capacity by funding technical assistants for M&E and M&E workshops at central, provincial and district levels. It will also fund expenses related to conducting semester and annual sub-sector reviews and planning.

## **8. Budget for EGDP Implementation**

58. The budget for this project will be the equivalent of US\$16.8 million. The whole project will be implemented in disadvantaged districts, particularly those located in remote rural areas. All of the project's components are focused on the improvement of teaching and learning outcomes as well as the effective management of the school system in the areas where most of ethnic groups reside. Therefore, it has been estimated that about 80% of the budget will directly benefit the ethnic groups of Lao PDR.