



Concept Environmental and Social Review Summary

Concept Stage

(ESRS Concept Stage)

Date Prepared/Updated: 11/29/2024 | Report No: ESRSC04588



I. BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Operation Data

Operation ID	Product	Operation Acronym	Approval Fiscal Year
P507442	Investment Project Financing (IPF)	Front Workers	2026
Operation Name	Improving Frontline Workers Performance in Education and Health		
Country/Region Code	Beneficiary country/countries (borrower, recipient)	Region	Practice Area (Lead)
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Lao People's Democratic Republic	EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC	Education
Borrower(s)	Implementing Agency(ies)	Estimated Appraisal Date	Estimated Board Date
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Home Affairs	05-May-2025	28-Aug-2025
Estimated Concept Review Date	Total Project Cost		
06-Nov-2024	35,000,000.00		

Proposed Development Objective

To enhance the performance of pre- and primary education and health frontline workers in Lao PDR

B. Is the operation being prepared in a Situation of Urgent Need of Assistance or Capacity Constraints, as per Bank IPF Policy, para. 12?

No

C. Summary Description of Proposed Project Activities

The proposed project aims to enhance the performance of pre- and primary education and health frontline workers in Lao PDR. It consists of three main components: improving education frontline workers' performance and management, enhancing health frontline workers' performance and management, and strengthening the legal and regulatory framework for both sectors. Key interventions include developing comprehensive continuous professional development for teachers, implementing classroom observations and learning assessments, improving teacher allocation systems, expanding health worker registration and licensing, enhancing pre-service and in-service training for health workers, implementing retention policies for rural and underserved areas, and updating personnel information management



systems in both education and health sectors. The project addresses critical challenges in workforce management and aims to improve service delivery in education and healthcare across Lao PDR, with a particular focus on rural and disadvantaged areas.

D. Environmental and Social Overview

D.1 Overview of Environmental and Social Project Settings

Poverty in Lao PDR is heavily concentrated in specific districts, particularly in rural and remote areas. A significant portion of the country's poor population is located in 40 priority districts. Poverty remains concentrated among subsistence farmers and minority ethno-linguistic groups. Rural poverty rates are significantly higher than urban rates, with 23.8 percent of the rural population living in extreme poverty compared to 7 percent in urban areas as of 2018.

Lao PDR is home to over 45 different ethnic groups, each with its own language, contributing to a rich tapestry of linguistic diversity. The major ethnic categories include Tai Kadai (55% of the population), Hmong-Mien (27%), and Sino-Tibetan (18%), among others. In total, there are around 82 officially recognized languages in Laos, which include various dialects and minority languages such as Khmu, Hmong, Akha, and Tai Dam²³⁴. This linguistic diversity presents significant challenges for education, particularly as Lao is the mandated medium of instruction in schools.

The project aims to enhance the performance of pre- and primary education and health frontline workers in Lao PDR, in particular through developing assessments, regulations and supporting training programs. Thus the project will have a nationwide approach. Component 1 will particularly target pre and primary school teachers and principals in rural, poor, and remote areas, specifically the targeted geographical area of the 40 most disadvantaged districts. These areas, as well as generally the whole of Lao PDR, have a presence of Indigenous Peoples, who are more likely to be poor and face challenge accessing education and health services. Project activities are largely focused on training activities and developing assessments and regulations. The project will involve limited upgrading of simulation rooms, but this will not incur in significant environmental and social risks and impacts on the local people and their environment.

D.2 Overview of Borrower's Institutional Capacity for Managing Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

The three project implementing agencies (PIAs) including Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), Ministry of Education and Sport (MOES) and Ministry of Health (MOH) are familiar and experienced with Bank-financed projects that apply safeguard policy and new ESF/ESSs. In particular, the MOES and MOH have about 20 years experience in implementing education and health sector projects that have triggered safeguard policy and ESSs. All these projects have been either successfully completed or effectively operated with satisfactory ESF performance ratings maintained. In house-capacity and system has been built-up for managing E&S risks and impacts associated with the protect activities. However, due to staff turnover and reshuffling which is commonly observed within the government ministries with focal staff well-trained on safeguard and ESF moving on, continued support and technical assistance (TA) input from consultants would be needed to ensure adequate capacity in place, smooth transition and adequate compliance with ESF requirements by the PIAs. A brief assessment will be carried out to identify needs for TA and inform preparation of a capacity development and training plan for the three PIAs. The plan with adequate resources or budget proportionate to the level of E&S risks will be prepared for Project Implementing Units (PIUs) expected to be established in each of the three ministries with focal staff (focal points) appointed to work on the ESF. E&S consultant would be hired to support preparation and implementation of ESF instruments required for the project. These ESF requirements and material measures including activity and site-specific ESF instruments required to be prepared and implemented to manage the



E&S risks will be specified in the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) which will form part of the legal agreement for the project.

II. SCREENING OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL RISKS AND IMPACTS

A. Environmental and Social Risk Classification (ESRC)

Moderate

A.1 Environmental Risk Rating

Low

The Environmental Risk is designated Low at this stage, as only negligible or minimal environmental risks and impacts are anticipated from the project activities. The environmental risks and impacts are mainly related to (i) disposal/recycling of package and electronic wastes from ICT installation and upgrade for the proposed digitized system of centralized Human Resource Management Information Systems (HRMIS). The identified risks and impacts are minimal and can be easily mitigated with implementation of package/electronic waste management plan as part of the Operation Implementation Manual (OIM) to be prepared and disclosed prior to procurement of ICT equipment. In addition, OIM will include provisions of description of technically and financially feasible measures to improve energy efficiency (EE) as per the World Bank Group (WBG) Environmental, Health, and Safety (EHS) Guidelines and relevant Good International Industry Practices (GIIP).

A.2 Social Risk Rating

Moderate

The social risk is classified as moderate. While the project is focused on targeting the most at-risk areas there is a possibility that existing institutions are unaware of the challenges and needs of different groups of frontline workers in the education and health sectors, or may have a preference to benefit dominant social groups. This could lead to the exclusion of vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities frontline workers and those with no access to power and connection with decision makers, from benefiting from project activities. For instance, inadequate consultations with these frontline workers would result in their needs not being included, or they could be excluded from training opportunities, skills enhancement, retention and promotions, or be discriminated against in assessments. Other social risks from project activities are expected to be low and include (i) OHS risk of project workers, in particular traffic-relating accidents when conducting project travel, and some limited risks from the upgrading of simulation rooms, and (ii) insignificant and manageable risks of CHS, if workers implementing project activities visit to local communities to conduct social accountability (SA) activities and meetings with the communities to discuss and obtain their view and feedback on frontline workers performance, skills and behaviors, which could lead to cases of transmission of communicable diseases and insignificant risks of SEA/SH. A SEP will be prepared and applied under the project to manage the risk of social exclusion in accordance with ESS10 and ESS7 requirements and relevant national legislation. The SEP will provide communication and engagement strategies to involve and reach out to affected stakeholders to enhance their accessibility and inclusion in the project design and implementation. It will also provide a GRM and a SA mechanism to improve transparency in public servant management in the education and health sectors.

B. Relevance of Standards and Policies at Concept Stage

B.1 Relevance of Environmental and Social Standards

ESS1 - Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

Relevant



Overall E&S risk is rated moderate with social risk being moderate and environmental risk low. The potential social risks are mainly related to: (i) exclusion and discrimination against vulnerable and ethnic groups of frontline workers; (ii) limited OHS risks, in particular related to road travel; (iii) low risks of CHS associated with visit to local communities to carry out SA activities. The environmental risk is related to generation of package wastes/e-wastes and OHS risks associated with ICT installation and upgrades for the proposed digitized system of centralized HRMIS and risk associated with upgrading simulation rooms for teachers. A Rapid-SESA will be conducted to info will be conducted to inform development of legal framework. Risk management tools including ECOP, LMP, CHS measures and brief CERC-ESMF will be prepared as part of POM by effectiveness.

ESS10 - Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure

Relevant

The PIAs will jointly prepare a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) for the project, including a GRM in accordance with ESS10 requirements and relevant national legislation. The SEP will provide a framework to conduct consultations with all stakeholder groups, with a focus on frontline workers from ethnic minority and vulnerable groups particularly those who have no access to power and connection with policy makers, to mitigate risks of exclusion. The SEP will also include a social accountability mechanism to improve transparency in recruitment and promotion as well as performance review of teachers and health personnel. The SEP will also incorporate the outcomes of consultation with project stakeholders, including concerned government agencies and CSOs during project preparation. The SEP will be disclosed and consulted prior to project appraisal. The SEP will be implemented, updated, and re-disclosed if needed, throughout the different phases of the project life cycle.

ESS2 - Labor and Working Conditions

Relevant

The ESS2 is relevant due to potential risks of occupational health and safety (OHS) to project workers -- including project staff appointed from the three PIAs, consultants, service providers or workers upgrading simulation rooms -- in particular risks from road travel and Covid transmission. Stand-alone Labor Management Procedures (LMP) will not be required based on the Borrower's Framework Assessment (2024), which the Bank deems is largely in line with ESS2. Therefore, the relevant national legal framework including the Law on Labor (2013) and Law on Health Insurance (2018), Law on Social Security (2018) and various health care protocols will be applied under the project to manage the OHS risk.

ESS3 - Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management

Relevant

Dismantled electronic equipment and materials/wastes generated during ICT installation and upgrade may cause risks to human health and the environment if not disposed of in an environmentally sound and safe manner. Where obsolete equipment and materials cannot be reused, they should be recycled or disposed of by licensed contractors. The relevant provisions will be included in the package and e-waste management plan and would address the proper dismantling, storage, handling, and final disposal of e-waste in accordance with internationally recognized practices and should include the monitoring of the types/quantities of waste electrical and electronic equipment disposed of and document evidence of proper management (e.g., recycled, refurbished, discarded, exported).. Risk associated with upgrading simulation rooms will be managed though ECOP.

ESS4 - Community Health and Safety

Relevant



ESS4 is currently considered relevant due to a low risk of exposing communities and frontline workers to transmission of COVID and other possible communicable diseases and SEA/SH risks associated with project travel and SA activities, including for meetings and consultations with villages, assessments and renovation of simulation rooms. Existing set of health care protocols and guidelines developed and applied with support from the World Health Education (WHO), and UNICEF as well as Bank-financed health projects will be applied to manage the health risks associated with transmission of COVID and other types of communicable diseases. Existing national traffic and road safety regulations will be observed by the communities to avoid and managed road safety risk and accidents. The existing Law on combating and preventing violence against women and children (2014) will be observed by the project workers and communities to prevent and manage SEA/SH risk.

ESS5 - Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement Not Currently Relevant

The project will not finance activities and civil work that could generate risk of land acquisition and resettlement.

ESS6 - Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources Not Currently Relevant

ESS6 is not currently relevant given that the project will not work in the area of and nearby area with biodiversity significance, forest and other types of living natural resources.

ESS7 - Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities Relevant

ESS7 is currently considered relevant due to potential risk of excluding frontline workers from ethnic groups Social risk and ethnic screenings as well as consultation with ethnic minority groups will be carried out prior to appraisal and during project implementation to identify risks and needs of ethnic minority frontline workers (FWs) and measures to manage and mitigate risks related to them will be included in the the SEP and in project design. The SEP will ensure that ethnic FWs are consulted, engaged and provided with benefits from the project in a transparent and equitable manner during the course of project activities. Moreover, the project's focus on the 40 priority districts and targeting areas where there are ethnic FWs, helps to mitigate this risk.

ESS8 - Cultural Heritage Not Currently Relevant

The project will not finance activities that will affect cultural heritage.

ESS9 - Financial Intermediaries Not Currently Relevant

ESS9 is not relevant since the project will not engage and finance financial Intermediaries.

B.2 Legal Operational Policies that Apply

OP 7.50 Operations on International Waterways No

OP 7.60 Operations in Disputed Areas No

B.3 Other Salient Features



Use of Borrower Framework

In Part

As per the Borrower's Framework Assessment (2024), the national legal framework including the Labor Law (2013), Law on Social Security (2018) and Law on Health Insurance (2018), Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children (2014), various national guidelines and protocols on health care, and control of COVID-19 and other types of communicable diseases relevant and applicable to the project will be applied under the project to manage OHS and CHS risks. Thus a stand-alone LMP will not be needed. LMP and CHS measures including ECOP to manage potential risk associated with upgrading simulation room, and the national law to prevent SEA/SH risk will be provided in the POM to be prepared and cleared as one of the prerequisites for project effectiveness. The Law on Grievance Handling (2015) will be also referred to and recognized in SEP required to be prepared and applied under the project. Key provisions of these national legislations are largely in line with the ESS2

Use of Common Approach

No

C. Overview of Required Environmental and Social Risk Management Activities

C.1 What Borrower environmental and social analyses, instruments, plans and/or frameworks are planned or required by Appraisal?

Actions to be completed prior to Bank Board Approval:

To be undertaken, prepared, disclosed and consulted prior to appraisal:

- 1. Rapid SESA to inform the HRM policy development and system.
- 2. Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), including Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM), Social Accountability Mechanism; and
- 3. Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP).

Public Disclosure

III. CONTACT POINT

World Bank

Task Team Leader:	Michael Drabble	Title:	Senior Economist
Email:	mdrabble@worldbank.org		
TTL Contact:	Emiko Masaki	Job Title:	Senior Economist, Health
Email:	emasaki@worldbank.org		



TTL Contact: Elena Georgieva Georgieva-Andonovska Job Title: Senior Public Sector Mgmt. Specialist

Email: egeorgievaandono@worldbank.org

IV. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

The World Bank
1818 H Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20433
Telephone: (202) 473-1000
Web: <http://www.worldbank.org/projects>

V. APPROVAL

Task Team Leader(s):	Michael Drabble, Emiko Masaki, Elena Georgieva Georgieva-Andonovska
ADM Environmental Specialist:	Ngozi Blessing Obi Malife
ADM Social Specialist:	Sybounheuang Phandanouvong