

Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR (BEQUAL)

Investment Design Document

May 2014

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Table of Contents

A. Executive Summary.....	i
B. Analysis and Strategic Context.....	1
1. Country Overview and Sector Analysis	1
2. Education Sector Context and Program Rationale	3
3. Strategic Context and Rationale.....	8
4. Lessons Informing the Design.....	11
5. Implementation Modality.....	14
6. Theory of Change	15
C. Investment Description.....	18
7. Program Approach	18
8. Program Logic and Key Result Areas	18
9. BEQUAL Components	25
D. Implementation Arrangements.....	46
10. Management and Governance	46
11. Implementation Responsibilities.....	49
12. Budget and Resourcing.....	50
13. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.....	58
14. Inclusiveness, Safeguards and Cross-Cutting Policy Issues.....	64
15. Sustainability	69
16. Procurement Arrangements	70
17. Risk Assessment and Management	72
Annex 1. Education Situational Analysis – Executive Summary	75
Annex 2. ESDP 2011-2015 Targets for the Basic Education Sector	76
Annex 3. Lao PDR Key Education Indicators	78
Annex 4. Lao Government and Development Partner Investments in Education	83
Annex 5. List of Target Districts	84
Annex 6. Program Activities and Targets.....	88
Annex 7. School Infrastructure Glossary of Terms.....	93
Annex 8. Terms of Reference for Governance Bodies	95
Annex 9. Monitoring &Evaluation Framework.....	99
Annex 10. Risk Matrix	114

List of Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASLO	Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes
DESB	District Education and Sports Bureau
DIESA	Disability Inclusive Education Situation Analysis
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DOF	Department of Finance (MoES)
DOI	Department of Inspection (MoES)
DP	Department of Planning (MoES)
DPPE	Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education (MoES)
DTE	Department of Teacher Education (MoES)
DUCDA	District Unit for Construction and Development Advice
ECDM	Education Construction and Design Management (Unit) (of MoES)
EDP2-AF	Education Development Project Phase II - Additional Funding
EFA-FTI	Education for All Fast Track Initiative (program)
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESDP	Education Sector Development Plan
ESQAC	Educational Standards and Quality Assurance Council
ESWG	Education Sector Working Group
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INSET	In Service Education and Training
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LABEP	Lao Australia Basic Education Program
LECS	The Lao Economics and Consumption Survey
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoH	Ministry of Health
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NEQS	National Education Quality Standards
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
NPA	Non Profit Association
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PCM	Provincial Coordinating Mechanism

PESS	Provincial Education and Sports Service
PUCDA	Provincial Unit for Construction and Development Advice
RIES	Research Institute of Educational Science
TESAP	Teacher Education Strategy and Action Plan
TNA	Training Needs Assessment
TTC	Teacher Training Centre
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VEDC	Village Education Development Committee
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Australia's support to basic education in Lao PDR has been central to the development assistance program for more than 15 years. Under the Lao-Australia Development Cooperation Strategy (2009-2015) and as outlined in Australia's Education Delivery Strategy for Laos 2013-2018, education is identified as a flagship intervention that commits Australia to working with Lao PDR over a ten-year strategy for investment in the basic education sub-sector to ensure all girls and boys (especially those experiencing disadvantage) complete a full course of quality basic education, achieving literacy, numeracy and other life skills.

Australia's most recent support to Lao PDR for basic education has been through the multilateral Education for All – Fast Track Initiative program, and this current investment will end in late August 2014 when the current Global Partnership for Education funding envelope concludes.

The Government of Lao PDR has confirmed its desire for the Australian Government to work collaboratively with the Lao Ministry of Education and Sports through a new program to be called Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR (or BEQUAL). This new program will focus on the primary education sub-sector in the first phase and will partner with several other donors (UNICEF, World Food Programme, Non-Government Organisations and Not-for Profit Associations and possibly the European Union) in this comprehensive investment program. BEQUAL will be targeted to 65 educationally disadvantaged districts in Laos, building on the foundation and initial impacts generated within the 56 districts targeted under the Education for All – Fast Track Initiative program, and expanding to an additional 9 districts with the lowest Survival Rates to grade 5.

BEQUAL will directly support pre-service primary level teacher education within the 8 main Teacher Training Colleges, as well as in-service teacher education for primary teachers working in the 65 targeted districts. Teaching and learning resource materials will be provided for both pre- and in-service teacher education as well as additional learning materials for primary schools.

The theory of change used to inform the Australia's Education Delivery Strategy for Laos 2013-2018 requires a long-term commitment of at least ten years, and so the BEQUAL program is conceived across a ten year time horizon and is designed as a ten-year commitment from Australia to basic education development in Lao PDR. The program will be implemented across three phases through a rolling design as follows:

Program Preparation	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
2014	2014/15 – 2017/18	2018/19 – 2021/22	2022/23 – 2023/24
6-8 months	4 years	4 years	2 years
Preliminary activities	Inception, Stabilisation and Review	Review, Replication and Escalation	Consolidation

This document outlines the program design for program preparation and Phase 1 of program implementation. The actual final level of funding for the program is not yet confirmed, and so BEQUAL will work within a flexible funding envelope (initially proposed at \$85.8 million¹ to

¹ \$85.8 million includes \$15.8 million (over FY2014/15—2016/17) for partner donor activities associated with WASH (UNICEF) and School Meals (World Food Programme), and \$70 million to support teacher education; school resourcing;

2017-18) with a design that will permit adjustment of its delivery priorities and targets as the investment envelope expands and/or contracts.

Australia's Education Delivery Strategy for Laos 2013-2018 aligns with the Lao Government's Education Sector Development Plan towards a common overall goal to ensure all girls and boys (especially those experiencing disadvantage) complete a full course of quality basic education, achieving literacy, numeracy and other life skills. With this goal in mind, BEQUAL is designed around the following three intermediate outcomes:

- **Participation:** more disadvantaged children and young people participate on a regular basis in primary education and attend school ready to learn.
- **Resourcing:** learning environments in targeted geographic areas are more equitable for all groups and are adequately resourced.
- **Effective teaching:** more effective teaching by better qualified teachers enables more disadvantaged girls and boys to learn.

In order to conceptualise the program in a manageable form, the BEQUAL design organises the structure of the program into five Key Results Areas each having one or more implementation components along with a set of intermediate outcomes and end-of-program outcomes. Note that these Key Result Areas are complementary to each other and inter-related and should not be viewed as separate emphases within the total program nor should they be seen as hierarchical in order of importance.

The Key Result Areas and related components for implementation are:

1. **Education Policy, Planning and Coordination:** investment to build the capacity of the Government of Lao PDR to lead and manage the basic education sector by strengthening the Lao Ministry of Education and Sports at all levels in a number of areas, including through school based, management which will also contribute to delivering other Key Result Areas.

Component 1: Policy, Planning and Coordination

2. **Increased Participation:** to assist disadvantaged children, especially girls and those with disabilities from rural areas, whose families experience poverty and health and nutrition challenges that act as barriers to full participation in education.

Component 2.1 Participation and Access

Component 2.2 School Meals

3. **Teacher Education and Support:** to address both pre-service and in-service training of primary teachers in order to promote better learning outcomes for primary level students through improved teaching. Focus will be on improving teacher training and ensuring that ethnic minority teachers, particularly female candidates, are trained and deployed in sufficient numbers to rural and remote villages to raise learning standards in those areas.

Component 3.1 Pre-service Teacher Education

infrastructure, and education policy, planning and management – including activities by the Learning Facility for knowledge and learning.

Component 3.2 In-service Teacher Education

4. **Teaching and Learning Resources:** to provide improved materials for primary teacher training and to develop new materials for primary schools to assist with Lao language teaching and learning, multi-grade teaching, fostering a love of reading, and supporting the distribution of textbooks to all primary schools.

Component 4.1 Teaching and Learning Resources

5. **School Infrastructure:** to rehabilitate existing classrooms and provide toilets, hand-washing and hygiene (WASH) facilities in the target districts according to a prioritised schedule, with the option to construct additional classrooms and toilets in instances of exceptional need along with converting ‘incomplete’ schools to ‘complete’ schools.²

Component 5.1 Classrooms, Furniture and Rehabilitation of Primary Schools

Component 5.2 New WASH Facilities in Primary Schools

Across all Key Results Area, strategies to address equality and inclusion gaps will be in place, including priority to recruiting local ethnic minority women to become teachers; strengthening teacher training content and pedagogy for inclusiveness; ensuring the revised curriculum is free of gender and ethnic bias; and ensuring that new schools can be accessed by students with disabilities.

Implementation of BEQUAL

Australia (through the Australian Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - DFAT) will jointly implement BEQUAL with the Government of Lao PDR (represented primarily by the Lao Ministry of Education and Sports – at central, provincial, district and school level). BEQUAL will be implemented via a program approach, where resources are provided to support key departments of the Ministry to implement the priorities of the Education Sector Development Plan, in relation to basic education. In support of realising these priorities, BEQUAL will draw on the expertise and experiences of several complementary partners, including contractors, multilateral, international non-government organisations and local not-for-profit associations in order to best meet specific implementation requirements. There will be a shared program framework that will ensure strong dialogue in order to achieve more effective cooperation and coordination. The Australian Government will appoint a BEQUAL managing contractor to manage and coordinate core activities in Key Result Areas with the Ministry of Education and Sports.

International non-government organisations and not-for profit associations will be engaged to address participation in primary education as well as other community-level implementation activities. The BEQUAL managing contractor and the other development partners (World Food Programme and UNICEF) will be responsible for managing and implementing other separate components and activities. The World Food Programme, continuing an existing package of work, will implement a School Meals Program (Component 2.2) designed to also contribute to increased participation. UNICEF will lead the investments in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (Component 5.2 – WASH) in primary schools that will also build on existing work.

² Incomplete schools are schools that are unable to offer all five grades of primary education.

Management and Governance

Management and governance of BEQUAL will occur at two levels: the strategic oversight level through a BEQUAL Steering Committee, and the operational governance level, through a BEQUAL Technical Working Group. The BEQUAL Steering Committee will be a bilateral entity with senior representation from both the Governments of Lao PDR and Australia³ to provide high level strategic oversight of the program. The BEQUAL Technical Working Group, aligned to the Education Sector Working Group, will manage planning and activity implementation and have oversight of program monitoring, evaluation and learning. The BEQUAL Technical Working Group will interface with provincial co-ordination mechanisms established by the Education Sector Working Group. The Technical Working Group will consist of the Director Generals of the five key departments within the Lao Ministry of Education and Sports - Departments of Planning; Finance, Teacher Education; Pre-primary and Primary Education; and Inspection), Australia's Development Cooperation representative (DFAT), who has day-to-day management responsibility for BEQUAL, the BEQUAL managing contractor Team Leader and representatives from WFP, UNICEF, and an international non-government organisation consortium. The Director General of the Department of Planning will initially chair the Technical Working Group, with chairing responsibilities rotated amongst the other Directors General.

Each program implementing partner will support the work of counterpart departments within MoES to ensure implementation on a day-by-day basis proceeds smoothly. At a central level partners will include: Department of Planning; Department of Teacher Education; Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education; Research Institute for Educational Sciences; Education Standards and Quality Assurance Centre, Department of Finance, and the Department of Inspection. At a provincial and district level the program will partner with the target Provincial Education and Sports Services, the District Education and Sports Bureaus and all 8 main Teacher Training Centres, as well as the offices of the Provincial and District Governors.

The BEQUAL Technical Working Group, linked to the Education Sector Working Group, will be expected to ensure that BEQUAL aligns with cohesive education policy; planning and sector coordination. Under direct support from DFAT linked with the program, Australia will continue to resource the Education Sector Working Group Secretariat and help strengthen the focal group structure.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation arrangements for BEQUAL will operate across several levels. Australia, through the aid program, has already established a **Learning Facility** within the rural development sector and has proposed to extend the facility's mandate into basic education. The Learning Facilities existing role is to generate, manage and disseminate learning and results, based on its monitoring and evaluation and resource functions within rural development, and so with its expanded role in basic education it will be expected to provide a similar function for BEQUAL. Consequently, monitoring and evaluation for BEQUAL at the **whole-of-program level** will be led by the Learning Facility, which will support portfolio-wide monitoring and evaluation across Australian aid program-funded investments in education. At the **component level**, monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken by each of the implementing partners (World Food Programme, UNICEF and the BEQUAL managing contractor in collaboration with Ministry's Department of Inspection), and within **individual packages of activity** such as

³ As well as the European Union if their delegated cooperation to Australia for co-funding BEQUAL goes ahead as proposed.

those that will be implemented by Non-Government Organisations and Not-for Profit Association partners, by the BEQUAL managing contractor.

It should be noted that the commitment of resources for monitoring, evaluation and learning in BEQUAL will be spread across the various program components, reflecting the particular responsibilities of each implementing partner. All implementing partners, as defined above, within BEQUAL will have dedicated and specialist monitoring and evaluation resources funded within their components of the program to ensure that adequate attention and expertise is directed to monitoring and evaluation.

Risk

In broad terms, most risks to BEQUAL are assessed as low to medium. Changing policies towards development assistance in the Government of Australia might present some on-going uncertainty in terms of total budget, but open dialogue between the Government of Laos (through the Lao Ministry of Education and Sports) and the Government of Australia (through the Australian Embassy in Vientiane) should lessen any potential operational risks. The design contains a flexibility that will permit adjustments to the program should there be any reduction in resourcing. The constraints on the non-wage recurrent budget for education within the Government of Laos' budget present a risk for the sustainability of BEQUAL-supported activities. This will need to be monitored carefully and addressed through policy dialogue throughout the first phase of the program. Regular revisiting of the Risk Matrix during the preparation of each Annual Plan will allow adjustment of risks in each category should situations change.

B. ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

1. Country Overview and Sector Analysis

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) was established in 1975, succeeding the Kingdom of Laos, following decades of colonial conflict and heavy involvement in the larger Indochina war in the eastern and north-eastern provinces. Established as a one party political system under the 1991 Constitution, Lao PDR is headed by the Lao People's Revolutionary Party. It is a land-locked country, bordered by five other countries in the Greater Mekong Region including China to the north, Vietnam to the east, Thailand and Cambodia to the south and Myanmar and Thailand to the west. The Lao PDR had a population of approximately 6.6 million people in 2012, around two thirds of whom live in rural areas. The terrain is varied, ranging from mountainous and hard-to-reach areas where road access is very limited to urban centres spaced widely across the country. During the wet season many remote areas are inaccessible.

Lao PDR is ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse, with 49 officially recognised ethnic groups and more than 200 sub-groups. This diversity presents real challenges for the delivery of all social services, including education, as many non Lao-Tai (ethnic persons) live in remote and hard to access locations and communicate predominately in their own mother tongue⁴.

Poverty in the Lao PDR has strong regional and ethnic dimensions, which frequently intersect and are masked by national level data. The Lao Economics and Consumption Survey (LECS) shows there is a significantly higher incidence of poverty in rural areas (31.7 per cent in 2007-08) compared to urban areas (17.4 per cent in 2007-08). Poverty incidence in the Northern regions of the Lao PDR (where many ethnic minority groups live) is very high with almost one in three households living in poverty (32.5 per cent) although poverty incidence in the central regions also remains high at 29.8 per cent⁵. In some regions, poverty levels have not changed and may have increased. Whilst there is a dearth of quantitative data on the gender dimensions of poverty, qualitative assessments suggest that poverty has a female face⁶.

The Australian Aid program-prepared a Disability Inclusive Education Situation Analysis (DIESA) in late 2012 that provides an in-depth analysis of the challenges disabled boys and girls face when accessing education in Lao PDR, and provides wide-ranging recommendations appropriate to the local context. Children with disabilities are passively and actively discriminated against in the education system and this seriously impacts on their ability to attend school and to continue an education if they are able to enrol at a school. Disability visibility is also a significant issue in Laos, with communities not recognising disability⁷. The low prioritisation of education among some communities, particularly ethnic minority groups, impacts more significantly on children with disability. This is because families and communities do not often believe that children with disability are able to learn, so if difficult decisions have to be made by families

⁴The Education Sector in Lao PDR—Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities, March 2013. See Annex 1 for the executive summary.

⁵Whilst poverty is slightly lower in Laos' southern regions (22.8%), this masks significant disparities between provinces within the region with poverty incidence in provinces such as Saravane and Sekong well above the national average (27.6%) at 36.3% and 51.8% respectively. Similarly in Northern provinces such as Phongsaly, Oudomaxay and Huaphanh and Central provinces Source: World Bank (2010), *PovertyNet Database*. Accessed on October 12-14, 2010.

⁶Chamberlain, J. R. (2007) Participatory Poverty Assessment II (2006): Lao People's Democratic Republic. National Statistics Centre, Asian Development Bank, ADB TA: 452, Institutional Strengthening for Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation 2006-2007.

⁷DFAT (2012) Disability Inclusive Education in Lao PDR: Situational Analysis Report

regarding which child commences/remains in school, the child with a disability is more likely to miss out.

Lao PDR is currently classified as a Least Developed Country according to United Nations' criteria. Current key development indicators for Lao PDR are as follows:

Table 1: Key Development Indicators

Key Development Indicators	Measure	Year
Human Development Index (UNDP)	0.543	2013
Human Development Index Ranking (UNDP) – out of 185 countries	138/185	2012
GNI per capita (US\$) (World Bank)	\$1,260	2012
GDP per capita (US\$) (Lao Statistics Centre)	\$1,408	2012
Population living below US\$1.25 per day international poverty line (per cent) (UNDP)	33.9%	2012
Life Expectancy at Birth (Male/Female - years) (MoH)	66.4/69.4	2011
Maternal Mortality Ratio - per 100,000 births - estimate (UNFPA)	357	2012
Malnutrition (stunting) rates in children under five years of age (UNICEF)	44%	2012
Gender Inequality Index - rank out of 186 countries (UNDP)	138/186	2012

The demographic profile of the Lao PDR is young: 50 per cent of the population is less than 20 years old, and the youth dependency ratio continues to rise. Shaped by high fertility rates⁸, declining mortality rates, rising life expectancy (at an average of 67 years in 2011) and an improving gender inequality index, Lao PDR's demographic profile has the potential to generate significant dividends if investments are made to ensure that high growth rates translate into inclusive development outcomes for all⁹.

Average gross national income is US\$1260 and GDP growth was approximately 8 per cent in 2012. Demand for labour, particularly skilled labour, is increasing and the Lao PDR needs to equip its labour force to meet this demand whilst also recognising the central role that a productive agricultural sector will need to play. It is estimated that approximately 70 per cent of the Lao population reside in rural areas. Subsistence farming presents particular difficulties for families who rely on their children to assist with the farming activity at various stages during the cropping seasons, which directly causes lack of continuity of participation of children in education. Food security in remote, rural and disadvantaged areas is a concern and many children suffer from malnutrition (stunting).

The economy of Lao PDR is modernising slowly. The country is actively working to become part of the integrated ASEAN Economic Community by 2015, and is a substantial power exporter to neighbouring countries. Significant investments in transport infrastructure in recent years, including an increasing number of bridges constructed over the Mekong River (the country's border with Thailand and the main waterway), as well as better major roads are opening up trade routes, expanding the economy and bringing greater exposure and access to the outside world for many rural communities.

⁸ These have been declining since the 1995 census.

⁹ Op. cit., page 9

Not-with-standing the above observations, recent fiscal reviews undertaken by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Australia¹⁰ highlight substantive financial constraints which will likely impact upon funding to the education sector over the life of the proposed program. According to the IMF (2013), inflation is accelerating and the nation's current account has deteriorated significantly, which is a product of a currency appreciation in real terms, a growing fiscal deficit, and strong domestic demand. Recent increases to teacher salaries are also contributing to fiscal pressures, resulting in a proportionate decrease in recurrent non-wage (operational) funding to the education sector¹¹.

Salary increases are already impacting upon the availability of funds for education operational expenses. Delays in payment of salaries and suppliers are taking place and this will likely impact negatively on both productivity and cost of doing business across the sector. Unless Lao PDR is able to address these substantive financial issues, there is a strong probability that public financial management of the education sector will deteriorate and program (and educational) sustainability will be compromised. There is an opportunity for Australia to work with the Government of Lao PDR through the Lao Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), to counter some of these issues.

2. Education Sector Context and Program Rationale

Lao PDR is divided into 17 provinces¹² (*khboueng*), which includes the capital Vientiane, and 145 districts (*muang*), each of which includes political and administrative arms of government responsible for education. The administrative structures are called the Provincial Education and Sports Services (PESS) and the District Education and Sports Bureaus (DESB).

The education sector in Lao PDR comprises a pre-primary sub-sector (including crèche, Kindergarten and pre-primary schools,¹³), a primary sub-sector (grades 1-5), a lower secondary sub-sector (grades 6 -9) and an upper secondary sub-sector (grades 10 – 12). There are also non-formal and technical vocational and education training sub-sectors managed by MoES.

Basic education is defined as primary and lower secondary, inclusive. The primary sub-sector contains many 'incomplete' schools (defined as those schools unable to offer all 5 grades). As a result, many students who wish to complete all five years of primary schooling must travel to the nearest 'complete' primary school. It is necessary for students to move once again to a lower secondary school if they wish to proceed beyond grade 5. Given the sometimes considerable distances involved, a great deal of student and parental persistence and additional family funds are required for students (particularly females), to complete a primary education. A secondary education is even more difficult to achieve, given the many barriers of both distance and cost.

The Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) is the Lao Government's five year plan for education and was developed by MoES with the support of development partners through the Lao Government-led Education Sector Working Group (ESWG). It is based upon the Education Sector Development Framework and the National Education System Reform Strategy and outlines goals; objectives; targets; resources and financial requirements together with

¹⁰ An Education Sector Assessment of Lao PDR in September 2013, was prepared by the Australian Government, reviewing public financial management and procurement systems to further inform this design.

¹¹ 2013 Education Sector Development Plan Mid-Term Review.

¹² An 18th province (Saysomboun Province) was created in January 2014, made up of districts which originally comprised Saysomboun Special Zone.

¹³ A kindergarten services 3-5 year olds and is not attached to a primary school, pre-primary classes are usually for 5 year olds only (though rarely include 3-5 year olds) and attached to primary schools. An informal community-based school readiness program for 5 year olds has also been piloted in 50 remote villages.

monitoring requirements for the period 2011 to 2015. The associated ESDP Policy Planning Matrix identifies targets to 2015 (Annex 2¹⁴), legislative requirements, and central-level responsible parties for each of the 96 strategies that have been included in the ESDP.

A joint government and development partner review of the ESDP was undertaken in mid-2013 and recommended a number of adjustments be made to targets and implementation strategies. This mid-term review confirmed that significant progress has been made over recent years in improving access to primary education. However, Lao PDR is off-track to meet Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3¹⁵ and the Education For All goals, particularly for children with disability and for groups living in the most remote areas, where often ethnicity, gender, poverty, cultural values and attitudes, all intersect to constrain participation in education. Moreover, for those many children who do participate in the education system their educational experience is not equipping them with the quality learning needed to develop to their full potential, and many leave the system without acquiring basic literacy, numeracy and life skills.

The Government of Lao PDR has developed a National Inclusive Education Policy (2011-2015). Implementation of the policy, however, is hampered by an unrealistic number of priorities, limited finance and technical expertise, and structural problems with the Inclusive Education Centre (IEC). Inclusive education is often seen as the responsibility of the IEC, when in fact all MoES departments are needed to ensure that all children access and benefit from education.

Table 2: Key Educational Indicators

Key Education Indicators	Measure (per cent)	Year
Net Enrolment Rate Primary (male/female) (MoES)	96.6 (97.6/95.9)	2012-13
Survival rate to grade 5 (male/female) (MoES)	73.3 (72.2/74.3)	2012-13
Gross Enrolment Rate Lower Secondary (male/female) (MoES)	69.0 (72.1/65.7)	2012-13

Current national education data indicates some improvements in key education indicators. This is supported by an analysis of the Lao education sector undertaken during the 2013 ESDP mid-term review, which demonstrates that whilst net enrolment rates have increased from 89.2 per cent in 2007-08 to 96.6 per cent in 2012-13, high rates of grade 1 drop out and repetition (one in ten children in the Lao PDR dropped out at grade 1 and one in 5 repeated in 2011-12), and low retention rates to grade 5 (73.3 per cent in 2012-13), are seriously undermining Lao PDR's enrolment achievements.

2.1. Gender and other Disadvantage in Education

Existing disaggregated educational data (refer Figure 1 below) show females are not progressing through the education system at the same rate as boys and substantive efforts must be made to address this trend. While at national level the gender gap in enrolment has decreased, significant gaps remain in certain districts, especially affecting girls in remote areas and from ethnic minorities.¹⁶ Girls, particularly those from ethnic minority groups, often experience later starts in education, delaying their Lao language acquisition and creating life-long disadvantage through

¹⁴ These were recently updated as a result of the 2013 Education Sector Development Plan Mid-Term Review.

¹⁵ Achieving universal primary education; and promoting gender equality and empowering women.

¹⁶ For girls in some districts retention rates are dire, with less than 25 per cent of girls able to complete grade 5.

dropout and low levels of literacy¹⁷. Recent UNESCO research also emphasises the impact that poor facilities have on girls' participation in education, particularly the lack of water supply and appropriate toilet facilities. The gender analysis completed as part of the Review of the Education Sector Development Plan in mid-2013¹⁸ provided important insights into the gender issues in the education sector and has informed this design. There would be benefit from further detailed gender analysis of available education data, to understand where gender gaps exist in order to improve education services and increase demand for girls' education with families in disadvantaged districts.

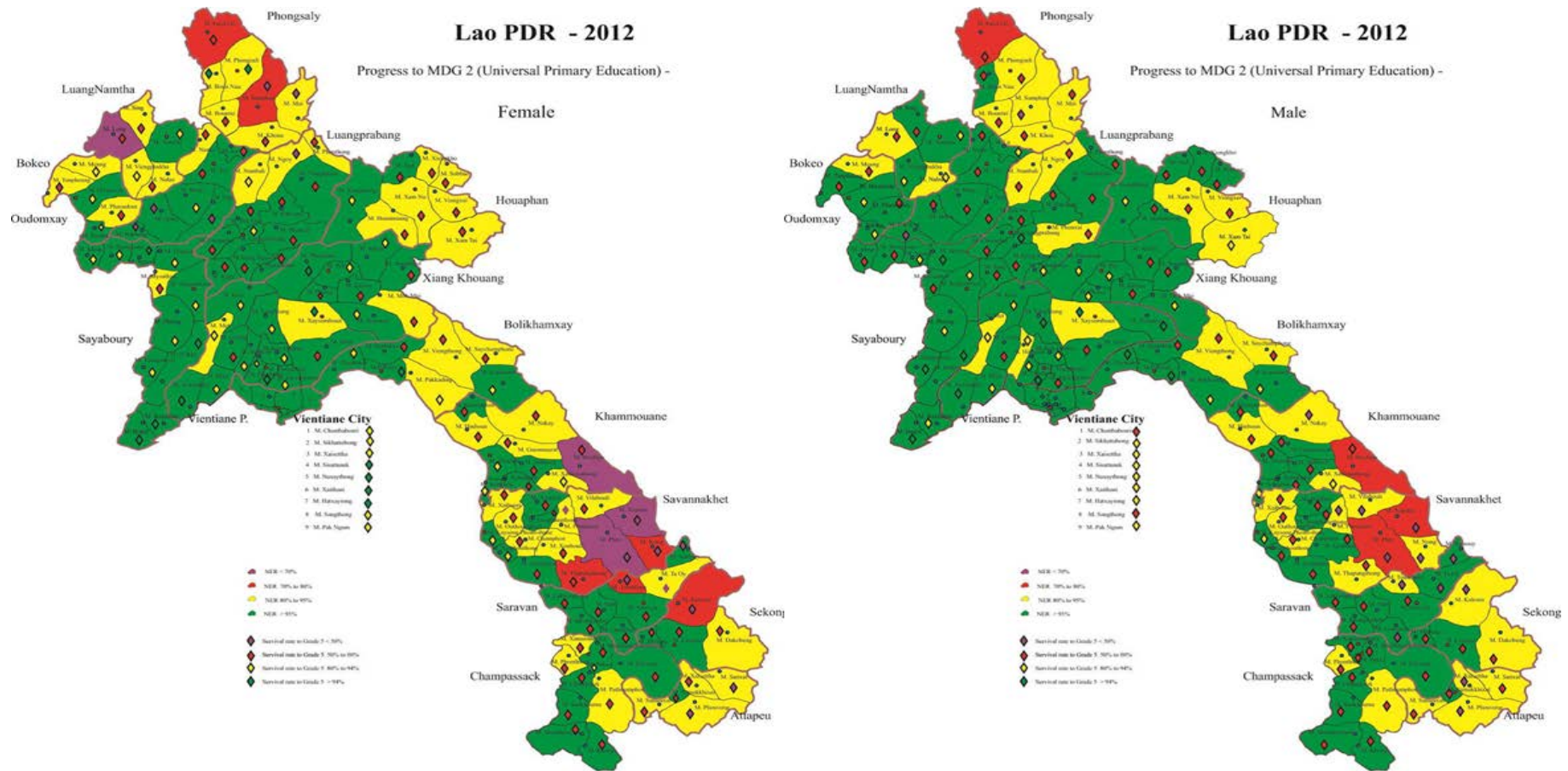
Further examination of data confirms other statistical variations across the country. As an example, the 2012-13 aggregated national net enrolment rates obscure substantive geographical discrepancies: remote and ethnic minority districts have significantly lower net enrolment rates relative to national and provincial centres. These discrepancies between areas are confirmed for other key educational indicators (refer to Annex 3) and clearly indicate how the poorest areas of the country, particularly in the north and south, show systematic disadvantage across a range of educational indicators. An examination of the data highlights the importance of looking beyond provincial level data to district data to ensure effective targeting of programs to reach the most marginalised boys and girls.

To illustrate, Phongsaly Province in the north (which is home to a large number of ethnic minority groups) had widespread poverty and correspondingly low overall net enrolment rates in 2012 at only 86.0 per cent (83.0 per cent for females and 88.9 per cent for males). Moving beyond the provincial level, profound discrepancies appear at district level, in Savannakhet Province in the south, overall net enrolment rates are 90.3 per cent (88.7 per cent for females) but vary significantly from economically more prosperous (geographically more accessible) Xayphothong district where net enrolment rate is 99.5 per cent (100 per cent for females) to only 69.3 per cent (64.2 per cent for females) in poorer Sepone District (with a 74 per cent ethnic minority group presence). When net enrolment rates and grade 5 retention rates are combined at a district level the discrepancies become more pronounced - in some districts less than 40 per cent of children progress to grade 5 and in six districts less than 30 per cent of girls progress to grade 5.

¹⁷Review and Update of the EDSP 2011-2015 – Situation Analysis – Gender; Dr Jan Edwards, Plan International, July 2013

¹⁸ *Ibid*: July 2013

Figure 1: District Disaggregated Net Enrolment and Survival Rates¹⁹



¹⁹ Figure 1 shows Net Enrolment Rate, NER by district (with districts shaded purple: NER less than 70%, Red NER 70-80%, yellow NER 80-95% and green, NER above 95%); Diamonds show Survival Rate, SR to Grade 5 (with purple diamond: SR less than 50%, red: SR 50 to 80%, yellow: SR 80% to 94% and green SR: above 95%).

2.2. Teaching and Learning

The quality of teaching and learning within the Lao education system requires urgent attention in order for Lao PDR to compete with other countries in the region in terms of the quality of its graduates. In particular, at school and Teacher Training College (TTC) levels, there is a constant need for both teachers and teacher educators to keep abreast of the changes in society and to continuously upgrade their professional knowledge and skills and to focus greater attention to the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Reviews²⁰ have shown that teaching in pre-service teacher training programs relies heavily on rote learning, with very little meaningful interaction between student teachers and few opportunities for trainees to learn to think for themselves. This approach to teaching is then repeated in the teacher's own approach to teaching when graduate teachers begin to work in schools. The existing curriculum and the limited teacher resources available tend to reinforce rote learning as a teaching methodology.

Rote learning has been recognised by MoES to be an inappropriate teaching methodology. There is now less emphasis on learning (rote) content and a greater effort to develop student-centred skills, competencies and learning outcomes which can be applied and used as children develop into adults better able to contribute to society and the economy.

Placing the focus of teaching on learning outcomes has the potential to leverage reform. This is particularly with respect to the quality of teacher education in core curriculum areas; needs-based planning and management of learning at school level; and, importantly, strengthening capacity for effective school leadership. It means new knowledge and skills for teachers, both in terms of subject knowledge and pedagogy, (the art and craft of teaching). It also means acquiring the capacity to teach using the new technologies along with new forms of student assignments and assessment in order to promote and reward new kinds of practical skills. This transition in methodology is evolutionary, and will require incremental support and change across all systems (schools, TTCs as well as DESBs and PESSs). In addition, strengthened school leadership will enable school-based management structures to be introduced more readily and with greater chances of immediate success.

Difficulties in attracting and maintaining qualified teachers in remote and ethnic minority areas are a major constraint for the Lao PDR. This contributes to the large number of 1-teacher and 2-teacher schools that are often unable to offer the full 5 years of primary education throughout the country. The challenges of living and working in these environments are well recognised. Language barriers (for non-local teachers); housing; lack of teaching resources and support (e.g. curriculum materials, lesson plans, textbooks and student materials) and extra workloads associated with teaching in what are often difficult and crowded multi-grade²¹ environments all serve to act as a disincentive for non-local teachers to be deployed into these areas. In particular, non-local female teachers face additional challenges of working and living in these communities – including safety and security issues and gender-related cultural barriers. In addition, married females find it difficult to relocate their families for professional reasons, often because their husbands do not want to interrupt their careers and/or may be unable to find work in remote and ethnic minority areas²².

²⁰ Refer to the Education Sector Development Plan 2013 Mid-Term Review Evaluation, in particular the teacher training section of the report.

²¹ The most challenging environments involving 1 or 2 teachers managing 5 grades and/or teaching several grades together and leaving older grade children in a separate classroom or learning space with regular checks. Multi-grade teaching environments are often further exacerbated by the presence of younger siblings being 'looked after' in the school.

²² Lao PDR Education Sector Situation Analysis (2013).

The past 40 years of research on effective teaching has been summarised into three essential building blocks for any education system²³:

- recruitment of great people into teaching and training them well;
- continuous improvement of teachers' pedagogical skills and knowledge; and
- great leadership and management at school level.

This translates into clear imperatives for Australia's planned assistance to education in Lao PDR. It means improved teacher recruitment processes that attract quality²⁴ graduates from secondary school entering teacher training, particularly ethnic minority female secondary school graduates from rural and remote areas. It also means ensuring that teachers in schools are given the opportunity, through an effective in-service training system, to develop and improve continuously in groups, developing their skills and planning programs collectively and with renewed and encouraging school and district leadership. This requires the accompanying provision of improved learning facilities and teacher materials for in-service training and to improve classroom teaching and learning.

Global evidence indicates²⁵ that the availability of stimulating learning environments (within schools and including equipment) and improved water and access to sanitation in schools and communities also directly impacts on enrolment, attendance, retention and learning achievement in schools, particularly with respect to female students²⁶. This is especially important in rural areas where wooden or bamboo school buildings with no electricity, poor road access and no water source or toilets are common and can have a profound negative impact upon school attendance.

3. Strategic Context and Rationale

Lao PDR is heavily dependent on Official Development Assistance (ODA) and there is no evidence to suggest this dependence will ameliorate in the immediate future. The structure of the Lao Government's recurrent education budget represents a risk to investments from development partners not being sustained due to the very low non-wage operating budget (less than 10 per cent of the total education budget).

This issue is compounded by inefficiencies in teacher deployment that has resulted in 24 per cent of the primary teacher workforce, and up to 29 per cent of secondary teachers, being surplus, with an oversupply of teachers in urban areas²⁷. Simultaneously, remote, rural areas are in desperate need of additional teachers. With national budget expenditure to education close to reaching the Lao PDR target of 18 per cent due to recent large salary increases, there is a critical need to focus on improved efficiency and better quality of expenditure in the education sector if adequate non-wage recurrent funding is to be made available to the sector.

²³Barber, M (2010) The Prospects for Global Education Reform <http://www.collegeofteachers.ac.uk/content/sir-michael-barber-2010>

²⁴ It is recognised that 'quality' does not necessarily equate to best qualified. Evidence from LABEP confirms less qualified ethnic minority candidates can and will develop into quality teachers given the right support throughout their training.

²⁵Cuyvers K, et al 2011 Well Being at School: Does Infrastructure Matter? OECD. Freeman, M.C et al 2012. The impact of school WASH in absenteeism: can a school-based water treatment, hygiene and sanitation program influence pupil absenteeism? Nairobi, Kenya: CARE Kenya.

²⁶ Bowen et al 2007 and Lopez-Quintero et al 2009 (hand washing among school children in Columbia. Lancet 2004 (childhood diarrhoea is the best single predictor of test of nonverbal intelligence scores and school performance at 6-12 years of age).

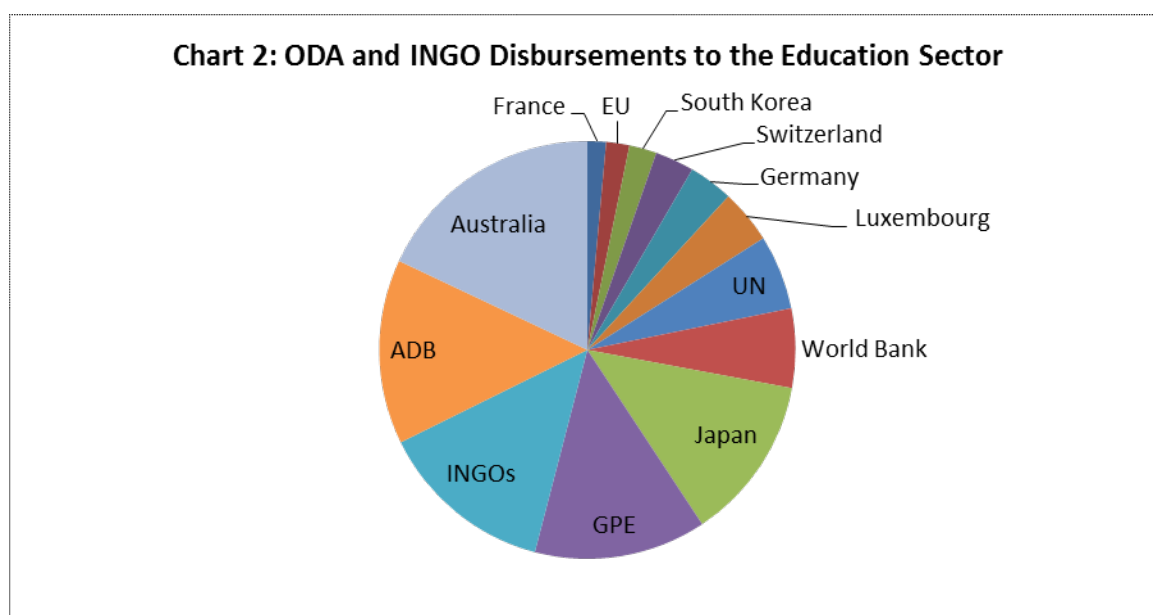
²⁷ Refer to the Education Sector Development Plan Mid-Term Review Evaluation, 2013.

It is proposed that by working closely with the Government of Lao PDR, including MoES, an Australian Government-funded program, linked with related policy dialogue, will aim to positively lever future Lao PDR funding priorities, particularly non-wage recurrent funding, aligned to the basic education sector. However this should not be assumed to be true as the Lao PDR financial limitations, as highlighted by the IMF²⁸, are substantial and will likely remain so during the life of this program.

In the education sector, Australia and Japan are the top OECD bilateral donors; while the ADB and the World Bank lead multilateral sector contributions. International donors provided an estimated 42 per cent of budgeted expenditure in the education sector during 2011-12. Civil society in Lao PDR is small but growing. There are around 300 non-government organisations working in Lao PDR, including more than 40 International Non-Government Organisations (INGOs) and local Non-Profit Associations (NPAs) engaged in the education sector. Total contributions from INGOs and NPAs working in education were US\$12.11 million in 2012.

Australia, the World Bank²⁹ and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), are the substantive investors in the primary sub-sector through the Education for All - Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) program— managed by the World Bank;³⁰ with UNICEF, the European Union, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and various INGOs and NPAs also investing in the primary sub-sector. The ADB and JICA substantially contribute to the lower secondary sub-sector. Other than some small amounts of funding by the EFA-FTI program and JICA, there is little donor activity in teacher education.

Figure 2: Lao PDR NGO and ODA Funding to the Education Sector 2011-12³¹



As a means to coordinate donor partner funding in the education sector the Government of Lao PDR³² facilitated the establishment of the ESWG³³. The ESWG serves as the primary

²⁸ Refer to the IMF Article IV Mission to Lao PDR staff report summary, dated October 2 2013.

²⁹ The World Bank also funds the Education Development Project II - Additional Funding (EDP2-AF) with a commitment of US\$15.5 million.

³⁰ Due to end in August 2014.

³¹ Refer to Annex 4 for a detailed list of donor programs supporting the basic education sub-sector.

³² With support from UNDP.

³³ The ESWG was established in 2006.

mechanism for sector planning, policy dialogue and coordination between the government and the majority of development partners. The ESWG comprises three levels of coordination: an executive level (which meets twice a year) to provide strategic direction and endorsement of decisions; a technical level (which meets three to four times a year) to provide a forum for building consensus on technical issues relating to the whole sector; and focal groups to support ESDP implementation at the sub-sectoral level in basic education, post-basic education, and financial and performance planning. The ESWG is chaired by the Government of Lao PDR, represented by a Vice -Minister for Education. Australia and UNICEF act as co-chairs. The secretariat for the ESWG is located in the Ministry's Department of Planning (DoP), with technical and logistical support from Australia.

The ESWG has provided a forum for dialogue around key sector issues, challenges and responses. To date the forum has served mainly as an opportunity for information exchange, but is slowly moving toward more active policy discussion, especially with the establishment of sub-sectoral Focal Groups. The need for evidence-based policy making has been a focus of ESWG discussions, with donors supporting joint sector reviews that focus on collecting data on key sector issues to inform policy making.

As a co-chair of the ESWG, Australia has also continually supported civil society engagement in policy dialogue in the sector, including through monthly Informal Education Development Partner Working Group meetings, participation in the ESWG and an annual Government of Laos-led INGO and NPA education forum. Civil Society participation in these forums provides opportunity for sharing updated knowledge of the issues at district, village and school levels as lessons from the approaches used to address these issues.

Outside of the above investments, both China and Vietnam provide substantial bilateral loan and grant funding to the education sector³⁴, however this funding is outside of the ODA framework and not aligned to ESWG and ESDP programming and accountability.

Australia's support to basic education in Lao PDR has been central to the development assistance program for more than 15 years. Under the Lao-Australia Development Cooperation Strategy (2009-2015) and as outlined in Australia's Education Delivery Strategy for Laos 2013-2018, education is identified as a flagship intervention. Current investments account for over one third of the total bilateral aid budget to Lao PDR. The delivery strategy commits Australia to working with Lao PDR to allow more girls and boys (especially those experiencing disadvantage) to complete good quality basic education, achieving literacy, numeracy and other life skills.

With the significant investment in basic education, success in building strong relationships with both MoES and development partners and influence in policy dialogue, Australia is viewed as a leader in the education sector. This perception has been facilitated by our role as co-chair of the ESWG. Australia has used this role to encourage the Government of Laos to use evidence to inform policy decisions and to influence the education sector agenda. Australia has also coordinated and co-led consultations for the development of significant Government of Laos

³⁴China has provided substantial funding to establish information technology high secondary schools and Vietnam has invested in professional development activities and infrastructure, particularly dormitories. Investment budgets associated with these investments are transparently reported against the sector. 2008-09 investments for China were US\$24 million and Vietnam US\$15 million but these figures are not disaggregated across sectors.

policies.³⁵ Australia also takes a leadership role as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Coordinating Agency.³⁶ This role has helped Australia influence important decisions with Laos regarding the use of GPE funds for basic education activities. Given the influence that both of these roles allow, including to advocate for increased funding to the education sector, it is likely that Australia will continue as co-chair for at least half of the first phase of the program.

4. Lessons Informing the Design

Australia's most recent support to Lao PDR has been through the multilateral EFA-FTI program (2010-2014). The EFA-FTI program used the MoES Education Management Information System (EMIS) data to identify 56 of the then 143 districts as most in need of support (based on low enrolment for girls) and focused on these 56 districts³⁷. Australia's current investment in support for basic education through the EFA-FTI program will end in 2014.

As an EFA FTI program partner, Australia's financial commitment will have contributed to the following outputs being achieved when the program concludes in 2014.

1. More than 1700 classrooms schools will be built or renovated.
2. Over 8,000 teachers and school principals will be trained.
3. Net Enrolment Rate in target districts will have increased from 86 per cent in 2009-10 to 94 per cent in 2012-13.

Australia has directly invested in the following initiatives during the EFA FTI program:

- System strengthening at all levels resulting in improved capacity and coordination across all levels of the education system.
- Support for the Government of Lao PDR 'Schools of Quality', incorporating teacher training, the provision of learning materials, and community participation.
- Support for community based construction, which has provided remote communities with access to educational facilities.
- Deployment of mobile teachers to better service villages without schools and out of school children.
- Home grown school meals that provides lunches, using food and produce locally sourced, as an incentive for children to attend and stay at school.

Given the prior investment by both Australia and MoES in implementing the EFA-FTI Program, there is a strong moral and development-based argument to continue to support those districts and schools that were supported by the EFA-FTI, particularly as:

³⁵ Including a National Inclusive Education Policy and Action Plan and an Education Sector Development Framework (ESDF) 2009-2015. The ESDF provided a platform for prioritising actions towards the MDGs in the education sector, and contributed significantly to development of the Education Sector Development Plan and the education inputs in the 7th National Socio-Economic Development Plan.

³⁶ Australia has undertaken this role since Laos' accession to the GPE in 2010.

³⁷ When combined with the World Bank-funded EDP2-AF initiative there were actually 60 districts as four additional districts was funded by EDP2-AF.

- The EFA-FTI program was a ‘fast track initiative’ delivered within a short (unrealistic) timeframe. As a result many activities supported were not delivered within a sustainable framework across the sub-sector³⁸.
- The EFA FTI program did not include an exit or transitional plan to provide ongoing support to target schools and districts. There is a continuing and ongoing need to address the critical gaps in access to, and quality of, early learning, particularly in provinces where drop-out and repetition rates at grade 1, and also through primary school, are most acute.

Sector reviews commissioned by Australia³⁹ confirm future investments by Australia in the Lao education sector should continue, and this support be directly managed bilaterally and in partnership with other partners. In response to this body of evidence and analysis, the Australian Government developed an education delivery strategy, setting out a ten-year strategy for investment in basic education. The delivery strategy also confirms Australia should continue to directly support the basic education sub-sector; it further states the goal of the investment will be: to ensure all boys and girls complete a quality basic education.

The delivery strategy aligns with the ESDP. The delivery strategy proposes the following three intermediate development outcomes as the focus of Australia’s future support to basic education in Lao PDR:

- i. Participation: more disadvantaged children and young people participate in primary education daily and are ready to learn.
- ii. Resourcing: learning environments in targeted geographic areas are more equitable and adequately resourced.
- iii. Effective Teaching: more effective teaching enables more disadvantaged girls and boys to learn more and perform better.

Issues outlined in the delivery strategy and recommendations arising as a result of the ESDP mid-term review clearly align to a number of challenges facing the education sector, in particular:

- Addressing community and school service needs, including: scholarships for disadvantaged groups, school meals programs,⁴⁰ inclusive education servicing, including physical and sensory impairment screening and support; and addressing barriers to enrolment and retention of ethnic minority girls.
- Improving a range of educational systems and structures in education, including increasing the supply and quality of classrooms with a focus on addressing the critical need for “complete” primary schools that offer the full 5 grades; school (and community) WASH requirements and school block grants.
- Supporting MoES management, coordination and administration of the education sector.
- Working with MoES to address teacher supply issues, particularly the undersupply of teachers in remote and ethnic minority areas of the country.

³⁸ DFAT Final Recommendations Report on the EFA-FTI Program (2012), page 4.

³⁹ Refer to: the Laos-Australia Basic Education Evaluation (2012) and the DFAT Final Recommendations Report on the EFA-FTI program (2012).

⁴⁰ Which primarily aims to increase retention rates, but may also positively impact upon the critically high levels of malnutrition amongst children in the Lao PDR, i.e. 44 per cent of children are suffering from malnutrition when they enter school at age 5 (UNICEF 2012).

- Addressing issues associated with the delivery of pre-service training⁴¹, including: appropriateness of curriculum, pedagogy, ethnic minority teacher training and professional qualifications and expertise of teaching staff.
- Addressing issues associated with the delivery of in-service teacher⁴² training, including: lack of availability on a regular basis; uncertainty between areas of responsibility; modalities, school-based management as a priority; the role and use of Pedagogical Advisers, links between and across the PESSs and TTCs and the availability of recurrent funding.
- Addressing issues associated with the lack of teaching and learning materials. It is not uncommon to find teachers using outdated material and several students sharing outdated and worn-out textbooks (where such texts actually exist). Workbooks, exercise sheets, readers and other core materials to help students learn their lessons are in short supply.
- Addressing issues associated with language of instruction by recruiting ethnic minority teachers and better preparing teachers for the complexities associated with teaching in multi-lingual environments. This includes providing appropriate teaching and learning materials.
- Assisting teachers (pre-service and in-service) to better understand and have the skills and resourcing necessary to work in multi-grade classes.

As an experienced partner and leader in the Lao education sector, Australia has the potential to substantially contribute to and impact upon the quality of education in Lao PDR, particularly working bilaterally and directly with MoES. With the EFA-FTI program coming to an end in 2014, the World Bank has indicated that it will focus on early childhood education and the ADB will continue working in the post basic education sub-sectors, including lower secondary. It is also expected that GPE funding will reduce from \$US30 million (Phase 1) to \$US16.8 million for Phase 2.

A substantial resource gap exists in the primary sub-sector. There is a real need and opportunity for Australia to work with MoES and other partners⁴³ in this sub-sector where major challenges exist, particularly for children in remote and disadvantaged areas.

This investment design document outlines the form of the new assistance package that will be called Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR (BEQUAL). The Government of Lao PDR has confirmed its desire for Australia, through BEQUAL, to work within the primary sub-sector in a holistic manner (i.e. treating all primary education intersections⁴⁴ as in a single package) and in partnership with other donors. BEQUAL will continue to build upon the foundation and initial impact of the EFA-FTI program.

⁴¹ Pre-service teacher training usually includes all activities associated with the delivery of training to student teachers before they have undertaken any teaching.

⁴² In-service teacher training usually includes all professional development activities provided to active education practitioners working in the classroom or as educational administrators.

⁴³ Partners working in the primary sub-sector include: the EU, UNICEF, the World Food Programme and numerous NGOs and NPAs.

⁴⁴ This may include social; health; ethnic, and rural development/livelihood intersects where they may impact upon enrolment and attendance.

Building on the support provided under the EFA-FTI program, the program will target 65 most educationally disadvantaged districts⁴⁵. The program will also directly support teacher education across the 8 main TTCs and the provision of teaching and learning materials at both pre-service level and in primary schools. BEQUAL will work within a flexible funding envelope (initially \$85.8 million to 2017/18) and will adjust its delivery priorities and targets as the investment envelope expands and/or contracts. Program targets, priorities and funding are in Sections C and D, with target districts listed in Annex 5.

5. Implementation Modality

The BEQUAL program is designed to reflect three core principles⁴⁶:

1. to take a broad systemic approach⁴⁷ that will change or modify the existing teacher training systems to make them more efficient, effective and responsive;
2. to ensure flexibility to adjust the implementation according to the absorptive capacity of the target systems; and
3. to build on successful innovations from previous interventions particularly at sub-national level (for example, the Lao Australia Basic Education Program - LABEP⁴⁸), and scale-up where feasible but also explore new opportunities and approaches.

The design team considered a number of alternative implementation modalities before confirming the program structure of the BEQUAL design. These are summarised, with an indication of the reasons for their non-selection:

An alternative approach was continuing Australia's contribution to major multi-donor initiatives in basic education in Lao PDR. The continuation of pooled funding with the GPE (to be managed by World Bank) was one potential option. However the design mission confirmed the assessment that this was not the most effective approach to achieve the strategic aims of basic education support. Such an approach would continue to limit Australia's impact and visibility despite its significance as a contributing partner, while also constraining the extent to which Australia can leverage its support through policy dialogue and influencing activities. A previous Australian Government evaluation⁴⁹ also recommended not pursuing this modality for the new program.

Efficiencies in management and implementation can be achieved through packaging the entire investment into a single large contract with an internationally sourced managing contractor. This option was not pursued because it excludes the important role that multilateral, national and INGO partners play, while simultaneously vesting all risk in a single implementing entity. With the significant investment of a number of multilateral and INGO partners in the sector, this option would also represent a move away from the development principle of harmonisation that

⁴⁵ Including the 56 districts with the lowest Net Enrolment Rates (2008-09) targeted by the EFA-FTI program and an additional 9 districts with the lowest Survival Rates to grade 5 (2012-13).

⁴⁶ The Government of Laos will play a key role in facilitating these core principles through the Program Steering Committee and Technical Working Group, but most importantly through links with the Education Sector Working Group and its sub-groups.

⁴⁷ That supports MOES planning, budgeting and monitoring systems at all levels, including school level, while supporting the MOES to improve the quality of both pre-service and in-service training of primary teachers in order to generate more effective teaching and increased interaction between Teacher Training Colleges and other agencies.

⁴⁸ The Laos-Australia Basic Education Project (LABEP) was an Australian -funded project funded in parallel with the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Basic Education (Girls) Project (BEGP) from 1999- 2007. The objective of both projects was to improve access to and quality of primary education for children from ethnic minority groups, particularly girls, living in remote and rural areas of Laos.

⁴⁹ Refer to the Recommendations Report for the EFA FTI Program (2012): Recommendation 11, page 7.

Australia ascribes to, and a potential risk to effective coordination of support to basic education in Laos. This approach could also risk marginalising Australia, particularly in policy and strategic engagement.

Delegated cooperation to another bilateral development partner is another option for implementation; however a suitable bilateral partner with sufficient resources to lead such a partnership is not currently active in the primary education sub-sector in Lao PDR, so this option was not feasible⁵⁰.

Finally, increased use of direct financing through MoES and Government of Lao PDR systems to support investments in strengthening basic education was considered. However the recent Australian Government-sponsored review of public financial management and procurement systems in the education sector in Laos indicated “the overall fiduciary risk to Australian funds of using government systems is high” and “this risk is of particular relevance to the use of the downstream systems of treasury, accounting, reporting and audit”. It was also determined that “if procurement with Australian funds is transacted through MoES and using the Government of Laos PDR procurement system, the risk of misappropriated funds is very high and value for money is unlikely to be achieved”⁵¹. Investment through MoES systems would also require a substantial increase in MoES capacity and institutional strengthening over an extended period of time (and utilising substantial financial commitment), which would delay educational impact at the school level. Such a model would also require a substantial monitoring and management presence by the Australian Government and this would not be appropriate given the nature of the program⁵².

Reflecting the varied needs and opportunities within basic education in Lao PDR, the chosen implementation modality for BEQUAL is a hybrid approach that will bring together several complementary implementing partners, including managing contractors, UN agencies and INGO partners, in a coherent program approach. Based on an assessment of the above options, this approach is considered the best suited to meeting the specific implementation requirements and to maximising effectiveness. The expansion of Australia’s support to education in Laos, along with a shift to bilateral engagement, and continuing in the role of ESWG co-chair, will allow Australia to build on past successes as well as enabling more direct policy dialogue and negotiation between Australia and Laos.

Further details regarding the implementation modality chosen for BEQUAL– the program approach – is described in Section C, and is founded on the theory of change for basic education in Lao PDR.

6. Theory of Change

The design of BEQUAL is founded on the theory of how change will occur in basic education in Lao PDR, as described in the delivery strategy⁵³, which was confirmed and refined during the design process. That theory states that achieving Lao PDR goals for education will only be possible with increased participation and improved quality, and with a focus on the involvement

⁵⁰ Although the European Union has expressed interest in providing funding through delegated cooperation to Australia under this program, which would allow for a collaborative approach to support in the primary education sub-sector.

⁵¹ Refer to the Executive Summary (page 10) of the Draft Lao PDR Public Financial Management and Procurement Assessment Report (October 2013).

⁵² The ADB funded Binding Constraints Analysis (2012) also highlighted the risks of investing directly through the Government of Lao PDR systems.

⁵³ This entire section is drawn largely from Australia’s Education Delivery Strategy for Laos 2013-2018, and as such, references will only be added when they relate to documents other than the delivery strategy.

of, and relevance for, disadvantaged groups. As more young people complete a basic education that provides them with the literacy, numeracy and life skills that enable them to access further education or employment, the country will achieve the change it seeks.

In summary, supporting education participation, resources and effective teaching for disadvantaged groups will enable more girls and boys to increase their learning and to complete good quality basic education – as shown in the following Figure 3 (the theory of change).

The theory of change requires a long-term commitment of at least ten years. This recognises that stronger education systems and sector governance, combined with mutual commitment of funding from the Government of Lao PDR and its development partners, are crucial to achieve and sustain results. Good gains have been made already in increasing access; but net enrolment rates are only part of the picture. Increased demand from the community for a good quality basic education and reducing the barriers to full participation are necessary elements to improve completion rates for all girls and boys in Lao PDR, as well as providing the literacy, numeracy and life skills that children need.

Boys and especially girls from disadvantaged groups in Lao PDR, including those with a disability, have lower rates of participation and completion of education, but addressing this is not an easy undertaking since it requires an understanding of the different ways that multiple disadvantages intersect to constrain participation and completion.

Past investments in basic education have tended to focus on education-specific issues only, such as classroom facilities or education systems, but there is a growing recognition that better education outcomes also require efforts to increase demand for good quality education through investments that address other barriers to participation related to gender inequality, poverty, poor health and nutrition. Girls and boys need to be developmentally and cognitively ready and able to learn, just as much as they need access to good quality schools, teachers and materials.

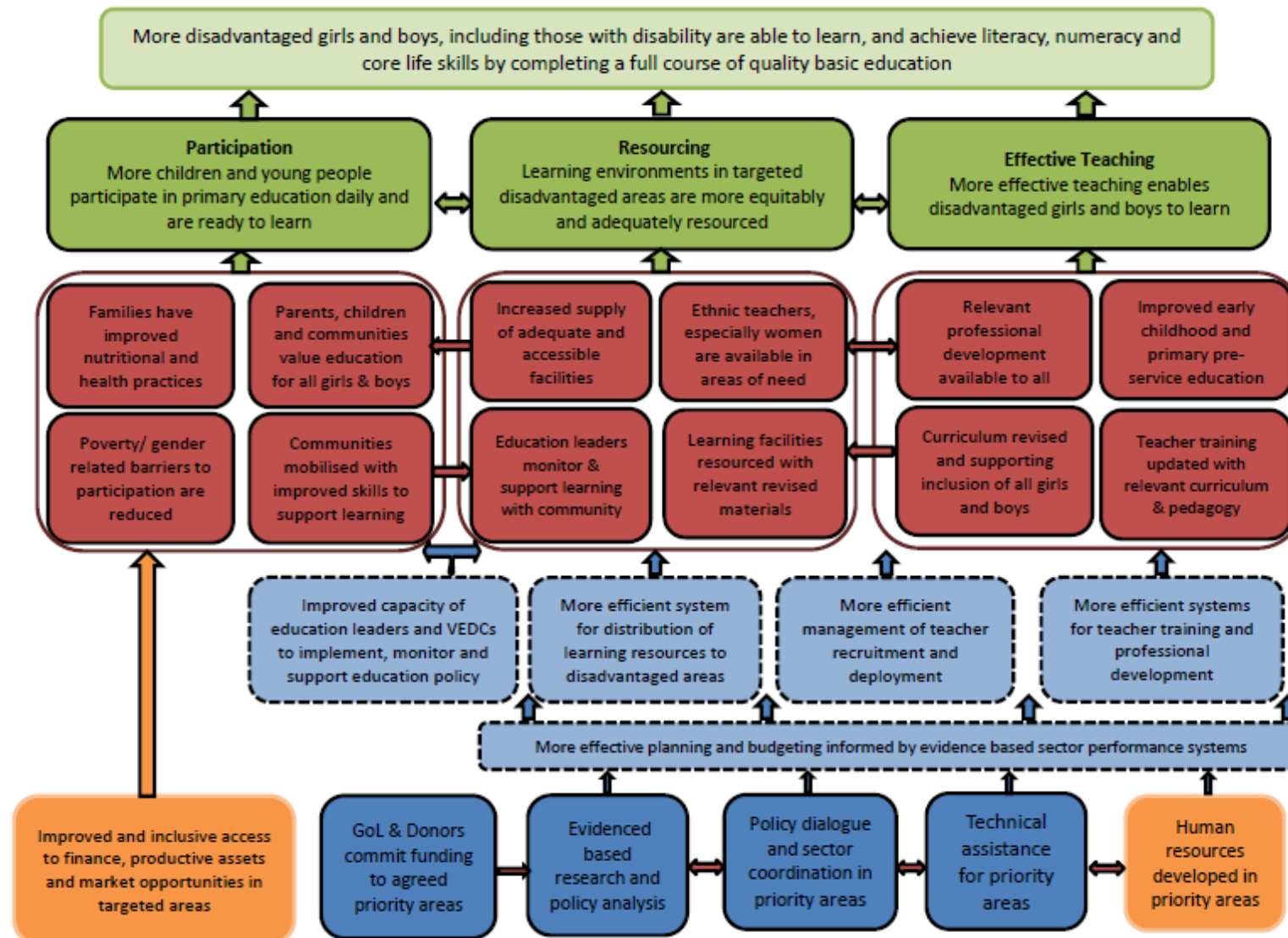
As previously outlined, the high level outcome Australia is seeking from its investments in the education sector in Lao PDR is that: more disadvantaged girls and boys, including those with disability, are able to learn, and complete quality basic education. In order to achieve this overarching outcome the three intermediate development principles (described above) will be based on an investment in more effective planning and budgeting informed by evidence-based sector performance systems.

Several important assumptions apply to the theory of change for basic education in Lao PDR:

- The Government of Lao PDR and its partners are, and remain, committed to supporting improved basic education for disadvantaged (ethnic minority, disabled and female) groups.
- The Government of Lao PDR and development partners align their support to high priority areas under a revised, costed and sustainable ESDP – or, in the absence of a revised ESDP, an alternative articulation of shared sector intentions.
- Relevant rural development programs are in place and are providing support to improve the livelihoods of disadvantaged people, and that rural development and education initiatives can work in a complementary way to achieve inter-related outcomes.
- The political economy of Lao PDR enables more effective budget planning and execution between central, provincial and district levels of government.

The design of BEQUAL builds on the broad theory of change articulated above to provide a more detailed theory of change and a practical implementation plan that includes a detailed set of activities and resources, as set out in the following sections.

Figure 3: Australia's Basic Education Theory of Change



C. INVESTMENT DESCRIPTION

7. Program Approach

BEQUAL will be implemented in partnership with the Government of Lao PDR in order to enhance ownership, leadership, policy dialogue and to invest in the sustainability of its (education) outcomes. BEQUAL will bring together several complementary implementing partners, including managing contractors, UN agencies and NGO partners, in a coherent program approach. There will be a shared program framework that will ensure strong dialogue in order to achieve more effective cooperation and coordination.

Education policy, management and administration deal with the actual conduct and operation of educational institutions. With support from DFAT - Vientiane Post, BEQUAL will pursue a strategy which will encourage MoES administrators to develop and better understand how they can improve management of the delivery of education for all students across Laos. In doing this, Australia will actively pursue policy dialogue which aligns with, and strengthens each of the targeted Key Result Areas supported by the program.

To manage and implement core activities, a managing contractor, called the BEQUAL managing contractor, will lead the investments in program planning and coordination, teacher education and support, teaching and learning materials and school infrastructure, engaging closely with INGOs and NPAs to address participation in primary education as well as other community-level implementation activities. UNICEF will implement a complementary investment in WASH in primary schools that will support increased participation, as will the World Food Programme, through the implementation of a School Meals Program. The BEQUAL managing contractor will manage an Innovation Fund (refer to Section 12.2), which will provide flexibility to respond to emerging needs and opportunities as the program develops.

An expanded Australian Government (through DFAT) funded Learning Facility will lead program-level evaluation and learning, complementing component-level monitoring and evaluation by each implementing partner. The Learning Facility will facilitate cross-program dialogue and support Australia's monitoring and evaluation of its broader education portfolio, while at the same time providing a link to the Laos-Australia Rural Livelihoods Program⁵⁴ (reflecting the interconnected nature of rural disadvantage and educational disadvantage). Full details of implementation arrangements are in Section D.

8. Program Logic and Key Result Areas

The goal of BEQUAL is based on the intended outcome of Australia's education delivery strategy, and reflects the triple priorities of equitable access, education quality and learning outcomes, essential for basic education:

More girls and boys, especially those experiencing disadvantage, complete good quality basic education, achieving literacy, numeracy and other relevant life skills.

BEQUAL is conceived across a ten-year time horizon, reflecting the timeframe of the delivery strategy. It will be implemented across three phases, with the first phase focusing on primary education, through a rolling design, as follows:

⁵⁴ The Laos-Australia Rural Livelihoods Program is a new initiative under Australia's aid program to Laos that is providing livelihoods support to poor rural communities.

Table 4: Program Phasing

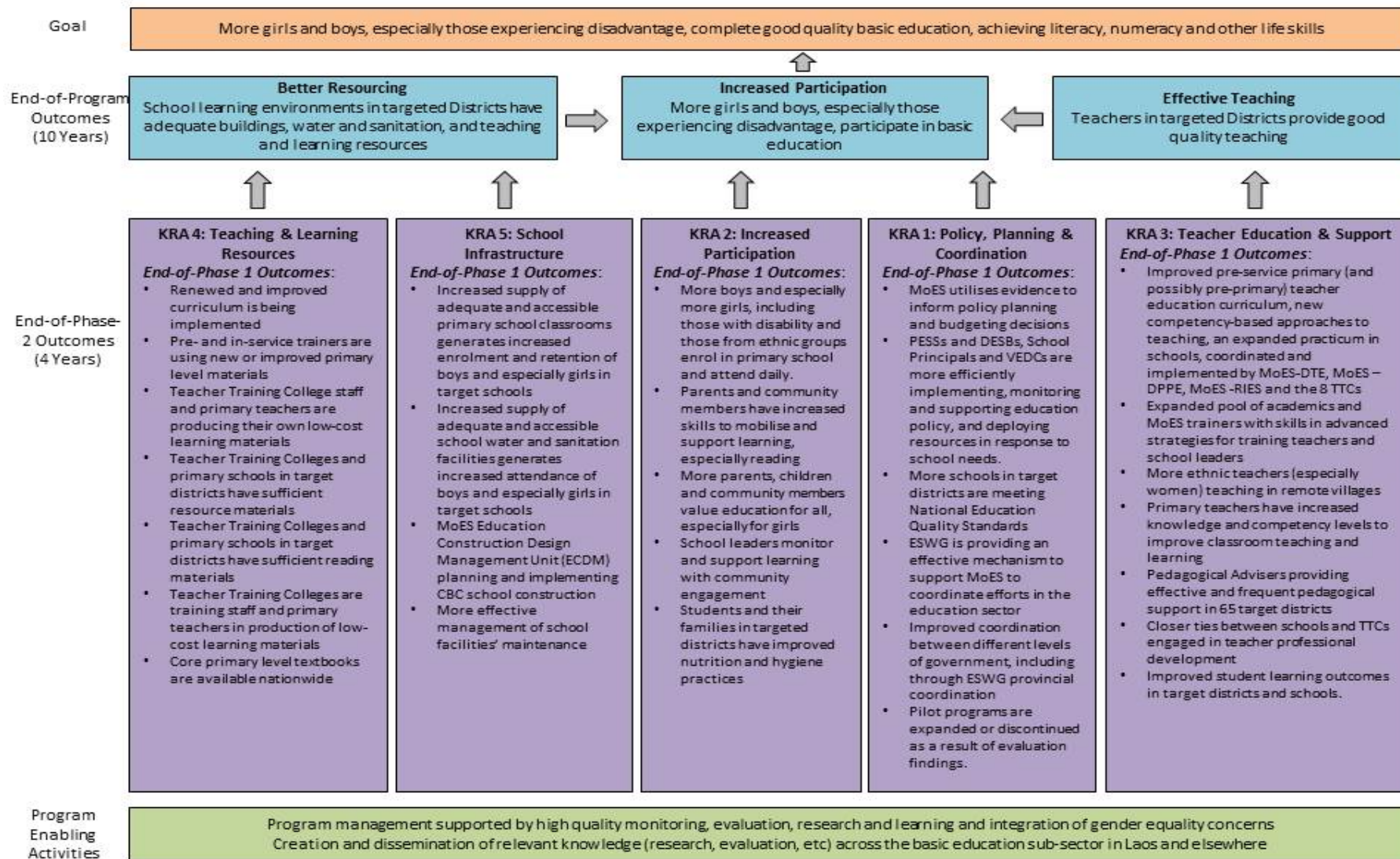
Program Preparation	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
2014	2014-15 – 2017-18	2018-19 – 2021-22	2022-23 – 2023-24
6-8 months	4 years	4 years	2 years
Preliminary activities	Inception, Stabilisation and Review	Review, Replication and Escalation	Consolidation

This design document articulates the program design details for program preparation (preliminary activities) and Phase 1 of program implementation (2014-2018). Each phase of the program will provide an opportunity to implement initiatives that will support planning, implementation, adaptation, evaluation and knowledge acquisition within a realistic timeframe. In order to conceptualise the program in a manageable form, but without losing the fundamental principle that it is deeply interconnected across all its areas of work, the design organises implementation of the program into five Key Result Areas:

1. **Education Policy, Planning and Coordination:** the aim is to strengthen the capacity of central; provincial and district MoES educational entities to better manage administrative and financial resources for education delivery in Lao PDR.
2. **Increased Participation:** the aim is to ensure more girls and boys (including those with disabilities) from remote and ethnic minority communities are able to enrol and complete their primary education.
3. **Teacher Education and Support:** the aim is to ensure primary teacher trainees, including ethnic minority women, are receiving modern and pedagogically appropriate pre-service training from qualified teacher trainers.
4. **Teaching and Learning Resources:** the aim is to ensure educators, teachers and students have access to, and are using, relevant gender inclusive teaching and learning resources, e.g. curriculum materials; lesson plans and resources; textbooks; notebooks and student materials.
5. **School Infrastructure:** the aim is to ensure teachers and students in remote and disadvantaged communities are accommodated in schools and classrooms ‘fit for purpose’ i.e. which provide a safe, hygienic, inclusive and well equipped physical learning environment.

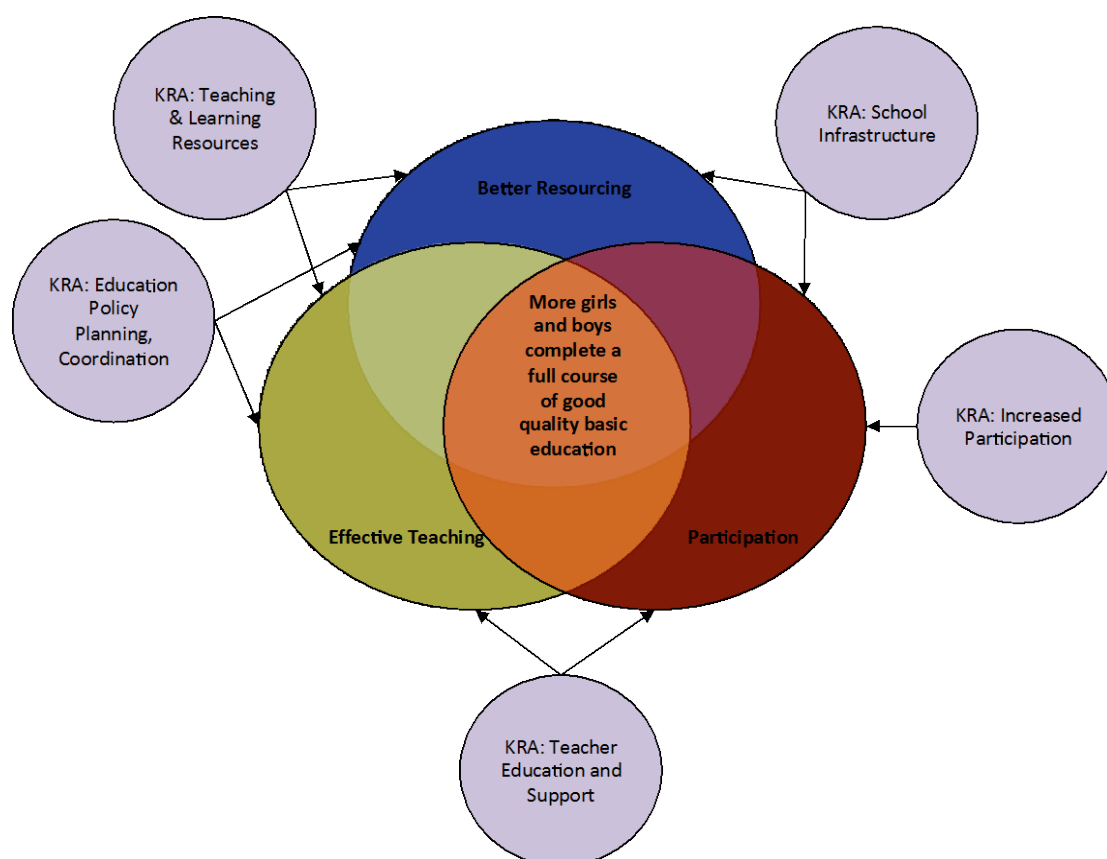
The logic model at Figure 4 shows the intended outcomes within Key Result Areas. The Government of Lao PDR already undertakes monitoring of learning outcomes using the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (ASLO), which is implemented by the Research Institute of Educational Science (RIES) on behalf of MoES. MoES is also trialling an Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) to determine literacy levels across the country. Progress towards the goal of the program will be monitored by working with MoES, in particular RIES to strengthen these systems to provide longitudinal data which can be disaggregated by gender, disability, geography and ethnicity as well as being more discriminatory to provide data at district level. Such tools may need to be complemented by additional program-supported assessments of learning outcomes using smaller-scale continuous monitoring tools. BEQUAL will provide support to, and work with the RIES, the MoES Department of Inspection and other counterparts to ensure biennial reports are available to monitor progress towards the goal.

Figure 4: BEQUAL Program Logic



The Key Result Areas are complementary and interconnected; they are intended as an organising mechanism, and program management and monitoring is structured to ensure that they do not become artificial ‘silos’ of implementation. The program emphasises the inter-related nature of the Key Results Areas, as shown below:

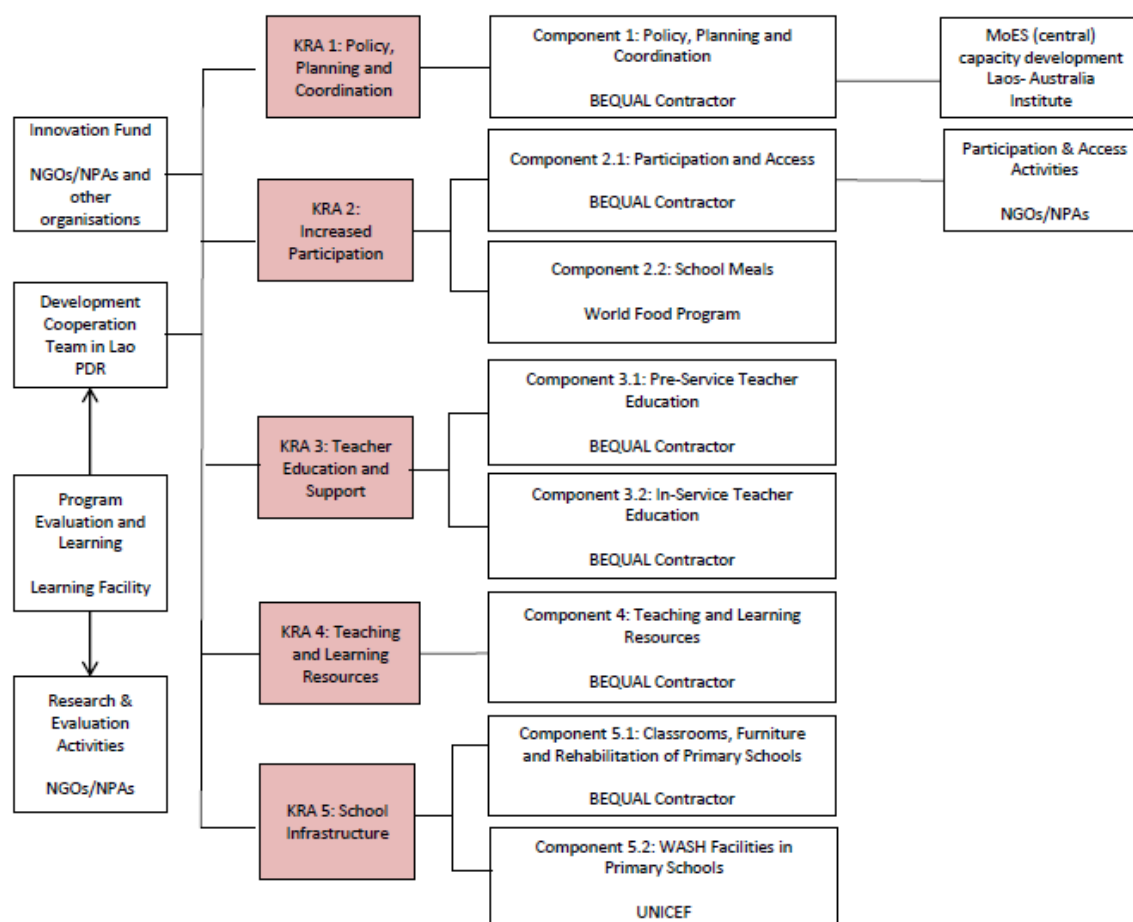
Figure 5: Program Concept



The strategic value of BEQUAL is that each of the five Key Result Areas contributes to the others, thereby together strengthening Lao PDR’s ability to enhance policy dialogue and to better deliver education services, particularly to students in remote, disadvantaged and ethnic minority communities. As an example: infrastructure support will help access as well as ethnic minority teacher deployment, but these children will still not receive a sustainable quality education unless Lao PDR improves sector planning; public financial management; teacher training, and implements stronger provincial, district and school management practices.

Across the five Key Result Areas, there are several implementation components, as shown in Figure 6 below:

Figure 6: Key Result Areas, Components and Implementation Responsibility



8.1. Program Beneficiaries

The direct and indirect beneficiaries of Australia's support are outlined in Table 5 below.

Table 5: BEQUAL Beneficiaries⁵⁵

Beneficiary Group	How Groups Benefit	How BEQUAL will support
450,000 students: especially girls and boys experiencing disadvantage	Better managed, and resourced schools leading to a higher quality education. Completion	Approximately 4,400 schools (all schools) across the 65 target districts will receive educational resource packs to support classroom learning. Support MoES to ensure that all 9,000 primary schools nationwide receive text books and teachers' guides ⁵⁶ based on revised primary school curriculum 25 per cent of all schools ⁵⁷ (approximately 1100) in targeted districts will receive professional development in support of enhanced school-based management.

⁵⁵Further details are outlined in Annex 7 (Program Activities and Targets).

⁵⁶Drawing on lessons learned from current EU and UNICEF support for national textbook and teacher guide procurement and distribution, and working collaboratively with MOES and other partners.

Beneficiary Group	How Groups Benefit	How BEQUAL will support
	of a full primary education that will result in progression to lower secondary schooling. Improved policy development and coordination resulting in increased education sector funding	At least 300 schools ⁵⁸ will be constructed and/or rehabilitated on existing school sites, using inclusive and gender criteria to ensure students have access to a safe and functional learning environment. Up to 700 schools will have new WASH facilities provided ⁶¹ . Up to 700 schools will receive gender-sensitive basic hygiene packs, and training in their use ⁶¹ . Students in about 614 ⁵⁹ schools across 30 districts will receive school meals every school day for 3 years, with an estimated 76,000 student beneficiaries over the life of the school meals component.
Communities (including parents)	Genuine participation in school decision making and oversight	Approximately 2,100 Community members ⁶⁰ will be included in Village Education Development Committee training in support of community based contracting in villages where 300 schools are constructed and/or rehabilitated (with particular focus on involving women from ethnic minority groups). Up to 700 school communities will be trained to maintain their new WASH facilities ⁶¹ . About 614 communities ⁵⁹ will be actively involved in the school meals initiative by the WFP resulting in increased understanding of the importance of continuing school attendance and better knowledge of nutrition.
Teachers and Principals	Better training; and school-based management.	25 per cent ⁵⁷ (3,700) of all teachers, and 1,100 principals or school leaders in targeted districts provided with professional development to improve classroom teaching. Approximately 14,800 teachers, or all teachers in target districts, will receive quality pedagogical support and mentoring from Pedagogical Advisers. 520 ethnic minority teacher trainees (at least 70 per cent female) will receive scholarships and support to become qualified primary teachers in their home communities ⁶²

⁵⁷ The 25 per cent most disadvantaged schools will be the focus in Phase 1, the other schools in target districts to receive support in future phases.

⁵⁸ Approximately 300 schools constructed or rehabilitated in the villages where the ethnic minority teachers recruited into training. The 6 key provinces targeted for construction are Phongsaly, Luang Namtha, Khammouane, Houaphan, Savannakhet and Saravan.

⁵⁹ Approximately 36 per cent (the per cent supported by Australia) of WFP total programme that supports 1,700 schools in 30 districts.

⁶⁰ At least seven Village Education Development Committee members in all 300 schools receiving construction support.

⁶¹ Approximately 400 WASH facilities constructed and school communities trained through current WASH program, plus up to 300 additional schools constructed under Phase 1 that may require WASH facilities.

Beneficiary Group	How Groups Benefit	How BEQUAL will support
Provincial and District Education Administrators	Enhanced knowledge to manage schools and to monitor and mentor teaching and clerical staff.	<p>All Pedagogical Advisers in the 65 target districts (approximately 200) receive professional development in pedagogy, mentoring and support to schools.</p> <p>Professional development training provided to education administrators across all targeted DESB (at least 1,300 persons) and PESS (at least 280 persons)⁶³:</p> <p>Up to 30 districts receive operating grants to implement primary education development plans in accordance with National Education Quality Standards⁶⁴</p>
Teacher Training Colleges	Enhanced knowledge and skills to better prepare primary trainee teachers for deployment resulting in graduate teachers with high quality teaching skills	<p>Support, as required, for MoES renewal of primary teacher training curriculum.</p> <p>Pre-service training enhanced by strengthening primary teacher training practicum, improving multi-grade teaching and Lao Language pedagogy</p> <p>Providing professional development to all primary teacher educators (at least 400) across the eight targeted TTCs.</p> <p>At least five primary teacher educators per TTC (up to 40 total), receive scholarships to National Higher Education Institutions for professional upgrading of qualifications.</p> <p>64 resource packs delivered to eight TTCs, comprising teacher learning materials across all primary subjects, including materials to support the teaching of reading and inclusive education teaching practices.</p> <p>Strengthened support for ethnic minority teacher trainees, including the 520 students recruited under the program, through student welfare offices at TTCs.</p>
Central MoES Education Administrators	More efficient management of the sector based upon stronger performance monitoring, research and analysis enabling evidence-based policymaking.	<p>Enhanced policy dialogue resulting in improved public financial and human resource management within MoES and thereby facilitating sustainable implementation of BEQUAL supported initiatives.</p> <p>Up to 250 central-level education administrators receive professional development⁶⁵ with a particular emphasis on planning, human resource and financial management, and support to school-based management in target areas.</p> <p>Provide support, as required, for renewal of the existing primary education curriculum and the development of associated textbooks and teacher guides.</p> <p>Strengthened capacity of central education administrators for performance monitoring through high</p>

⁶² Over the first phase of the program, there will be three cohorts of approximately 174 each year.

⁶³ This includes about half of the 33 PESS staff responsible for Administrative and Primary Education in each of the 16 Provinces, and 20 of the DESB staff in each of the 65 districts.

⁶⁴ Commencing with the districts in the 6 provinces targeted for School Construction and Rehabilitation, these districts will be targeted for support based on the DESBs capacity to demonstrate commitment to transparent costed sector planning.

⁶⁵ Some of this support will be provided by the Australia-Lao Institute and will consider working with and/or through the MoES Institute for Education Administrator's Development (IEAD).

Beneficiary Group	How Groups Benefit	How BEQUAL will support
		quality research and data analysis to enable evidence-based policy making.
ESWG stakeholders and citizens of Laos and Australia	More efficient use of Lao PDR resources Transparent management and use of Australian aid.	Enhance transparency and effective use of Lao PDR education sector funding, including through better education sector planning and financial management at all levels. Enhanced evidence-base for decision making through joint sector reviews, information sharing and policy development. Government of Laos's co-commitment of human and financial resources for program implementation, with funding increasing over time.

9. BEQUAL Components

Across the Key Result Areas BEQUAL implementing partners will work together to achieve the intended program outcomes. The components of the program are described in the following sections, and the table at Annex 7 provides details of activities and targets for each component.

9.1. Key Result Area 1: Policy, Planning and Coordination

In order to underpin sustainable and systemic change in parallel with initiatives targeting resources, teaching and participation outcomes, BEQUAL will also invest in building the capacity of the Government of Laos to manage and implement policy, through MoES, to lead and manage the basic education sector. The program will continue to strengthen MoES in a number of areas as described below, which will also contribute to delivering all of the program's Key Result Areas.

Component 1: Policy, Planning and Coordination

The BEQUAL managing contractor will implement this component, working closely with representatives from the Development Cooperation Section of the Australian Embassy in Vientiane and drawing on evidence and analysis from the Learning Facility. At a central level partners will include: MoES' Department of Planning; Department of Personnel, Department of Teacher Education; Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education; RIES; the Education Standards and Quality Assurance Council, Department of Finance, and the Department of Inspection. At a provincial and district level the program will partner with target PESSs, DESBs, all 8 main TTCs, as well as the offices of provincial and district Governors.

The program will work closely with, and counterpart through, the Director General of the Department of Planning to ensure program resources are targeted appropriately to strengthen capacity across all partner departments associated with the program, both vertically and horizontally. Advisors deployed by the BEQUAL managing contractor will provide formal and informal policy, planning, financial management and coordination advice to MoES officials at a central, provincial and district level.

This Key Result Area will also involve working with MoES departments to increase and expand the collection, management, analysis and use of data that is sex disaggregated and also addresses other indicators of disadvantage, including disability.

Support through the ESWG

The ESWG will play a lead role in facilitating the development and management of cohesive education policy, planning and sector coordination. BEQUAL will continue to provide assistance to the ESWG by DFAT resourcing the ESWG Secretariat and strengthening the focal group structure. The ESWG and associated entities will receive direct support from Australia linked to BEQUAL to ensure targeted priorities are managed and delivered in a coordinated and cohesive way, and in support of ESDP objectives, including the key recommendations of the ESDP Review undertaken in 2013⁶⁶. Development Cooperation personnel from the Australian Embassy in Vientiane will continue their active role in the ESWG. Australia will pursue policy dialogue, through the ESWG and bilaterally, on critical matters relating to the development of the education sector in Laos (refer Annex 6). Further detail on these governance and management arrangements is provided in Section D.

Australia will support the ESWG to ensure provincial engagement through either the proposed ESWG Provincial Coordinating Mechanism or through an alternative approach developed and approved by the ESWG. Technical advisers supported at the provincial level will support provincial engagement and coordination in the Northern, Central and Southern regions of the country. In addition, BEQUAL will implement activities through MoES systems and structures at a provincial and district level. There will be close liaison with Provincial and District Governors, including through their participation in annual planning discussions and provincial level coordination mechanisms to ensure decentralised resources are appropriately aligned to the program.

Mapping Survey

To fully understand and implement targeted and sustainable activities across such a diverse set of organisational counterparts, a comprehensive management and administrative mapping survey will be undertaken. This survey will result in a series of recommendations that will confirm priority activities to strengthen MoES policy, planning, budgeting, monitoring, management and coordination to inform this component's work plan over Phase 1⁶⁷. The survey will be conducted within four months of the BEQUAL managing contractor's mobilisation, and coordinated through the ESWG Focal Group 3, which would include representatives of the Laos-Australia Institute⁶⁸ and MoES' Institute for Education Administrators' Development. The survey will provide practical solutions and detailed resourcing options in the following areas:

- Administrative and Public Financial Management
- Administrative and financial human resource capacity development needs⁶⁹ across all levels of MoES;

⁶⁶ In particular, Australia will pursue high level policy dialogue around increased and better management of GoL budget to the education sector and improved efficiency of teacher management.

⁶⁷ The work plan for this sub-component will be developed by MoES with support from the BEQUAL managing contractor in consultation with ESWG focal groups, especially ESWG Focal Group 3, and agreed to by the BEQUAL program steering committee.

⁶⁸ The Laos-Australia Institute (2013-14 to 2016-17) will provide a program of individual and organisational professional development to the Ministry of Education and Sports, other key ministries and NPAs, after undertaking a Capacity Needs Assessment, which will need to be coordinated with ESWG Focal Group 3. This is a \$20 million program, which will commence in early 2014 with capacity building support prioritised to MoES.

⁶⁹ This includes support for Education Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation, Budgeting and Financial Management possibly including through the Institute for Education Administrator's Management, but does not include professional development for educational practitioners i.e. teachers, TTC lecturers and education supervisors and managers, including Pedagogical Advisors. These professional development requirements will be managed under Key Result Area 3 (Teacher Education Support).

- Capacity building for senior education managers of PESS and DESB, School Principals and Village Education Development Committee members in all facets of school-based management (such as fiscal planning and budget execution) with reference to national education quality standards - school-based management training will then be delivered to key personnel in target provinces, districts and schools;⁷⁰
- Enhancement of public financial management practices and policy within MoES and strengthening of the funding relationship with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning and Investment and, including⁷¹:
 - a. developing financial strategies to enhance opportunities to address the substantial public financial management issues impacting upon program sustainability and the MoES budget, including the increase of non-recurrent wage to meet ongoing requirements and to ensure program sustainability.⁷²
 - b. enhancing opportunities for use of financial and procurement systems, particularly at a provincial level, if program funding is ever to be dispersed using Government of Lao PDR financial systems.
 - c. identifying options to work with provincial and district governors to expand opportunities for local funding for basic education, particularly with a focus on increasing local recurrent funding to schools. This may include dollar for dollar co-financing support of agreed initiatives.

This will require resources to be allocated to support recommended initiatives to enhance public financial management, including through technical assistance under BEQUAL at central and provincial levels. This may include, within Phase 1, resources to pilot district level initiatives (such as operating grants), that will allow program disbursement and/or procurement using provincial/district financial systems in support of education delivery.⁷³

Management of Learning Outcomes Data and Systems

The program will provide support for and application of MoES-managed learning outcomes data and systems (i.e. ASLO and EGRA) to monitor program progress against its goal, including:⁷⁴

- a. Support for an ASLO sampling data report to determine an appropriate baseline of disaggregated data for targeted provinces and districts and

⁷⁰Note that at the time of preparing this design document the concept for Phase II of the GPE program was being prepared with a focus on contribution to school block grants and to national school-based management training. The school-based management training described in this section will build broad skills in the management of schools, against National Education Quality Standards, not just the management of school block grants. It is expected that this school-based management training will be delivered to at least 280 PESS and 1,300 DESB education managers, as well as at least 1,100 School Principals and 7,700 VEDC members. The development and implementation of this training will need to be closely coordinated with GPE Phase II.

⁷¹ Note that the program will support a PFM Specialist whose work will need to be closely coordinated with broader support from Australia and the European Union - at the time of preparing this design the European Union were in the process of formulating future support for public financial management.

⁷²As highlighted by the recent IMF Financial Evaluation (2013), the ADB Binding Constraints Report (2012) and Australian funded Lao PDR Financial Management and Procurement Review (2013).

⁷³ This is subject to the final recommendations of the Australian Government-funded Education Sector Assessment Australian funded Lao PDR Financial Management and Procurement Review: Laos report (2013) and ongoing reviews conducted by development partners.

⁷⁴This will be done by engaging RIES to conduct activities as required, and will require dialogue between Australia (and other development partners through the ESWG) and MoES for ongoing institutionalisation of the ASLO assessment.

- b. establishment of systems to ensure appropriate biennial (2 yearly) assessments are put into place to monitor progress across the targeted provinces and districts.

This will require resources to be allocated⁷⁵ to support: capacity development within RIES and the Department of Inspection; to support the continuation of ASLO nationwide⁷⁶, and work with the ESWG to ensure strong coordination of MoES systems (central, provincial and district) in support of educational monitoring and evaluation. The BEQUAL managing contractor will liaise with the Learning Facility to support the MoES to ensure learning outcome data is available and meets the needs of program and portfolio analysis and reporting.

The program will support the enhancement and integrated use of multiple education management information systems currently in use within the MoES⁷⁷. The use and relevance of these various systems will be assessed and recommendations made as to how these may be effectively integrated and/or interfaced to MoES requirements. The assessment will be conducted in consultation with MoES and other donors⁷⁸.

Key Result Area 1 Outcomes

Outcomes to be achieved during Phase 1 of the program, linked with a policy dialogue (with more detail in Annex 7 and the monitoring and evaluation framework at Annex 12) are:

Table 6: Component 1 Outcomes and Policy Focus Areas

Outcomes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MoES utilises evidence to inform policy planning and budgeting decisions in the basic education sector, including by implementing recommendations from program and joint ESDP reviews 2. PESSs and DESBs, School Principals and VEDCs are more efficiently implementing, monitoring and supporting education policy, and deploying resources in response to school needs. 3. More schools in target districts are meeting National Education Quality Standards 4. ESWG is providing an effective mechanism to support MoES to coordinate efforts in the education sector, including through active and functional focal groups 5. Pilot programs are expanded or discontinued as a result of evaluation findings. 6. Improved coordination between different levels of government, including through ESWG provincial coordination providing a link between districts, provinces and central level
Policy Dialogue Focus
<p>Improved fiscal circumstances associated with increased recurrent (non-wage) budgeting (central and provincial) allocations to basic education;</p> <p>Sustained provision of School Block Grants, with increments to the per student allocation over the medium term; and</p> <p>Better alignment of teacher demand and supply..</p>

⁷⁵This will be done by engaging RIES to conduct activities as required.

⁷⁶ And to coordinate with GPE Phase 2 to support EGRA assessment to be undertaken in complementary districts.

⁷⁷The following are existing management information systems in use by MoES: Education Management Information System (EMIS); Personnel Management Information System (PMIS); Financial Management Information System (FMIS) linked with a Financial Reporting System for School Block Grants, and Teacher Management Information System (TMIS) – the concept for GPE Phase 2 also proposes support for these systems and coordination between BEQUAL and GPE Phase 2 will be required, particularly through ESWG Focal Group 3.

⁷⁸ Support for this activity would be linked to and coordinated with proposed GPE Phase 2 support.

9.2. Key Result Area 2: Increased Participation

Increasing the participation of all boys and girls in basic education is at the heart of BEQUAL. For the Government of Lao PDR to achieve the MDGs and to fulfil its ambition of graduating from Least Developed Country status; increased participation is essential in order to provide equitable opportunities for all Lao citizens. In this sense, all aspects of BEQUAL will contribute to achieving increased participation – but there is a set of more focused activities which will target participation more directly.

Improving education participation in disadvantaged communities will require a holistic approach that engages closely with the MoES at all levels. Support to basic education in disadvantaged areas will involve multiple strategies and partnerships with other rural livelihoods programs, such as the Laos-Australia Rural Livelihoods Program, and initiatives delivered by other donors, NGOs and NPAs working with poor and disadvantaged groups through livelihoods support. These programs, with support from MoES will help to create an environment where poor families are better able to support their children's participation in education, thus increasing the overall demand for a good quality education.

The Key Result Area for Increased Participation will be implemented via two components:

2.1 Participation and Access – managed by the BEQUAL managing contractor

2.2 School Meals – managed by World Food Programme.

Component 2.1 Participation and Access

Working closely with the MoES Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education⁷⁹, the BEQUAL managing contractor will manage this component, with implementation support from NGOs and NPAs. Work under this component will focus on the implementation of a range of community level activities across the target districts that overcome specific barriers to participation, or target opportunities to increase participation, including through working with NGOs and NPAs. Grade 1 dropout is a major issue with no improvements over the past 6 years. Thus, interventions linked to improvements in grade 1 dropout will be a priority.

Complementing the work of DESBs, the experience of NGOs and NPAs at the local level will be an asset to the implementation of this component. They have considerable experience involving communities in supporting learning, performance monitoring and accountability; and working with sub-national education administrators in delivering education services in hard to reach areas.

The scope and nature of activities delivered under this component may include activities that:

1. support communities, including VEDCs, as active participants in school level education planning, budgeting and monitoring the quality of education services.
2. increase participation and learning for girls and boys with disability.
3. develop a culture of reading at the community level.
4. support early grade literacy and reading⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Based on annual Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education work plans, support will be provided under BEQUAL for MoES-led activities to support participation, complemented by activities supported through NGOs and NPAs.

⁸⁰ Drawing on lessons learned from GPE Phase 2 pilot approach to supporting reading, including through the ESWG Focal Group 1 Literacy Taskforce

5. support teaching of Lao language to non-Lao speaking boys and girls with an emphasis on those districts where grade 1 repetition and dropout rates are high.⁸¹
6. complement the training and deployment of ethnic minority teachers⁸², particularly female teachers, through support for village-based school readiness programs in those villages from which teacher trainees may be recruited and deployed. This will include learning from the community-based school-readiness program piloted under the EFA-FTI program with a view to replicating the lessons learned.
7. improve health and hygiene, particularly those that focus on maximising the impact of improved water and sanitation facilities being provided by the program.⁸³ Initiatives would also be supported that teach children and communities to adopt and maximise health, hygiene and sanitation practices in school environments where water and sanitation facilities are compromised or non-existent.
8. provide eye sight and hearing assessments and related support (to the extent possible⁸⁴) for children, working in partnership with the appropriate MoES and Ministry of Health personnel.
9. address particular barriers experienced by girls (both through activities that exclusively target girls and through activities that cover the community as a whole or boys as well as girls), for example through managing and implementing scholarships for ethnic minority girls to attend lower secondary school, aimed at supporting enrolment and attendance.

NGO/NPA Consortium

An NGO/NPA consortium will be selected (through an open selection process) by the Australian Embassy in Vientiane in consultation with MoES. The NGO/NPA consortium will be sub-contracted by the BEQUAL managing contractor and a package of activities⁸⁵ will be developed in consultation with MoES and the Australian Embassy. The work conducted by the NGO/NPA consortium will directly support the broader work of the MoES in relation to increasing participation, and will complement the work of other program components. The NGO/NPA consortium will work closely with the BEQUAL managing contractor and MoES to monitor and report activity outcomes, which will then be consolidated by the BEQUAL managing contractor for use in program reports, and for inclusion, as needed, in sector-level reports by the Learning Facility.

Activities delivered through the NGO/NPA consortium will mainly be based on known and existing activities that improve opportunities for children, particularly girls and those with disabilities, to participate in school and/or continue their primary education. The potential for replicability of these activities will be an important factor in selection, as will existing policy frameworks by MoES to guide delivery. With the support (as needed) from the BEQUAL managing contractor, MoES and the Learning Facility, the NGO/NPA Consortium will

⁸¹ This will need to be coordinated with plans for research on teaching Lao to non-Lao language speakers planned under the GPE Phase 2

⁸² Refer to Key Result Area 3, Component 3.1

⁸³ Refer to Key Result Area 5, Component 5.2

⁸⁴ These assessments would take simple approaches to checking vision and hearing of all children in the community, which can be undertaken by district/community health personnel and by teachers, and may need to start on a small scale. Support would be provided, where possible and appropriate, for eye glasses, and skills developed for teachers to better support children with hearing and vision impairments (such as seating students closer to the front of the class etc.)

⁸⁵ Up to \$6 million will be allocated in support of these activities. Refer to Annex 10, Program Costings.

undertake or commission sound and appropriate evaluations of participation activities to ensure a sound basis for decision making on further implementation and expansion.

Innovation Fund

The BEQUAL Innovation Fund⁸⁶ will be managed by the BEQUAL managing contractor in consultation with MoES and used to pilot new and innovative activities and analysis to strengthen provincial, district, school and community capacity to manage, coordinate and implement educational activities at a local level. Activities funded through the Innovation Fund will support any of the Key Result Areas. A broad range of activities implemented by varying stakeholders will be eligible for support through this fund (refer also Section 12.2). Examples of activities that could be supported under the Innovation Fund may include:

1. pilots of new approaches to teaching Lao language to non-Lao speaking boys and girls with an emphasis on those ethnic minority districts where grade 1 repetition and dropout rates are high⁸¹
2. use of different and new multi-lingual methodologies (using a combination of mother tongue and Lao language) to teach Lao language at grade 1 in predominantly ethnic minority schools⁸¹;
3. Action at community level to increase acceptance of and demand for girls' education;
4. Piloting of new local curriculum content, conducted in partnership with provincial and district educational authorities; and
5. Research related to BEQUAL objectives.

Component 2.2 School Meals

The World Food Program is managing and implementing this component⁸⁷. Component monitoring will be carried out by the World Food Programme, which reports directly to the Development Cooperation personnel from the Australian Embassy in Vientiane on outcomes, as confirmed by the existing funding agreement.⁸⁸

This component aims to increase primary school enrolment and attendance in a sustainable manner through the provision of nutritious school meals and building of government capacity to eventually manage and implement the program. The work targets pre-primary and primary school girls and boys in schools in Phongsaly, Oudomxay, Luangnamtha, Luang Prabang, Sekong, Saravan and Attapeu Provinces, and is working in partnership with the School Meals Unit at the Inclusive Education Centre, MoES; PESS, DESB, Village School Meals Committee. The School Meals program is also working in partnership with UNICEF, which is providing complementary support for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH).

The school meals program will help to address barriers to access through two pathways:

⁸⁶Up to \$2.2 million will be allocated in support of work through the Innovation Fund.

⁸⁷This section is adapted from World Food Programme submission presented to, and agreed by the Australian government (April 2013).

⁸⁸Note that this funding agreement between the Australian Government and World Food Programme has a total value of \$9.5 million from 2012-13 to 2015-16, and was signed in June 2013.

1. The meals act as an incentive to parents to send children to school, contributing to increases in enrolment and helping sustain attendance, leading to higher survival rates⁸⁹.
2. The meals contribute to addressing short-term hunger and micronutrient deficiencies. As a result, the ability of students to concentrate at school should increase, leading to better learning and contributing to higher retention rates.

The component is delivered through two discrete activities:

1. Delivery of the World Food Programme-assisted school meals program in about 614⁹⁰ schools in 30 targeted educationally disadvantaged districts; resulting in:
 - Enrolment and attendance increases in about 614 pre-primary and primary schools in 30 of the most educationally disadvantaged districts; and
 - 76,500 pre-primary and primary school children annually receiving nutritious mid-morning snacks
2. Capacity building of the central, provincial, district government and communities to implement and manage the school meals program, resulting in:
 - Government and communities increasingly able to manage and implement an effective National School Meals Program;
 - Increased community understanding of the importance of continuing school attendance and better knowledge of nutrition;
 - Home-grown School Lunch model implemented in one or two districts to learn lessons for the implementation of the National School Meals Program; and
 - An agreed handover strategy in place.

Key Result Area 2 Outcomes

Outcomes to be achieved during Phase 1 of this program (with more detail in Annex 7 and the monitoring and evaluation framework at Annex 12) are:

Table 7: Key Result Area 2 Outcomes and Policy Focus Areas

Outcomes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More boys and especially more girls, including those with disability and those from ethnic minority groups enrol in primary school. 2. More boys and especially more girls in targeted schools, including those with disability and from ethnic minority groups attend school daily 3. Parents and community members have increased skills to mobilise and support learning, especially reading 4. More parents, children and community members value education for all, especially for girls 5. School leaders monitor and support learning with community engagement

⁸⁹ This is supported by international and domestic evidence that School Meals can lead to improved enrolment and retention: see World Food Programme (2009): Feed Minds, Change Lives School Feeding - Highlights and New Directions.

⁹⁰ WFP provide school meals to approximately 1,700 schools in 30 districts. Australia is funding about 36% of the total program, or approximately 614 schools.

Outcomes
6. Students and their families in targeted districts have improved nutrition and hygiene practices
Policy Dialogue Focus
<p>MoES and education sector partners prioritise inclusive education to ensure that girls, students from ethnic minority communities and students with disability are supported and able to participate in learning.</p> <p>Within the existing education monitoring system, ensure opportunity is given for effective community monitoring of school resource management (including the transparency of the use of school resources).</p>

9.3. Key Result Area 3: Teacher Education and Support

The review of the ESDP in 2013 highlighted some key challenges and recommendations regarding teacher training and professional development; equitable teacher recruitment, deployment and distribution and teacher performance⁹¹. BEQUAL will respond to these recommendations by supporting MoES to improve the quality of both pre-service and in-service training of primary teachers in order to generate more effective teaching together with increased interaction between TTCs and other agencies. Teachers will have increased access to professional development programs and to learning, teaching and assessment resources.

BEQUAL will work in partnership with the Departments of Teacher Education, Pre-Primary and Primary Education, the eight core TTCs and the Teacher Development Centre to strengthen the pre-service curriculum, and to build the capacity of teacher education staff. The program will also support the quality improvement of in-service teacher education. In both pre- and in-service education teachers will include content on gender equality and other inclusiveness issues. Teachers will receive systematic upgrading related to their teaching subjects and pedagogy.

Better linkages will be promoted between pre- and in-service teacher education particularly at sub-national levels by seeking to integrate the TTC program more closely with professional development for teachers in schools.

Component 3.1: Pre-Service Teacher Education

This component will be managed by the BEQUAL managing contractor and Department of Teacher Education, in consultation with the eight Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs). The component will:

1. Improve the quality of pre-service primary teacher training by reviewing the TTC curriculum;
2. Provide professional development for up to 3,700 teacher educators;
3. Support the implementation of proven successful initiatives in teacher education;

⁹¹ In particular noting the absence of any support to teacher education from major development partners over the past three years has made it difficult to achieve Education Sector Development Plan targets for teacher training and development.

4. Assist with the development of a Performance Appraisal System for teacher assessment, and
5. Attract, train, support and deploy approximately 520 ethnic minority primary teachers, particularly female candidates.

The component will address the following problems identified for primary teacher education:

- Curriculum and learning materials out of date and needing revision to make them more relevant and appropriate for student-centred and inclusive learning.
- Most existing programs are teacher centred and are not competency-based or learner-centred, with limited practicum programs.
- Inadequate learning facilities and/or out-dated equipment which limits the shift to student-centred teaching and learning.
- Low capability for research and development.
- Inadequate library facilities (including e-libraries) that limits research quality.
- An insufficient number of higher degree holders on the academic (teaching staff) of most TTCs.⁹²

Four technical responses can be prioritized from this list to be addressed in this component: (i) a review of the national pre-service primary teacher training curriculum as a joint exercise between all 8 core TTCs, Department of Teacher Education, Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education and the Teacher Development Centre (ii) the provision of a program of continuing professional development for teacher educators (through the Department of Teacher Education) as well as a strategy to upgrade qualifications for selected staff; (iii) the revision or development of new learning materials for use in TTC programs, particularly in support of student-centred and inclusive learning; and (iv) to recruit, train and support ethnic minority teachers, particularly female teachers from remote, rural locations.

Review of the national primary pre-service teacher training curriculum

The BEQUAL managing contractor together with Departments of Teacher Education, of Pre-Primary and Primary Education, the Teacher Development Centre and the 8 core TTCs will undertake a complete revision of the undergraduate Primary level teacher education curriculum for Lao PDR to ensure a balance between the with the minimum course specifications and to include a proportion of local curriculum content. Issues surrounding the nature and logistics of the practicum form a key part of this revision.

1. A detailed mapping of the pre-service primary teacher training curriculum against other pre-service primary curricula in neighbouring developing countries in similar contexts., including the practicum component.
2. A review of curricula⁹³ and learning materials in TTCs in order to make them more relevant, knowledge-based and with a student-centred approach to teaching and learning.

⁹² Data from TTCs show a very low number of teaching staff (less than 20 per cent but in many instances below 10percent) have Masters level degrees. A majority of staff have Bachelors level degrees only.

⁹³ This will include gender and inclusive analysis of the existing and revised curricula.

3. An updated approach to assessment linked to student centred learning integrated into the curriculum outline.
4. Strengthening of multi-grade teaching methodologies in both curricula and practicum.
5. Increase the time allocation for Lao Language acquisition, Reading and Mathematics.
6. Examine feasibility of teaching of Basic English in grades 3–5⁹⁴.
7. Strengthen concepts of “Inclusive Education” in the curriculum and practicum including teaching of Lao as a second language.
8. Review of lessons learned from curriculum localisation activities under KRA 4.
9. A review of out-dated learning facilities and equipment in TTCs.
10. Provision of an expanded Professional Development Program⁹⁵ for TTCs

The majority of student teachers in Lao teacher training are being taught by faculty who possess a similar qualification as the trainees and, in many instances, have never previously taught in a school. Initially, an extensive and comprehensive Training Needs Analysis (TNA) should be conducted for all full-time teaching staff and relevant administrators in each of the 8 main TTCs, including an audit of the qualifications of all teacher educators. These findings will inform the final structure of the professional development program for teacher educators. Core principles of the professional development program will include:

1. Comparative developments in professional development, particularly in ASEAN countries.
2. Teaching methodologies at TTCs transformed from teacher-centred to learner-centred.
3. Constructivist strategies in subject-based knowledge processing, particularly in Science.
4. Exposure to practical multi-grade teaching approaches being demonstrated;
5. Inclusion of strategies for teaching Lao as a second language⁸¹.
6. Promotion of gender equality and awareness of effective strategies to address barriers experienced by girls
7. Awareness raising of students with disabilities diagnostic and support strategies.
8. Development of low-cost Learning Aids using local materials.
9. Effective school practice preparation, management and supervision.
10. Curriculum design and self-evaluation strategies.

BEQUAL will provide support through scholarship provision for 40 selected primary teacher educators, preferably those teaching pedagogy, to upgrade qualifications to a higher degree, particularly to Masters level qualification.

Identification of possible strategies for teaching Basic English in grades 3 – 5, within a context of limited English language proficiency, including enlisting Australian Volunteers to assist with English Language instruction at TTCs if this is deemed important in the TNA.

⁹⁴ This is in line with ASEAN priorities for English language teaching, which is likely to be pursued through TTCs. The new Lao Australia Institute will also provide support in English language training.

⁹⁵ With a focus on gender and inclusive methodologies.

Learning Materials for teacher training revised and preparation of new materials

BEQUAL will support the Department of Teacher Education and the 8 TTCs in the collaborative preparation of new training modules for primary teacher trainees delivered as eight resource packs to each of the TTCs. These will include: multi-grade teaching, Lao Language teaching⁸⁰, teaching of reading, inclusive education strategies; mathematics teaching, producing guides to making low-cost classroom materials and provision of reading materials. This is discussed further under Key Result Area 4.

Training more ethnic minority teachers, particularly female teachers

Difficulties in attracting and maintaining qualified teachers in schools in remote areas is a major constraint in the Lao PDR and contributes to the large number of one and two teacher or “incomplete” schools which are unable to offer the full five years of Primary Education.

With the support of the Department of Teacher Education and the Department of Planning, BEQUAL will undertake a significant initiative to recruit and train ethnic minority teachers (with an emphasis on female trainees) from remote and rural locations across five provinces⁹⁶, and to foster their redeployment back to their home villages. This initiative will draw on the successful strategies from the LABEP approach but with some variations to reflect the current context⁹⁷. BEQUAL will work with TTCs to develop a more balanced allocation of time between TTC-based programs and a TTC-administered intensive practicum style program of activity within the village school.

BEQUAL will provide a scholarship grant as a living and study allowance for up to 520⁹⁸ selected ethnic minority students (70 per cent female) during their enrolment at TTCs administered by the BEQUAL managing contractor⁹⁹, in conjunction with the Department of Teacher Education. The selection of recipients by the Department of Teacher Education and the BEQUAL managing contractor will be district-based, with multiple criteria including secondary school results, leadership qualities, recommendations from VEDC and teachers.

To provide ethnic minority students from remote areas with required support to adjust to an unfamiliar environment, BEQUAL will provide for additional appropriate support through the TTC Student Affairs Offices with additional capacity building from three liaison officers. The TTC will monitor the performance and status of the scholarship holders and report to DESB, DTE and the BEQUAL managing contractor. Additional monitoring of trainees by Pedagogic Advisers would occur for one year after graduation when the trainees return to their home villages.

Component 3.2 *In-Service Teacher Education*

The BEQUAL managing contractor will support the Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education, the Department of Teacher Education and the Teacher Education centre to promote effective in-service teacher education, as outlined in the MoES Teacher Education Strategy and Action Plan (TESAP) to improve the quality of teaching at primary school level. By the end of Phase 1 of BEQUAL 3,700 teachers across the 65 districts will have received training.

⁹⁶Phongsaly, Luangnamtha, Savannakhet, Xiengkhouang and Saravan.

⁹⁷ For example, there is data to show that there is now a large enough pool of female graduates from Lower Secondary level from remote villages that do not require special bridging programs within the TTCs as occurred for LABEP.

⁹⁸ 70 per cent female and 30 per cent male

⁹⁹ All TTCs have ATM facilities and payments can be directly credited to student accounts.

Linkages will be fostered between TTCs and MoES, particularly at sub-national levels, by seeking ways to integrate the “practice teaching” or practicum more closely with professional development opportunities for teachers. The focus will be on support for school-based professional development, utilizing existing MoES guidelines.

Training Needs Assessment

The BEQUAL managing contractor will work with the Department of Primary and Pre-primary Education, Department of Teacher Education and the Teacher development Centre to undertake a training needs assessment for classroom teachers in the target district schools to rank the following priorities:¹⁰⁰

1. Strategies for teaching multi-grade classes including lesson-planning.
2. Strategies for teaching Lao language as a second language to ethnic minority students.
3. Strategies for working with children with learning and other disabilities in an inclusive classroom.
4. Strategies for use of appropriate assessment tools for a student centred approach within an inclusive classroom.

Professional Development for Pedagogical Capacity Building

BEQUAL will support Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education, Department of Teacher Education and the Teacher Development Centre to deliver an integrated program of professional development of school principals and lead teachers through various mixed alternative models of delivery for capacity building. Target DESBs will be provided with an additional operating budget of \$5,000 per year to facilitate school-based and Pedagogical Adviser-delivered professional development. This will be conditional upon provinces continuing their current levels of operating budgets to DESBs. Activities include:

1. Build the capacity of 200 Pedagogical Advisers in target DESB to work as teacher mentors, to give support to teachers, particularly those in remote schools, including the 520 new ethnic minority graduates.¹⁰¹
2. Utilize the existing network of “advanced skills teachers” to provide support for professional development.
3. Support the DESB-based monthly meetings of School Principals to coordinate a professional development program at the school level that meets local priorities. These meeting will also include lead teachers from schools with no designated principal.
4. The role of Pedagogic Advisers will be strengthened, partly through an upgrading program¹⁰² at TTCs, to be an integral part of teachers’ professional development. The additional operating budget will be used to maximise the use of school-based professional development.

¹⁰⁰Note each of the priorities identified are already mandated by Laos’ Minister for Education and Sport as being important components of any professional development program.

¹⁰¹ Pedagogical Advisers must be trained as teacher mentors to work closely with teachers. They will be required to complete a training program in the nearest TTC. The support for Pedagogical Advisers from BEQUAL will be through travel and accommodation allowances to allow them to make a minimum of 3 visits to each school every school year.

¹⁰² This will become mandatory for new PAs.

Promotion of Institutional Linkages

BEQUAL will support the Department of Teacher Education to seek ways to enhance the institutional interface between TTCs and schools, districts and provinces through the teacher practicum.

BEQUAL will fund co-ordinated visits by TTC staff to schools with primary student teachers during practicum sessions across the 65 target districts so that TTC staff can provide school-based courses that may include strategies for better supervision of trainees on practicum as well as such topics as upgrading student-centred teaching strategies.

Sustained Literacy and Numeracy

BEQUAL will assist the Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education and the Department of Teacher Education to place a stronger emphasis on achieving sustained literacy and numeracy in the early grades (grades 1 and 2) by emphasising reading programs.

Reading pedagogy will be included in-service programs as a matter of priority with training supported by the provision of suitably-graded reading books, as part of the resource packs delivered to 4,500 schools.

Multi-grade teaching

With BEQUAL support the Department of Teacher Education and the Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education to incorporate genuine multi-grade teaching methodologies in all professional development activities provided to 3,700 principals and lead teachers.

BEQUAL, the Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education and the Department of Teacher Education will address the issue of multi-grade teaching in an intensive manner through visits to nearby best-practice multigrade classes, and by providing additional awareness-raising and training opportunities.

Performance Assessment of Learning Outcomes

BEQUAL will work with RIES to develop a system-wide performance assessment tool to monitor the impact of enhanced professional development and capacity-building, building on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (ASLO).

RIES will be engaged by the BEQUAL managing contractor to adapt ASLO to monitor more closely district performance and as a tool to evaluate professional development and capacity-building programs.

Key Result Area 3 Outcomes

Outcomes to be achieved in this component during Phase 1 of the program are shown below, with more detail in Annex 7 and the monitoring and evaluation framework at Annex 12:

Table 8: Key Result Area 3 Outcomes and Policy Focus Areas

Outcomes

Outcomes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved pre-service primary (and possibly pre-primary) teacher education curriculum, new competency-based approaches to teaching, an expanded practicum in schools, coordinated and implemented by MoES-DTE, MoES – DPPE, MoES -RIES and the 8 TTCs 2. Expanded pool of academics and MoES trainers with skills in advanced strategies for training teachers and school leaders 3. More ethnic minority teachers (especially women) teaching in remote villages 4. Primary teachers have increased knowledge and competency levels to improve classroom teaching and learning 5. Pedagogical Advisers providing effective and frequent pedagogical support in 65 target districts 6. Closer ties between schools and TTCs engaged in teacher professional development 7. Improved student learning outcomes in target districts and schools.
Policy Dialogue Focus
<p>Ensuring that a coordination mechanism is developed within the framework of the ESWG for collaboration on improving pre and in-service teacher education.</p> <p>Flexibility in policies and their implementation to allow for appropriate support for children from ethnic minority groups to learn Lao language.</p>

9.4. Key Result Areas 4: Teaching and Learning Resources

Component 4 Primary Teaching and Learning Resources

The BEQUAL managing contractor will support MoES to develop a more efficient and decentralised system for the acquisition and procurement of renewed teaching and learning resources that are more gender sensitive and inclusive of disadvantaged groups, including:

1. Renewed curriculum and learning materials, including textbooks and teacher guides.
2. Analysis of all materials to ensure they are gender and disability inclusive.
3. Provision of learning materials and equipment, including developing low-cost materials.
4. Strengthening of management of teaching and learning materials.

Curriculum renewal and content of textbooks and Teacher Guides will be led by RIES, in conjunction with Department of Primary and Pre-primary Education. RIES will identify areas of support to be provided by the BEQUAL contractor. The BEQUAL managing contractor will assist the Teacher Development Centre to ensure consistency between newly developed primary curriculum and teaching resources and materials developed for TTCs.

Renewal of Primary Curriculum

BEQUAL will provide technical assistance as identified by RIES to support renewal of the existing primary curriculum. NGOs and NPAs will be contracted to work with RIES and PESS staff to trial localisation of the curriculum.

Support is likely to include consultations and participatory work among staff of Department of Primary and Pre-primary Education, Department of Teacher Education and Teacher Training Colleges to identify a mechanism whereby the curriculum is delivered by an integrated approach using a variety of teaching and learning materials rather than direct instruction from a prescribed text.

NGOs and NPAs will work with RIES to identify barriers to broader implementation of the decree that allows for curriculum localisation and develop relevant training programs for staff of

Teacher Training Colleges, PESS and RIES to introduce localisation. This will initially take place in the three districts where the Laos Australia Rural Livelihoods program is being implemented.

BEQUAL will provide support for research and curriculum writers as required by RIES.

Primary textbooks and Teacher Guides revised, printed, distributed and managed

BEQUAL will support: preparation of new textbooks for the three core subjects and the five Teacher Guides to match the content of a revised primary school curriculum. It will also provide support to RIES to develop an additional Teacher Guide for Reading. It is clear that the system for selection, evaluation, procurement and distribution of textbooks needs to be reviewed and decentralized approaches with strong quality assurance strategies need to be adopted by MoES.

Support will be provided to RIES for textbook renewal, including financial support for textbook writers. Textbooks will be updated so that they fit an overall package of learning support materials for the revised student-centred primary school curriculum.

In collaboration with other partners, including the ESWG Focal Group 1 and the related Literacy Taskforce¹⁰³, technical support will be provided to RIES to develop an additional teacher guide for the teaching of reading.

Working with the MoES with joint funding to the extent possible, BEQUAL will support printing and distribution of new textbooks and teachers' guides to all 9,000 primary schools in the country with one set of 3 textbooks for all 880,000 primary students nationwide. This will be done in coordination with other agencies (such as UNICEF, JICA and the European Union), which are also engaged in the printing and distribution of existing materials already selected for classroom use.

Support will be provided to Department of Finance and financial units at provincial and district levels to better manage learning materials, especially textbooks, including planning and monitoring for replenishment.

Resource packs for primary schools

BEQUAL will support RIES in provision of teaching and learning resource packs for use in the classroom to 4,500 primary schools across the 65 target districts, including identification, procurement and distribution of simple commercially available resource materials (such as posters, large reading books, workbooks and learning materials).

BEQUAL will support RIES and the Department of Teacher Education to develop a renewed approach to reading and will provide attractive commercially-available books and smaller booklets that are stimulating, interesting for students, and graded in levels of difficulty so that students can progress through them according to reading ability. (The same titles will be made available to TTCs to stimulate student teachers' attitude to reading).

The BEQUAL managing contractor in conjunction with RIES and the eight TTCs will develop a strategy for the preparation of new and updated training modules for primary teachers in the areas of most critical need such as multi-grade teaching and subject-specific modules such as Lao Language teaching, the teaching of reading and mathematics teaching. These materials will be placed in the resource kits to be distributed to 4,500 primary schools across the 65 districts.

¹⁰³ This is a small technical group set up as a sub-group of Focal Group 1 with key stakeholders from MoES and the ESWG to focus on supporting literacy in Laos

Training materials for primary programs at TTCs

BEQUAL will work with the Teacher Development Centre to support provision of teaching and learning resource packs for the eight main TTCs, comprising teacher learning materials across the subjects of Maths, World Around Us, Lao Language and Reading. Reading does not have its own curriculum in the TTC.

A systematic approach to training of teachers to show students how to decode text, comprehend it, read with fluency and compose their own messages in text will be developed for use in all 8 TTCs.

Further development and distribution of pre-service training materials linked to the revised curriculum for use in all eight TTCs using groups of teachers from TTCs, MoES working with a skilled materials development specialist based in the Teacher Development Centre and supported by BEQUAL.

Development of local and low-cost classroom materials

BEQUAL will support provision of training in the production of low-cost equipment using simple materials locally available for use in the primary classroom, with support from RIES, Department of Teacher Education and NPAs that have experience in this area. This will include:

1. Simple teacher's guides for production of local low-cost materials developed for use in training programs.
2. Workshops to show teachers how to make low-cost classroom materials for all subjects in a student-centred, active learning environment. Such workshops can be provided by international NGOs and NPAs in conjunction with RIES.
3. A digital databank of low-cost materials developed by RIES during training programs will be developed for broader distribution to PESS and Pedagogical Advisers based in DESB offices.

Key Result Area 4 Outcomes

Outcomes to be achieved in this component during Phase 1 of the program are shown below, with more detail in Annex 7 and the monitoring and evaluation framework at Annex 12:

Table 9: Key Result Area 4 Outcomes and Policy Focus Areas

Outcome
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Renewed and improved curriculum is being implemented 2. Pre- and in-service trainers are using new or improved primary level materials 3. TTC staff and primary teachers are producing their own low-cost learning materials 4. TTCs and primary schools in target districts have sufficient resource materials 5. TTCs and primary schools in target districts have sufficient reading materials 6. TTCs are training staff and primary teachers in production of low-cost learning materials 7. Core primary level textbooks are available nationwide
Policy Dialogue Focus
<p>Teaching and learning materials are readily available in classrooms and continue to be so through MoES' own prioritisation of resources</p> <p>Teaching and learning materials include specific content that is inclusive and accessible</p> <p>The importance of locally relevant content and materials – particularly those that encourage learning of the most disadvantaged children (e.g.: different local ethnic groups)</p>

9.5. Key Result Area 5: School Infrastructure

The focus of the Infrastructure Key Result Area will be on the rehabilitation¹⁰⁴ of existing classrooms and construction of additional classrooms and water and sanitation facilities in existing schools. This will align to MoES' priorities associated with converting 'incomplete' to 'complete' schools in ethnic minority communities¹⁰⁵ where additional ethnic minority teachers will be trained. It will also respond to the contribution that insufficient and inadequate facilities make to gender inequity and broader non-participation in basic education. Construction and rehabilitation of classrooms will include the provision of essential furniture (desks, stools, chairs) as well as blackboards, where required.

The School Infrastructure Key Result Area will be implemented via two components:

5.1 Classrooms, Furniture and Rehabilitation of Primary Schools

5.2 Water and Sanitation Facilities in Primary Schools

Component 5.1 Classrooms, Furniture and Rehabilitation of Primary School

The BEQUAL managing contractor, working in partnership with the Education Construction and Design Management (ECDM) unit, will be responsible for delivery of this component, which will include the provision of technical quality assurance as well as financial oversight¹⁰⁶. It is proposed that over the first phase of the program, classroom construction and rehabilitation should be implemented in six provinces which have a 'high proportion' of incomplete schools¹⁰⁷. The program will initially establish a four-year infrastructure budget based upon an average of 10 schools per district in these six provinces (that is, approximately 300 schools will be constructed or rehabilitated¹⁰⁸). Annual infrastructure and expenditure targets will be managed by the BEQUAL managing contractor in partnership with the MoES ECDM unit¹⁰⁹ to ensure appropriate technical oversight of the Component. By working directly with the ECDM the program will contribute to the capacity development of this key infrastructure unit within MoES.

This Component will be delivered by the BEQUAL managing contractor in partnership with the ECDM through the following activities:

1. Assets Survey: immediately after the BEQUAL managing contractor is mobilised, the priority will be the completion of an assets survey of all schools in the target districts in the six provinces to establish an inventory and a preliminary condition assessment of all existing classrooms and water and sanitation facilities at each school. This will include the following:
 - Working with the Education Statistics Centre to analyse existing EMIS data on number of teachers, number of incomplete schools and condition of school

¹⁰⁴ Please refer to Annex 8 for a detailed definition of what constitutes 'rehabilitation', as well as other key infrastructure terms.

¹⁰⁵ With a caveat that supported activities do not actively or passively support government of Lao PDR resettlement practices which contravene Australian government policy.

¹⁰⁶ BEQUAL Managing Contractor would be responsible for engaging an Infrastructure Manager to oversee a team of Infrastructure and Financial Management specialists working at central, provincial and district level.

¹⁰⁷ These being: Phongsaly; Luangnamtha; Housaphan; Khammouane; Savannakhet and Saravan – more than 40% incomplete schools in the target district in these Provinces.

¹⁰⁸ Districts selection will be based on those where ethnic teachers have been recruited and trained to return to their home village (under component 3.1 of BEQUAL). New or rehabilitated WASH facilities will be provided where required.

¹⁰⁹ It is recognised the ECDM has little experience working with donors in the management and implementation of Community Based Contracting for construction as a result of a past reliance of Project Management Units. The BEQUAL managing contractor will have to commit adequate resources to ensuring ECDM and provincial and district capacity is developed appropriately to meet the requirements of the program.

facilities in the target districts. This data would then be verified by the PESS and DESB¹¹⁰ through the assets survey. This will involve preparing an asset survey template and updating rehabilitation criteria. The asset survey will include, *inter alia*, the age and condition of the classrooms, furniture and fittings, and the operational status of the toilets and water supply.

- The EMIS data and assets survey will be used to inform the program's scope of work and establish a priority listing of school classrooms and toilets for construction and rehabilitation that reflect education and program priorities. School prioritisation will be a joint process between program partners¹¹¹. Ideally this survey¹¹² would be managed by the ECDM and the Asset Division of the DoF. It is proposed that the BEQUAL managing contractor will jointly manage the asset survey with ECDM and gradually transition ownership and management to the Asset Division.
2. Update classroom and WASH construction guidelines and operation and maintenance manuals, with emphasis on gender appropriate and disability inclusive design considerations; hazard risk reduction of construction (including asbestos management); and infrastructure vulnerability to environmental factors such as flooding or storm damage.
 3. Infrastructure activities (classrooms in up to 300 schools will be constructed or rehabilitated): All infrastructure activities identified as a priority within the program, will be undertaken through the Village Education Development Committees using the Community-Based Contracting (CBC) model. In consultation with the ECDM, the BEQUAL managing contractor will determine and fund provincial and district technical resourcing to manage, supervise and support prioritised school infrastructure activities.
 4. MoES and ECDM Capacity Development: The BEQUAL managing contractor will resource initiatives supporting the capacity building of ECDM. To achieve this, the BEQUAL managing contractor may draw from the MOES capacity development plan which will be supported by the Laos-Australia Institute to further enhance MoES' ability to manage and implement infrastructure programming, including ongoing maintenance of school buildings and water and sanitation facilities.

Given fiduciary risks associated with using government systems¹¹³, the BEQUAL managing contractor will manage and disburse all funding associated with this Component¹¹⁴, consistent with the Commonwealth Procurement Regulations or equivalent. VEDCs would be contracted¹¹⁵ to procure materials and local labour or pay subcontractors to undertake any

¹¹⁰ Technical management of education construction is the responsibility of the Provincial Unit for Construction and Development Assistance (PUCDA) and District Unit for Construction and Development Assistance DUCDA.

¹¹¹ It is important that school selection is not influenced by Lao PDR resettlement policy and resettlement priorities are not used to influence targeted priorities for the BEQUAL.

¹¹² Much of this information already exists as a result of previous infrastructure support provided by the EFA FTI Program. However it appears as though the information has not been consolidated.

¹¹³ As confirmed by the 2013 DFAT review of education sector public financial management and procurement systems.

¹¹⁴ Including by supporting sub-national level Financial and Procurement Officers with community-based contracts and providing spot-checks of accounts and financial management at community level across the target districts.

¹¹⁵ PESS would engage in contract with VEDCs with oversight from the BEQUAL Managing Contractor at Provincial level to ensure appropriate management of funds and support technical quality assurance of construction.

specialist construction and rehabilitation works as per the current CBC model¹¹⁶. Where more complex infrastructure or specialised skills or equipment are required, the utilisation of local construction companies will be considered.

All rehabilitation needs and construction standards in this Component will be based on criteria and standards approved by the ECDM. The BEQUAL managing contractor will provide independent quality assurance, and will also ensure key construction records, including photographs and quality checklists that demonstrate that the facilities have been constructed in accordance with the approved design, are properly collected, collated and archived for future reference by either the MoES or the Australian Government.

Component 5.2: WASH Facilities in Primary Schools

UNICEF is currently managing and implementing this component.¹¹⁷ Monitoring is carried out by UNICEF who report directly to the Australian Embassy in Vientiane on outcomes, as confirmed by the existing funding agreement¹¹⁸. This component has been designed in accordance with UNICEF's global WASH strategy, with the objective of increasing school attendance and retention. The provision of water and sanitation services complements ongoing behavioural change activities being delivered by the MoES, which will be strengthened through the generation of evidence on the efficacy of key interventions promoting hygiene.

The component is delivered through two discrete activities:

1. Provision of water and sanitation facilities in more than 700 primary schools¹¹⁹ will enable greater access to improved sources of water and latrine facilities through:
 - construction of water and sanitation facilities in BEQUAL target districts¹²⁰.
 - New, cost-effective, accessible latrine and water system designs provided that are gender-appropriate and suitable to the needs of children with disabilities.
 - Teachers are trained in operation and maintenance of water and latrine facilities and are capable of keeping the facilities functional if minor damage occurs.
 - Development and implementation of a Basic Hygiene Education Package for the targeted 600¹²¹ schools (including the provision of soap, water containers, water supply of potable water, classroom based drinking water dispenser)
2. Evidence will be collected of the impact on education outcomes of investing in WASH in schools through the delivery of a basic package of hygiene education and facilities in 600 primary schools:
 - longitudinal research will be undertaken with a randomized control group conducted to look at the impact on educational outcomes of WASH in schools.

¹¹⁶ As per Australian Government regulations pertaining to Child Protection Regulations and as outlined in Section 14.6 of this document, child labour will not be used for any infrastructure activities supported by the program.

¹¹⁷ This section is adapted from the UNICEF submission presented to, and agreed by the Australian Government (April 2013).

¹¹⁸ The funding agreement between UNICEF and the Australian Government for this work was signed in June 2013.

¹¹⁹ Including 400 schools currently being supported through the WASH and School Meals Program as well as up to 300 schools with additional classrooms being constructed or rehabilitated under BEQUAL.

¹²⁰ Note that the schools that will be provided with WASH facilities are located within 18 target (former EFA:FTT) districts.

¹²¹ Pending amendment to the UNICEF agreement on WASH Support for additional schools being constructed under BEQUAL.

- formative assessment to identify sustainability determinants that can feedback to improve quality of interventions on specific questions and issues
- monitoring of activity outputs –EMIS indicators (Annual), which will be collected in all schools and reported through EMIS

UNICEF will submit an annual progress report each year, which will reflect results of monitoring visits. The report will highlight achievements against key planned results, and detail constraints and lessons learned. UNICEF, Governments of Australia and Lao PDR and the World Food Program will meet on an annual basis to review this component (and Component 2.2), and will carry out joint field missions to monitor implementation.

Key Result Area 5 Outcomes

Outcomes to be achieved in this component during Phase 1 of the program are shown below, with more detail in Annex 7 and the monitoring and evaluation framework at Annex 12:

Table 10: KRA 5 Outcomes and Policy Dialogue Focus Areas

Outcomes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased supply of adequate and accessible primary school classrooms generates increased enrolment and retention of boys and especially girls in target schools 2. Increased supply of adequate and accessible school water and sanitation facilities generates increased attendance of boys and especially girls in target schools 3. MoES Education Construction Design Management Unit (ECDM) planning and implementing CBC school construction 4. More effective management of school facilities' maintenance
Policy Dialogue Focus
<p>School infrastructure is provided based on education need, including for the most disadvantaged groups, not only based on broader development priorities (i.e.: development focal areas);</p> <p>Construction quality and control measures are firmly applied (and monitored) to school infrastructure, resulting in quality construction (meeting all required standards – structural, disability inclusive and environmental), and risks mitigated in regards to the use of negative list materials (such as Asbestos Containing Materials).</p> <p>Ongoing maintenance of school infrastructure by the community and the district is undertaken, and operational budget is available at the local level to ensure assets are sufficiently maintained.</p> <p>The community-based contracting school construction approach is further developed, with cost effectiveness and quality improved, and led by the ECD, the MoES functional/responsible unit.</p>

D. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

10. Management and Governance

BEQUAL is a partnership between the Governments of Lao PDR and Australia. The partnership will be founded upon mutual accountability: each partner will be held responsible for the commitments that they have voluntarily made to each other at the program outset.

BEQUAL represents a shared agenda and the design will encourage changed behaviours to achieve the key targets of the program. Both partners will be held accountable for the use of development resources provided to support program initiatives.

Australia (through its aid program) will jointly implement BEQUAL with the Government of Lao PDR (represented by MoES – at central, provincial, district and school level). Other development partners (World Food Program and UNICEF); NGOs and NPAs, and the BEQUAL managing contractor will be responsible for managing and implementing the separate components and activities for which they are responsible. The program may expand to include additional partners in the future.¹²² If this were to occur the program's scope would likely be expanded.

Management and governance of BEQUAL will occur at two levels: the strategic oversight level through a BEQUAL Steering Committee, and at the operational level, through a BEQUAL Technical Working Group.

10.1. BEQUAL Steering Committee

The BEQUAL Steering Committee will provide high level strategic oversight of the program. It will initially be a bi-lateral entity with senior representation from both the Governments of Lao PDR and Australia¹²³. The Counsellor (Development Cooperation) will represent the Government of Australia from the Australian Embassy in Vientiane and a Vice Minister of Education will represent the Government of Lao PDR. Relevant observers and representatives from other government ministries and partner agencies would be invited to attend as required. The BEQUAL Steering Committee would meet every six months to monitor program progress and provide strategic and financial guidance to the program. The BEQUAL managing contractor will provide secretarial support to the BEQUAL Steering Committee.

Strategic oversight by the BEQUAL Steering Committee will be guided by performance data provided by the MoES, the Learning Facility, UNICEF, World Food Programme and the BEQUAL managing contractor. Annual reports to the BEQUAL Steering Committee will confirm planning and expenditure associated with supported components and activities. The annual report will also summarise progress against the targeted Key Result Areas. Core functions of the BEQUAL Steering Committee will be:

- Assessment of performance in accordance with the BEQUAL monitoring and evaluation framework.

¹²²Initial discussions with the European Union indicate there is the potential for an alignment of Australian and European Union funding in the future. If this was to occur, there would be scope for the programs to further expand its support for central systems; particularly budget and financial management. The program may also expand into the lower secondary sub-sector, thereby supporting MoES across basic education more broadly.

¹²³ If the program was to expand and additional funding partners were to join BEQUAL the constituency of the BEQUAL Steering Committee would be adjusted as appropriate.

- Confirming annual budget allocations from partner governments¹²⁴ and exploring opportunities to expand the program's funding base.
- Confirming Annual work plans and budgets to ensure they align to both governments' development priorities.
- A terms of reference for the BEQUAL Steering Committee is provided at Annex 9.

10.2. BEQUAL Technical Working Group

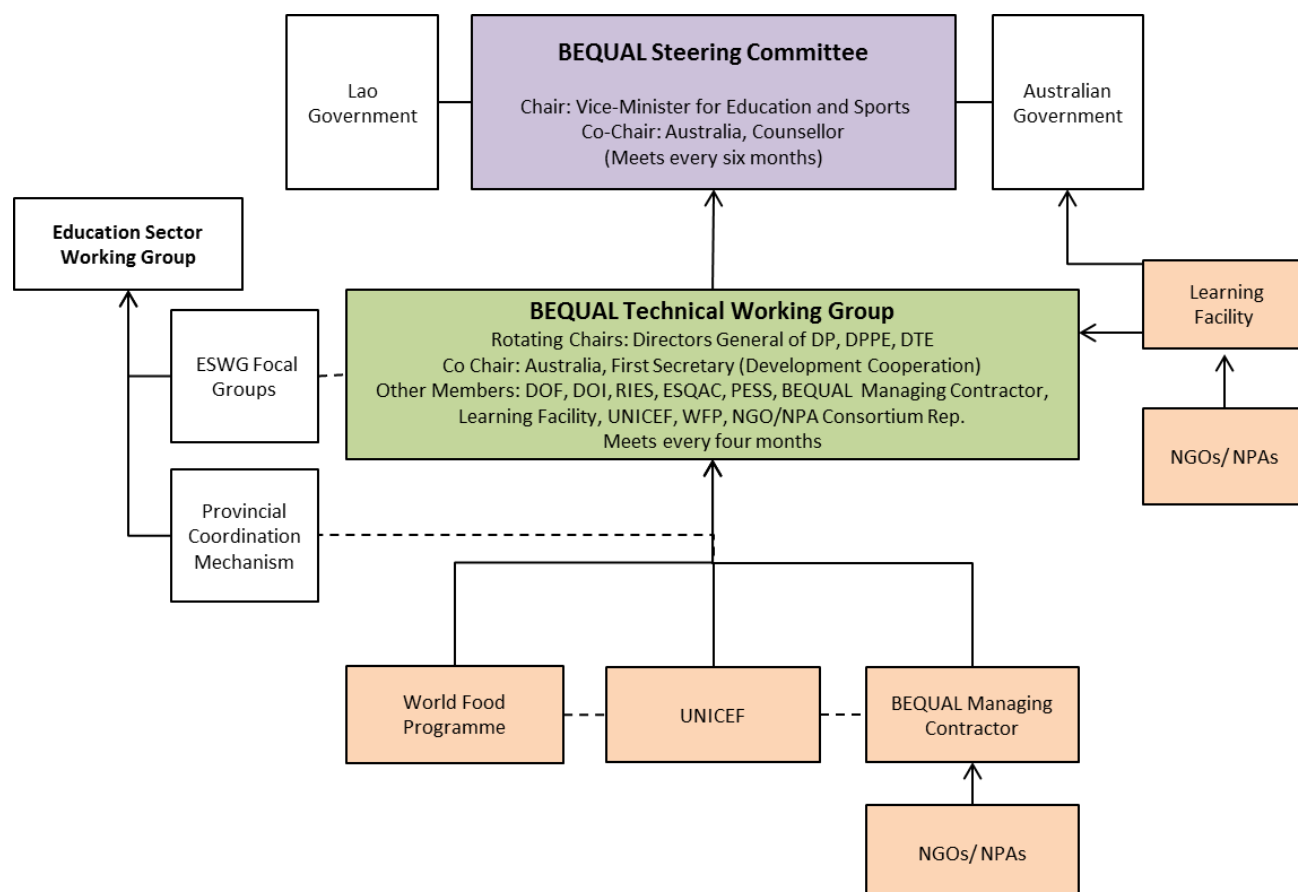
A BEQUAL Technical Working Group, aligned to the ESWG Basic Education Focal Group, will manage planning, activity implementation and oversight of program monitoring, evaluation and learning activities. The group will be jointly led by the Director Generals of the three key Departments (i.e. Departments of Planning; of Teacher Education; and of Pre-primary and Primary Education), the Australian Embassy Development Cooperation representative who has day-to-day management responsibility for BEQUAL, and the BEQUAL managing contractor Team Leader¹²⁵. The Director General of the Department of Planning will initially chair the group with chairing responsibilities rotated amongst the other Directors General as required, depending on meeting agenda priorities.

The BEQUAL Technical Working Group will meet quarterly (or more often, if needed) and reports to the BEQUAL Steering Committee. It will also report on BEQUAL progress to the ESWG. Formal joint planning and evaluation meetings for the program will occur twice yearly.

¹²⁴ This would include progress towards self-sustaining funding in support of program supported initiatives.

¹²⁵ Additional partner representatives (including: PESS, DESB, TTCs and/or other donors and NGOs) may be invited to join the BTWG as appropriate.

Figure 7: BEQUAL Management and Governance Arrangements



10.3. Partner Responsibilities

The key responsibilities of the two partner governments include:

Government of Lao PDR

- Support for the delivery of all five Key Result Areas, including agreed in-kind contributions. This includes setting policy guidelines; ensuring the establishment of provincial coordinating mechanisms in targeted provinces, data management and collection, supporting VEDCs and community based construction initiatives; ensuring teachers, particularly ethnic minority teachers trained by the program, are deployed to remote and disadvantaged schools; actively pursuing and supporting resource deployment to ensure the program is sustainable.
- Providing the appropriate representation on the BEQUAL Steering Committee and the BEQUAL Technical Working Group, and supporting Lao Government personnel to engage fully with the initiatives and activities jointly agreed to through BEQUAL.
- Through the ESWG, setting of an overall policy, budget and performance framework for the education sector through the Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) with functional responsibility for delivery sitting with national, provincial, district and school level authorities.
- Active participation in the selection of a BEQUAL managing contractor and subsequent close coordination with that managing contractor (through the Team Leader) on all program implementation.

Government of Australia

- DFAT - Australian Embassy Vientiane - will provide oversight of the BEQUAL managing contractor, Learning Facility managing contractor and partnership agreements with UNICEF and WFP.
- Policy dialogue¹²⁶ on achievement and constraints to achievement of the ESDP, through the ESWG, including in the role of co-chair¹²⁷. This includes dialogue within the education sector and other relevant stakeholders in Lao PDR, including: NGOs, NPAs and other donors and government agencies e.g. the Ministry of Finance.
- Monitoring of the performance of the program against ESDP, the ESDP Performance Framework and component outputs. This will be conducted jointly with MoES and other donors. Responsibility includes negotiation of program changes where monitoring shows that the program is not achieving desired results.
- Dialogue and coordination with all donors involved in the education sector. This will include ensuring program coherence with donors working across ESDP objectives.
- Building cross program linkages within the broader Australian Aid Program, in particular, with the Laos-Australia Rural Livelihoods Program and the Laos-Australia Institute.
- Commissioning independent evaluations and providing information and briefings on program performance at appropriate intervals.

11. Implementation Responsibilities

BEQUAL implementing partners will work collaboratively to achieve the intended outcomes within the Key Result Areas. Each implementing partner involved in BEQUAL will be responsible for one or more program components, with the Learning Facility supporting portfolio-level monitoring, evaluation and learning.

Table 14: Component Implementation Responsibility

Implementing Partner	KRAs	Component Responsibility	Main Lao Government Partners
DFAT	All	Policy Dialogue leading to program sustainability	Ministry of Education and Sports (Minister, Vice Minister, DGs)
BEQUAL Contractor	KRA 1	1: Policy, Planning and Coordination	MoES Central (DP, DTE, DPPE, RIES, ESQAC, DOI, DoF); MoES sub-national (PESSs, DESBs, VEDCs, Schools, TTCs) MoF
	KRA 2	2.1: Participation and Access	MoES Central (DP, DTE, DPPE, RIES, ESQAC, DOI and DoF) MoES Sub-national (PESSs, DESBs, schools, TTCs, VEDCs)
	KRA 3	3.1: Pre-service Teacher Education 3.2: In-service	MoES Central (DP, DTE, DPPE, RIES, ESQAC, DOI and DoF) MoES Sub-national (PESSs, DESBs,

¹²⁶ Refer to Annex 6 for full details of policy dialogue opportunities.

¹²⁷ To the extent that Australia remains a co-chair of the ESWG

Implementing Partner	KRAs	Component Responsibility	Main Lao Government Partners
		Teacher Education	schools, TTCs)
	KRA 4	4: Teaching and Learning Resources	MoES Central (DP, DTE, DPPE, RIES, ESQAC, DOI and DoF) MoES Sub-national (PESSs, DESBs, schools, TTCs)
	KRA 5	5.1: Classrooms, Furniture and Rehabilitation	MoES Central (DP, ECDM, DPPE, DoF) MoES sub-national (PESSs, DESBs, schools, VEDCs); MoH (Nam Saat)
NGO/NPA Consortium	KRA 2	2.1: Participation and Access – NGO/NPA activities therein Others as required	MoES Central (DP, DTE, DPPE, RIES, ESQAC, DOI and DoF) MoES Sub-national (PESSs, DESBs, schools, TTCs, VEDCs)
Implementers of activities funded by Innovation Fund	KRA1-5	KRA1-5	MoES Central (DP, DTE, DPPE, RIES, ESQAC, DOI and DoF) MoES Sub-national (PESSs, DESBs, schools, TTCs, VEDCs)
Learning Facility	KRA 1 KRA 2	Work with the BEQUAL MC to support M&E, research and documenting of lessons learned to inform policy	RIES, DOI, DP, ESQAC
	All	Support for Australian Aid education portfolio M&E	
UNICEF	KRA 5	5.2: New WASH facilities in Primary Schools	MoES Central (DP, ECDM, DPPE, DoF) MoES sub-national (PESSs, DESBs, schools, VEDCs); MoH (Nam Saat)
World Food Programme	KRA 2	2.2: School Meals	MoES Central (DP, ECDM, DPPE, DoF) MoES sub-national (PESSs, DESBs, VEDCs)

12. Budget and Resourcing

BEQUAL will require substantive funding and resourcing if it is to have the intended impact planned. At the same time, it is recognised that international financial and resourcing constraints exist resulting in uncertainty with regards to funding flows. Because of this uncertainty the program has been designed with some flexibility in mind so that BEQUAL can adapt to variation in the way investments are targeted.

12.1. Budget

Australia's initial investments in BEQUAL will align to the program preparation and first phase of the program i.e. 2013/14 – 2017/18 encompassing support for: preliminary activities, and

inception; stabilisation, and review (Phase 1). At the time of design drafting the funding envelope for the first phase is anticipated to be approximately \$15.8 million for partner donor activities associated with WASH (UNICEF) and School Meals (World Food Programme)¹²⁸. The balance of the program during this period of time would be approximately \$70 million to support teacher education; school resourcing; infrastructure, and education policy, planning and management – including activities by the Learning Facility for knowledge and learning.¹²⁹

The BEQUAL managing contractor, in consultation with MoES and the Australian Government, will develop the first Annual (costed) Work Plan for the components it is managing within four months of mobilisation (and after the first Program Conference – refer Section 13.4) and work with other implementing partners to demonstrate how work plans are linked across all components. The annual work plan will prioritise supported initiatives for the first year (plus) of the program and will be submitted to the BEQUAL Technical Working Group for approval. Subsequent Annual Work Plans will adjust according to known cash flow, and will be confirmed at subsequent Program Conferences.¹³⁰

Whilst it is difficult to anticipate cash flow fluctuations at the time of drafting the investment design document, it is possible to highlight design priorities as a result of consultations undertaken during the design process. Beyond the financial commitments outlined above there are two likely funding scenarios, which may occur during the initial phase of the program. Funding may increase as a result of additional investments by partner donors, e.g. the European Union may co-commit to the program; the Australian Government may expand its budget, or there may be changes to the way the GPE Phase II proposal may target basic education priorities. Alternatively, funding may decrease if the Australian Aid Program funding envelope contracts.

If funding was to increase, additional funding should be aligned towards:

- Substantive institutional strengthening of MoES and other Government of Lao PDR ministries to enhance public financial management capacity within MoES and the government of Lao PDR. This would include further capacity development and institutional strengthening of central systems to ensure MoES is better positioned to manage and administer its education budget.
- Expand opportunities for teacher education and the provision of new teacher resource materials. This might include funding for the construction of additional dormitories or refurbishment of existing ones at targeted TTCs to provide accommodation for ethnic minority teachers¹³¹.
- Expand participation and infrastructure initiatives. Participation initiatives could include support for health screening at the school level.
- Consider increased interface and interaction across the primary and lower secondary sub-sectors.

¹²⁸ The total approved budget of the program of support being delivered by UNICEF and WFP is \$20.5 million from FY2012/13 to 2015/16. The figure of \$15.8 million cited covers FY2014/15-2016/17.

¹²⁹ Not inclusive of European Union funding.

¹³⁰ Section 13.4

¹³¹ This has been a repeated request to donor partners by DTE.

If funding was to contract, BEQUAL would need to focus on the core targets of the program which means getting more girls and boys, particularly those experiencing disadvantage, into school and completing a good quality education with improved literacy and numeracy. During periods of contraction, resourcing should more closely align to the following activities¹³² and adjust the numerical targets outlined in Annex 7:

- Teacher training, particularly ethnic minority teacher training and deployment.
- Teacher professional development, with a particular focus on Lao language training and multi-grade teaching methodologies.
- The development and provision of new and inclusive teacher resource materials and equipment, including classroom consumables for use by students and teachers.
- Investments to enhance participation: school meals; scholarships and bursaries; water and sanitation, and work to strengthen VEDCs with a focus on strengthening the demand elements of education.

Investments in infrastructure can be expensive and whilst important are less of a priority, relative to retaining children in school and getting a quality education. If funding contractions occur investments and targets in infrastructure should be immediately reduced.

Should the program budget significantly increase or contract, the BEQUAL Steering Committee, on the advice of the BEQUAL Technical Working Group, would lead a re-scoping process, if necessary. The process would equate to a mini re-design, in order to ensure that the program retains a coherent and evidence-informed theory of change and program logic. All Government of Lao PDR stakeholders, contributing donors and implementing partners would participate in this process, which would also entail any necessary Australian aid (or other donor) quality assurance and approval processes.

12.2. Innovation Fund

The BEQUAL managing contractor, in conjunction with MoES, will manage the Innovation Fund, which will enable the program to finance pilot activities, to mainstream approved new initiatives, and to undertake analysis and research to improve management and coordination of education at the local level. This may include the provision of grants to incentivise local funding options in support of educational activity. Activities may be undertaken by NGO and/or NPA partners, or by Lao Government agencies, other BEQUAL implementing partners, or separate specialist local or international organisations.

In consultation with MoES, the BEQUAL managing contractor will establish operational guidelines to manage the Innovation Fund within the first four months of the program. These guidelines will include transparent and robust selection processes for funding recipients, who will be selected through a competitive application process. All initiatives funded by the Innovation Fund will be subject to approval by the BEQUAL Technical Working Group. The Innovation Fund will be limited to five per cent (5%) of the annual BEQUAL budget. The percentage allocation may be adjusted as the funding envelope varies; the BEQUAL Steering Committee will approve any variations to the allocation on an annual basis. Should sound opportunities to fund innovation not arise over the course of a year, funds can be rolled back into other program funds for redeployment across the budget.

¹³² As confirmed by the indicative activities to be supported in Section C.

12.3. Budget Sustainability

BEQUAL will work closely with MoES and other stakeholders to maximise opportunities to increase recurrent non-wage funding to the education sector with the aim of increasing Government of Lao PDR funding for the education sector and as a result sustain program investments¹³³. Under the BEQUAL managing contractor, a Financial Advisor will support the MoES Department of Finance so it can be better informed about and manage the budget and planning process. A particular focus will be placed on enhancing the relationship between MoES and Ministry of Finance.

Additional efforts will be made to access provincial funding through the provincial Governors so as to fill recurrent funding gaps, particularly at the school level. Advisory support will be provided, beginning late in Year 1 (2014-15) to support sustainability and MoES' knowledge and understanding of public financial management. These inputs will guide and advise both partner governments on mechanisms and opportunities to improve public financial management processes to ensure recurrent funding gaps and/or in-kind program resourcing needs are addressed. Advisory reports and recommendations will be tabled and discussed at Steering Committee meetings. As a result of ongoing policy dialogue and technical support, it is hoped that by the end of Phase 1 (2017-18) Lao Government funding will be available to sustain initial investments, particularly with regards to recurrent non-wage investments.

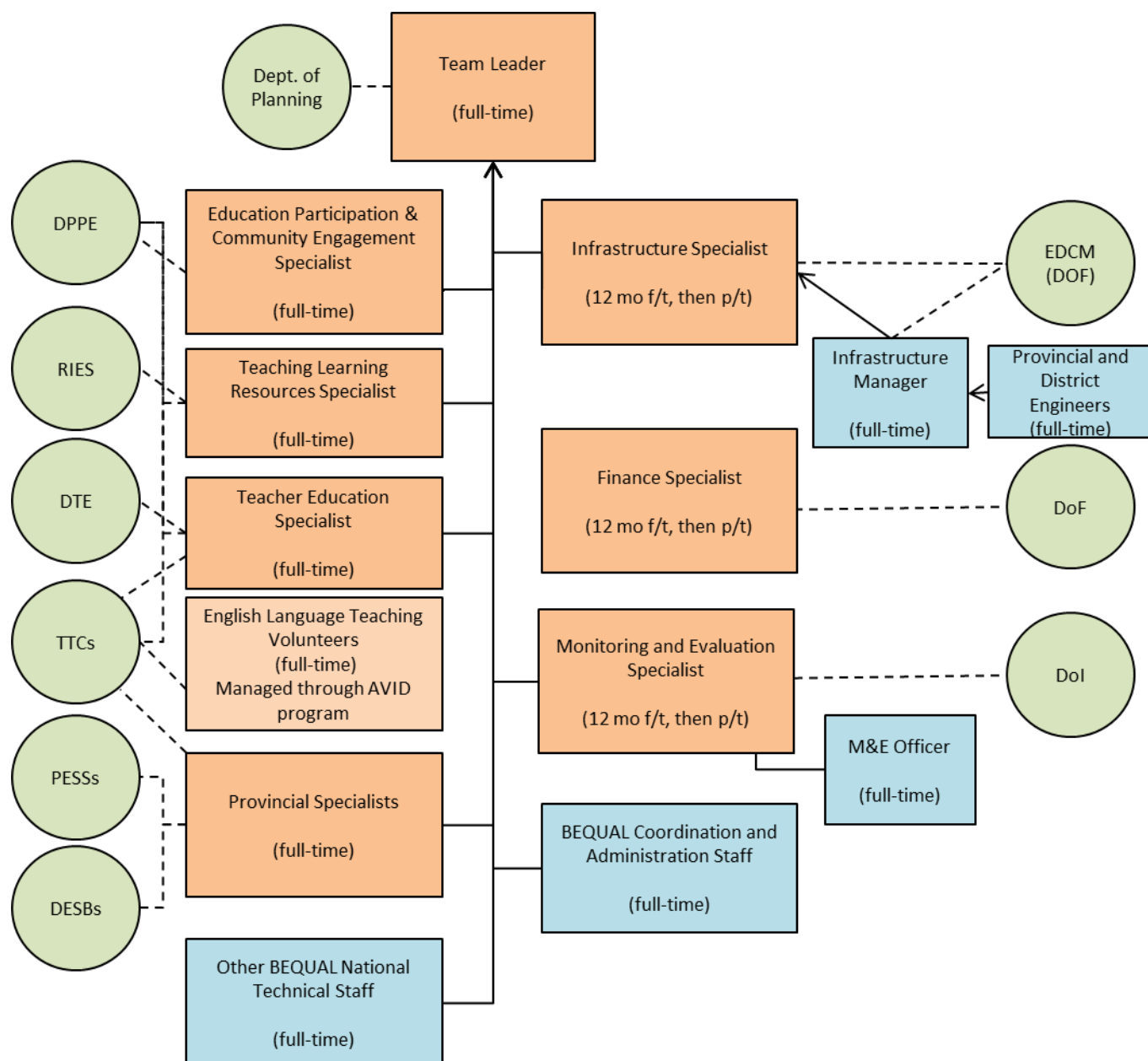
12.4. Personnel Resources

BEQUAL will be implemented with a careful blend of international and national personnel engaged by the implementing partners. Advisory and counterpart relationships for the program will be established through MoES central agencies. The program will require an investment of technical and management resources within all implementing partners. Terms of reference for key advisory positions are provided at Annex 11. Figure 8 provides a schematic overview of program resourcing. The Education Participation and Community Engagement Specialist will require an advanced level of expertise in gender and disability-inclusive education issues and all other specialists will require at least a basic-level of expertise on gender issues and disability¹³⁴

¹³³ Refer to the sustainability discussion in Section 11

¹³⁴ The BEQUAL managing contractor will be encouraged to draw on support from the Australian Aid Program CBM-Nossal Institute as well as to identify and allocate resources for additional technical expertise on disability-inclusive education.

Figure 8: BEQUAL Managing Contractor Organisational Structure



BEQUAL Managing Contractor Resources

Indicative staffing of the BEQUAL managing contractor is likely to include up to ten advisers in the initial period, of whom three will be placed in the provinces (one in the north; two in the south), with additional short-term and part-time (ongoing) inputs as required. The managing contractor will have a greater number of staff for the first 12-18 months, with the number of full-time international positions progressively reducing in subsequent years.

Implementation and management of the components allocated to the BEQUAL managing contractor will be the responsibility of the BEQUAL managing contractor Team Leader (TL). The Team Leader will counterpart with the Director General of the Department of Planning,

and will be deployed for the whole of Phase 1. By counterparting with the Director General of Planning, there will be substantial opportunity to align and deploy program resources across all counterpart agencies with substantial financial and management authority which derives from the Department of Planning¹³⁵.

The Team Leader will lead and guide technical management of the program and will work closely with both MoES and the Development Cooperation Section at the Australian Embassy in Vientiane to ensure program objectives are achieved. The BEQUAL managing contractor will provide administrative and financial staff to ensure the program functions appropriately. The MoES will organise the provision of desk space for the managing contractor in both Vientiane and targeted provinces within line areas. A program office will be co-located within the MoES central office in Vientiane, ideally within the Department of Planning.

Component 1: Policy, Planning and Coordination

The BEQUAL managing contractor will deploy a **Team Leader** who is an **Education Management Specialist**; this person will be responsible for the management and implementation of all components and activities assigned to the BEQUAL managing contractor. He or she will be responsible for ensuring component outcomes aligned with the BEQUAL managing contractor are delivered. The Team Leader will be full-time and accountable on behalf of the BEQUAL managing contractor to Development Cooperation personnel based at the Australian Embassy in Vientiane.

Based on the outcomes of the mapping survey, the **Finance Specialist and a Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist** will be engaged to support the Department of Finance, Department of Planning and Department of Inspection (including through Focal Group 3) to strengthening budget planning, monitoring and management. Additional policy and technical advisory support associated with educational, policy and coordination will be provided by other specialists engaged by the managing contractor (see below) through the Team Leader to program stakeholders.

Component 2.1: Participation and Access

An **Education, Participation and Community Engagement Specialist** will be deployed to manage the initial investments in this Key Result Area. The Specialist will have an advanced level of expertise in gender and disability-inclusive education issues and will be full-time for the duration of the program. The Specialist will counterpart with the Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education and will initially work closely with Development Cooperation personnel based at the Australian Embassy to implement and manage the BEQUAL relationship with NGO and NPA implementing partners. The Specialist will also support all members of the BEQUAL team across all program components (within the BEQUAL managing contractor as well as other implementing partners) to fully incorporate approaches, including gender equality and inclusive approaches to address access and quality in basic education as seen from the child, family and community perspectives. The specialist will liaise regularly with the NGO

¹³⁵ The design team considered locating the Team Leader in either the Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education or the Department of Teacher Education but concluded that this would risk BEQUAL being perceived as a project rather than a program, thereby reducing the impact of BEQUAL in supporting the “usual work” of MoES rather than implementing “parallel project activities”. A team leader based in the Department of Planning would allow a more integrated approach, with key team members located in line departments including the Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education or the Department of Teacher Education DPPE.

consortium and work closely with the teacher Education Specialist to support inclusive education approaches to teacher pre-service and in-service professional development.

Components 3.1 and 3.2: Teacher Education and Support

The BEQUAL managing contractor will deploy a full-time **Teacher Education Specialist** to counterpart senior personnel in the Department of Teacher Education; Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education, and RIES as well as work closely with all 8 TTCs. This Specialist will provide professional leadership, policy support and input into all initiatives associated with teacher education (pre-service and in-service) and provision of learning resources.

Component 4: Teaching and Learning Resources

In support of the development and deployment of learning resource materials, an additional **Teaching and Learning Resources Specialist** will be deployed for 12 months to be mobilised three months after the BEQUAL managing contractor is deployed. This specialist will work closely with the Teacher Education Specialist to undertake a review of current learning resources available for teacher training at both pre-service and in-service level, and then establish and initiate strategies to meet the needs of the program particularly in the development of new low-cost resource materials for teachers and students.

The Teaching Learning Resources Specialist will also be expected to form writing teams to develop new teacher training materials as well as identify and procure attractive, stimulating texts and other associated learning materials from commercial sources.

Component 5.1: Classrooms, Furniture and Rehabilitation of Primary Schools

To support the infrastructure key result area a fulltime international **Infrastructure Specialist** will be deployed on program mobilisation for 12 months. After the initial 12 months are completed, the specialist will provide annual one month inputs to ensure appropriate quality standards are being achieved. To further support the infrastructure Key Result Area, a full-time national Infrastructure Specialist will be contracted three months after mobilisation. This full-time national Infrastructure Specialist will increasingly take greater responsibility for infrastructure oversight.

Additional Personnel Inputs

Three **Provincial Specialists** (reporting to the Team Leader) will support those program initiatives taking place through TTCs, PESS, DESBs and schools, and will support the Teacher Education, the Teaching Learning Resources and the Education, Participation and Community Engagement Specialists. The three Provincial Specialists will be deployed to Champasack and Saravanin the south, and Luang Prabang in the North, all conveniently situated to give support to all targeted districts in the north and south of the country.

Provincial level advisory inputs will be critical with regards to support for the program. The Provincial Specialists will manage and coordinate all BEQUAL components managed by the BEQUAL managing contractor, and will counterpart with senior PESS and DESB staff within and across each targeted province and district. Provincial Specialists will engage in capacity development initiatives to counterpart as well as manage decentralised delivery of activities through the (to be established) provincial coordination mechanisms. MoES will confirm provincial coordination mechanisms and counterpart relationships before Phase 1 starts.

It is important to highlight that the Provincial Specialists will be supporting the program across all adjacent provinces and districts within their placement area; they are not specifically assigned

to the provinces within which they will reside. The Provincial Specialists will be accountable to the BEQUAL managing contractor Team Leader.

MoES has highlighted the importance of English teaching in the primary curriculum and as a national priority as a result of recent ASEAN forward planning. Whilst the program will not support English teaching at a school level, BEQUAL will facilitate the development of the English curriculum at targeted TTCs through a program for the professional development of TTC staff with regards to English language teaching. To achieve these priorities, the program will seek to recruit Australian Volunteers through the Australian Volunteers in International Development (AVID) program. BEQUAL will propose (up to) eight **English language teaching volunteers** over the life of the program to work with staff in TTCs to strengthen English language teaching and English curriculum development in the targeted institutions. This initiative should start in 2015-16. The Australian Volunteers will work closely with the provincial technical advisors at the TTC level.

The **Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist**, along with a national Monitoring and Evaluation Officer will also support component level monitoring and evaluation and link BEQUAL with MoES monitoring and evaluation systems. This role will include support for capacity development of the MoES staff, including the Department of Inspection, and will link with the Lao-Australia Institute. The BEQUAL managing contractor will manage a flexible monitoring and evaluation operating budget to fund all necessary monitoring and evaluation activities.

The BEQUAL managing contractor will contract additional short-term and local personnel as necessary to support BEQUAL implementation, and the budget provide a degree of flexibility to enable this.

Technical Support to Development Cooperation Program Oversight in Lao PDR

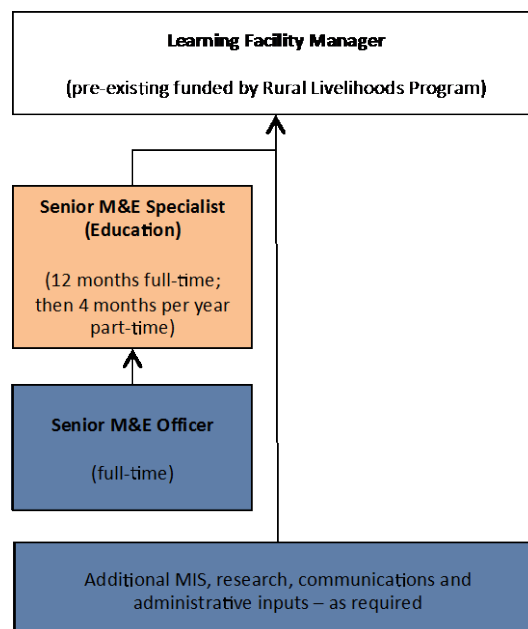
The BEQUAL design includes a small budget for short-term technical and advisory support to assist Development Cooperation staff at the Australian Embassy in Vientiane in their strategic and management oversight work associated with policy and program implementation. The Post will draw upon international and Lao expertise, contracted directly or through the Education Resource Facility (ERF) or the Advisory Services Standard Offer (AAS). This may involve establishing an ongoing Technical Resources Team to provide continuity of expertise over the life of BEQUAL, or it may be used in a more flexible way; the decision on the utilisation of this funding will be made on commencement of BEQUAL.

The Development Cooperation section will utilise this technical and advisory support to undertake required Progress Reviews, mid-term Reviews and Completion Evaluations of BEQUAL, to assist with peer reviewing of major program outputs, plans and documents, and to assist with ad hoc and emerging technical issues. There may also be value in involving any contracted technical specialists in discussions at the Annual Program Conference (Section 13.4).

The Learning Facility

The Learning Facility will have an additional international Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist deployed in support of BEQUAL activities, as well as some additional national staff in research and monitoring and evaluation.

Figure 9 – Expanded Learning Facility Structure



12.5. Non-Governmental Organisations and Non-Profit Associations in BEQUAL

NGOs and NPAs will play a crucial role as implementing partners in BEQUAL. NGOs and NPAs will play a substantive role in the management and implementation of Component 2.1 (Participation and Access). This will include implementing pilot activities, as part of a NGO/NPA Consortium coordinated by the BEQUAL managing contractor and MoES. NGOs and NPAs will also be eligible to apply for funding for new pilot activities and research under the Innovation Fund to address education issues at a local level. Sector level research and evaluation activities undertaken by NGOs and NPAs may also be supported through the Learning Facility.

13. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

An indicative approach to the monitoring and evaluation of BEQUAL, and the approach to learning that will be integrated with monitoring and evaluation, is provided in Annex 12. It describes program-level monitoring and evaluation of all components of BEQUAL, which will be brought together into a coherent, systemic framework linking all implementing partners (i.e. the BEQUAL managing contractor, the World Food Programme, UNICEF and NGO/NPAs) and program components. For this design, the focus is on describing the general structure of monitoring and evaluation and the indicative approaches that will comprise the program-level monitoring, evaluation and learning system for BEQUAL. MoES, through the Department of Inspection and its Monitoring and Evaluation Network will be important contributors to this work. It will be further tested, refined, detailed and finalised by the implementing partners.

A strong monitoring and evaluation system must be founded on a clear and shared program design, and especially on clarity about the outcomes that are intended. The purpose of the monitoring and evaluation system for BEQUAL is to support management, accountability and learning, and will be required to:

- provide necessary information for program personnel, the Government of Lao PDR, and the Government of Australia, to make day-to-day and strategic management decisions on the basis of timely and well-founded evidence;
- support accountability to the people of Laos and Australia about the use of program resources and the achievement of positive intended and unintended program outcomes; and
- enable program personnel, participants and stakeholders to learn from the program and to apply that learning to ongoing efforts; and to capture and communicate those learnings so the wider development community can make use of them.

Monitoring and evaluation arrangements for BEQUAL will operate across several levels: at the sector and portfolio level; at the program level (led by the Learning Facility); at component level (undertaken by implementing partners and Department of Inspection); and within individual packages of activity such as those that will be implemented by NGO/NPA partners under Department of Inspection, the BEQUAL managing contractor and by partners under the Innovation Fund.

In consultation with the Department of Inspection, each implementing partner will develop and implement its own monitoring and evaluation system and processes to monitor and evaluate implementation performance of the components or activities for which it is responsible. These processes, and the information they generate, will be harmonised and integrated with the program-level monitoring and evaluation requirements (and will be disaggregating and analysing data by sex, ethnicity and disability wherever possible). This will provide program-wide information for strategic decision-making and program priority-setting, while also provide information for management decision-making within each implementing partner.

All monitoring and evaluation arrangements will meet the requirements of relevant standards and guidelines, and through this, monitoring and evaluation capacity of MoES will be strengthened. This includes the specific requirements of the Australia Aid Program's Monitoring and Evaluation Standards¹³⁶, as well as international standards such as OECD Development Assistance Committee standards¹³⁷, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation Program Evaluation Standards¹³⁸, and accepted standards for evaluation ethics¹³⁹.

Australia will expand its existing Learning Facility to extend its mandate from the rural development sector into basic education, creating a Basic Education Unit within its structure. This will make the Learning Facility central to the monitoring and evaluation of BEQUAL, much as it is for the Laos-Australia Rural Livelihoods Program. The role of the Learning Facility is already specified as “the generation, management and dissemination of learning and results based on its monitoring, evaluation and resource functions across the rural development

¹³⁶DFAT Monitoring and Evaluation Standards, 2013

¹³⁷ OECD DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, 2010, www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/dcdndep/36596604.pdf

¹³⁸ <http://www.jcsee.org/program-evaluation-standards> <http://www.jcsee.org/program-evaluation-standards>

¹³⁹For example, Australasian Evaluation Society Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations (Dec 2010), which require evaluators to: design, conduct and report monitoring and evaluation activities in a way that respects the rights, privacy, dignity and entitlements of people affected by and contributing to program monitoring and evaluation; undertake monitoring and evaluation activities so as to ensure that judgements and actions based on program monitoring and evaluation are based on sound and complete information; and that monitoring and evaluation reporting will provide audiences with fair and balanced information. www.aes.asn.au www.aes.asn.au

program”¹⁴⁰. With its expansion into basic education, it will provide an integrating function for Australia’s basic education program in Lao PDR through its established functions:

- Providing a powerful centre for research, evaluation and learning across the basic education sector in Laos (making resources and data available across the sector, and particularly to meet the needs of the Government of Laos);
- Overseeing and supporting the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation across BEQUAL and ensuring that reporting from implementing partners complies with the BEQUAL monitoring and evaluation requirements for outcomes data and analysis, by providing technical support and advice on a collaborative and supportive basis to implementing partners as well as a quality control function;
- The creation of, and support for, the use of evidence and analysis to inform Australian aid in the formulation of policy for BEQUAL and its engagement with government, stakeholders, and other development partners; and
- Coordination and convening regular BEQUAL internal discussions on strategic and cross-cutting issues affecting the program; on management issues; the analysis of progressive results and overall performance assessment.

13.1. Program Level Monitoring and Evaluation

The expanded Learning Facility will lead program level monitoring, evaluation and learning, while also promoting increased demand for evaluation and evaluative knowledge. It will be responsible for developing a high level monitoring and evaluation system (based on this indicative framework) that will provide for the program-wide monitoring, evaluation and learning. It will enable the tracking of progress towards the intended outcomes (as well as unintended outcomes), the exploration of factors influencing progress (or lack thereof), and the consideration of sectoral and contextual issues. The focus at the program level for the Learning Facility will be collating and assessing the outcomes of work undertaken by the various BEQUAL implementing partners (drawing on their monitoring and evaluation reporting). Implementation monitoring (i.e. at the component level) will be the responsibility of the implementing partners responsible for each program component.

Program level monitoring will also address compliance issues associated with the program’s commitments on inclusiveness, equity, safeguards and other crosscutting policy issues such as gender, disability and socio-economic disadvantage.

Program level monitoring and reporting will include a set of indicators to assist with understanding program achievements. These indicators are a sub-set of the information that will be required to fully understand program performance, but they are a valuable snapshot means to track and report progress. Annex 12 provides a preliminary draft monitoring and evaluation framework, which the Learning Facility will populate update in consultation with other BEQUAL partners, including the Department of Inspection as part of overall monitoring and evaluation system development. Data will be drawn from a range of sources in order to provide a degree of triangulation and will be considered in tandem with other qualitative and quantitative data collected through evaluation and research activities.

¹⁴⁰ This is as specified in the design document for the Lao Australia Rural Livelihoods Program, and specifically the LARP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

13.2. Component Level Monitoring and Evaluation

Component level monitoring and evaluation will be the responsibility of the relevant BEQUAL implementing partners, working closely with their Government of Laos PDR counterparts, including the MoES Department of Inspection and others. The BEQUAL managing contractor, UNICEF, the World Food Programme, and NGO/NPA partners, will each be required to develop and implement monitoring and evaluation systems and processes that meet their internal management needs, which provide for their reporting and learning obligations, and that satisfy their contractual obligations to the Australian Government. These processes will be fully documented in a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for each implementing partner that integrates with program-level monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring and evaluation at the implementation level will especially focus on outputs level monitoring, but with a clear and explicit line-of-sight to intermediate and end-of-Phase 1 outcomes. Further, because implementation will include ongoing piloting and trialling of innovative approaches to increasing quality and participation in primary education – there will be a serious commitment to undertaking rigorous quality evaluation of pilot activities by implementing partners. This is crucial to ensure that subsequent decisions on pilot activities are based on sound evidence.

13.3. Additional Research and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of BEQUAL will use MoES data and information systems to the greatest degree possible. While key educational data is available in Lao PDR, there remain often-significant gaps in understanding of the dynamics constraining educational access and disparities in educational outcomes¹⁴¹. The focus of BEQUAL on addressing access and quality issues in basic education will necessitate an investment in increased understanding of the sector. The Learning Facility, in collaboration with the Education and Sports Research Centre of the Department of Planning, MoES through ESWG Focal Group 4 will integrate learning across all components of BEQUAL. As part of this role, the Learning Facility will commission or undertake research and evaluation studies into important issues or aspects of basic education in the country so that program and sector stakeholders can better understand the social, economic, gender, and other contextual factors influencing program and sector performance. The aim of the research and evaluation portfolio will be to create an expanded knowledge base about basic education development in Lao PDR, including the practices, constraints, opportunities and risks, and to share this knowledge base widely with other stakeholders.

Much of the research and evaluation work is likely to be subcontracted to national, regional or international specialist organisations, to Lao-based NGOs and/or NPAs, or to individuals, with an emphasis on engaging with RIES and the Education and Sports Research Centre of the Department of Planning. The Learning Facility Basic Education Unit will work closely with the other implementing partners and these key counterparts in the Government of Lao PDR to design, commission and manage these research and evaluation studies and to integrate them into the wider program learning approach.

13.4. Portfolio Level Monitoring and Evaluation

The Learning Facility will provide support to Australia in the monitoring and evaluation of its broader aid program education portfolio, including any initiatives that are outside the boundaries

¹⁴¹ The Education Sector in Lao PDR – Achievements Challenges and Opportunities (DFAT Education Sector Situational Analysis, March 2013)

of BEQUAL. This may include providing support in the refinement and implementation of the Performance Assessment Framework for the education delivery strategy, including the preparation of any reporting or analysis arising from it. This work will support the policy engagement work by the Government of Australia.

13.5. BEQUAL Program Conference

Once all components of the program have commenced, the BEQUAL managing contractor will support the Department of Planning and DFAT staff to arrange the first annual BEQUAL Program Conference. The Conference will bring all program participants and stakeholders together to develop a common understanding of the program, its plans and operations, and their individual intentions and roles. As part of this conference the managing contractor will facilitate all stakeholders to reconsider, review and reconfirm the program theory of change and the program logic, and associated aspects of the planned monitoring and evaluation system. This will be an important opportunity to update the overall program concept in light of the prevailing context.

The Program Conference will then become an annual event¹⁴², providing a forum for program stakeholders and others in the basic education sub-sector in Lao PDR to share experiences and information, to make sense of program level performance and progress data, to debate strategic and contextual information and its implications for the program, and to consider and agree priority issues for evaluation and research. The Program Conference will continue to be supported by the BEQUAL managing contractor, with input from the Learning Facility in its program-level evaluation and learning role, and will be scheduled to align with important program reporting or planning requirements.

13.6. Resources for Monitoring and Evaluation

The commitment of resources for monitoring, evaluation and learning in BEQUAL will be spread across the various program components, reflecting the particular responsibilities of each implementing partner. All implementing partners within BEQUAL will have dedicated and specialist monitoring and evaluation resources funded within their components of the program to ensure that adequate attention and expertise is directed to monitoring and evaluation.

In cooperation with MoES, the BEQUAL managing contractor will establish monitoring and evaluation systems and support capacity sufficient to meet its internal needs for identifying and reporting results and performance, for program management, and to satisfy any other requirements determined by Australia. The BEQUAL managing contractor will require a full-time national Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, and a Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist. The BEQUAL managing contractor will manage a flexible monitoring and evaluation operating budget to fund all necessary monitoring and evaluation activities.

Within the funding and activity agreements signed with the NGO/NPA consortium and other implementing partners under the Innovation Fund, the BEQUAL managing contractor will ensure that there is adequate provision for staff and operating resources for effective monitoring and evaluation. This funding will include provision for the NGOs, NPAs and other implementing partners to fully participate in BEQUAL program-level activities including monitoring and evaluation system development and the BEQUAL Program Conference.

¹⁴²The program conference will need to be a minimum of two days to allow for necessary program workshoping.

The existing Learning Facility will be expanded through the creation of a Basic Education Unit. Central to this will be the appointment of a Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist and a Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer. The Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist will be an international appointment and will work full-time for the first year of the appointment, then providing four person-months of input each subsequent year of the program. The Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer will be a national appointment and will work full-time for the duration of BEQUAL. In addition, Australia will negotiate with the Learning Facility and Laos-Australia Institute to supplement the capacity for research leadership and management, management information systems design and implementation, and communications, administration and coordination functions. The Learning Facility will manage a flexible BEQUAL monitoring and evaluation operating budget to commission all necessary evaluation and research studies, and to facilitate the BEQUAL Program Conferences.

Both UNICEF and the World Food Programme have been provided with a dedicated resource allocation for the monitoring and evaluation of their components within BEQUAL. Both partners will also be able to draw on expertise from within the Learning Facility if necessary.

Further details of monitoring and evaluation resources are provided in Annex 12.

Australia's Management Oversight Monitoring and Evaluation Resources

The Development Cooperation Section at the Australian Embassy in Vientiane will monitor the BEQUAL program, focusing on the strategic, contractual and financial aspects. It will access technical support in this work from the Learning Facility, or may also utilise flexible funding for technical and advisory input to bring in additional expertise in education sector monitoring and evaluation. The Australian aid technical hub and the Australia Mekong NGO Engagement Platform (AM-NEP) based at the post in Hanoi can also offer support as required. Australia will also undertake periodic field monitoring visits as part of its oversight monitoring of BEQUAL implementation, in accordance with the provisions of the Australian Aid Program's Monitoring and Evaluation Standards. These will be integrated with the ESWG Joint Sector Review Missions wherever possible, in order to minimise demands on staff and counterpart time and resources.

13.7. Monitoring and Evaluation System Development

The development of the monitoring and evaluation system will take place across a series of stages (detailed in Annex 12), commencing with interim monitoring and evaluation arrangements for the School Meals and WASH in Primary Schools programs (which commence first), and culminating in the finalisation of the overall BEQUAL monitoring and evaluation system once all components of the program are online. A central step in the process will be the first Program Conference, at which all implementing partners and Government of Lao PDR stakeholders will work together to review and update the program theory of change and program logic, to agree program level monitoring and evaluation arrangements, and to identify and confirm the initial work program of evaluation and research.

13.8. Preliminary Activities

The Learning Facility Basic Education Unit will be established three months before the BEQUAL managing contractor mobilises, in order to undertake preliminary work to lay the foundations for program monitoring, evaluation and learning.

The first priority for the Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist will be to work with key partners in MoES (particularly in the Department of Inspection and the Department of Planning) to undertake mapping of existing sector monitoring and evaluation systems, and of other monitoring and evaluation systems for education programs and projects, as well as of other

development partner support for monitoring and evaluation. The intent of this mapping exercise will be to identify high priority opportunities for BEQUAL to support education sector monitoring and evaluation development, while also identifying the requirements for BEQUAL monitoring and evaluation system alignment and integration with national systems.

The second priority for the Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist will be the establishment and reconfirmation of baseline data for program level outcomes and indicators, and the identification of additional work that will be required to establish baselines where they do not currently exist. This work will be finalised once the BEQUAL managing contractor commences and can become involved in the finalisation of baselines for its package of BEQUAL work.

Other preliminary activities for the education team in the Learning Facility will include:

- The Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist will work with UNICEF and World Food Programme to review their interim monitoring and evaluation arrangements for the WASH in Primary Schools and School Meals program respectively.
- The Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist will undertake preliminary work to establish initial parameters, processes and systems for program-level monitoring, evaluation and learning, including preparing for a baseline ASLO to monitor progress on learning outcomes throughout Phase 1. Once the BEQUAL managing contractor is in place, they will work together with the Learning Facility to prepare an updated outline of the BEQUAL Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for further development and finalisation with the full complement of BEQUAL implementing partners.
- Research staff of the Learning Facility will review the ESDP Mid-Term Review, the Situational Analysis, the LABEP Sustainability Evaluation Report and other recent analyses and reviews to identify possible issues for research. They will then work with partners in Australian aid, UNICEF, World Food Programme, NGOs and NPAs

While these preliminary activities are important, equally important is the principle that no program-level monitoring and evaluation arrangements will be finalised until the BEQUAL managing contractor has commenced and can fully participate in the development of those arrangements, as described above.

14. Inclusiveness, Safeguards and Cross-Cutting Policy Issues

There are minimal practical linkages between health and education sectors in Lao PDR.

Malnutrition remains a major challenge with 26.6 per cent of children under 5 years of age being underweight, and 44 per cent being stunted. There are also limited provisions and opportunities for disadvantaged groups and no clear mechanisms in place for promoting inclusiveness (e.g., for females, ethnic minority students, and the disabled), although there is a National Policy on Inclusive Education (2011), and a National Strategy and Action Plan on Inclusive Education 2011-15. BEQUAL will take these government documents as the basis for further work, as well as work in conjunction with MoES sub-office of the National Commission for the Advancement of Women to work on selected education-related dimensions of the National Strategy on the Advancement of Women (2011-15) and the Lao Women's Development Plan (2011-15).

BEQUAL will work within MoES and in partnership with other agencies to ensure cross-cutting priorities are fully integrated into the program. This is an inclusive program which will give particular attention to promoting gender equality and more equitable outcomes for the most disadvantaged. Specially targeted interventions will enable ethnic minority children, girls, children with disability, children out of school, and others with specific disadvantages to access and participate in schooling.

A priority for the program will be to assist MoES to upgrade pre-service and in-service teacher education content to address inclusive education policy based on gender awareness, ethnic diversity, children with special needs and disabled learners. This includes the issue of teaching Lao language to children from ethnic minority groups where children find great difficulty in learning a new language without proper support and so drop out of school, usually at grade 1.

Within an integrated approach and aligned to the Five Key Result Areas, the program will specifically support the following cross-cutting initiatives, recognising that they are frequently closely inter-related.

14.1. Gender

National data do not highlight significant gender disparities for drop out and repetition rates (slightly higher for males at 12 per cent than females at 11.3 per cent). These aggregate data do mask some gender disparity in grade 1 drop out at provincial level although this disparity is not significant overall. Importantly, however, these disparities are not consistent, with some provinces showing higher levels of male drop out and others higher female drop out. Provincial level data may well mask district level gender disparities. In line with the Laos Education Situation Analysis, the program has recently supported a more focussed gender assessment of the sector, and through its research activities will look into district-level gender disparities and their causes in more detail.

Poverty, gender and ethnicity intersect in a number of ways, creating significant disadvantage for particular groups of girls. This is most acutely observed in remote communities, where insufficient demand for quality basic education for girls frequently coincides with inadequate education facilities and numbers of teachers. A lack of female teachers is seen as an important cause of ethnic minority girls' relatively low enrolment and completion rates. Few ethnic minority women are qualified to become teachers, while non-local female teachers face additional challenges of working and living in these communities compared to non-local men – including safety and security issues and gender-related cultural barriers. Married women additionally find it difficult to relocate their families in remote areas for professional reasons, since their husbands may not find jobs and may be reluctant to interrupt their careers. Other gender-related reasons have been detailed in the gender analysis of basic education which was commissioned in 2013.

In response to the recommendations from the 2013 gender analysis, the program will be implementing a number of efforts specifically targeted at women and girls. The program will support MoES to recruit and train a significant number of ethnic minority women for deployment to remote and ethnic minority communities. BEQUAL will work closely with TTCs and other donors to ensure that women identified as potential teachers are appropriately supported while undergoing training and are redeployed into their home communities so they can continue to be a role model in their community.

In discussions through the BEQUAL Steering Committee and Technical Working Group, BEQUAL may also decide to provide funds for scholarships, with an emphasis on girls from remote ethnic minority communities targeted by the program, to encourage student enrolment and attendance at lower secondary school. The scholarships would be delivered under Component 2.2 (Participation and Access). The provision of scholarships will address some poverty issues and encourage greater and more sustained participation of girls in post-primary schooling.

The absence of gender-aware curricula is also an area of concern at all levels of schooling and will need to be addressed over coming years. BEQUAL will work with the MoES Sub-Commission for the Advancement of Women to support MoES-sponsored curriculum review

initiatives (including pre-service teacher training curricula) and the development of new teacher support materials that show gender equality. Similarly, the program will be able to encourage the development and implementation of localised curricula that show gender equality.

Through the Innovation Fund, the program will enable partners, in particular NGOs and NPAs, to pilot new approaches to ensure that girls from disadvantaged backgrounds are fully supported by their families, communities and education authorities to attend primary school. The Innovation Fund will also consider piloting activities that involve adult and adolescent women in remote areas as champions for girls' education.

14.2. Disability Inclusiveness

The identification of possible impairment, referrals and provision of appropriate support is lacking and girls and boys with disabilities rarely receive appropriate support. There are commitments to mainstreaming inclusive education and health measures in pre and in-service teacher training programs in the National Strategy and Plan on Inclusive Education (2011 – 2015), no training on disability-inclusive education for regular teachers or staff is currently provided through MoES. Nor is disability-inclusive training embedded in school level mechanisms and training programs that could be key enablers for achieving more inclusive education outcomes – such as skills training that has been provided to date for principals/teacher and VEDC members in school development plans, VEDC training and the preparation of school block grants.

Systemically there is a lack of accessible facilities, limited ability to provide assistive devices and support, weak to non-existent linkages in referral and support services intersect with other critical barriers such as poverty, gender, language and location to limit access and completion. The lack of diagnostic and referral systems coupled with an absence of information systems on disability underlines and reinforces invisibility.

In support of this design Australia commissioned an inclusive and disability analysis in 2012.¹⁴³ The resulting report provides a number of recommendations for implementations up to 2016 and beyond. Over the full ten years of implementation, BEQUAL will, in partnership with the MoES, aim to implement all of the recommendations outlined in the report. On mobilisation, the BEQUAL managing contractor with the MoES Inclusive Education Centre and in collaboration with the Lao Disabled People's Association¹⁴⁴, will develop a strategy for integrating disability-inclusive education into pre-service and in-service training for regular teachers. There may also be an opportunity to trial the use of the Rapid Assessment of Disability tool, developed for global use by the Nossal Institute with Australian aid funding, and the feasibility of this option will be considered by partners during program inception. Such a trial could support the Education Statistics Centre of MoES to develop a system to collect disability data and to begin to disaggregate core education statistics by disability. The program will also work in partnership with NGOs and NPAs to expand and research approaches to disability-inclusive education the focus will be on building an evidence base on what works so the MoES can expand its role in supporting inclusive programs¹⁴⁵. This will be done under Component 2.2 (Participation and Access) and will be managed by the BEQUAL managing contractor in conjunction with MoES.

¹⁴³ DFAT (2012) Disability Inclusive Education in Lao PDR: Situational Analysis Report

¹⁴⁴ Including through consultations with the ESWG Gender and Inclusive Education Technical Working Group

¹⁴⁵ The current Catholic Relief Services *Right to Learn* project may serve as a useful model to influence MoES policy.

14.3. Environment

Rehabilitation/new construction managed by the BEQUAL managing contractor will also primarily be done through VEDCs using a Community Based Construction approach although in more complex cases where specialised skills or equipment are required the utilisation of local construction companies using local labour will be used. UNICEF will be managing the WASH program, with a particular focus on upgrading schools that do not have appropriate water and sanitation facilities.

All rehabilitation needs and construction standards will be based on criteria and standards approved by the MoES ECDM unit. Additional international standards will also be applied to ensure all sponsored rehabilitation and construction activities meet appropriate safety (e.g. no Asbestos Containing Materials); inclusive (e.g. disabled access and appropriate facilities for females); hazard risk reduction (e.g. flood and storm damage), and appropriate engineering standards.

The BEQUAL managing contractor will monitor national and international standards, and, in conjunction with ECDM, will be responsible for the supervision of all construction activities and likely environmental impacts associated with the investments under Component 5.1 (Classrooms, Furniture and Rehabilitation of Primary Schools).

14.4. Partnerships

Through the ESWG, the program will collaborate with other donors and partners working in the basic education sector. As a substantial investor in the sector, the program will be able to influence policy and collaboration across the sector, particularly by leveraging education investments to create complementary and efficient programs. Working within the ESWG, efforts will also be made to better align non-OECD investments in the sector through supporting MoES to advocate for participation of the non-OECD donors, particularly China and Vietnam in the ESWG.

The program will be actively engaging with NGOs and NPAs, and, where appropriate, the program will also draw on resources provided by the regional Australia-Mekong NGO Engagement Platform (AMNEP).

NGOs and NPAs have well established and well respected relationships to the education sector, particularly in remote and disadvantaged communities that BEQUAL will be targeting. NGOs and NPAs are well placed to support initiatives associated with participation and community engagement. They also have extensive experience and commitment in inclusion and working with the most marginalised, including girls, women, people and remote ethnic minority communities. Raising awareness and changing behaviour related to education at the village level is a long-term, intensive process for which the NGOs and NPAs are well equipped to do.

In parallel with wide ranging NGO/NPA participation in the program, BEQUAL integrates UNICEF and the World Food Programme to ensure substantive WASH and school meals programs are being implemented in close cooperation with MoES. These programs may be expanded as needs and opportunities change.

Other Australian Aid Program investments in Lao PDR will complement BEQUAL. The Learning Facility will support the program by providing technical advice, analytical assistance and an evidence base to support ongoing engagement in policy development and policy dialogue with Government of Lao PDR agencies. The Learning Facility will also play a role in providing capacity development opportunities for the MoES through collaboration on research and evaluation. Similarly, initiatives supported by the Laos-Australia Institute will facilitate professional development at the central level of MoES. International scholarships also managed

by the Institute will be used to target senior personnel within MoES, particularly lecturers within TTCs.

14.5. Anti-Corruption

Australia commissioned a review of public financial management and procurement systems within the education sector in Laos in September 2013. The resulting Education Sector Assessment concluded that it was not appropriate at this point in time to work within and use Lao PDR financial systems to manage and implement program activities. For this reason, a managing contractor is being procured to implement BEQUAL. The BEQUAL managing contractor will comply with all relevant Australian Government policy guidance and ensure that key issues relating to fraud and anti-corruption are mainstreamed at all levels within the program.

As the program progresses further assessments will be made to determine if there are emerging opportunities to use Government of Lao PDR (MoES) financial systems (particularly at a provincial level) as a result of public financial management technical support provided by the program under Component 1.1 (Policy, Planning and Coordination).

14.6. Child Protection

Child protection in Australian Government policy reflects four principles, which are also reflected in the BEQUAL design:

- Zero tolerance of child exploitation and abuse
- Recognition of the best interests of the child, in keeping with Australia's commitments to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Sharing responsibility for child protection
- A risk management approach that reduces risks to children associated with the program.

As a program focusing on basic education, initially primary education, it is highly likely that program personnel will be in contact with children at various times in schools and in the community. This makes child protection especially important in this design. Good practice in child protection states that personnel should never work with children on a one-to-one basis. Beyond that, the contractors, sub-contractors and NGOs involved in implementing BEQUAL will all be required to comply with the Australian Government's child protection policy and to establish appropriate policies, processes, monitoring and reporting mechanisms to enable Australia to confidently assess compliance. All personnel employed through BEQUAL funding will be provided with training¹⁴⁶ and will sign a legal undertaking to adhere to the Australian Government's child protection policies and processes; all implementing agents will ensure this occurs within their staff and those of any subcontractors, with substantial penalties for any breach of the agreements.

Because part of BEQUAL will be implemented by multilateral partners (UNICEF and World Food Programme) it is important that they also operate within a child protection framework that provides at least as much protection as the Australian Government policy. Australia will assess and monitor the approaches of both partners throughout program implementation.

¹⁴⁶ Arranged by DFAT through the Australian Embassy Vientiane

15. Sustainability

Sustainability requires strong ownership and alignment of investment to systems and structures, which are appropriate and supported on an ongoing basis. To achieve sustainability, benefits and systems must be maintained beyond the life of the defined program and be harmonised across donors and MoES. In order to maximise sustainability, BEQUAL will integrate with, and build upon, MoES management and governance structures to capitalise on the opportunity for program sponsored activities to strengthen MoES capacity. Bilateral policy dialogue pursued through the BEQUAL Steering Committee will also aim to enhance sustainability opportunities for the program.

It is now widely recognised that the usual three to five year planning horizon for development programs is often inadequate in terms of promoting sustainable outcomes, particularly when behavioural and institutional changes are sought or if there are multiple local agencies involved or a wide geographical spread. On the other hand, open-ended commitments are not appropriate. However, phasing implementation over a longer period is a management strategy, which is most likely to achieve sustainable benefits. The phasing of BEQUAL over a 10-year period will provide opportunities to ensure sustainability can be jointly managed and monitored.

The foundations for BEQUAL are sound as the program builds upon and supports many educational policies and initiatives already being implemented by MoES, in partnership with multiple donors. BEQUAL is a demand driven partnership between the Governments of Lao PDR and Australia, which is founded upon mutual accountability. Each partner will be held responsible for the commitments they have made to each other so sustainable and aid effective outcomes are achieved.

There have been significant improvements to key education development indicators in recent years¹⁴⁷. Laos is making substantive efforts to resource the education sector as evidenced by the increase in the education budget from 13.6 per cent of total Government of Lao PDR budget in 2011-12 to 17.3 per cent in 2012-13. However most of the budget is aligned to recurrent teacher salaries. Whilst this is a substantial budget increase, in reality it will have little impact upon many children, particularly those that live in the poorest and most disadvantaged districts of Lao PDR as teacher and resource shortages are most significant in these areas, i.e. the target districts of BEQUAL. This is because it is well recognised there is an imbalance of teacher numbers across urban, rural and remote schools to the detriment of those that live outside of urban environments.

Lao PDR and senior MoES officials recognise this is the case. As a result of recommendations contained in the 2013 Education Sector Development Plan Mid-Term Review, the Government of Lao PDR has initiated processes to limit the teacher supply through TTCs and relocate existing teachers to rural and remote schools in order to address the inequitable distribution of teachers. It is early days, but clearly the Government of Lao PDR and MoES recognise that resources allocated in support of education have to be appropriately deployed if all students are to access a quality education.

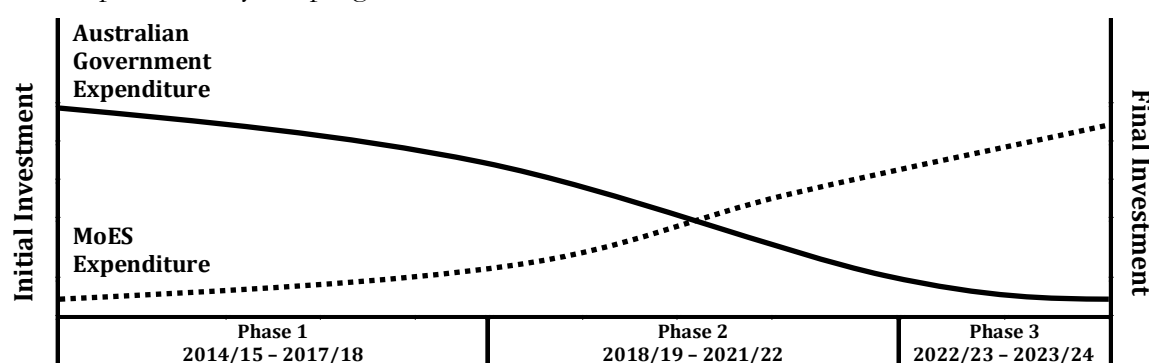
Over time, it is expected program funding will stimulate the provision of additional Government of Lao PDR funding at both the central and provincial level by encouraging co-commitment against targeted and agreed activities. Initially MoES will be providing support to the program through 'in-kind' contributions, i.e. ensuring staff support, participate, coordinate and counterpart program initiatives. MoES has already initiated government discussions, through the

¹⁴⁷ Refer to Lao PDR Education Situational Analysis, page 17.

Department of Planning, to explore opportunities for the government to contribute additional funding at a central and provincial level to support program activities. It is further anticipated that program success and the availability of co-financing through the Innovation Fund will further catalyse and stimulate additional expenditure and increased budget allocations for the non-wage recurrent budget.

Co-commitment and increased funding prioritisation for education will also likely be stimulated by alignment of program priorities to the government's own ESDP and management and governance of BEQUAL through the ESWG¹⁴⁸. Regular and ongoing reviews of key education indicators and performance will further inform the government and enhance opportunities for increased non-wage recurrent funding to the sector.

Sustainability for the program will be dependent upon increased Government of Lao PDR funding to the sector over time. Initial BEQUAL investments will directly support non-wage recurrent funding with an emphasis on the injection of funds to stimulate increased educational activity in the classroom. Whilst all five Key Result Areas will be targeted on implementation, the provision of teacher training (pre and in-service) and teacher support materials will be a priority. Over time, program funding will decrease and Government of Lao PDR funding will be expected to increase. Initial consultations with senior MoES officials confirm there is recognition that funding streams from partners will invert over time to ensure the program is sustainable from a Lao PDR perspective. Over time it is expected partner investment in activities sponsored by the program will be as follows:



To ensure partner investment is on track to allow for sustainability, it is recommended the Annual Program Progress Report to be prepared for the BEQUAL Steering Committee provides a detailed analysis of partner commitments and expenditure. Similarly the joint annual planning process will quantify partner commitments and track planned and actual expenditure for past, current and future programming by all partners. Towards the end of Phase 2, a 'phase out' strategy will be developed to further guide program implementation and sustainability progress over the remaining phases of the program.

16. Procurement Arrangements

A number of different procurement processes are required to establish implementation arrangements for BEQUAL, reflecting its program approach and the different implementation partners involved. These are set out below.

¹⁴⁸ This includes Australian aid (through BEQUAL) providing ongoing secretarial support for the ESWG.

16.1. Procurement Arrangements for Multilateral Partners

UNICEF and World Food Programme will implement the BEQUAL School Meals Component (2.2) and the BEQUAL WASH Component (5.2) respectively. Australia has separately undertaken negotiations with both multilateral partners to establish funding agreements enabling them to commence implementation in advance of the rest of BEQUAL.

Both UNICEF and World Food Programme will provide a representative on the BEQUAL Technical Working Group and will also participate in joint activity planning with the BEQUAL managing contractor.

16.2. Procurement Arrangements for BEQUAL Managing Contractor

Australia will undertake procurement of a managing contractor for BEQUAL through an open international tender process. In light of recent experience with comparable procurement in Lao PDR, which attracted a limited number of experienced bidders, a one-step tender process will be used. Proposals will be welcomed from individual entities or consortia of entities.

The selection process will assess bids according to their demonstrated knowledge of basic education development in relevant developing country contexts; their expertise in teacher training and support, in developing teaching and learning materials, their understanding of and capacity to address disadvantage and participation issues, and in their capacity to lead a substantial school infrastructure program across scattered and diverse geographic locations. The assessment will also consider the extent to which bidders can provide or access high quality and relevant local expertise and implementation support services, their capacity to effectively manage implementation, performance and risk, and their capacity to finance program implementation (including payments to NGOs and sub-contractors).

Bidders will be required to nominate core international personnel in their proposals, although Australia will reserve the right to request the replacement of individual nominees by the preferred tenderer once the selection process has been completed.

The BEQUAL managing contractor will provide a representative to the BEQUAL Technical Working Group while also providing secretariat services, and will participate in joint activity planning with the lead NGO partner of a NGO/NPA consortium (see below).

16.3. Procurement Arrangements for NGO and NPA Partners

The role of NGOs and NPAs in implementing BEQUAL is important, and is situated as part of the larger BEQUAL managing contractor function. This will ensure the activities implemented by civil society – even if modest in size and value – remain central to the program and not relegated to the margins.

Australia will ensure a transparent process of selecting an NGO/NPA consortium to implement the nominated aspects of BEQUAL. In advance of the process, and in the lead up to selection of the BEQUAL managing contractor, Australia will continue its dialogue with all NGOs and NPAs working in basic education in Lao PDR, in order to disseminate details of the upcoming opportunities as widely as possible, and to give interested groups an extended period of preparation.

The NGO/NPA consortium will be identified through an open selection process run by the Australian Embassy in Vientiane with engagement from MoES and with support from the Australia–Mekong NGO Engagement Platform (AM-NEP). As part of this selection process, the extent of NGO/NPA capacity to address the program requirements in a creative, flexible, responsive and community-focussed way will be assessed. Expertise in basic education and associated rural development and poverty-focussed initiatives will be essential and it will be

important for NGOs to demonstrate established and constructive partnership with relevant NPAs. NGOs or consortia with an established network across target districts are likely to have an advantage, although these networks need not necessarily be in the education sector.

Australia, in consultation with MoES, will make the final decision on the selection of the NGO/NPA consortium. The NGO/NPA consortium will be sub-contracted through a lead NGO with overall responsibility for all aspects of the NGO/NPA consortium activities by the BEQUAL managing contractor.

The NGO/NPA consortium will provide a representative on to the BEQUAL Technical Working Group and will participate in joint activity planning with the BEQUAL managing contractor.

There will be scope for additional NGO or NPA activities in addition to the core package procured through the processes described above. In particular, there will be NGO and/or NPA involvement in Innovation Fund and in the Learning Facility research and evaluation program of work.

16.4. Procurement Arrangements for Learning Facility Basic Education Unit

DFAT completed procurement of a contractor to establish and operate the Learning Facility while the BEQUAL design was in development. Negotiation of the contract has included forewarning to the contractor that there is a likelihood its scope of services will be expanded. The expanded scope for the Learning Facility described in this design, including the specified resources, will be presented to the Learning Facility contractor once BEQUAL is approved, and the contractor invited to respond with a costed proposal reflecting the expanded scope of services and resources. This will be subject to negotiation with the Australian Embassy Development Cooperation section.

The expansion of the Learning Facility and the establishment of its Basic Education Unit will be completed three months prior to the mobilisation of the BEQUAL managing contractor. This will enable the Learning Facility to undertake the specified pre-commencement activities described in Annex 12. It is anticipated that this would entail commencement of the Learning Facility component in or around May 2014.

The Learning Facility contractor, in collaboration with the Development Cooperation Section of the Australia Embassy in Vientiane, will recruit and select personnel to the key positions specified. Both parties will be represented on the selection panel, as well as a representative of MoES. The Learning Facility Manager will participate in meetings of the BEQUAL Technical Working Group.

17. Risk Assessment and Management

Laos is a relatively peaceful country with little or no conflict within its borders and will provide a safe working environment for BEQUAL personnel. Travel within the country's remote rural areas including those areas close to neighbouring borders to conduct consultations and activities will require some forward planning because of inclement tropical weather and changing road conditions, but, apart from the usual caution, it is likely that safety and/or security risks will not be an issue for program operations.

In general broad terms, most risks to BEQUAL are low to medium. Changing policies towards development assistance in the Government of Australia following the recent change of government might present some on-going uncertainty in terms of total budget but open dialogue between the Government of Laos (through MoES) and the Government of Australia (through the Development Cooperation Section in the Australian Embassy in Vientiane) should avoid any

potential operational risks. The design contains the flexibility that will permit the BEQUAL managing contractor to adjust the program should there be substantial changes in resourcing.

The BEQUAL managing contractor will have been appointed by the Australian Government on the basis that appropriate established financial management procedures (with accompanying manuals) are in place and that audit guidelines will be implemented. This will mean that any financial risk to the management and operation of all program aspects is unlikely to eventuate. A potential operational risk would be a reduction in the number of Development Cooperation personnel in Vientiane, which would consequently increase the load on remaining staff, risking the effectiveness of their monitoring and management of BEQUAL.

There are a number of specific points where the risk level might impact the program and these are identified below according to the 5 Key Result Areas proposed for BEQUAL. Annex 13 contains a more detailed and comprehensive preliminary Risk Matrix, including proposed mitigation measures and risk level assessments.¹⁴⁹ A biennial risk assessment that highlights any changing circumstance, particularly financial and sustainability risk, will be included in the BEQUAL managing contractor's report to the program's Steering Committee for action.

17.1. Policy, Planning and Coordination Risks

Broad risks include:

- Insufficient and inaccurate field data available to inform policy and planning decisions.
- Primary teachers cannot be deployed to areas of shortage by PESS/DESB.
- ESWG lacks capability to coordinate education sector.
- Lao PDR and MoES lack the will power and/or capacity to seek additional recurrent non-wage funding to ensure sustainability of activities supported by BEQUAL.
- Lao PDR and MoES are not prepared to participate in policy dialogue aimed at enhancing opportunities for program sustainability.
- Development Cooperation team lacks capacity to manage policy and other tasks due to increasing workload and complexity of the program.
- Coordination and implementation difficulty arising as a result of working on remote school sites.
- Corruption within agencies that might divert resources from designated targets.

17.2. Increased Participation Risks

Broad risks include:

- Ethnic minority children and also children with a disability unable to enter school due to structural and social barriers.
- School Meal Program insufficient to consistently attract disadvantaged children to school.
- Progress towards improved participation of ethnic minority women and children with disability is slow.

¹⁴⁹ The BEQUAL managing contractor will prepare a comprehensive Risk Management Strategy immediately prior to or at mobilisation in order to assess the existing risk environment and to adjust the matrix and strategy accordingly. It will also update this Risk Management Strategy at least annually.

17.3. Teacher Education and Support Risks

Broad risks include:

- Resistance to curriculum review and curriculum change in TTCs.
- Inclusive education not embraced as essential for inclusion in TTC program.
- Teacher deployment to areas of shortage not carried out.
- Insufficient female secondary graduates enrol for teacher training¹⁵⁰.
- Ethnic minority teachers (particularly females) recruited from remote villages do not return to home village as teachers.
- TTCs have no incentive to provide INSET for MoES primary teachers.
- Practicum not viewed as an important mechanism for professional development.
- Insufficient budget to support Pedagogical Advisers to take active role in INSET and to visit schools on regular basis.
- Initiatives piloted in TTCs particularly regarding increased ethnic minority participation are unable to yield demonstrable or easily measured results, particularly in the short-term.

17.4. Teaching and Learning Resources Risks

Broad risks include:

- TTC and RIES staff and primary teacher teams unable to work together collegially to produce low cost learning materials.
- Difficulties in procurement and distribution of resource materials for teachers and students in primary schools due to remoteness and distances from distribution points.
- Diversion of texts and other materials from intended targets due to pilfering or poor coordination.

17.5. School Infrastructure Risks

Broad risks include:

- Prioritising of target schools may be influenced by Government of Lao PDR village consolidation. Re-settlement considerations during the decision making process may be rejected.
- Prioritisation of schools with most pressing needs for rehabilitation or refurbishment subject to political interference.
- Procurement and delivery of materials to improve water and sanitation facilities difficult due to remote school sites.
- VEDCs lack capacity to adequately manage basic school repair and maintenance programs.
- Inadequate capacity at PESS, DESB and school level to control budget for school-based repair and maintenance programs.

¹⁵⁰ BEQUAL can draw on lessons from the EFA-FTI program to inform actions to address this risk.

ANNEX 1. EDUCATION SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Edited Version

By way of conclusion, the Education Situation Analysis notes that whilst net enrolment rates have increased from 89.2% in 2007/08 to 95.2% in 2011/12, high rates of Grade 1 drop out and repetition (one in ten children in Lao PDR dropped out at Grade 1 and one in 5 repeated in 2011/12), and low survival rates to Grade 5 (70% in 2011/12) are seriously undermining Lao PDR's entry-level enrolment achievements. This suggests a real need for continued Australian support to the basic education sector with a clear focus on addressing the critical gaps in (access to and quality of) early learning, particularly in provinces where drop-out and repetition rates at Grade 1 are most acute.

The Situation Analysis underlines that a key to understanding the complex dynamics that frame the challenge to achieving improved educational outcomes in the Lao PDR is that poverty, ethnicity and gender are powerful negative markers of educational access and that the available data suggest that where these markers intersect, disadvantage is most profound. To understand these dynamics, it argues that it is important to look beyond the aggregate data as national level data mask serious geographic disparities along these markers of disadvantage within and between provinces.

The Situation Analysis also notes that low overall survival rates at primary level are impacting on lower secondary enrolments, which, whilst showing modest improvements in the last decade, remain consistently low and inadequate to meet the demands of a rapidly modernizing labour-force. It suggests that low progression rates from basic education to lower secondary levels (and beyond), if sustained, will reduce the availability of adequate numbers of well-trained teachers to meet the educational needs of the next generation. As the analysis notes, at current levels system capacity (including facilities) at lower secondary level is limited, and straining to meet enrolment demands which are currently high.

The Situation Analysis finds that these challenges, whilst considerable, provide a strong rationale for greater and sustained Australian engagement in the basic education sector to enable the Lao PDR to meet its current development goal of growth with equity. The complex education context is likely to require carefully targeted and coordinated interventions across both the basic and secondary sectors to address the serious capacity gaps that exist. In particular, the strong intersections between poverty, nutrition and education in the Lao PDR indicate that, in the future, programs will need to give much greater emphasis to cross-cutting interventions across the education, health and rural development sectors that acknowledge and promote the well-being of the whole child and recognise the need for lifelong learning.

The Situation Analysis notes that there is considerable space for innovation and learning – with current data and analysis suggesting that approaches to date have not been effective in targeting the disadvantaged and remote, and sustaining achievements in early-grade enrolment. In the final analysis, the reality may be that the marginal cost of targeted programs informed by strong monitoring systems and quality research and analysis is comparatively high and likely to require continued investments over time. However, the medium-long term benefits are likely to be far reaching and support a labour force that is equipped to deliver and benefit from the inclusive economic growth that is required for the Lao PDR to achieve its goal of successfully transitioning from a centrally-planned to market-led economy over the next two decades.

ANNEX 2. ESDP 2011-2015 TARGETS FOR THE BASIC EDUCATION SECTOR¹⁵¹

Sub-Sector	Targets
Early Childhood Education	<p>39% new admission rate in community-based play groups, pre-school and kindergarten.</p> <p>Gradual expansion of admissions of 5-year olds into pre-schools to 63% by 2015.</p> <p>Provision of school block grants and 250,000 targeted scholarship students by 2015.</p> <p>Reach an enrolment rate of 17% for 3 and 4-year olds by 2015.</p> <p>Reach a 30% share of enrolment in community-based school-readiness programs by 2015.</p> <p>Reach a 30 % share of enrolment in private kindergartens by 2010.</p>
Primary Education	<p>98% primary school gross intake rate by 2015.</p> <p>98% primary school net enrolment rate by 2015.</p> <p>80% primary survival rate by 2015.</p> <p>Expanded school feeding program to 39 districts with transfer of management and implementation from WFP to the MoES beginning from 2011.</p> <p>90% progressive promotion rates for primary by 2015.</p> <p>One textbook per student per subject for all students by 2015.</p> <p>50% of all primary schools have latrines and water supplies.</p>
Lower Secondary Education	<p>Increase 75% gross enrolment rate in lower secondary school by 2015.</p> <p>95% progressive promotion rates for lower secondary by 2015.</p> <p>Develop the curriculum with provision of teacher manuals and textbooks to lower secondary school nationwide.</p> <p>Scholarship provision to approximately 20% of lower and upper secondary students, 5% for the poor based on conditions in 2011.</p> <p>Expand lower secondary school to all village clusters (Khumban) and ensure that there is one lower secondary per four complete primary schools.</p> <p>One textbook per student per subject for all students by 2015.</p>
Inclusive and Non-Formal Education	<p>Improvements in the design of NFE vocational and rural skills training programs.</p> <p>Annually enrol 2% of illiterate adults and 20% of primary school dropouts in non-formal primary courses.</p> <p>Annually enrol 2% of illiterate adults in adult literacy programs.</p> <p>Illiteracy eradication for the target population as follow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15-24 year old group from 91.8% in 2010 to 99% in 2015. • 15-40 year old group from 87% in 2010 to 93% in 2015.

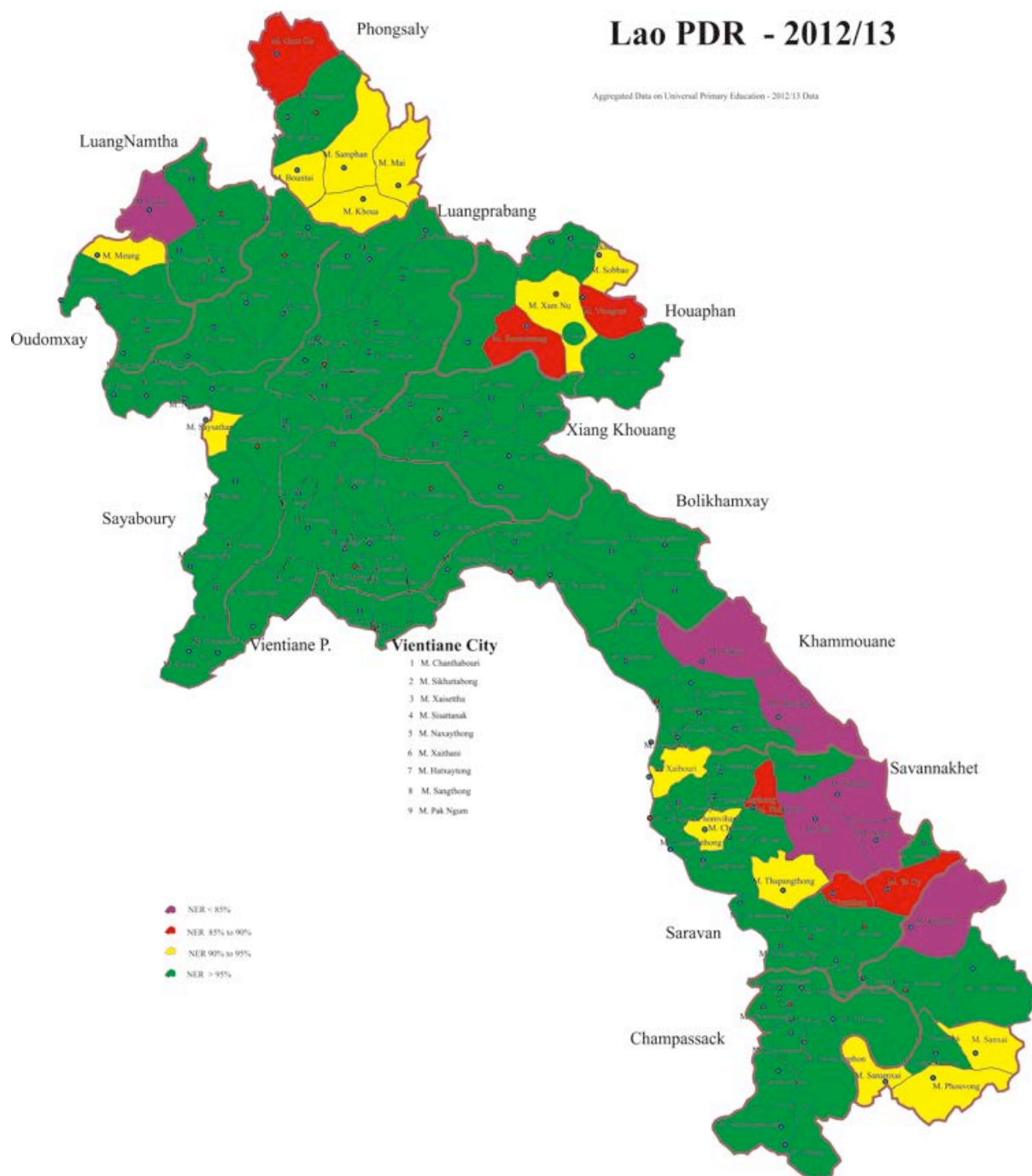
¹⁵¹Some ESDP targets were revised in October, 2013 following the Mid-term Review and are reflected here

Sub-Sector	Targets
	<p>Continue to increase the number of 15+ year olds who complete the primary equivalency program by 2015</p> <p>Increase training and upgrading of secondary level from 4,914 to 19,500 persons for lower secondary education in 2010 and 9,489 to 27,000 persons for upper secondary in 2015.</p> <p>Upgrade the pre-service and in-service teacher education content to address inclusive education policy based on gender awareness, ethnic diversity, children with special needs and disabled learners, including the issue of teaching Lao language to children from ethnic groups.</p> <p>Prepare and endorse guidelines on the design and environment for equipping of inclusive education schools and criteria for opening a special school for learners with disabilities.</p> <p>Increase the number of inclusive education schools according to the number of disadvantaged children in a district and across a province.</p> <p>30% of children with light disabilities are included in Inclusive Education schools.</p> <p>Build special schools for children with disabilities who cannot attend inclusive classes.</p>

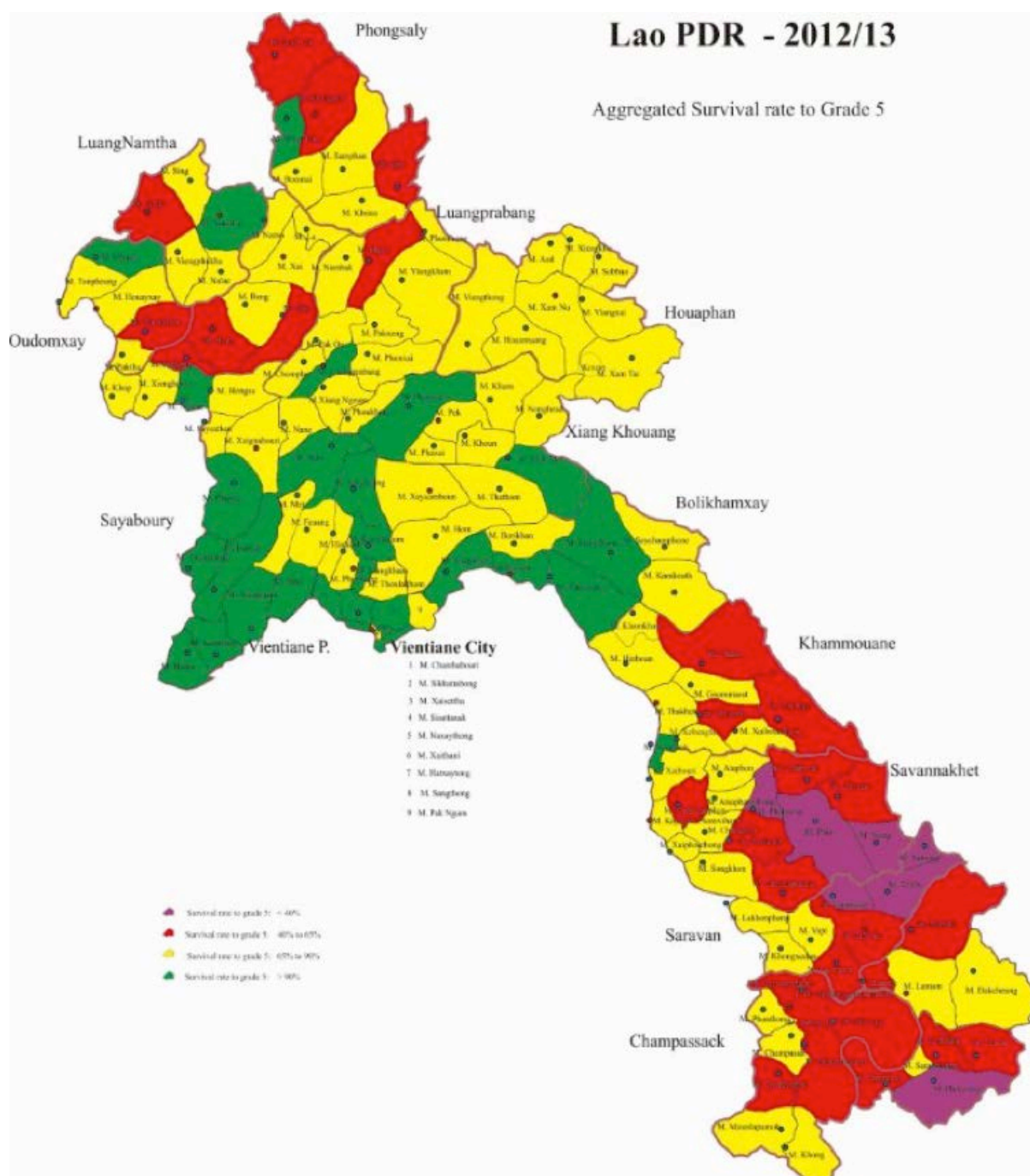
ANNEX 3. LAO PDR KEY EDUCATION INDICATORS

The following data was provided by the Senior Education Adviser and reflect MoES data for 2013.

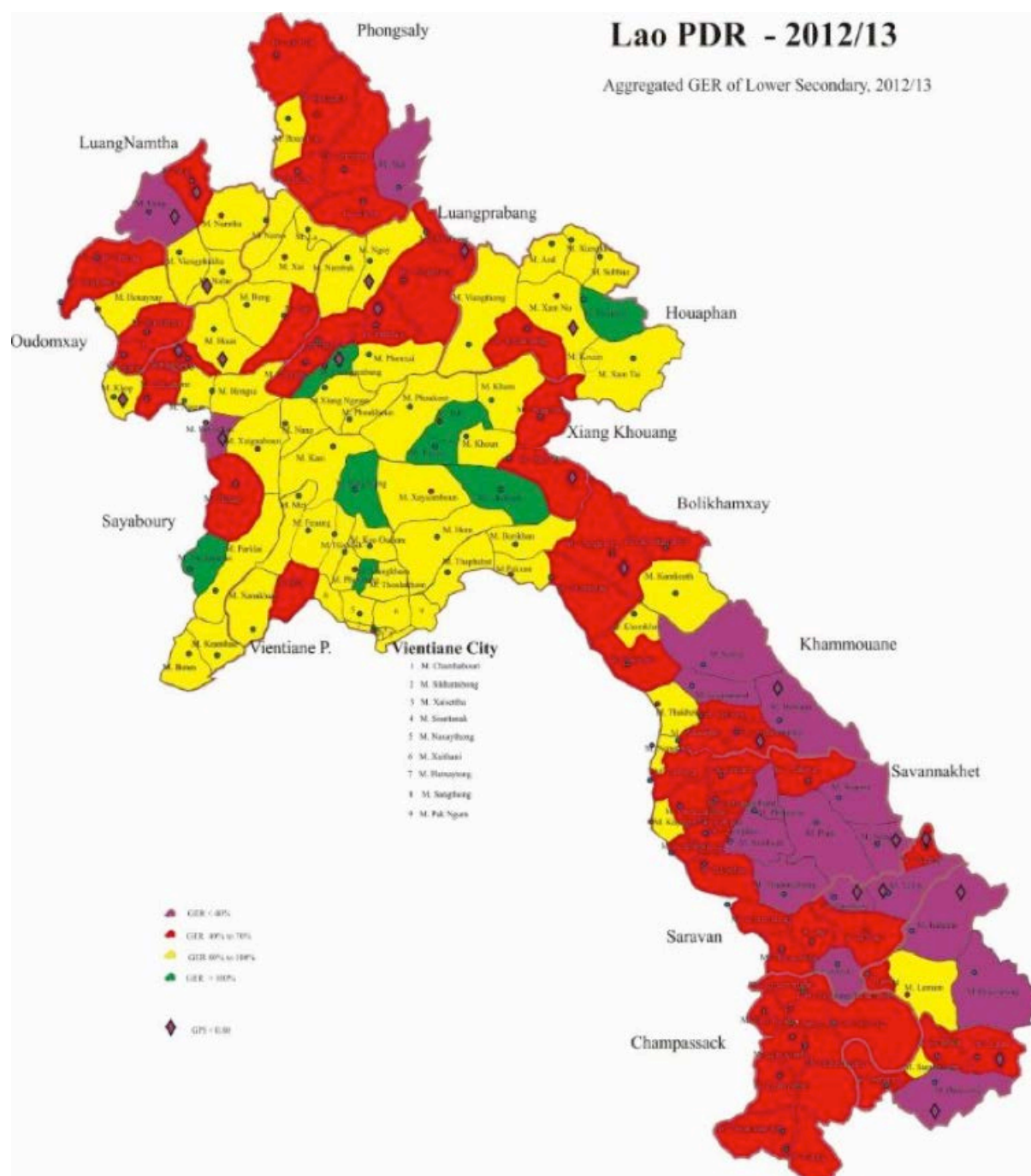
Primary Aggregated Net Enrolment Data



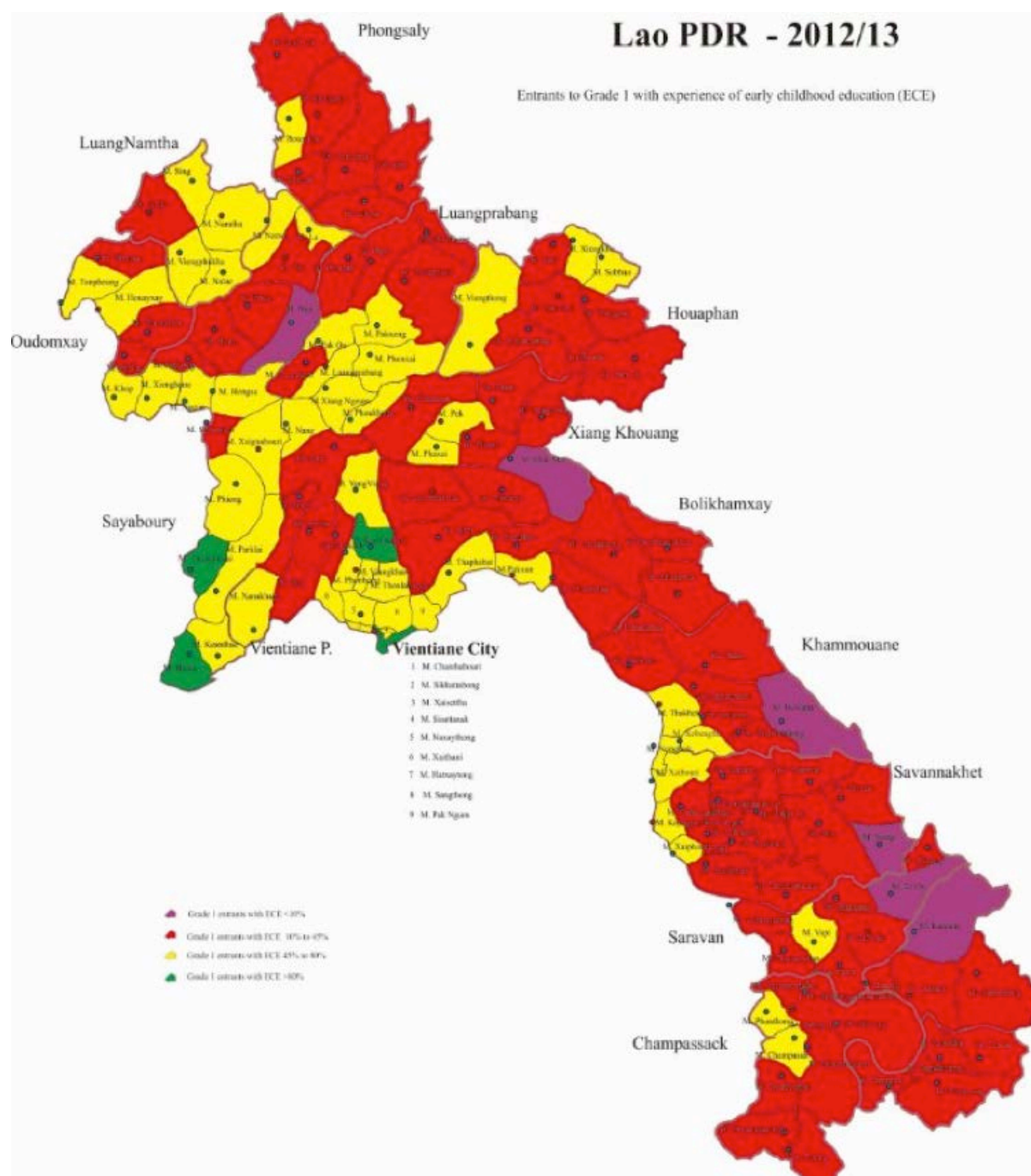
Primary Survival Rate to Grade 5



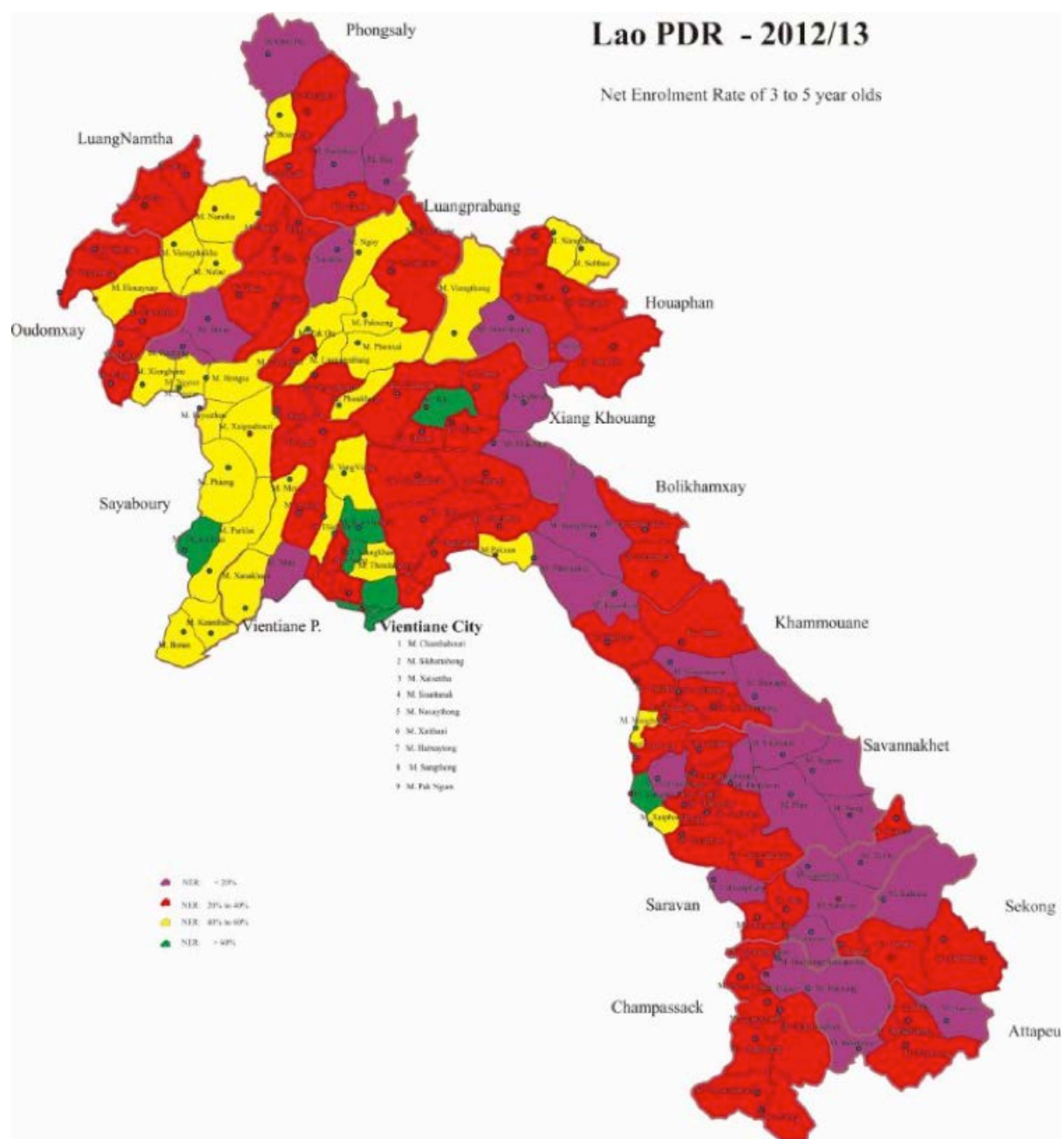
Aggregated Lower Secondary Gross Enrolment Rate (GER)



Primary Entrants with ECE Experience



Early Childhood Education Net Enrolment Rate



ANNEX 4. LAO GOVERNMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNER INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION¹⁵²

Subsector	Recurrent ¹⁵³	Investment
As share of total GoL Education expenditure	54.5%	45.5%
Pre-primary	3.3%	0.7%
Primary	32.5%	40.3%
Lower Secondary	15.4%	10.6%
Upper Secondary	12.9%	16.6%
Vocational Education	4.2%	12.3%
Teacher Education	4.6%	1.5%
Higher Education (Universities)	9.7%	7.9%
Non-Formal Education	1.1%	1.8%
Administrative Institutional Costs	15.8%	7.9%
Sports	0.5%	0.5%
Total	100%	100%

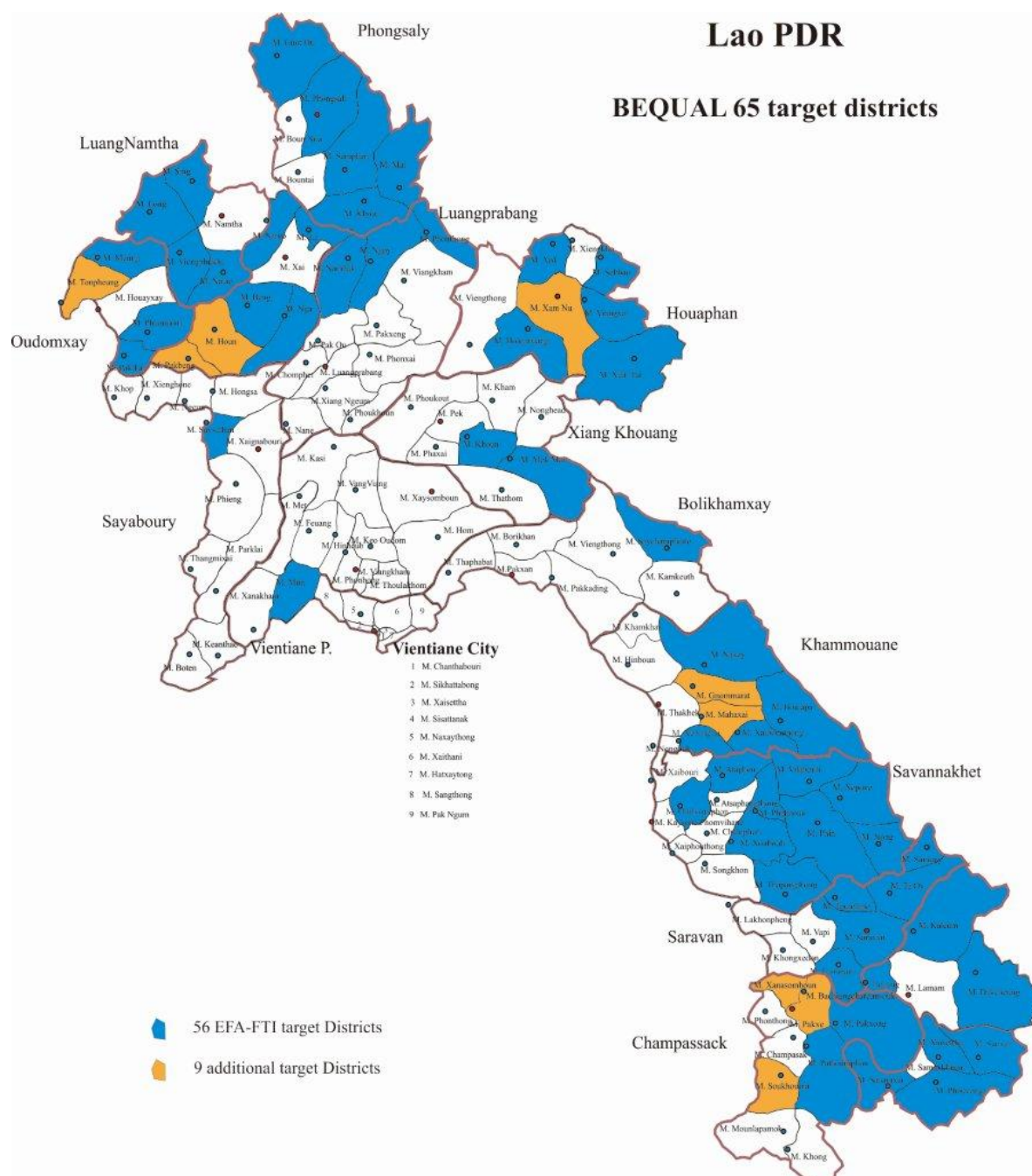
Areas of Support	Development Partners/Program
Early Childhood Education	EFA-FTI (World Bank, GPE, Australia); UNICEF; INGOs & NPAs
Primary Education	EFA-FTI; UNICEF; INGOs & NPAs
Lower Secondary Education	ADB; JICA, some INGOs
Upper Secondary Education	ADB, China, KOICA, Vietnam
TVET	ADB, Germany (GIZ), Luxembourg
Higher Education	Australia, China, Vietnam, JICA, ADB, France
Teacher Education	EFA-FTI (World Bank, GPE, Australia); JICA; UNESCO
Literacy & Non-Formal Education	EFA-FTI (World Bank, GPE, Australia); UNESCO

¹⁵²2011-2012 Financial Year

¹⁵³ Recurrent includes the following separate components each corresponding to an Education Budget Chapter: salary (Chapter 10); allowances (11); recurrent operations (12 – includes fuel, books, teaching materials, school block grants, training, maintenance); Technical Activities, subsidies (e.g. political activities, price subsidies, media communication, etc.)(13); interest payments, government contingency funds, etc. (14 and 15); Assets (16).

ANNEX 5. LIST OF TARGET DISTRICTS

The 65 target districts for BEQUAL will be made up of the 56 EFA-FTI districts, plus nine additional districts with the lowest survival rate to grade 5. The map below shows the geographic distribution of these districts, and the tables following provide details of each district against key indicators of basic education status.



EFA-FTI Districts

The following are the 56 target districts originally selected for EFA-FTI support, and proposed for continuing support under BEQUAL and the 9 additional districts with the lowest survival rates to grade 5. Key basic education indicators are shown, and can be compared to the national averages for Lao PDR, which are:

	Female NER 2012/13 (%)	Female Survival Rate to Grade 5 2012/13 (%)	Grade 1 Drop-out Rate
Lao PDR National average	95.9	74.3	11.0

Code	Province	District	Female NER 2012/13 (%)	Female Survival Rate to Grade 5 2012/13 (%)	Grade 1 Drop- out Rate
0201	Phongsaly	Pongsali	100.0	39.7	30.8
0202	Phongsaly	Mai	93.6	58.1	9.0
0203	Phongsaly	Khoua	92.4	66.8	9.9
0204	Phongsaly	Samphan	88.9	72.3	10.7
0206	Phongsaly	Gnot Ou	83.9	63.2	11.0
0302	Luangnamtha	Sing	95.5	80.5	6.1
0303	Luangnamtha	Long	77.7	52.6	13.9
0304	Luangnamtha	Viangphoukha	94.3	89.5	8.3
0305	Luangnamtha	Nalae	95.9	69.5	10.4
0402	Oudomxay	La	95.8	74.8	12.2
0403	Oudomxay	Namo	97.2	74.2	8.2
0404	Oudomxay	Nga	99.1	42.1	35.1
0405	Oudomxay	Beng	98.2	86.2	10.6
0406	Oudomxay	Houn	97.2	58.2	21.0
0407	Oudomxay	Pakbeng	96.8	40.6	30.4
0502	Bokeo	Tonpheung	96.7	66.1	3.5
0503	Bokeo	Meung	91.7	93.5	4.9
0504	Bokeo	Pha Oudom	97.2	61.6	12.3

Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR (BEQUAL)
Investment Design Document Annexes

Code	Province	District	Female NER 2012/13 (%)	Female Survival Rate to Grade 5 2012/13 (%)	Grade 1 Drop- out Rate
0505	Bokeo	Paktha	97.5	75.9	8.8
0605	Luangprabang	Nambak	96.7	76.1	15.5
0606	Luangprabang	Ngoy	98.5	58.4	21.8
0612	Luangprabang	Phonthong	100.0	78.7	13.6
0701	Houaphan	Xamneua	89.2	65.2	21.7
0704	Houaphan	Viangxai	89.1	76.9	12.9
0705	Houaphan	Houamuang	89.2	74.4	11.8
0706	Houaphan	Xam Tai	98.0	73.4	7.3
0707	Houaphan	Sopbao	91.6	69.4	13.8
0708	Houaphan	Et	96.6	66.4	20.7
811	Sayaboury	Saysathan	92.2	81.0	4.5
0904	Xiengkhouang	Khoun	100.0	69.3	10.7
0905	Xiengkhouang	Mok Mai	95.6	94.5	2.0
1013	Vientiane Province	Mun	97.5	94.3	6.2
1107	Bolikhamxay	Saychamphone	93.9	63.6	6.3
1202	Khammouane	Mahaxai	96.5	53.6	29.1
1205	Khammouane	Gnommalat	97.2	67.6	7.4
1206	Khammouane	Boualapha	77.0	50.8	18.4
1207	Khammouane	Nakay	77.9	45.6	15.1
1208	Khammouane	Xebangfai	97.4	90.5	n/a
1209	Khammouane	Xaibouathong	98.7	76.0	7.9
1302	Savannakhet	Outhoumphon	94.7	64.0	13.3
1304	Savannakhet	Phin	64.3	39.5	24.7
1305	Savannakhet	Xepon	64.4	50.3	14.2
1306	Savannakhet	Nong	76.8	23.6	31.7

Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR (BEQUAL)
Investment Design Document Annexes

Code	Province	District	Female NER 2012/13 (%)	Female Survival Rate to Grade 5 2012/13 (%)	Grade 1 Drop- out Rate
1307	Savannakhet	Thapangthong	91.9	41.0	20.6
1310	Savannakhet	Xonbouli	94.8	60.9	1.8
1312	Savannakhet	Vilabouli	95.1	56.9	16.5
1313	Savannakhet	Ataphon	98.2	66.3	10.0
1315	Savannakhet	Phalanxai	87.7	35.5	36.4
1401	Saravan	Salavan	100.0	57.0	15.1
1402	Saravan	Ta Oy	82.0	28.8	19.7
1403	Saravan	Toumlan	86.1	13.2	20.9
1407	Saravan	Lao Ngam	97.6	51.6	18.7
1408	Saravan	Samouay	96.3	43.6	31.7
1502	Sekong	Kalum	84.1	49.9	24.3
1503	Sekong	Dakchung	96.6	74.1	n/a
1504	Sekong	Thateng	99.9	68.1	10.4
1602	Champassack	Xanasomboun	95.4	68.3	10.9
1603	Champassack	Bachiangchaleun- sok	98.9	61.8	16.7
1604	Champassack	Pakxong	98.8	66.1	18.3
1605	Champassack	Pathoumphon	96.0	74.6	5.8
1608	Champassack	Soukhouma	94.3	58.1	7.2
1701	Attapeu	Xaisettha	95.1	64.6	13.8
1703	Attapeu	Sanamaxai	94.3	66.9	8.3
1704	Attapeu	Sanxai	92.9	53.6	21.7
1705	Attapeu	Phouvong	92.6	28.9	34.6
	Lao PDR	National average	95.9	74.3	11.0

ANNEX 6. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND TARGETS

The following table provides an **indicative** set of activities and targets for each component of BEQUAL. Each implementing partner will be required to initially confirm them for the 1st Annual Plan and then review, update, revise and confirm the activities and targets relevant to their component implementation responsibilities as part of each year's annual work planning and budgeting process. These targets will be reviewed as the program budget fluctuates and operational/policy circumstances change.

Key Result Area 1	
Policy Planning and Coordination - Strengthening the capacity of central, provincial and district MoES to better manage administrative and financial resources aligned to delivery of education in Lao PDR	
Supported Activity	BEQUAL Target
Component 1 – Policy Planning and Coordination	
Support to ESG Focal Groups.	ESG Focal Groups active.
Management and administrative mapping survey.	Completed and identified activities underway.
Provincial Coordinating Mechanisms (PCMs).	PCMs established and operational in all targeted provinces.
Administrative and Financial Capacity of central, provincial and district entities assessed and provided with professional development, particularly with support for school based management (SBM).	Approximately 250 central-level personnel receive professional development. A minimum of 280 PESS personnel in targeted provinces (16) receive professional development i.e. approximately 35 persons per targeted province. A minimum of 1,300 DESB personnel in targeted districts (65) receive professional development i.e. approximately 40 persons per targeted district.
Recurrent non-wage budgeting addressed.	Improved circumstances associated with recurrent non-wage budgeting identified in targeted provinces.
Teacher deployment issues addressed.	Teacher supply and demand imbalances are addressed in all targeted provinces.
Learning outcomes used for sector management.	Establishment of baseline learning outcomes data for targeted districts and provinces (by RIES with contractor). Biennial learning outcomes data collected, analysed and used in sector management.
Management Information Systems integrated.	Unified MoES management information system established and in use.
Student Learning Outcomes Assessed.	Biennial assessments conducted and reports published which include data on all 65 targeted districts.
Pilot initiatives established to strengthen provincial, district, school and community capacity to better manage educational activities.	A minimum of 16 Pilot initiatives (1 per province) established, assessed and outcomes acted upon.

Key Result Area 2 Increased Participation – Ensuring more girls and boys (including those with disabilities) from remote and ethnic communities are able to enrol and complete their primary education.	
Supported Activity	BEQUAL Target
Component 2.1 – Participation and Access	
Agreement in place between selected NGOs and NPAs with the BEQUAL managing contractor to support and manage targeted initiatives to be addressed under this Component.	The Consortium is selected and works with the BEQUAL managing contractor to develop activity designs, scope of services and basis of payment, and the agreement is signed. Participation and access initiatives implemented in partnership with appropriate stakeholders.
Pilot activities and research initiatives are developed and implemented to address the follows needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inclusive education • Lao language (language of instruction) • multi-lingual teaching • local curriculum development • health/disability screening • village based school readiness programs • TTC pastoral care initiatives are implemented in support of the ethnic teacher trainees (refer to component 3.1). 	A minimum of 7 pilot programs (at least one per topic) are implemented, assessed and where appropriate successful program recommendations will be acted upon. A minimum of 7 research activities (one per topic) are implemented, assessed and recommendations acted upon.
Component 2.2 – School Meals	
School meals provide to targeted schools.	Delivery of school meals to 614 targeted schools across 30 districts. 76,000 students will receive school meals annually.
Home grown school meals model piloted.	Home grown feeding model to be piloted in 1-2 districts.
Professional development provided to targeted schools and administrators, as well as communities, to support implementation of School Meals.	Training provided to representatives from all 614 schools and 30 districts in support of the Component.
Handover strategy developed for ongoing management of School Meals by MoES.	Handover strategy developed by WFP and MoES personnel trained in its use and application.

Key Result Area 3 – Teacher Education	
Ensure primary teachers and teacher trainees (including ethnic women) are receiving modern and pedagogically appropriate in-service and pre-service professional development.	
Supported Activity	BEQUAL Target
Component 3.1 – Pre-service Education	
Review of national primary pre-service teacher training curriculum.	National pre-service teacher training curriculum reviewed and recommendations acted upon.
Extended and enhanced professional development program for primary teacher educators in all 8 targeted TTCs.	Professional development training needs analysis completed. Adaptation of proven initiatives in teacher education in neighbouring countries trialled in modified form in Lao PDR. Performance Appraisal System for teachers developed and trialled for national use. 100 per cent of primary teacher educators

**Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR (BEQUAL)
Investment Design Document Annexes**

	<p>(approximately 400 educators) will receive professional development in all targeted TTCs.</p> <p>At least 5 (five) primary teacher educators in each targeted TTCs will be sponsored by BEQUAL to formally upgrade their formal professional qualifications in Teaching Methodology areas (50 per cent male and female).</p>
Training more ethnic teachers, in particular females, from remote ethnic communities.	<p>8 teachers per district (average 2 per year) will be identified and trained i.e. a total of 520 ethnic teachers will be trained.</p> <p>At least 70 per cent of ethnic teacher trainees will be female.</p> <p>Welfare offices in all 8TTCs will be supported to provide ethnic teacher trainees (including the 520 recruited under the program) with pastoral care.</p> <p>All 520 graduating teacher trainees will be deployed to their 'home' community; ongoing professional development will be provided by district PAs and teacher mentors where available.</p>
Component 3.2 – In-service Teacher Education	
School Based Management (SBM) Training	<p>25 per cent of all schools (approximately 1100) in targeted districts will receive professional development in support of SBM, including leadership training for Principals, PESS, DESB leaders and VEDCs.</p> <p>All PAs (approximately 200) in targeted districts will receive professional development in support of mentoring, pedagogical support and to assist with School Based Management initiatives.</p>
Adaptation and application of the TESAP	<p>Provide professional development to 25 per cent of all teachers (approximately 3,700) in targeted districts. Professional development will support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-grade teaching • Inclusive education • Mathematics teaching • Language of instruction – Lao language and Reading • Lesson planning • Resource development and use.
Interface between teacher in-service and pre-service practicum.	Evidence of enhanced professional development activities generated by improved cooperation between TTCs, PESSs, DESBs and schools.

Key Result Area 4 – Teaching and Learning Resources	
Ensure Educators, teachers and students have access and are using relevant teaching and learning materials.	
Supported Activity	BEQUAL Target
Component 4.1 – Teaching and Learning Resources	
Learning materials will be developed and new commercially available texts and materials that are gender and disability inclusive, and also relevant and appropriate for student centred-learning purchased for	<p>Each TTC will receive learning material packs and be trained in their application for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mathematics teaching • Science teaching

Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR (BEQUAL)
Investment Design Document Annexes

all 8 targeted TTCs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lao language (language of instruction and reading) • Active learning strategies • Multi-grade teaching • Inclusive teaching • Library resourcing. <p>A total of 64 resource packs will be delivered to the TTCs.</p>
New commercially available learning materials (including text books) that are gender and disability inclusive, and also relevant and appropriate for student centred-learning will be identified, procured and delivered to all schools in targeted districts.	<p>Each school will receive learning material packs which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated Grade 1-5 text books to align with revised school curriculum • Updated Teacher guides • Consumable materials • Classroom resources – particularly for multi-grade teaching, maths, science and reading. <p>Approximately 4,500 resource packs will be delivered to the schools.</p>
Strengthening of resource distribution system.	<p>Efficient and effective distribution system for getting materials to remote schools.</p> <p>Effective acquittal system to monitoring shortages and over-supply and to respond.</p>
Training in the development and use of teaching and learning materials.	Completed training in producing low-cost learning materials in maths and science.

Key Result Area 5 – School Infrastructure	
Ensure teacher and students in remote and disadvantaged communities are accommodated in schools and classrooms fit for purpose, i.e. provide safe, hygienic, inclusive and well equipped physical learning	
Supported Activity	BEQUAL Target
Component 5.1 – Classroom, Furniture and rehabilitation of primary schools.	
Asset survey to determine rehabilitation priorities for the program.	<p>Asset survey completed by the program and infrastructure priorities confirmed for all targeted 65 districts.</p> <p>A work plan and budget developed which outlines prioritised CBC rehabilitation requirements aligned to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and educational needs • Inclusive, hygiene and safety needs • Furniture requirements • Converting in-complete to complete schools • Opportunities to train ethnic teachers for remote communities.
Rehabilitation activities implemented.	Classrooms/units (including WASH facilities as appropriate) in at least 300 schools (average of 10 per district in 30 target districts) rehabilitated or constructed to ensure all boys and girls including disabled students have access to a safe and functional learning environment. Rehabilitation implemented using CBC methodologies.
Capacity development activities supported.	<p>ECDM capacity development plan developed.</p> <p>ECDM capacity development plan implemented and evaluated.</p> <p>MoES collaboration to support increased VEDC capacity for managing school infrastructure requirements.</p>
Component 5.2 – New WASH facilities in Primary Schools.	
Cost effective WASH facilities appropriate to the program are designed and work plan in place.	Designs and work plan confirmed and agreed.
WASH facilities constructed.	WASH facilities constructed in up to 600 primary schools.
Basic hygiene packs are developed, delivered and in use.	600 basic hygiene packs in place and beneficiaries are trained in their application.
Teachers and community are trained to maintain and use the facilities.	600 schools communities trained to maintain supplied WASH facilities.
Research, evaluation and reporting systems in place. Longitudinal research initiatives designed and implemented.	<p>Formative and longitudinal assessment strategies established and in place.</p> <p>Annual evaluation and reporting systems established and in use by MoES.</p>

ANNEX 7. SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Community Based Contracting (CBC) – Lao PDR Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The method of construction of school physical facilities whereby the capital expenditure funding for materials and labour is provided directly to the school community via the Village Education Development Committee (VEDC) from the Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES) to manage the construction of the facilities via a School Building Committee (SBC) including the local procurement of materials and labour. Technical support to the school community during construction is provided by an experienced building foreman hired by the VEDC and funded out of the school Block grant. Technical support and monitoring is provided by engineers from the district (DESB) and the province (PESS).
Refurbishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration and redecoration of a classroom to no more than the condition it was in at the completion of its construction. Activities could include painting and minor repairs. Generally work costs for refurbishment would be less than 10% of the current replacement cost of the building.
Rehabilitation*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work costs for rehabilitation would be between 15% and 30% of the current replacement cost of the building. Works could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacement of roof sheeting, roof framing (trusses, rafters, purlins etc.), concrete floor, ceiling, windows/shutters and doors, repairs/maintenance to water supply or sanitation system Same form and functionality as original structure Quality and durability of some materials may exceed the quality of original materials replaced i.e. higher quality roof sheeting (e.g. colorbond versus galvanised iron); bamboo ceilings replaced with fibre-cement sheeting; earth floors replaced with concrete; plywood black boards replaced with metal surfaced blackboards, etc.
Renovation*or Reconstruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30% to 40% of the current replacement cost of the building. Work specifications as for Rehabilitation but could include in addition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconstruction of isolated columns or beams and or some sections of walls (traditional materials replaced with masonry, timber or shutters) Rebuilding of toilet cubicles, septic tanks, water supplies, etc. Same form and functionality as original structure. Quality and durability of some materials may exceed the quality/durability of original materials replaced.
Maintenance Activities & Responsibilities (Based on ECDM, <i>School Construction Guidelines</i> , MoES, December 2009)	
Routine maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitates full and proper use of buildings through daily and weekly care; involves sweeping, locking of doors and windows, checking of fencing and gates, collection of rubbish, removal of debris from surface drains and rainwater guttering, etc. Responsibility - School community

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget – school community and DEB if required.
Preventative maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storm water drainage, emptying (de-sludging) toilet septic tanks, painting wooden walls, replacement of wooden structures infested with termites and other organisms • Deterioration slows down significantly by carrying out regular preventative maintenance • Responsibility - School community and DESB • Budget – DESB and PESS.
Corrective maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities carried out after a breakdown or a storm/flood has occurred e.g. replacement of roof sheeting or tiles, rotten ceilings, window and door locks and fittings, damaged furniture, etc. • Responsibility –DESB and PESS • Budget – PESS and/or a special allocation from Central Office as a contractor may need to be used.
PUCDA	Provincial Unit for Construction and Development Advice.
DUCDA	District Unit for Construction and Development Advice.
* ECDM definitions	

ANNEX 8. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR GOVERNANCE BODIES

Draft

TERMS OF REFERENCE¹⁵⁴

BEQUAL Steering Committee

Overview

The BEQUAL Steering Committee will provide high level strategic oversight to the program. It will initially be a bi-lateral entity with senior representation from both the Governments of Lao PDR and Australia¹⁵⁵. Government of Lao PDR will be represented by the Vice Minister of Education (or delegate) and the Government of Australia will be represented by the First Secretary Aid Representative from DFAT at the Australian Embassy (Vientiane). The BEQUAL Steering Committee will be co-chaired by both government representatives.

Relevant high level observers and representatives from other government ministries and partner agencies will be invited to attend as required. These are likely to include: Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Planning; Ministry of Health, the European Union, UNESCO, the World Food Program and the World Bank.

The Steering Committee will meet every six months to monitor progress and provide strategic and financial guidance to the program. Strategic oversight by the BEQUAL Steering Committee will be guided by performance data provided by the Education Sector Working Group, the Australian Learning Facility, UNICEF, the WFP and the BEQUAL managing contractor. Annual planning and performance reports to the BEQUAL Steering Committee will confirm planning and expenditure associated with supported Components and activities. The BEQUAL Managing Contractor will provide secretariat support to the Steering Committee.

Objectives

The objectives of the Steering Committee are:

- i. Ensuring government leadership and ownership of the key strategic direction and issues associated with the BEQUAL
- ii. Ensuring Australia's support to the primary sub-sector through BEQUAL aligns to the Education Sector Development Plan
- iii. Facilitating alignment with a common policy and programming framework
- iv. Facilitating mutual accountability in managing for results within the BEQUAL
- v. Encouraging and supporting harmonization and simplification within the Education sector
- vi. Promoting policy dialogue¹⁵⁶ amongst key stakeholders, including Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Investment and the Ministry of Health.

Core Function

The core functions of the Steering Committee are:

- i. Confirming program priorities and the implementation mechanisms to achieve them

¹⁵⁴ To be reviewed at the first meeting of BEQUAL Steering Committee.

¹⁵⁵ If the program was to expand and additional funding partners were to join BEQUAL the constituency of the BEQUAL Steering Committee would be adjusted as appropriate.

¹⁵⁶ Refer to the Policy Dialogue Annex associated with the IDD.

- ii. Assessment of performance in accordance with the BEQUAL monitoring and evaluation framework
- iii. Confirming annual budget allocations from partner governments and exploring opportunities to expand the program's funding base
- iv. Confirming Annual work plans and budgets to ensure they align to both governments' development priorities.
- v. Policy dialogue associated with:
 - Education Equity and Access
 - Organisational Culture and Development
 - Educational leadership
 - Financial and Budget Management
 - Accountability.

Reporting to the BEQUAL Steering Committee will be managed by the BEQUAL Technical Working Group through the BEQUAL Contractor.

Draft

TERMS OF REFERENCE¹⁵⁷

BEQUAL Technical Working Group

Overview

The BEQUAL Technical Working Group will be established under the auspices of the Education Sector Working Group and aligned to the Basic Education Focal Group. As a sub-committee of the Basic Education Focal Group the BEQUAL Technical Working Group will manage planning, activity implementation and oversight of program monitoring, evaluation and learning activities on behalf of the BEQUAL Steering Committee.

The BEQUAL Technical Working Group will consist of the Director Generals of the four key Departments (i.e. Departments of Planning; of Teacher Education; of Pre-primary and Primary Education; and of Inspection), the DFAT representative who has day-to-day management responsibility for BEQUAL, and the BEQUAL managing contractor Team Leader.

The Director General of the Department of Planning will initially chair the BEQUAL Technical Working Group, with chairing responsibilities rotated amongst the other Directors General.

Relevant observers and representatives from other government ministries and partner agencies will be invited to attend as required. These are likely to include: the Research Institute of Educational Science; Teacher Training College representation; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Planning; Ministry of Health; the European Union; UNESCO; the World Food Program; the World Bank and a NGO/NPA representative.

The BEQUAL Technical Working Group will meet quarterly (or more often, if needed) and report to the BEQUAL Steering Committee. The BEQUAL Technical Working Group will also report on BEQUAL progress to the Education Sector Working Group.

Formal planning and evaluation meetings for the program will occur twice yearly as part of the M&E system. Where possible, BEQUAL Technical Working Group meeting should be held in targeted provinces and hosted by Provincial Education and Sport Service (PESS) offices. Meetings may also coincide with the annual program conference.

Annual planning and performance reports will be prepared by the BEQUAL Technical Working Group for endorsement by the BEQUAL Steering Committee. The BEQUAL Managing Contractor will provide secretariat support to the BEQUAL Technical Working Group.

Objectives

The objectives of the Steering Committee are:

- i. Ensure technical management and ownership of BEQUAL is embedded within MoES
- ii. Ensure all program components are managed within a cohesive technical and operational framework
- iii. Ensure Provincial and District partners are fully engaged in all aspects of program management and implementation
- iv. Pursue opportunities for program initiatives to be sustainably managed by MoES
- v. Strengthening MoES' ability to implement performance monitoring and evidence-based decision making for initiatives aligned to BEQUAL

¹⁵⁷ To be reviewed at the first meeting of BEQUAL Technical Working Group.

- vi. Ensure program supported activities align to primary sub-sector priorities as outlined by the Education Sector Development Plan
- vii. Provide robust technical and financial input into the annual planning process supported by BEQUAL
- viii. Interpret, evaluate and apply lessons learned as outlined in the annual performance report prepared by the BEQUAL Contractor.

Core Function

The core functions of the BEQUAL Technical Working Group are:

- i. Ensure program activities work within and/or use MoES systems and structures where possible
- ii. Ensure MoES stakeholders implement program activities as agreed by program partners
- iii. Facilitate the development of inception activities¹⁵⁸ to be developed by the BEQUAL Managing Contractor, and approve as appropriate
- iv. Facilitate the development of the program's (costed) annual work plan by the BEQUAL Managing Contractor, and approve the work plan as appropriate
- v. Facilitate the development of the annual performance report – endorse to the BEQUAL Steering Committee as appropriate
- vi. Facilitate and support the implementation of the annual program conference
- vii. Ensure program assessment is in accordance with the BEQUAL monitoring and evaluation framework.

The BEQUAL Technical Working Group will be provided with policy, technical and operational support through the BEQUAL Contractor.

¹⁵⁸ These include: management and administrative survey; innovations fund operational guidelines; monitoring and evaluation plan; NGO/NPA request for tender; scholarships and community grants guidelines; teacher professional development plan; teaching and learning resources strategy; infrastructure delivery strategy; teacher training college materials plan.

ANNEX 9. MONITORING & EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

This annex sets out an indicative approach to the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of BEQUAL and the approach to learning that will be integrated with M&E. It describes program-level monitoring and evaluation of all components of BEQUAL, which will be brought together into a coherent, systemic framework linking all implementing partners (i.e. the BEQUAL managing contractor, WFP, UNICEF and NGO/NPAs) and program components. At this point, the focus is on describing the general structure of monitoring and evaluation and the indicative approaches that will comprise the program-level monitoring, evaluation and learning system for BEQUAL. **It will be further tested, refined, detailed and finalised by the implementing partners.**

A strong M&E system must be founded on a clear and shared program design, and especially on clarity about the outcomes that are intended. The purpose of the M&E system for BEQUAL is threefold: to support management, accountability and learning, and will be required to:

- provide necessary information for program personnel, the Lao Government, and DFAT, to make day-to-day and strategic **management** decisions on the basis of timeline and well-founded evidence
- support **accountability** to the people of Lao PDR and Australia about the use of program resources and the achievement of positive intended and unintended program outcomes
- enable program personnel, participants and stakeholders to **learn** from the program and to apply that learning to ongoing efforts; and to capture and communicate those learnings so the wider development community can make use of them.

The M&E system will be designed to enable BEQUAL implementing partners and stakeholders to regularly and systematically consider four important analytical questions in making sense of the data that is collected throughout program implementation, and of its implications for the program and the basic education sector in Lao PDR¹⁵⁹. These questions will guide the implementation and use of monitoring and evaluation across the BEQUAL program:

1. What is the current situation?
2. What are the factors – both positive and negative – that have led to this situation?
3. What are the implications of the situation for the program, and the context?
4. What are we doing, or do we need to do, in response to the situation?

Across all levels of program M&E a number of important principles will guide the development and implementation of M&E systems and processes. They will underpin an M&E system that enables the production of timely and accurate information to support evidence-informed management, accountability and learning. Those principles include commitments to:

- integrating with, utilising and supporting the development of MoES systems for the collection, management, analysis and use of sector data
- addressing gender, disability and other inclusiveness variables

¹⁵⁹These guiding questions, together with many other aspects of this monitoring and evaluation annex, are founded on the guidance provided through Australian aid's Evaluation Capacity Building program which has established Key Concepts as well as quality standards for monitoring and evaluation systems in investment designs.

- involving program personnel, participants and stakeholders in ‘sense-making’ so that the M&E system is participatory, meaningful and accessible and to enable all stakeholders to have ownership of the conclusions about program performance and progress
- encouraging information flows in both directions, so participants and other contributors of data receive feedback, using a range of communication and reporting tools
- value both qualitative and quantitative data and to use a variety of monitoring and evaluation methods in response to specific needs and opportunities
- meeting Lao Government and DFAT reporting needs
- complying with internationally recognised standards for ethics and evaluation methods.

Monitoring and evaluation arrangements for BEQUAL will operate across several levels: at the whole-of-program level (led by the Learning Facility); at component level (undertaken by implementing partners); and within individual packages of activity such as those that will be implemented by NGO/NPA partners under the BEQUAL managing contractor.

Each implementing partner will develop and implement its own monitoring and evaluation system and processes to monitor and evaluate implementation performance of the components or activities for which it is responsible. These processes, and the information they generate, will be harmonised and integrated with the program-level M&E requirements. This will provide program-wide information for strategic decision-making and program priority setting, while also providing information for management decision-making within each implementing partner.

All M&E arrangements will meet the requirements of relevant standards and guidelines. This includes the specific requirements of DFAT’s Monitoring and Evaluation Standards¹⁶⁰, as well as international standards such as OECD Development Assistance Committee standards¹⁶¹, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation Program Evaluation Standards¹⁶², and accepted standards for evaluation ethics¹⁶³.

These will guide each BEQUAL implementing partner to develop a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, as well as an overall BEQUAL M&E Plan that:

- clearly articulates the specific end-of-Phase 2 outcomes
- focuses on answering key evaluation questions linked to the specific intended uses of the information
- enables the monitoring and evaluation of the quality, reach and coverage of deliverables
- supports regular monitoring of the program context
- fully describes methods for sampling, data collection, management, analysis and reporting

¹⁶⁰AusAID Monitoring and Evaluation Standards, 2013

¹⁶¹OECD DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, 2010, www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/dcdndep/36596604.pdf

¹⁶²<http://www.jcsee.org/program-evaluation-standards>

¹⁶³For example, Australasian Evaluation Society Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations (Dec 2010), which require evaluators to: design, conduct and report M&E activities in a way that respects the rights, privacy, dignity and entitlements of people affected by and contributing to program M&E; undertake M&E activities so as to ensure that judgements and actions based on program M&E are based on sound and complete information; and that M&E reporting will provide audiences with fair and balanced information. www.aes.asn.au

- allocates responsibilities, provides adequate resources, and supports mutual accountability and the use of partner systems where appropriate.

In summary, there will be M&E Plans for each implementing partner, as well as an overall BEQUAL M&E Plan addressing program level monitoring and evaluation.

The Role of the Learning Facility

DFAT will expand its existing Learning Facility to extend its mandate from the rural development sector into basic education, creating a Basic Education Unit within its structure. This will make the Learning Facility central to the monitoring and evaluation of BEQUAL, much as it is for the Rural Livelihoods Program, and with an additional mandate to support DFAT with the monitoring and evaluation of its broader education portfolio. The role of the Learning Facility is already specified as “the generation, management and dissemination of learning and results based on its monitoring, evaluation and resource functions across the rural development program”¹⁶⁴. With its expansion into basic education, it will provide an integrating function for DFAT’s basic education program in Lao PDR through its established functions:

- Providing a powerful centre for research, evaluation and learning across the Lao basic education sector;
- Overseeing and supporting the design and implementation of M&E across BEQUAL and ensuring that reporting from implementing partners complies with the BEQUAL M&E requirements for outcomes data and analysis, by providing technical support and advice on a collaborative and supportive basis to implementing partners as well as a quality control function; and
- Coordinating and convening regular BEQUAL internal discussions on strategic and cross-cutting issues affecting the program; on management issues; the analysis of progressive results and overall performance assessment; and
- Promoting the gathering of evidence and use of analysis to inform DFAT in the formulation of policy for BEQUAL and its engagement with government, stakeholders, and other development partners.

Specific functions and tasks of the Learning Facility are further described throughout this annex.

Program Level Monitoring and Evaluation

The expanded DFAT Learning Facility will lead program level monitoring, evaluation and learning. It will be responsible for developing a high level M&E system (based on this indicative framework) that will provide for the program-wide monitoring, evaluation and learning. It will enable the tracking of progress towards the intended outcomes (as well as unintended outcomes), the exploration of factors influencing progress (or lack thereof), and the consideration of sectoral and contextual issues. The focus at the program level for the Learning Facility will be collating and assessing the outcomes of work undertaken by the various BEQUAL implementing partners (drawing on their M&E reporting), and the effectiveness of the approaches those partners are using. Implementation monitoring (i.e. at the component level) will be primarily the responsibility of the implementing partners responsible for each program component.

¹⁶⁴This is as specified in the design document for the Lao Australia Rural Livelihoods Program, and specifically the LARP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Program level monitoring will also address compliance issues associated with the program's commitments on inclusiveness, equity, safeguards and other crosscutting policy issues such as gender, disability, and socio-economic disadvantage.

Program level monitoring and reporting will include the utilisation of a select set of progress and performance indicators to assist with understanding program achievements. These indicators are a sub-set of the information that will be required to fully understand program performance, but they are a valuable snapshot means to track and report progress. Attachment 2 provides a preliminary draft monitoring and evaluation matrix of indicators, which the Learning Facility will review, revise and update in consultation with other BEQUAL partners as part of overall M&E system development. The matrix organises indicators around key results areas and the end-of-program and end-of-phase-2 outcomes described in the program logic. Data will be drawn from a range of sources in order to provide a degree of triangulation and will be considered in tandem with other qualitative and quantitative data collected through evaluation and research activities.

Component Level Monitoring and Evaluation

Component level monitoring and evaluation will be the responsibility of the responsible BEQUAL implementing partners, working closely with their Lao Government counterparts. The BEQUAL managing contractor, UNICEF and WFP, and NGO/NPA partners, will each be required to develop and implement monitoring and evaluation systems and processes that meet their internal management needs, which provide for their reporting and learning obligations, and that satisfy their contractual obligations to DFAT.

Monitoring and evaluation at the implementation level will especially focus on outputs level monitoring, but with a clear and explicit line-of-sight to intermediate and end-of-Phase 2 outcomes. Further, because implementation will include ongoing piloting and trialling of innovative approaches to increasing quality and participation in primary education – there will be a serious commitment to undertaking rigorous quality evaluation of pilot activities by implementing partners. This is crucial to ensure that subsequent decisions on pilot activities are based on sound evidence. The Learning Facility will be available to support the design, implementation and use of pilot evaluations as required, working to support NGO and NPA implementing partners that implement pilot activities.

Additional Research and Evaluation

While key educational data is available in Lao PDR, there remain often-significant gaps in understanding of the dynamics constraining educational access and disparities in educational outcomes¹⁶⁵. The focus of BEQUAL on addressing access and quality issues in basic education will necessitate an investment in increased understanding of the sector. The Learning Facility will integrate learning across all components of BEQUAL, and will also work closely with the Department of Inspection, which has the mandate for monitoring and evaluation within MoES. As part of this role it will commission or undertake research and evaluation studies into important issues or aspects of basic education in the country so that program and sector stakeholders can better understand the social, economic and other contextual factors influencing program and sector performance. The aim of the research and evaluation portfolio will be to create an expanded knowledge base about basic education development in Lao PDR, including the practices, constraints, opportunities and risks, and to share this knowledge base widely with other stakeholders.

¹⁶⁵The Education Sector in Lao PDR – Achievements Challenges and Opportunities (AusAID Education Sector Situational Analysis, March 2013)

Much of the research and evaluation work is likely to be subcontracted to national, regional or international specialist organisations, to Lao-based NGOs and/or NPAs, or to individuals, with an emphasis on engaging with the Research Institute for Educational Science (RIES) and the Education and Sports Research Centre of the Department of Planning. The Learning Facility Basic Education Unit will work closely with the other implementing partners and these key counterparts in the Lao Government to design, commission and manage these research and evaluation studies, and to integrate them into the wider program learning framework.

In some cases it will be preferable for the Learning Facility to take partial or total responsibility for such work. The most appropriate approach will be determined on a case-by-case basis in agreement with DFAT. Research and evaluation work will include a capacity development element wherever possible, through collaboration with Lao-based research institutions or consulting organisations.

Portfolio Level Monitoring and Evaluation

The Learning Facility will provide support to DFAT in the monitoring and evaluation of its broader education portfolio, including any initiatives that are outside the boundaries of BEQUAL. This may include providing support in the refinement and implementation of the Performance Assessment Framework for the Education Delivery Strategy, including the preparation of any reporting or analysis arising from it.

Information Management

The Learning Facility Basic Education Unit will examine the options for information management for BEQUAL, with a first priority being an assessment of the extent to which existing MoES information systems can be used or supported to also meet BEQUAL needs. While it is unlikely that existing systems can currently meet program requirements (for example, disaggregation of data by disability is not possible), complete system integration should be the ultimate aim and any program system must interface and align with MoES system to the maximum degree possible. Thus it is likely that the Learning Facility will be required to establish and manage a Management Information System (MIS) for BEQUAL. The MIS will enable the management and use of monitoring and evaluation data across all aspects of the monitoring, evaluation and learning system. As required by existing specifications, the MIS should, to the extent feasible, utilise web-based interfaces and communicate directly with the information systems of other implementing partners.

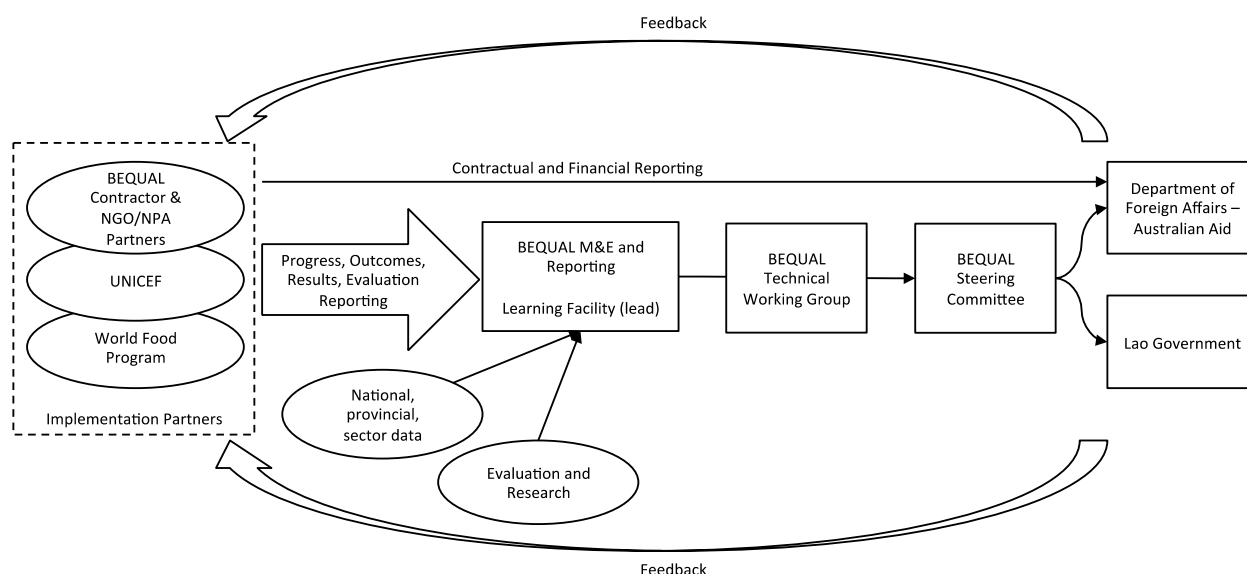
The Learning Facility will work with the other BEQUAL implementing partners (i.e. BEQUAL managing contractor, UNICEF, WFP) as they develop their own information management systems as part of their overall M&E system development to achieve as much of this interface as possible. This will be especially important with the BEQUAL managing contractor, which will be responsible for the bulk of BEQUAL implementation activity (and thus, data collection).

As part of the expansion of the Learning Facility, DFAT will negotiate the necessary increases to MIS staffing and other related resources within the Learning Facility in order to meet the needs of BEQUAL and its support to information management within MoES.

Making Use of M&E

A monitoring and evaluation system is only valuable in as much as it is utilised. The flow of information is crucial to enabling that utilisation. The M&E system for BEQUAL will be designed to ensure that information flows between partners in a meaningful way so that the information collected and the analysis undertaken is of value for all participants in the program.

BEQUAL Information Flows



Program Reporting

Formal reporting will be limited and targeted, with an emphasis on the provision of meaningful information. At both activity level, and program level the main written reports will be twice yearly: a Mid-Year Progress Report, and an Annual Report. Verbal reporting will be part of the overall discussion and debate at annual Program Conferences. As shown in the diagram above, there will be a sequenced approach to these technical reports: implementing partners (the BEQUAL managing contractor and its NGO and NPA partners; UNICEF and WFP) will provide reports to the Learning Facility, which will collate and analyse M&E outputs to prepare the program level reporting to DFAT and MoES through the BEQUAL Technical Working Group. In doing so, the Learning Facility will also take into account the operating environment for the program, including analysis of the context in all major technical reports.

The program level BEQUAL Mid-Year Progress Report will be submitted to DFAT team in Lao PDR in August each year (reporting on the first half of the calendar year); the BEQUAL Annual Report will be submitted at the end of February each year (reporting on the preceding calendar as a whole).

In addition to the two main technical reports, every implementing partner will provide Quarterly Financial Reports to DFAT as part of routine financial and contract management processes. Annual Reports at both implementation and program level will also include a summary financial report as an annex.

DFAT Performance and Quality Reporting

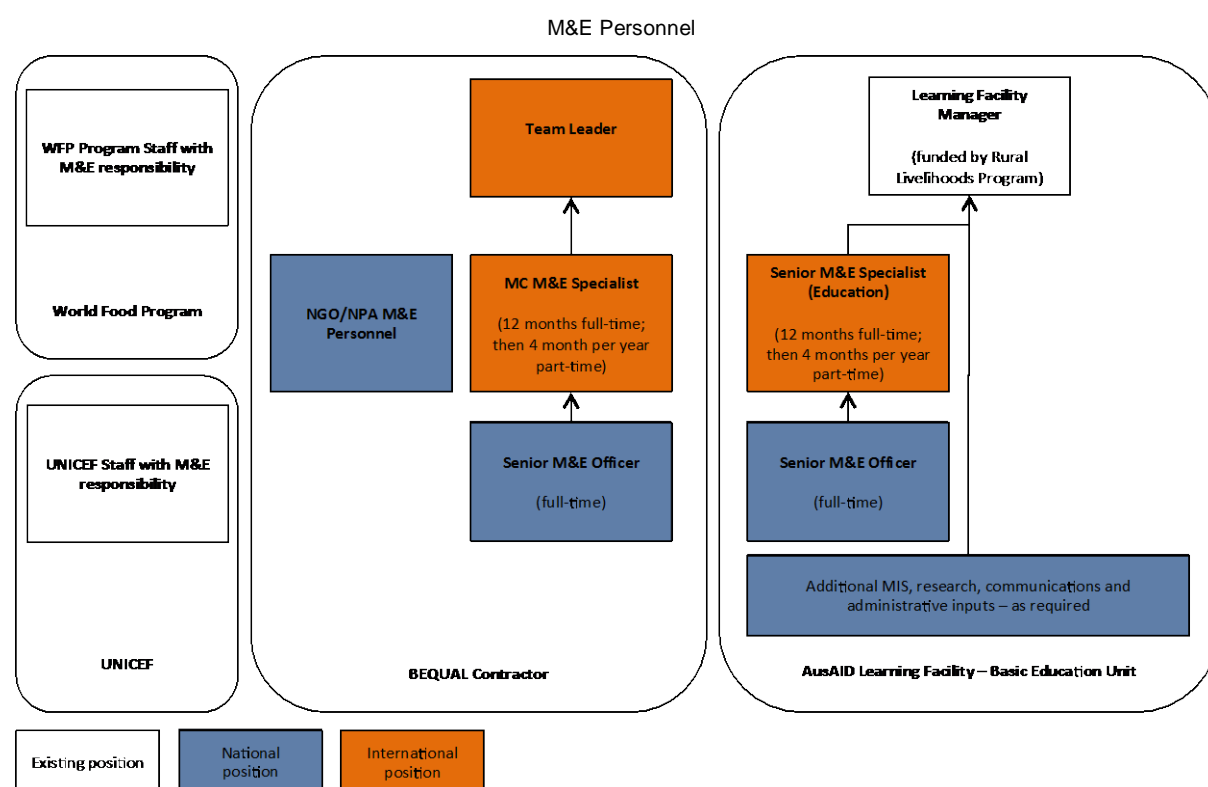
The M&E system for BEQUAL will be designed to provide DFAT with the information and analysis it requires for its own internal performance and quality reporting, and provides it in a timely fashion. Central to this will be the provision of Annual Reports at the appropriate time to contribute to DFAT's Quality at Implementation and Annual Program Performance Reports, early in each calendar year. Reports will be designed to address the quality criteria that require BEQUAL to demonstrate that it is evidence-based, effective, efficient, sustainable and inclusive.

DFAT will also implement its usual routine accountability processes across the program. These will include annual Contractor Performance Assessments and oversight of individual Adviser Performance Assessments.

Resources for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

The commitment of resources for monitoring, evaluation and learning in BEQUAL will be spread across the various program components, reflecting the particular responsibilities of each implementing partner. All implementing partners within BEQUAL will have dedicated and specialist monitoring and evaluation resources funded within their components of the program. This will ensure that adequate attention and expertise is directed to M&E.

The Learning Facility will play an important facilitation role in bringing all BEQUAL implementing partner M&E personnel together in its implementation of the program level M&E Plan. Further, it will create and support an active **BEQUAL M&E Community of Practice** that also involves M&E personnel from MoES and national, provincial and district levels. The community of practice will be a professional community of practising evaluation specialists working in the basic education sector in Lao PDR. Through structured and informal communication and interactions¹⁶⁶, the community of practice will enable peer-to-peer interaction and support – outside of formal monitoring, reporting, and evaluation activities – between and across implementing teams and their professional counterparts within the Lao Government.



BEQUAL Managing Contractor M&E Resources

The BEQUAL managing contractor will establish M&E systems and support capacity sufficient to meet its internal needs for identifying and reporting results and performance, for program

¹⁶⁶Communities of practice are an established notion: they are a group of people who share a craft and/or a profession. A community of practice can evolve naturally because of the members' common interest in a particular domain or area, or it can be created deliberately in order to support members to learn and develop in their field.

management, and to satisfy any other requirements determined by DFAT. The BEQUAL managing contractor will require a full-time M&E Specialist for the first year of the program, following which the Specialist will provide four person-months of input in each subsequent year. A full-time national Senior M&E Officer, who will be appointed for the duration of the program, will support the Specialist and the Team Leader.

The BEQUAL managing contractor will manage a flexible M&E operating budget that will provide the capacity to engage other specialist resources when required, to commission stand-alone evaluation studies, and to enable the M&E team to undertake all the necessary travel across the BEQUAL program.

NGO/NPA Partner M&E Resources

Within the funding and activity agreements signed with NGOs or an NGO consortium, the BEQUAL managing contractor will ensure that there is adequate provision for staff and operating resources for effective monitoring and evaluation. This funding will include provision for the NGOs or lead NGO to fully participate in BEQUAL program-level activities including M&E system development and the BEQUAL Program Conferences.

Learning Facility Resources

As outlined above, the existing Learning Facility will be expanded to play a similar role for BEQUAL as the role it plays for the Lao Australia Rural Livelihoods Program and the broader rural development portfolio, through the creation of a Basic Education Unit. Central to this will be the appointment of a Senior M&E Specialist and a Senior M&E Officer. The Senior M&E Specialist will be an international appointment and will work full-time for the first year of the appointment, then providing four person-months of input each subsequent year of the program. The Senior M&E Officer will be a national appointment and will work full-time for the duration of BEQUAL. In addition, DFAT will negotiate with the Learning Facility contractor to provide additional funding for resources to supplement the capacity for research leadership and management, management information systems design and implementation, and communications, administration and coordination functions.

In addition to staffing resources, the Learning Facility will manage a flexible BEQUAL M&E operating budget. This will enable the Learning Facility to commission all necessary evaluation and research studies, and to facilitate the BEQUAL Program Conferences.

Multilateral Partner M&E Resources

Both UNICEF and the WFP will be provided with a dedicated resource allocation, both financial and personnel, for the monitoring and evaluation of their components within BEQUAL. The precise scale and nature of these resources is currently in negotiation. Both partners will also be able to draw on expertise from within the Learning Facility if necessary, as well as from other partners within the BEQUAL M&E Community of Practice.

DFAT M&E Resources

The DFAT education team in Lao PDR will monitor the BEQUAL program, as well as the broader education portfolio, focusing on the strategic, contractual and financial aspects. It will access technical support in this work from the Learning Facility, which will also support DFAT with its broader monitoring of the education portfolio and the Education Delivery Strategy. DFAT may also utilise its flexible funding for technical and advisory input to bring in additional expertise in education sector monitoring and evaluation; alternatively such specialist technical support may be drawn from DFAT's broader Evaluation Capacity Building program, should it expand to encompass the Vientiane Post.

DFAT will also undertake periodic field monitoring visits as part of its overall monitoring of BEQUAL implementation, in accordance with the provisions of the DFAT Monitoring and Evaluation Standards. These will be integrated with Joint Sector Review Missions wherever possible, in order to minimise demands on staff and counterpart time and resources.

Mutual Accountability and Analysis

Recent analysis¹⁶⁷ indicates that MoES is moving towards the implementation of M&E practices that will enhance the collection and use of quality data for the education sector. Some national systems are functioning more effectively with the support that has been provided through EFA-FTI, and the 2011 Lao National Education Quality Standards are beginning to be incorporated into operations. This provides an important positive climate for monitoring and evaluation within BEQUAL to link with and support national systems.

However, sector-wide monitoring and evaluation improvements remain patchy. There is fragmentation in M&E within MoES as well. At the highest level, responsibility for M&E lies with the Department of Inspection (which has made only limited progress with sector-level M&E), but other parts of the Ministry also have related responsibilities, including the Department of Planning (which must report on the Education Sector Development Plan); RIES (which reports on evaluation of curricula and student learning); the Education and Sports Statistics and IT Centre (which is responsible for statistical data and the EMIS); and the Education Quality Assurance Centre (which reports on M&E of education quality assurance). Further complicating the system are parallel M&E responsibilities at provincial and district levels¹⁶⁸. There are varying capacities across these agencies within MoES as well as competing mandates and reporting processes¹⁶⁹.

The BEQUAL M&E team across all implementing partners will engage with the breadth of M&E systems and processes in MoES. However, it will work closely with the Department of Inspection, as the lead department for sector M&E. It is likely that the leading engagement between BEQUAL M&E and the Department of Inspection will come from the BEQUAL managing contractor M&E Specialist, although the Learning Facility will also provide important support, including through its MIS personnel linking with EMIS staff, and research personnel linking with RIES.

One strategy to support the diverse M&E staff in MoES will be involving them in the M&E Community of Practice, providing opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction and support and access to information and informal support. Involvement in BEQUAL M&E processes including the Program Conferences will be a chance to demonstrate meaningful utilisation of M&E data for quality and performance improvement; a useful tactic to build understanding and demand for stronger M&E. In addition, BEQUAL implementing partners will plan and implement their significant M&E activities with targeted MoES counterparts, seeking to jointly undertake data collection and analysis wherever possible, including during evaluation and research studies. Finally, the underlying principle that all BEQUAL M&E will utilise, link with

¹⁶⁷Final Recommendations Report for the Lao Education for All – Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI), December 2012

¹⁶⁸The full set of responsibilities has just been updated through the 23 August 2013 decree *Agreement of the Minister on the Organisation and Operations of the system for Monitoring and Evaluations in the Education and Sports Sector*

¹⁶⁹The Final Recommendations Report for the Lao Education for All – Fast Track Initiative (December 2012) observed that Department of Inspection (DoI) has the government endorsed mandate for reporting EMIS data on behalf of MoES; however the Education Statistics and Information Technology Centre (ESITC) has a greater capacity and an alternative reporting mandate to report to similar parent stakeholders. Consequently the Education Statistics and Information Technology Centre routinely hold back data, limiting DoI's ability to fulfil its reporting obligations to the Lao PDR Assembly.

and align to MoES M&E systems and processes is an important means to support mutual accountability and analysis.

Monitoring Gender, Disability, and Ethnicity

The M&E system is crucial in determining the extent to which program implementation is achieving the core BEQUAL aim of increasing participation and access to basic education for girls and boys, especially those experiencing disadvantage. The Learning Facility will have lead responsibility for monitoring the extent to which implementing partners are complying with their obligations in terms of data collection, analysis and use of information that addresses gender, disability, ethnicity, and other indicators of disadvantage. This obligation – shared by all implementing partners – goes beyond just disaggregating data (which, in itself, can pose a significant challenge). It also requires genuine and thoughtful consideration of the implications of program activities on disadvantaged groups, requires the undertaking and commissioning of specific research or evaluations addressing the issues and experiences of disadvantaged girls and boys, and particular efforts to include participants and stakeholders from all groups – not just those most easily reached or most straightforward to involve.

M&E System Development

The BEQUAL M&E system will be developed in a series of stages reflecting the sequencing of the commencement of program components, as set out below:

Sept – Dec 2013	Preliminary M&E arrangements established and initiated by UNICEF (WASH in Primary Schools Program) and WFP (School Meals Program)
June 2014	Commencement of BEQUAL resources into expanded Learning Facility
	<p>Learning Facility Preliminary Activities (detailed below):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping education sector M&E systems, other development partner support for M&E development, identification of priorities and opportunities for M&E technical support • Establishment of BEQUAL baselines, using appropriate tools (which could include, for example, Citizen Report Cards, and drawing on EMIS data for 2013/14 which will be available from May 2014) • Work with UNICEF and WFP to review interim M&E arrangements • Prepare outline of BEQUAL M&E Plan, in collaboration with partners • Prepare initial research and evaluation work plan
February 2015	Commencement of BEQUAL managing contractor
March 2015	<p>First BEQUAL Program Conference, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and reconfirmation of program theory of change and program logic • Agreement amongst all partners regarding program-level M&E • Approval of initial research and evaluation work plan
April 2015	<p>Learning Facility finalises BEQUAL M&E Plan</p> <p>BEQUAL managing contractor finalises M&E Plan</p> <p>UNICEF updates WASH in Primary Schools M&E Plan</p> <p>WFP update School Meals M&E Plan</p>
May 2015	Program and program component M&E fully operational

One of the central steps in the M&E system development will be the inaugural BEQUAL Program Conference, to be held shortly after the commencement of the BEQUAL Contractor.

The finalisation of the whole M&E system will follow the Program Conference and be led by the Learning Facility. It will be completed within a month of the Conference with the full set of M&E arrangements described in an M&E Plan submitted to DFAT and the BEQUAL Technical Working Group for approval.

Learning Facility Preliminary Activities

The Learning Facility Basic Education Unit will be established three months before the BEQUAL managing contractor, in order to undertake preliminary work to lay the foundations for program monitoring, evaluation and learning.

The first priority for the Senior M&E Specialist will be to work with key partners in MoES (particularly in the Department of Inspection and the Department of Planning) to undertake a scan and mapping of existing sector M&E systems, and of other M&E systems for education programs and projects, as well as of other development partner support for M&E. The intent of this scan and mapping exercise will be identify high priority opportunities for BEQUAL to support education sector M&E development, while also identifying the requirements for BEQUAL M&E system alignment and integration with national systems.

The second priority for the Senior M&E Specialist will be the establishment and reconfirmation of baseline data for program level outcomes and indicators, and the identification of additional work that will be required to establish baselines where they do not currently exist. This work will be finalised once the BEQUAL managing contractor commences and can become involved in the finalisation of baselines for its package of BEQUAL work.

Other preliminary activities for the education team in the Learning Facility will include:

1. The Senior M&E Specialist will work with UNICEF and WFP to review their interim M&E arrangements for the WASH in Primary Schools and School Meals program respectively.
2. The Senior M&E Specialist will undertake preliminary work to establish the parameters, processes and systems for program-level monitoring, evaluation and learning, preparing an outline of the BEQUAL M&E Plan for further development and finalisation with the full complement of BEQUAL implementing partners once the BEQUAL managing contractor commences.
3. Research staff of the Learning Facility will review the ESDP Mid-Term Review, the Situational Analysis, the LABEP Sustainability Evaluation and other recent analyses and reviews to identify possible issues for research. They will then work with partners in DFAT, UNICEF, WFP, NGOs and NPAs

While these preliminary activities are important, equally important is the principle that no program-level M&E arrangements will be finalised until the BEQUAL managing contractor has commenced and can fully participate in the development of those arrangements, as described above.

Attachment 2: Development of a Program Level Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix

Outcomes for the first phase of the BEQUAL program are listed under each Key Result Area in the Design, including key focus areas for policy dialogue. Performance questions will be developed for monitoring and evaluation of each of the outcomes, with outcome targets for both mid-term (2016-17) and end-of-phase one. A program level monitoring and evaluation matrix will then be developed which articulates indicators against which progress towards intended outcomes may be monitored. A proposed outline for this matrix is below. On mobilisation of the expanded Learning Facility, the Senior M&E Specialist within the Learning Facility will review this outline and develop indicators, ensuring integration and alignment with the Performance Assessment Framework for the Education Delivery Strategy, and will then fully operationalise all indicators and associated data collection and reporting methods. Operationalising the indicators will include fully developing and documenting:

- Operational definitions of each indicator
- Targets (annual and end-of-phase 1 targets)
- Process and timeline for data collection and analysis
- Data quality assurance methods
- Reporting timelines and processes
- Data management systems and processes that maximise the use and strengthening of existing and nascent data management information systems within MoES
- Responsibility for all processes associated with the indicators.

The process of developing and Operationalising the indicators will also be the basis for the Learning Facility to establish baselines for indicators wherever possible, as part of this preliminary work.

Outcome	Indicator	Baseline (when known)	Baseline Date	Data Source(s)
Program Context (Sector)				
Key Result Area 1: Education Policy, Planning & Coordination				
Component 1: Education Policy, Planning & Coordination				
End-of-Phase 1 Outcomes				
Intermediate Outcomes (mid-term)				
Key Result Area 2: Increased Participation				
Component 2.1: Participation and Access				
End-of-Phase 2 Outcomes				
Intermediate Outcomes				
Key Result Area 2: Increased Participation				
Component 2.2: School Meals				
End-of-Phase 2 Outcomes				

Outcome	Indicator	Baseline (when known)	Baseline Date	Data Source(s))
Intermediate Outcomes				
Key Result Area 3: Teacher Education and Support Component 3.1: Pre-Service Teacher Education				
End of Phase 2 Outcomes				
Intermediate Outcomes				
Key Result Area 3: Teacher Education and Support Component 3.1: In-Service Teacher Education				
End of Phase 2 Outcomes				
Intermediate Outcomes				
Key Result Area 4: Teaching and Learning Materials Component 4: Teaching and Learning Resources				
End of Phase 2 Outcomes				

Outcome	Indicator	Baseline (when known)	Baseline Date	Data Source(s))
Intermediate Outcomes				
Key Result Area 5: School Infrastructure				
Component 5.1: Classrooms, Furniture and Rehabilitation of Primary Schools				
End of Phase 2 Outcomes				
Intermediate outcomes				
Key Result Area 5: School Infrastructure				
Component 5.2: New WASH Facilities in Primary Schools				
End of Phase 2 Outcomes				
Intermediate Outcomes				

ANNEX 10. RISK MATRIX

The Risk Management Plan contains an assessment of risk based on the following criteria:

L = Likelihood of occurrence (1=Rare, 2=Unlikely, 3=Possible, 4=Likely, 5=Almost certain)

C = Consequence of occurrence (1=Negligible, 2=Minor, 3=Moderate, 4=Major, 5=Severe)

R = Risk Level Combination of the two assessments (**E**=Extreme, **H**=High, **M**=Medium, **L**=Low)

SOURCE OF RISK	RISK EVENT	RANKING			RISK TREATMENT	RESP.
		L	C	R		
FINANCIAL & ECONOMIC RISKS						
MoES is not able to influence MoF to increase budget allocations to better finance recurrent (non-wage) allocations.	Limited opportunity for MoES to provide counterpart funding in support of BEQUAL and therefore limits the opportunity for the program to be sustained	4	4	H	Continuous monitoring of MoES budget. Active support to MoES with regards to public financial management capacity development and dialogue with MoF. High level consultations by DFAT at Post with Lao Government (MoF).Use of Program funds to support recurrent (non-wage) expenditure if necessary.	DFAT MoES
Corrupt practices by officials at each level divert resources from target beneficiaries	Services provided at inflated costs Preferred contractors bypassed for other contractors who will misuse funds	4	4	H	Careful checks and balances across all expenditure channels to reduce opportunities for diversion of resources	DFAT BEQUAL Managing Contractor

SOURCE OF RISK	RISK EVENT	RANKING			RISK TREATMENT	RESP.
		L	C	R		
Incentives for DTE, RIES and provincial and district personnel (e.g. service credits, travel allowances) to be engaged in BEQUAL activity are not provided by MoES	Staff including teachers may perceive participation in program activities to be additional to normal workload	3	4	M	Program initiatives seen to be included as an integral part of regular MoES activities rather than as an additional task.	DFAT, MoES,
Delayed funding of program activities from BEQUAL managing contractor or from counterpart funds	Teachers unable to attend training due to lack of travel / counterpart funds Reduction in the pace and scope of planned program activities	2	4	M	All activities planned based on the actual MoES allocation and agreed contributions Any delays in BEQUAL Managing Contractor funding advised immediately	MoES, DFAT
Funding envelope not conveyed in a timely way – annual funding not kept constant	Annual programming commitments cannot be met. Inconsistency of programming will result	3	3	M	Annual programming and funding projections planned well in advance and partners confirm their commitment for the funding requirements. When not practical – BEQUAL adjust outputs and outcomes accordingly.	DFAT MoES BEQUAL Managing Contractor
INSTITUTIONAL RISKS						
Poor understanding of program objectives and outcomes. Little ownership by counterparts	Programming and implementation of sponsored initiatives will be limited.	3	3	M	Program conferences held in selected provincial centres The annual program conference focused on ensuring collaborative ownership and planning program activities.	DFAT MoES , BEQUAL Managing Contractor

SOURCE OF RISK	RISK EVENT	RANKING			RISK TREATMENT	RESP.
		L	C	R		
Counterparts particularly at Central level are too busy with other activities to devote sufficient time to BEQUAL activities	Lack of active counterpart participation will undermine the partnership approach to implementation and program ownership.	4	3	M	Consultation and agreements reached to ensure the workloads of counterparts is eased to ensure adequate availability and commitment to the program	DFAT, MoES and
Counterparts are transferred during implementation and after capacity building	Disruptive to program implementation and inefficient due to the need to build capacity of replacements	4	4	H	Agreements negotiated within MoES to ensure such transfers are minimised.	DFAT, MoES, BEQUAL Managing Contractor
Curriculum changes in TTCs resisted by staff, particularly the increase in inclusive education programs	Negative attitude of TTC staff and educational administrators towards curriculum changes and introduction of additional units such as "Inclusive Education"	3	2	L	Stakeholders to undertake an advocacy role to ensure TTCs embrace the changes (i.e. incentives) and demonstrate an absorptive capacity for new and enhanced roles Possible opportunities for TTC staff to gain higher qualifications through professional development strategies to be negotiated.	BEQUAL Managing Contractor and TTC (via MoES – DTE)
Stakeholders do not understand program aims, objectives, potential benefits and their roles in program.	Negative attitude of other stakeholders towards program interventions	2	4	M	Awareness raising throughout program planning, training and implementation. Reinforce program activities as supporting roles of MoES staff	BEQUAL Managing Contractor
Lack of coordination between implementing agencies	Overlapping of functions and duplication of activities possible unless well-coordinated by BEQUAL	3	3	M	Program Conference held regularly to ensure coordination between all implementing agencies	BEQUAL Managing Contractor, MoES,

SOURCE OF RISK	RISK EVENT	RANKING			RISK TREATMENT	RESP.
		L	C	R		
	Managing Contractor					
Inability of Provinces and Districts to sustain the increased demands for planning teacher professional development and distribution of materials.	Teaching/learning materials not distributed as planned. Teachers unable to access PD on a regular and cyclic basis	4	4	H	BEQUAL must support PESS and DESB with sufficient funds, at least initially, to ensure on-going training in managing materials distribution and monitoring and recording teachers' access to PD.	MoES, BEQUAL Managing Contractor
Inability of PESS, DESB and schools to absorb initiatives and gains during program implementation	Schools view the program as another source of external aid and adopt a mindset that sustainability will not be achieved or expected once program funding ceases	3	3	M	All activities planned within framework of budgetary and human resource constraints of school communities, Review of progress undertaken after 3 years and modifications made to ineffective implementation measures.	BEQUAL Managing Contractor, MoES
Delay in program tendering and implementation	GoL budget allocations insufficient to cover counterpart funding in the first and second year	2	2	L	Maintain close contact with GoL on timing and the program budgetary requirements.	DFAT, MoES
TECHNICAL RISKS						
Disagreement about the additional target districts and beneficiaries of support (beyond EFE-FTI)	Lack of clarity in the selection of additional target Districts to be in BEQUAL program.	2	2	L	Clear criteria for the selection of additional target Districts (beyond EFA-FTI districts) clearly stated and transparent	MoES DFAT
Ethnic children and children with disability unable to	Language and cultural barriers present; Access for disabled children	4	4	H	BEQUAL Managing Contractor coordinates local support staff from MoES to work with parents to reduce	BEQUAL Managing Contractor, MoES

SOURCE OF RISK	RISK EVENT	RANKING			RISK TREATMENT	RESP.
		L	C	R		
enter school due to structural and social barriers	to school site prevented by barriers e.g. for wheelchairs or other aids)				cultural misunderstandings Access ramps to school grounds and building provided as part of rehabilitation	
Insufficient female graduates enrol for teacher training	Perceived difficulties for female secondary graduate to enrol in teacher training and insufficient numbers qualified for training	3	2	L	Data shows sufficient secondary graduates available for training. Scholarships and advocacy programs offered as incentives for enrolment	BEQUAL Managing Contractor TTCs MoES
The Technical Resource Group is not used appropriately	Program monitoring may be limited and the Post will not be receiving profession advice and support with regards to program implementation.	3	3	M	Deployment of the TRG parallels program mobilisation. DFAT ensures the TRG is actively used to monitor the program and for advisory support to the post and the program	DFAT.
BEQUAL and the Learning Facility are not able work together effectively as a result of contracting or personality issues.	BEQUAL Managing Contractor will not be able to use the resources of the Learning Facility effectively and program initiatives will be limited	3	3	L	All stakeholders associated with both BEQUAL and the Rural Livelihoods Program are briefed and made aware of the importance of the LF being seen and used according to DFAT requirements,	DFAT BEQUAL Managing Contractor
NGOs and NPAs are not sufficiently engaged with the BEQUAL program	Inability to mobilise participation and knowledge activities appropriately – with community involvement and ownership	3	2	L	BEQUAL Managing Contractor ensures NGOs and NPAs are fully engaged and actively included in the management and implementation of program activities.	DFAT BEQUAL Managing Contractor
POLITICAL RISKS						
Political leadership changes during implementation	Lack of ongoing support for program activities by Governors and MoES leadership in each province	3	3	L	Brief the new GoL leadership on BEQUAL, including proposed MOU obligations for counterpart funding, physical infrastructure and human	DFAT

SOURCE OF RISK	RISK EVENT	RANKING			RISK TREATMENT	RESP.
		L	C	R		
	and / or district				resource allocation	
Political intervention in program activities	Dilution of program impact due to diversion of resources and inputs; non-targeted participants substituted in training programs or scholarship programs, Resettlement programs change the target beneficiaries through both inward and outward migration	3	3	M	Maintain active working relationships with key leaders at national and provincial levels; Build in clear criteria for selecting beneficiaries; monitor and audit all expenditure	DFAT, BEQUAL Managing Contractor I
Post lacks staffing capacity to manage the monitoring of program implementation	Insufficient staff at Post, increased workload and program complexity increases as implementation proceeds	3	3	M	Undertake occasional random monitoring visits to the field sites, with regular monitoring reports to be submitted to BEQUAL Managing Contractor by District officers	DFAT
ENVIRONMENTAL / INFRASTRUCTURE RISK						
Location of BEQUAL management office Staffing of Advisers in Provincial Support Offices.	Difficulty in attracting and retaining experienced and qualified international and Lao advisers for extended contracts	3	4	H	Advertise for advisers with proven experience in Lao or similar context. Contract arrangements take account of relative remoteness	BEQUAL Managing Contractor
	Concern about the ability of Advisers to work in more remote locations in North and South Lao PDR.	3	4	H	Regional Advisers provided with appropriate delegated authority and communicate regularly on all program issues with central management. Regular joint meetings between provincial advisers and central management group.	BEQUAL Managing Contractor MoES
Access to remote villages, particularly	Travel for monitoring, evaluation and specialist	4	4	E	Pace and scope of activities take account of time needed for travel,	BEQUAL Managing

SOURCE OF RISK	RISK EVENT	RANKING			RISK TREATMENT	RESP.
		L	C	R		
those in border areas comprising ethnic groups	training restricted both for advisers and for participant beneficiaries Lack of access to villages during the wet season				security, counterpart costs (including release of teachers) and MoES role in monitoring / selection of candidates for in-service training.	Contractor MoES (PESS and DESB)
Difficulties in telecommunications access	Regular interaction between the key program stakeholders is limited	2	2	L	Use of cell phones for data transmission possible since all DESB have 3G internet connectivity Utilise existing MoES courier systems and others for document transmission if needed.	BEQUAL Managing Contractor MoES
Intermittent power supply	Reduces productivity of advisers, counterparts and local staff Impact on training courses in some venues	2	2	L	Training venues selected on basis of power reliability Back-up plans, teaching methodologies and equipment in place in locations with unreliable power Program office locations and the type of office equipment purchased take account of power situation	BEQUAL Managing Contractor, MoES,
Damage to environment through infrastructure activities funded by program	Reduced credibility of program interventions	2	3	L	Follow GoA and GoL environmental guidelines as required under the contract	BEQUAL Managing Contractor. DFAT
Natural disasters (e.g. flooding or landslides)	Location and timing of program activities may be affected Vulnerable communities unable or unwilling to continue program activities	4	3	M	Security and risk management plan address protocols procedures in case of natural disaster Recommend adjustments to program activities affected by natural disasters	BEQUAL Managing Contractor, MoES, DFAT

SOURCE OF RISK	RISK EVENT	RANKING			RISK TREATMENT	RESP.
		L	C	R		
District Engineers have inadequate skills to supervise repair of building and water & sanitation systems in dispersed and remote villages	Unsatisfactory construction standards likely in areas with a low building skill base	4	4	H	More involvement of ECDM advisers from Central office to visit locations where skills are limited. Intensive capacity building of a team of advisers who can rotate between sites on a cycle of support	MoES BEQUAL Managing Contractor;;VEDCs NPA / NGOs
SOCIAL RISK						
Inability to sustain commitment to level of community participation	Withdrawal of participants in program activities Reduction of household income needed to keep children in school	3	3	M	Community development plans address levels of commitment required and identify realistic and achievable activities for program funding.	BEQUAL Managing Contractor; MoES; VEDC
Negative attitude of stakeholders including attitudes towards a foreign program	Unwillingness to participate in program planning or activities	3	3	M	Local leaders invited to participate in cross-visits to similar programs in other provinces as part of planning process.	BEQUAL Managing Contractor; VEDC

