



International Labour Organization

**MID-TERM EVALUATION
of
“National rural employment strategy in Lao PDR
towards
increasing opportunities for decent and productive employment in rural areas”
(106182 – LAO/16/01/CHE)**

Type of Evaluation: Internal Evaluation

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
AVSF	Agronomes and Veterinaries sans Frontiers
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DAC	District Advisory Committee
DAFO	District Agriculture and Forestry Office
DIC	Department of Industry and Commerce
DW	Decent Work
DWT	Decent Work Team
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoL	Government of Lao PDR
Ha	hectare
HHs	Households
HQ	Headquarters
ILO	International Labour Organization
IVETS	Integrated Vocational and Educational Training School of Sekong
kg	kilograms
K	Lao currency
km	kilometers
LFTU	Lao Federation of Trade Unions
LNCCI	Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry
LWU	Lao Women's Union
LYU	Lao Youth Union
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
m/c	Motor-cycle
M+E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
NESDP	National Economic and Social Development Plan
NGO	Non-Government Organisations
NRES	National Rural Employment Strategy
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PAC	Provincial Advisory Committee
PAFO	Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office
PDR	Peoples Democratic Republic
PRF	Poverty Reduction Fund
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SEZ	Special economic zone
SSDC	Southern Skills Development Center
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
VCD	Value-chain development

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rural employment continues to be one of the country's priorities in national development plan and requires formulation of a National Rural Employment Strategy (NRES) that creates jobs and income in rural areas, and where (formal) employment promotion is a key indicator in ensuring inclusive economic growth. The current project, "National rural employment strategy in Lao PDR towards increasing opportunities for decent and productive employment in rural areas" (106182 – LAO/16/01/CHE), aims to increase rural employment through application of integrated approaches in a range of sub-projects. The Project's development objective was to increase incomes of 2000 households (HHs) by 30%.

The Project (April 2017 – Mar 2020) is implemented by ILO in partnership with national and provincial authorities of the Government of Lao PDR (GoL) represented by different line ministries, led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and includes Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU) and the Lao National Chamber of Commerce (LNCC). The Project is co-funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for \$2,138,062, the ILO (\$1,422,664) and the Arab Gulf Program for Development Organisation (\$100,000). The project inception was prompt (19/05/2017) but then suffered serious delays (both external and internal) in assignment of the Project Manager (22/02/2017) and ongoing slow mobilisation of national staff. As a result, it will be difficult to achieve its development objective within the remaining sixteen months, as well various intermediate objectives.

The Project design is highly appropriate to address some of the imbalance between rural and urban areas. At the same time the Project is complex with many layered activities and thus somewhat ambitious in terms of its timeframe and targets, particularly when the original time frame was reduced from five to three years. The Project Intervention Model uses sub-projects to both provide lessons and inputs towards formulating an NRES, which can at the same time provide a vehicle for the development of tools (e.g. nationally certified skills development curriculums) that would continue to contribute to the development of skills and employment in rural areas. The Project Intervention Model appears to focus on the agriculture sector, with very limited attention given to light industry, a growing sector in rural areas.

The sub-projects or field activities with potential to directly to increase HH incomes remain limited to Sekong province, with in Savannakhet, mainly governance structures established since Project mobilization there in Feb. 2018. Field activities have been based on providing technical training with VCD interventions, one of the core interventions, still to be applied. The outputs are limited in terms of HHs involved and production volumes remains small. Thus, these are far from having significant or sustainable impact, and as such can't yet provide convincing implementation-strategies for enhancing rural employment within the NRES. Significant inputs have been made preparing two major activities, construction of an irrigation scheme in one village (104 HHs) and improved coffee production, which promise to deliver significant results towards the project objective.

The drafting of an NRES has proceeded well, engaging relevant GoL agencies and has developed a relevant set of strategic objectives. These include both the agriculture and light industry sectors. Further development of the NRES is to take place and it is expected to be included in the next National Economic and Social Development Plan which will ensure institutional support. The current draft does not yet include implementation-strategies to guide the local (Provincial and District) line agencies who will be responsible for applying the NRES. The strategic objectives however will not easily be interpreted by them into action plans, risking that the NRES be not applied. Thus, the MTE recommended the NRES define working scenarios, provisionally; (a) Agriculture based – subsistence; (b) Agriculture based –

semi-commercial and (c) Light industry in rural areas. These will better resonate with local agencies and then allow practical implementation-strategies to be developed.

Despite the slow mobilization of the Project the MTE considers that the project provides a valuable opportunity to address the growing issue of rural employment. While it might not reach its development objective it could make good progress in demonstrating effective working strategies to deal with the three scenarios provisional listed above. To this end the MTE provides two broad recommendations.

Recommendations

Project stakeholders (ILO, MLSW and SDC) should consider how the project can best uses its remaining sixteen months and resources to work towards its development objectives. At the same time this should contribute towards an effective NRES. The following operational and management strategies should be taken into consideration.

1# Operational strategies

- (a) Select activities that will mobilize greater number of work opportunities for local workers, both to work towards achieving the Projects development objectives and to demonstrating models that will be a real contribution to achieving the NRES.
- (b) Explore an implementation-strategy for strategic objective 4# of the NRES. This would examine ongoing employment of foreign workers in light industry (4.1#) and other associated issues i.e. DW (e.g. pay rates); OSH.
- (c) If resources are available for community tourism, these should not be invested in construction of a lodge as it will place too great a burden on the community and likely to be mis-used or fall into miss-use. The investment in this would be better supported through links with other agencies with specific expertise (e.g. Swiss contact)
- (d) Examine the funds remaining and decide how they can best be used to facilitate the above. This could include arranging for a no-cost extension that would provide time for the above to begin to be demonstrated.
- (e) Re-visit the log frame and adjust targets and indicators as part of the refocusing initiative.
- (f) Engage all local partners through PAC and DAC to appreciate the overall project implementing strategy as a means to work towards an NRES. They should then appreciate the role of individual activities as contributions to the NRES, and all field activities should articulate a provisional model or working-strategy as to how the activity could enhance rural employment.

2# Project Management and coordination

- (a) Take all measures it needs to rapid mobilize its capacity, including recruitment of effective national staff, have effective and accessible transport (either purchase or obtain a long-term contract, with a project recruited driver), streamline fund transfers from ILO HQ to the Project in Lao PDR etc. Without taking such measures then the above recommendations will continue to be slowed.
- (b) Enlist GoL as partners in conducting project interventions, but then add external agencies (trainers, NGOs, intl. specialists etc.) to guide and mentor the implementation. In this way, capacity is built, project outputs are achieved, and local GoL agencies can assess interventions in terms of working-strategies for the NRES.

A final comment can be added. While the Project with its slow mobilization may not achieve its objectives in the time remaining, if it can demonstrate progress consideration should be given to find ways to advance this work further through an extension and/or further phases.

2.0 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

2.1 Objective of the MTE.

The objective of the evaluation is to review progress against the expected project deliverables and outcomes and to propose any course correction for the project's remaining period. In so doing, the evaluation will identify the achievements, good practise and lessons learned from the project. It is further intended to assess and analyse continued feasibility of the project design and intervention approaches.

Knowledge and information obtained from this evaluation will be used as a basis for better implementation for the remaining period of the project. The evaluation will also supports public accountability of the government of Lao PDR and the ILO. Clients and users of the evaluation:

- Project team and ILO Country Office for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR
- DWT – Bangkok, ILO HQ
- Government of Lao PDR, workers' and employers' organizations
- Donor – SDC

2.2 Scope of the MTE

The evaluation covers all activities undertaken up to September 2018. The evaluation will cover all the aspects of the project, including the formulation of the National Rural Employment Strategy and the provincial implementation. It involves discussion with national counterparts of the project, provincial partners and Bangkok-based technical specialists.

The evaluation will verify good practises, lessons learned from the implementation and management of the project. A set of practical recommendations will be included in the evaluation report aimed at improving the project management, interventions, constituent and partner coordination and overall implementation.

The evaluation (see TOR in Annex 1) will give specific attention to how the intervention is relevant to the ILO's programme and policy frameworks at national and global levels, UNDAF, and national sustainable development strategy or other national development framework incl. relevant policies for rural development in Lao PDR.

The evaluation will integrate gender equality, disability inclusion and other non-discrimination issues as a cross-cutting concern throughout its methodology and all deliverables, including the final report. In particular the evaluation should focus on the following:

- a. The progress of the project against output and outcome targets
- b. The extent to which management arrangements are appropriate to achieve desired results and outcomes within a timely, effective and efficient manner
- c. The level of engagement with and satisfaction of the project constituents and direct beneficiaries
- d. Assess the quality of operational work planning, budgeting and risk management.
- e. Lessons learned and good practices
- f. Prospects for the model to improve livelihood of rural workers beyond the expected end of the project (exit strategies and sustainability).

2.3 MTE Methodology

The ILO evaluation policy 2017 provided the basic framework for the MTE. The evaluation was carried out according to ILO standard policies and procedures.

The MTE Team was comprised of one international and one national consultant, both with extensive experience in development work in Lao PDR. The evaluation used mixed methods that draw on both quantitative and qualitative evidence and involve multiple means of analysis. These included:

1. A desk review of relevant documents related to the project performance and progress, including the project document, progress reports, project outcomes, mission reports, reports and assessment form the Sekong Pilot project, etc
2. Interviews held with: ILO Country Office, Project Manager, Project staff, and ILO DWT specialists who have contributed to the project activities; Lao-based Project Manager was interviewed in relation to the potential and/or actual synergies with the RE project (see Annex 2).
3. Interviews with key project stakeholders at national, provincial and district levels, e.g. constituents, donor, implementing partners, direct beneficiaries (staff of relevant ministries, departments, and offices) and community villagers at project target areas, (see Annex 2).

Interviews with beneficiaries were conducted in the villages first in meetings attended by Village Committee members and villagers who had participated in Project activities to date. Where possible examples of the activities (e.g. chicken houses, fish ponds, irrigation site) were visited where various issues were probed; engagement of village in planning, incomes gained etc.). Due to time constraints the number of village visits was limited but was considered cover the range of activities conducted to date. (see Table 1 for villages visited and activities/ouputs, and Annex 3 for map and activities in each village).

The Project has conducted a range of training inputs (ToT, Gender Awareness, etc.). These were references in interviews but in the absence of training reports and detailed M+E system a full record of these was not obtained. Similarly, without the M+E system still in process of development, a detailed assessment of beneficiaries disaggregated by sex was not possible.

The MTE team was not able to attend a de-briefing workshop to present preliminary findings to project partners in a formal manner, as such could not be included in schedule. Assessments and observations were expressed to DLSW informally in Sekong.

3. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION

3.1 Background

At the request of the Government of Lao PDR and aligning with the United Nations Partnership Framework for Lao PDR (2017-2021) and the ILO Decent Work Country Programme for Lao PDR (2017-2021), the ILO has been working to develop an approach to reducing poverty through promoting employment in the rural areas of the Lao PDR.

Rural employment promotion continues to be one of the country's priorities in national development plan, specifically, the current 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) 2016-2020. This requires formulation of a national rural employment strategy that creates jobs and income in rural areas, and where (formal) employment is a key indicator in ensuring inclusive economic growth.

A small pilot in 2012, followed by the Sekong Project¹, (2014 – 2016), led the Lao PDR government to promote rural employment for poverty reduction at 24th Labour Ministerial Meeting (LMM) of 2016 ASEAN, where Lao PDR assumed the ASEAN presidency. The ASEAN Declaration on transition from informal employment to formal employment towards decent in ASEAN was adopted at the meeting. ILO was then supported the drafting of a declaration for discussion among ASEAN Member States and subsequently, drawing up a work plan. The work plan has been a platform for knowledge sharing among ASEAN countries where agriculture and rural development have played an important economic role.

The current project involves scaling-up of the strategies from the Sekong Project both in its reach and policy impact. It puts an emphasis on national policy implementation and development, with relevance to the implementation of such policies as the labour law, national OSH programme, social protection system, national skills standard and value chain promotion.

The Project was originally conceived as a five-year project but scaled back (in time frame but not substance) to three years following negotiation with donor. The project in its current form aims to contribute to increasing decent rural employment and income through integrated approaches; supporting the Lao PDR Government to develop a National Rural Employment Strategy that also addresses the ASEAN Declaration on decent work promotion; and increasing the Lao PDR and ASEAN knowledge base on decent rural employment creation.

The project emphasizes women, ethnic minorities and people with disability as they are the most vulnerable groups and more susceptible to poverty and multiple discrimination. These groups are prominent in data collection, inclusion in technical strategy development, training delivery as well as through translations into ethnic language and appropriate project staffing.

Sustainability is ingrained through capacity-building of government departments and officials, implementing agencies and the use of a market based approach for commercialising rural agriculture.

3.2 The Project

The project will contribute to increased rural employment through application of integrated approaches in a range of sub-projects. This will be used to demonstrate how policies and strategies promoting different pillars of Decent Work are extended to rural economies and so also contribute to the formulation of a National Rural Employment Strategy (NRES), (see Fig 1 for the Project Intervention Model)

¹ Official title; “Rural Safety Nets through Income Security and Employment Promotion for Poverty Reduction”

Development Objective: Decent employment opportunities increased in rural areas of Lao PDR through development and implementation of a national Rural Employment Strategy. The specific development goal is for 2000 HHs to increase their income by 30%. (see Box for detailed Outputs.)

Immediate Objective 1: Decent rural employment opportunities and income increased through integrated approaches in target communities of selected Sekong and Savannakhet provinces

Immediate Objective 2: National Rural Employment Strategy developed and adopted, linked to support for implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on 'Decent work promotion: Transition to formal economy'

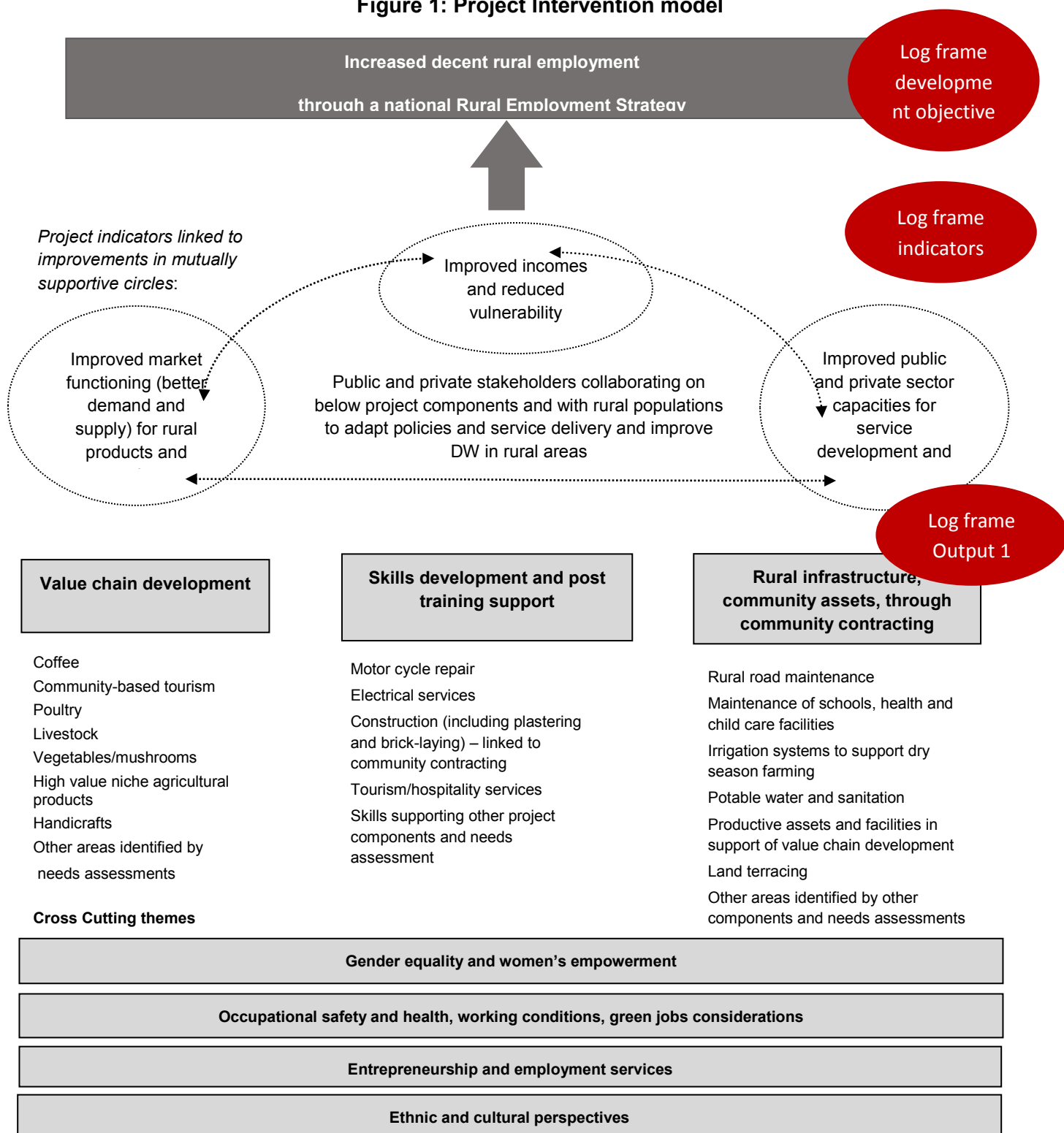
Immediate Objective 3: Increased knowledge base and knowledge sharing enhances decent rural employment creation in Lao PDR.

Box 1: Project strategy, objectives and outputs
<p>Immediate Objective 1: Decent rural employment opportunities and income increased through integrated approaches in target communities of two selected provinces</p> <p>Output 1.1: Value chain processes improved for selected products with demonstrated food security, nutrition, income generation and market linkage elements, with incorporation of gender analysis, OSH and green job considerations</p> <p>Output 1.2: Decent rural employment increased in line with local market requirements through (i) gender responsive skills development and (ii) access to employment, financial and business support services; incorporating OSH, green job and gender considerations</p> <p>Output 1.3: Rural infrastructure (including community assets) improved in target areas, incorporating OSH, green job approaches and gender mainstreaming</p> <p>Output 1.4: Decent working conditions and OSH strengthened through promotion and implementation of the Labour Law and 2nd National OSH Programme, with attention to gender considerations</p>
<p>Immediate Objective 2: National Rural Employment Strategy developed and adopted, linked to support for implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on 'Decent work promotion: Transition to formal economy'</p> <p>Output 2.1: National Rural Employment Strategy and action plan formulated and adopted through participatory process and partnership development among relevant stakeholders at all levels, with special attention to gender mainstreaming, needs of ethnic minorities and persons with disability</p> <p>Output 2.2: Improved collection, management, dissemination and use of sex-disaggregated data on decent work in rural areas provides a strengthened evidence base for the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the rural employment strategy</p> <p>Output 2.3: Implementation of ASEAN Declaration on 'Decent work promotion: Transition to formal economy' is supported in Lao PDR with links to the formulation and implementation of the National Rural Employment Strategy</p>
<p>Immediate Objective 3: Increased knowledge base and knowledge sharing enhances decent rural employment creation in Lao PDR</p> <p>Output 3.1: Project lessons documented, published, disseminated and used to inform formulation of National Rural Employment Strategy</p> <p>Output 3.2: Findings of project research initiatives published and disseminated to inform policy and strategy development (including National Rural Employment Strategy at national and provincial levels within Lao PDR)</p>

The project secured funding from three sources, (a) Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (\$2,138,062); (b) ILO (\$1,422,664) and (c) Arab Gulf Programme for Development Organisation (\$100,000), making a total of \$3,660,726.

The main project implementing partner is the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare through its Provincial Departments. To guide and monitor activities the Project sets up Provincial and District Advisory Committees (PAC and DAC) with 'working groups formed to coordinate specific activities in the field.

Figure 1: Project Intervention model



Supported by ILO tools: GET Ahead for Women in Enterprise; Business Group Formulation; Community-contracting Work improvement in homes, farms, constructions sites (WISE; WISH; WISCON; WIND); Gender Mainstreaming Strategies Training (GEMS); Know About Business (for use in national secondary school curriculum)Portfolio of Policy Guidance Notes on Decent Work in the Rural Economy

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

In addition to the key questions (bold/italics) below, a set of six additional points were to be addressed by the MTE². The first of these is contained within the key question and responded to there. Responses to points not contained within key questions (i.e. b,c, and d) have been added to an appropriate question. Lessons Learnt (e) will be included in sect 4 (conclusion).

4.1 Relevance and validity of design

- ***To what extent do the design of implementation strategies respond to the problem analysis***

The background and rationale for the Project highlights a range of issues; *the higher levels of poverty in rural areas; the high ratio of youth in the working population; the failure of economic growth to contribute to local employment, vulnerability of women in seeking employment in the informal sector: and the weak performance of the agriculture sector*. These are common to many development projects in Lao PDR, but here are viewed through the lens of employment opportunities and decent work. This enables a range of existing laws and regulations to be referenced and resources mobilised. As such it also implicitly encourages cooperative action across sectors, so necessary and often so difficult to achieve. The problem analysis might also have referred to the increasing urban drift³ which can be linked to lack of employment opportunities in rural areas. This could help to reinforce determination across the sectors to work together on enabling rural employment. Weak performance of GoL agencies was recognised in the earlier phase and this should also be noted. Capacity building for these is implicit in the 'intervention model', but no outputs or indicators for this are in the log frame, despite this likely to absorb significant project resources.

The target areas for the Project continue to include Sekong Province with the same village clusters; Tok Onkeo in Laman District, and Xieng Louang in Dak Cheung District. These areas were recognised as suffering from a range of development issues which could constrain the development of rural employment strategies. To provide a broader context for development of the NRES the current Project includes a second province, Savannakhet, with target areas in Sepon and Atsaphone Districts. Of these, Sepon faces similar development issues as the two Sekong districts. Atsaphone communities do appear to have relatively secure livelihoods and thus provides the Project a more general context to explore strategies for enhancing rural employment.

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- a. The **progress of the project** against output and outcome targets
 - b. The extent to which management arrangements are appropriate to achieve desired results and outcomes within a timely, effective and efficient manner
 - c. The level of engagement with and satisfaction of the project constituents and direct beneficiaries
 - d. Assess the quality of operational work planning, budgeting and risk management.
 - e. Lessons learned and good practices
 - f. Prospects for the model to improve livelihood of rural workers beyond the expected end of the project (exit strategies and sustainability)

³ "Results of Population and Housing Census 2015", Lao Statistic Bureau.

The Project has built on the experience and lessons of the earlier ILO project, Rural Employment Creation in Sekong, more commonly referred to as the Sekong Project, which worked only in Sekong Province. This used VCD as the main working-strategy to enhance smallholder's income and the field activities in the current Project replicate this. The Implementation Model for the current Project has added activities for "skills development" and "rural infrastructure/community assets through community contracting". These will less directly contribute to the development objective, but in the process of their application will build tools and capacities, and thus contribute to ongoing and sustained impact. Together these are part of the ILO integrated model for rural employment development.

The agriculture sector can be expected to remain the dominant area of employment for rural people for some time to come. Smallholder farmers' production remains semi-commercial, with output sold in small lots, and with variable quality. VCD interventions could thus be applied in every district of the country for a range of products, and is so most relevant.

At the same time, light industry is becoming increasingly common in rural areas. In Sepon district, the MTE found three such industries⁴ and in Sekong two new industries are projected⁵, along with existing rubber plantations and processing. Such light industry could well be expected to be an important source of employment surrounding rural populations. However there is little in the Project Implementation Model (Fig 1) to indicate interventions will be directed towards this, except for Output 1.4.1 (application of the Labour Law to achieve DW and OSH in rubber plantations). A further issue for light industries in the target areas is continued employment of foreign workers. The first draft National Rural Employment Strategy (NRES) now addresses issues related to light industry with Strategic Objective #4.1, and as such an outcome of the Project. In the time remaining the Project could test working strategies within this sector.

- ***To what extent do the design of implementation strategies contribute to the project indicators and responsive to vulnerable target groups?***

The implementation field activities to pilot 'implementation-strategies'⁶ as a means to contribute to the NRES is good. However, it must be recognised that the development objective of 2000 HHs with an increased income of 30%, can only be achieved through Outputs 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3. Other project outputs aim to generate similar in the longer term through strategic changes.

- ***To what extent do the implementation modalities contribute to building the capacities and service offerings of the implementing partners and institutional stakeholders?***

Overall there was a high degree of readiness by GoL staff met by the MTE to participate in the Project and achieve results. However given their existing weaknesses, it is unsuitable to immediately allocate delivery of project interventions to them without support and guidance in place. Within the design there is room for both external agencies (NGOs etc.) and GoL agencies (such as LWU, DAFO etc.) to deliver project interventions. These should not act independently but ensure GoL agencies are engaged

⁴ (a) Chinese rubber processing facility; (b) Chinese sandpaper factory; (c) Vietnamese cassava processing factory.

⁵ (a) Bauxite processing, by Vietnamese company, Viet Phoung Group, expecting to employ 4000 workers, and (b) Chinese company (?) to construct new hydro scheme, employing 1000 workers. Both these initiatives were reported by Mr Thavone, Dpty. Provincial Governor during MTE.

⁶ Implementation strategies is understood here to mean ways that various agents (GoL staff, NGOs etc.) can apply in the field to gain positive results. The term will be used in this way throughout the report.

(either directly or as partners with external agencies) to build their capacity and at the same time have ownership over strategies that can then be included in the NRES.

The development of the NRES is not the development objective of the project but is at the apex of the intervention model (Fig. 1). The experiences and lessons for the field, whether led by GoL, NGOs or the private sector, must have a mechanism by which they can inform the development of the NRES. The Project intervention model aims for field-level activities to be a means of generating lessons for the NRES (i.e. project activities are not seen as standalone development activities). The Project management arrangements include establishment of the PAC's and DAC's. These can assign 'working groups' to monitor activities and so report back to their PAC and DAC. This then provides a mechanism to feed lessons back to the NRES.

4.2 Effectiveness

- ***What types of strategies and measures were taken by the project to achieve project targets?***
- ***How effective were the measures and strategies in achieving the project targets and indicators?***
- ***To what extent were the intervention results defined and monitored?***
- ***What have been the achievements of the project so far and what can be improved to further its effectiveness?***

The Project has carried out a range of activities. This section will be structured according to the interventions with the above questions applied to each.

4.2.1 Project mobilisation

The overall Project effectiveness has been significantly affected by a series of delays. Project funding was approved in 04/2017 and followed quickly by an Inception Meeting 19/05/2017 for Sekong only. Recruitment of a suitable Project Manager was protracted. He was assigned in 12/2017 and initially operated from home base (See Fig. 2,3) while waiting processing of his work permit and visa. He arrived on-site 22/02/2018.

Up until his arrival the project was managed by ILO Bangkok along with the ILO Country Rep and a National Project Coordinator. Work proceeded in Sekong using the institutional set-up established in the previous phase. Activities implemented there were largely replication of activities conducted during the earlier Sekong Project, which by applying lessons from it now applied in the current Project in a more effective manner, as well as using these activities to carry out curriculum development and build capacity of local training institutions. Efforts were made to link with other development projects (e.g. CARE in Dak Cheung) so that the Project might benefit from development interventions of those projects, and those projects might replicate rural employment strategies in their villages. Considerable preparatory work was also carried out for two significant interventions: construction of an irrigation scheme and support for an improved coffee value-chain.

Achieving the MoU for the Project in Savannakhet Province an extended process, with final approval gained 11/2017. Following the arrival of the PM based in SAVANNAKHET, activities focussed on establishing the various governance structures, the PAC and DACs, selection of target Districts (04/2018) and village selection (05/2018). In Savannakhet, a range of training inputs have been provided to GoL partner staff, and studies initiated (base line study, Employment demand, TOT), but no field activities with target villages. Thus, Savannakhet has lost more than half its project life, with activities at village level planned to be initiated in Dec 2018. (Fig. 2,3 illustrate the contrast in initiation of field work in Sekong and Savannakhet. (Note these charts don't include all inputs and dates are indicative).

Fig. 2 Indicative time-line of key activities in Sekong 2017/2018

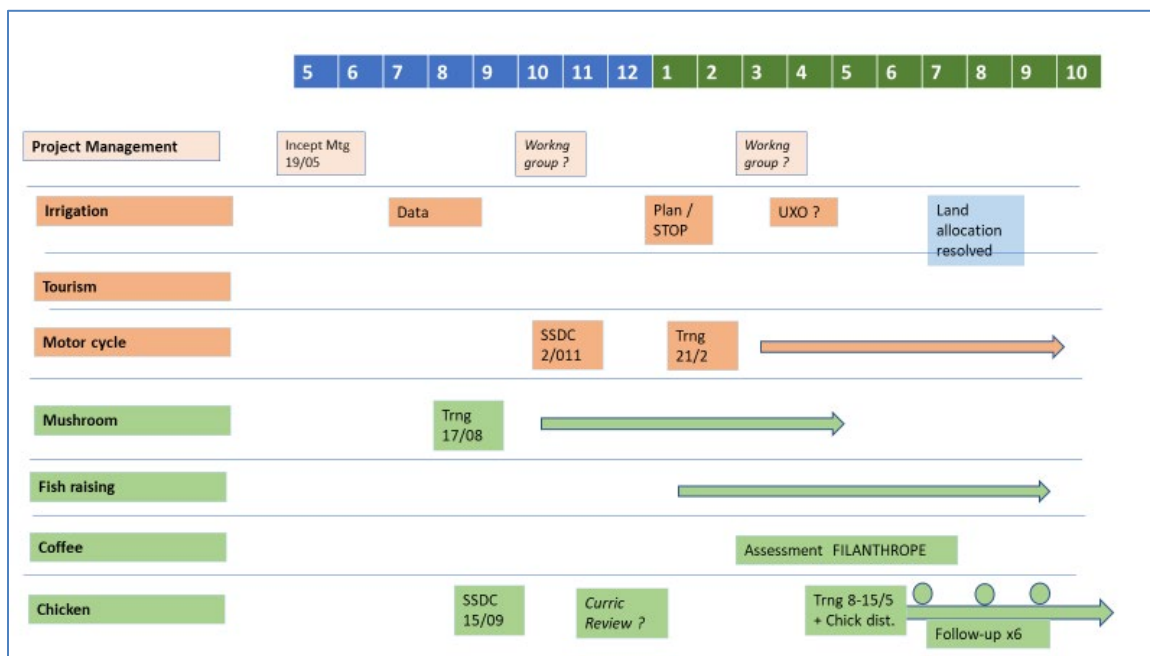
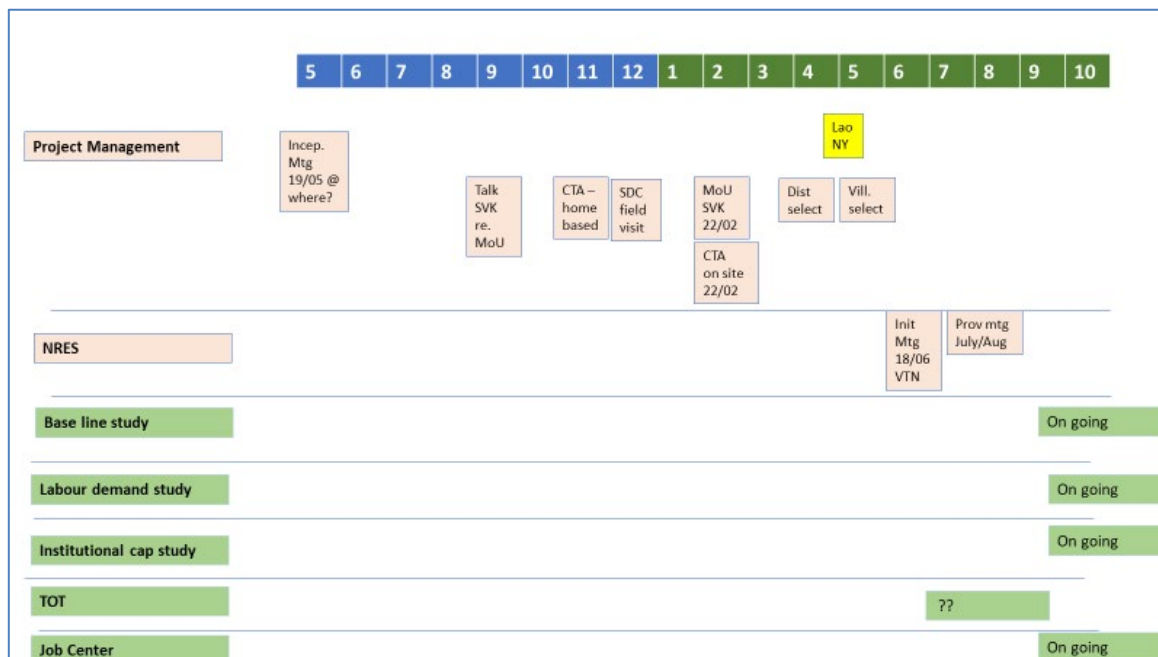


Fig. 3 Indicative time-line of key activities in Savannakeht 2017/2018



Field activities reported on below include application of several strategies (a) VCD; (b) skills development; (c) infrastructure through intensive labour investment. These have often been applied together reinforcing the integrated model proposed by ILO. At the same time, they have their own characteristics and will be commented on specifically.

4.2.2 Value-chain development (VCD)

There are four agricultural products the project is focussing on for VCD; chicken raising; mushroom production, fish raising, with coffee as a major initiative as noted above. For the three minor products the Project has applied a common implementation strategy;

- Engagement of a service provider to provide technical training, with in some, cases curriculum development
- Selection of farmer trainees, conduct study trips to exposure candidates to exemplary production models and markets
- training of the candidates in production techniques (using improved training inputs)
- provision of inputs for start-up (chickens, mushroom spores, fingerlings)
- Monitoring and follow-up support
- Support links to markets (pending)

The above implementation strategy is a common process and has been used by many development projects. It is driven by delivery of training inputs. The Districts of Laman and Dak Cheung are isolated with the bulk of farmers still engaged in subsistence farming, and with mindsets still focussed on day to day issues rather than producing according to market requirements. Thus, beginning with study trips to illustrate improved practices and then building models of these practices within communities is a good approach. There were however some weaknesses in the approach as it was applied:

- Exposure to 'exemplary models' as in the case of chicken raising was too advanced, causing some trainees to become discouraged and drop out.
- The trainings for these products were provided by several agencies with villagers (SSDC, IVETs, PAFO) as 'live-in trainees'. This has advantages in creating a focus on the learning experience and ensuring teaching materials are at-hand. However, this would discourage many HHs from joining. It is doubtful whether by pursuing excellence in the training inputs this is a cost-effective or replicable approach for agricultural products.
- Follow-up inputs, where well provided (chickens) resulted in the activity with a strong technical footing and prospects for expansion and marketing. Where this was not provided the results have been weaker (mushroom and fish production). Follow-up was not part of the training package, and eventually included where staff had commitment to the task.

In brief, the above process could be improved through (a) conducting study trips to farmers at the same level of the trainees, rather than to exemplary cases, and (b) working with a group 5-6 farmers/village, which would illustrate a range of applications of the production system by the different farmers, and at the same better position the group to move into selling jointly at commercial volumes.

With this process the Project did achieved outcomes that can be further built upon. The chicken raisers visited in two villages were actively managing their flocks, with the pens in good order, and have all sold produce at good unit prices earning a total of 3-500,000 kip in the last year. For both chickens and fish-raising the trainees have provided a demonstration of improved production that has led other HHs to be interested to follow their example. In the case of fish raising, 21 Hhs in one village have built fish ponds and stocked them themselves. Mushroom producers also sold their produce at good unit prices.

However due to the nature of the product, tended to give away much of their crop. No support was provided to renew their stocks. The sale of these products in each case was limited to within the villages, with none reaching external markets.

Thus, models of improved production have been established, but this falls short of achieving commercial or sustainable production. To achieve this the village will need multiple farmers to achieve volume of production, and with these villages then to be recognised and sought by the Sekong market (or other) as reliable suppliers, (Note: for both fish and poultry, a significant challenge to achieving commercial volumes will be obtaining sufficient feed in villages with food security issues⁷. This should be a focus of further technical support). The ‘trainers’ see that expansion of farmers will be achieved through the established farmers/trainees training additional farmers. This remains a technical based model and does not enable farmers to engage with markets. Instead, VCD or market mechanisms should be used; i.e. supporting the farmers themselves to assess market requirements: demand, quality and delivery schedules. Such effort should not focus on a few designated farmers (as was done to establish the production models) but mobilise all ‘interested farmers’ to apply improved practices so together then can achieve commercial volume, and thereby be recognised by traders as being a new source of supply.

The need for ‘marketing’ was noted by most agencies interviewed, but none have a clear idea of how to conduct this. This raises the question of which GoL agency is best suited to carry this work out. As the District office of Industry and Commerce (DIC) deals with ‘markets’, there is a tendency to believe that it should be responsible, where they can find a market for farmers. The Partners need to see VCD as an activity that will support farmers themselves to understand market requirements of demand, quality and delivery schedules. Thus, in the early stages of VCD when dealing with local value chains and where the focus is on enabling farmers to shift towards market orientated production, this would best be done by District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO). Other agencies can be engaged if/when the volume increases to significant levels and/or cross-border trade is involved.

Coffee

Coffee production was introduced to Dak Cheung in the last ten years or so, following the Paksong area gaining recognition for coffee production. The aim in the current Project is not to expand areas of coffee production (also possible) but to assist farmers to shift from sale of dried coffee cherries (‘black coffee’) @2000 k/kg, to processing to parchment coffee (‘white’) or to green beans which will fetch 9000 K/kg red-cherrie equivalent price when sold to niche markets.

There have been several factors that led to Dak Cheung farmers selling unprocessed coffee as ‘black coffee’. Water supplies for home use is limited and thus insufficient to process coffee from red-cherrie to washed parchment coffee. High humidity and rain through most months of the year make drying the washed coffee difficult, resulting in uncertain quality. If these issues can be addressed there is a great opportunity for the project to lift HHs incomes.

Given the complexities of the Dak Cheung communities themselves (strong and persisting ethnic lives with serious food security issues), the project commissioned Filanthope⁸ to conduct an agro-ecological

⁷ Chicken farmers are already planting forage grasses but they might try another variety, *arachis pinto* as a better protein source. Forages grasses for grass-eating carp *Panicum maximum* (Simuang) and *Paspalum atratum terenos* have yet to be introduced.

⁸ Filanthope is an NGO with a coffee focus. They have successfully enabled communities in the Paksong area a key coffee producing area in neighbouring Champassak province, to improved cultivation practices, processing of coffee to green beans, and selling into hi-vale niche markets in USA and Europe.

assessment of a cluster of three villages (one of which is composed of three hamlets) to understand the full context of the Dak Cheung villagers' context. This study confirmed the food security issue, and as importantly provided a clear picture of technical issues facing coffee cultivation and processing. These include; soil fertility/nutrition, pest/disease, and crop management issues. Thus Filanthrope identified three areas that needed attention; (a) improved crop management; (b) achieving value[added through processing coffee to green beans, and (c) establishing market links for high value markets. Filanthrope proposed to address these in a holistic and sustainable way through training farmers to produce quality coffee. This will use green technologies that include production of organic fertilizer through recycling coffee pulp, agricultural waste products and livestock manure in biogas digesters. Filanthrope will supervise processing of coffee to 'green beans' and will establish market links to European and US buyers.

Given the late stage of the Project, it is critical that concrete action is taken with this important product. The harvest season for 2018/19 is beginning (Nov – Feb), and so is almost the last chance for the project to assess the opportunities as described above. If farmers can process this harvest (2018/19) and gain higher prices from trading into higher value markets (Europe and US) this will encourage them to sustain application of the improved crop management practices, the processing to green beans, and have confidence in the new market relationships. The issue of water requirements for processing can be side-stepped this year if a limited group (4-5 HHs/village) is involved to place limited demand on water. Solutions for improved water supply needed for processing the coffee can then be explored through 2019. This could include the project working in partnership with Provincial Water and Sanitation Dept. to construct gravity-fed clean water systems⁹. Such an activity could provide an opportunity for intensive labour investment. Installation of clean water in the villages, as development issue, would greatly reduce HH labour for hauling water, particularly for women.

In summary while improved processing of coffee could have a major impact on incomes and livelihoods in Dak Cheung, it still faces challenges. As an exploratory activity, this can't be assigned to regular GoL agencies to manage but requires a dedicated specialist agency. Filanthrope with its dedication to enabling smallholder coffee processing, its achievements in Paksong, and its links to niche markets in Europe and US, is very suitable for this. However, the should still continue to ensure engagement of GoL agencies.

Community-based tourism

Dak Cheung due to its previous isolation has retained many of the specific characteristics of the ethnic groups that live there. The off-road villages still have houses built in traditional manner, and there are notable natural features worthy of preservation. As these disappear from the Lao country side (and indeed the world) they will increasingly attract tourists. The project has carried out a number of studies, including an audit of such assets, and conducted a consultation study trip/workshop for commercial 'green and adventure' tourist operations to gain their interest and insights.

The Project has considered constructing a small lodge (in the style of the traditional houses) within one of the villages for private sector tour operators to attract high level clients. The idea is attractive but problematic in practice. Introduction of such assets would raise issues of maintenance, ownership, particularly when it might not be continually in use. Such assets can easily be appropriated by the elites

⁹ Consideration was being given to use of a condensation machine (Skywater Co.). This entails on-going operating costs as well as maintenance requirements. It would run the high risk of becoming a white elephant. It is doubtful that procedures for procurement and importation could be completed in time for the 2018/19 harvest season.

of the village and so create internal discord. Thus, both the impact (increased income to beneficiaries') and its sustainability is doubtful.

Through the activities to date, the Project has very effectively illustrated the tourism assets of the area (audit), and through the workshop (18-19 Oct) the private sector is now in a good position to make its own assessment as to whether there is a good business opportunity for cultural tourism. The Project could encourage and support this through inputs for; training of villagers as hosts and guides, instalment of sanitation etc. The skills related to community tourism are very particular and the Project might partner with other agencies in this (e.g. Swiss Contact). Even without private sector investment some inputs could be provided to facilitate home stays as a good first step. Funds might be spent on ensuring more reliable water supply and sanitation, two factors important for tourists

4.2.3 Skills development

The Project has considered skills development on several levels (a) for villagers to improve their production and income; (b) to improve capacities of GoL agencies, including IVETs so they can provide services more effectively; (c) policy development to contribute to NRES; (d) support to private sector actors so the TVET institutions can provide training to rural people. To date some training has been provided to GoL agencies but to a limited such as project procedures and ToT. Most training inputs have been provided to villagers for agricultural production activities; fish-raising, mushroom production, chicken raising. In each a specialist training institution was engaged and used this to develop improved training curriculum. These have been applied successfully in establishing improved production models in each case (see 4.2.2).

Motorcycle repairs

In addition to working with the agriculture sector, training inputs were provided to enable villagers to gain income as service providers through operating village based motorcycle repair shops. This has been successfully conducted and represent a model intervention that combines; (a) curriculum development, (b) strengthening of trainers, (c) inclusion of internship as an integral part of the training; and (d) assessment of trainees' competence and finally, (e) certification of the training course nationally.

This process has been completed (with the exception of national certification) and in the process trained 15 persons (male) from 14 villages from the two village clusters¹⁰: Tok Onkeo and Xieng Louang (Laman and Dak Cheung Districts respectively). Most trainees continued to operate providing occasional services, with perhaps 50% operating regularly and commercially, gaining incomes of a total of 300,000 – 1,000,000 Kip in the six months since training (April 2018). These tended to be those located along key feeder roads. (Trainees reported they had not received their full dsd or the tool kits from the training facility. This may have inhibited some of the trainees getting their business started). At least one trainee had gained employment with a Chinese vehicle repair shop in Sekong town for several months, on the basis of the mechanical training he had received. One constraint to the m/c repair business model is that the trainees don't have cash reserves to carry stocks of spare parts. Despite this, several trainees reported that they have travelled into Sekong to purchase needed parts when needed, indicating their determination to make their enterprise viable. For the communities they service, this is a far cheaper alternative to placing their machine on top of local buses to send to Sekong, costing 100,000 Kip for the return trip.

¹⁰ These were selected from villages who has been provided training in the RECS 2016.

Training for m/c repairs is not going to generate large numbers of jobs, but it can be seen as an ‘enabler’ so communities can engage in other activities. It is something that could be built upon, with those active trainees being offered further training in (a) tractor repair: for single axle tractors common in many villages, and, (b) electrical wiring: newly connected electricity provides a single outlet in each house, and more are desired. OSH inputs could be embedded in such training.

General assessment of skills development enabling employment

Effective application of skills development currently faces significant challenges to enabling rural employment at this stage, at least in the Project areas. The training facilities, such as the Savannakhet Skills Development Center (SSDC), are understaffed with few resources and little ongoing training activity. While there is certainly a need for effective skills training, with nationally recognised training curriculum, the driver for this is not apparent. While there is a demand for skilled worker in the growing industrial sector, well- established industries (e.g. those in the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) of Savannakhet) generally access and train this themselves. It is beyond the capacity of the Project to build capacity of the SSDC. However the gap between demand and capacity of the SSDC might be bridged by engaging sister institutions in Vientiane to provide trainers to work with staff of SSDC for specific courses. This could generate links between industry and rural candidates, and build SSDCs capacity and confidence.

Companies frequently state that local workers do not have necessary skills or the work ethics and as a result they continue to use a proportion of foreign workers, thus reducing the opportunity for rural employment for local people. In some cases, low wages are paid (DW issue) with poor working conditions (OSH issues), may make their employment unattractive to local workers. While it is also true that in local workers may lack skills and work ethnics, this cannot be accepted as a defining or enduring characteristic of Lao workers. There are many examples in Lao PDR, (mines and mineral processing, factories in the SEZ, etc.) where the companies concerned have invested in training and capacity building to create an effective work force.

The technical courses of SSDC and IVETs will not address this. Skills that would assist local workers to transition to paid employment would be “soft” or “life skills”. It is understood that ILO does have training modules that relate to this. Thus, at this stage of development of the formal employment sector in rural areas, rather than focusing on the technical skills the Project might be to find ways to enable development of workplace soft-skills. This might be combined with a system of internship at a partial wage, as an innovative training approach. (Lack of use of local workers is not only a skills issue, but most likely also involves DW (eg. low wages) and OSH issues, which make such work unattractive to local workers. Hence some sort of integrated approach where DW/OSH/soft-skills are combined, might be considered).

The Project has conducted, and plans to conduct, a range of basic or foundation trainings to GoL staff: Gender Mainstreaming, TOT, and GET Ahead for women. These should be planned strategically in order to build on ongoing activities. For instance, in the case for the Get Ahead training, this could be linked to other activities. Where VCD progresses and farmers increase their production, frequently a demand for services develops eg: as more HHs raise poultry there will be a demand for supply of chicks to raise, and for veterinary services. GET Ahead type training would assist HHs to decide whether there is a demand for a particular service, and then how they can manage their finances. Such training inputs need to be timed strategically for when demand is expected to develop.

4.2.4 Rural Infrastructure/village asset development

Irrigation scheme

The proposed irrigation system is located in Dak Tleup village. Design for this was made early 2018, and then delayed. An assessment of issues to be taken into consideration was made (April 2018). The main use of the paddy to be developed will initially be for rice production which will help to address food security issues rather than being sold for income. (For the project to assess this in terms of 'increased income' the value of additional production can be calculated). The total command area is 24 Ha which will provide each of the 103 HH with about ¼ ha each, not large but not an insignificant area and worthwhile.

Delays to construction arose due to UXOs (about 100 items were removed), and contested claims to the land from a neighbouring village of Xieng Louang. These claims were resolved, with the land now formally recognised as that of Dak Tleup. Within Dak Tleup, further dialogue was facilitated to gain agreements from those HHs with existing rights to the land, for it to be distributed to all HHs equally.

There will be some opportunity for the direct income for Dak Tleup HHs by employing them for some components of the construction (earthworks and terracing of new paddy), with local contractors constructing weir intake and lined canal. Hand-digging of terraces will provide direct employment through community contracting and also tends to retain the more fertile top soils than when dug with earth moving equipment. However priority should be given to bringing the system into production in 2019. If hand-digging of terraces this can't be completed in time consideration should be given to engaging earth moving equipment to assist. Following construction of the facility and paddy, further support will be needed to assist HHs to begin paddy cultivation in respect to techniques (best with an experience farmer to live-in and mentor HHs), draft power, and new seed varieties to replace those used for upland rice.

The impact of this should be significant and sustainable for the community. The scheme will see additional rice produced and on a more secure basis. In time, suitable off-season crops might be grown that will add income (rather than attempting a second rice crop). Together these production systems will encourage more community planning than the current upland swidden cultivation of rice.

Overall, this is a major activity. As noted in the assessment report this should be carried out through the DAFO. At the same time given the level of investment and complexity of this activity, the Project should ensure there is some additional management in place, either through the newly employed Project community facilitator, or a local NGO with experience in this.

Community contract for direct employment

As noted above several of the Projects interventions lend themselves to providing direct employment through community contract. This includes the irrigation scheme above. These can be a vehicle for introducing OSH protocols.

Through the PRF there does exist a program for road maintenance by local communities through provision of tools, training and payment on a per Km basis (2 M Kip/km). There are plans for the project to develop a manual for road maintenance with IVETS to do this. However, the feeder roads travelled on in the two Sekong Districts are quite rough with the surface hard packed and so beyond the capacity of simple hand tools. These roads would thus seem to be beyond capacity of local communities to maintain or thus to be seen as a source of local employment.

4.2.5 NRES development

The NRES team was able to begin work on schedule and has proceeded with its strategy as designed. This included a series of provincial level meeting and national consultation workshop that have articulated challenges facing rural employment and from this developed the structure and content of the NRES. In addition to these workshops the Project commissioned a series of analytical products to inform the NRES, these include (a) study on the capacity of local governance structure to implement the NRES; (b) a paper on rural employment and climate change; and (c) labour and skills needs of industry in the SEZ of Savannakhet. Considerable work has also been done on processing data from the LFS 2017, to take into account changes in definitions of workers in formal and non-formal work types. This has now been published and available to the NRES.

The output of the above consultations and a has been a first draft of the NRES. This was available to the MTE, prior to its review by the NRES drafting committee planned for 01-02 Nov. The Project has been able to have DW included in the current NESDP 8#, with the intention that the NRES be included in NESDP 9#, which should ensure its ongoing role and impact.

This output of the project is an ambitious one and requires broad ownership. As part of the consultation process the NRES team identified existing national strategies and laws that the NRES must relate to and engaged GoL institutions related to rural employment: DLSW; MP; LFLU; LWU, and LNCC. This strategy ensures that these institutions see that the NRES is not an additional strategy but may reinforce existing strategies by looking through the lens of employment rather than agricultural production, for instance. From reports by the NRES team and senior staff of MLSW and MPI, it does appear this iterative approach has been effective in progressively engaging the agencies involved.

To the consultant, the NRES draft document reads well with the strategic objectives very relevant and well expressed. However, there are two areas where the NRES might be articulated in a way that local agencies could understand and respond to more easily.

Light industry in rural areas is a growing sector. The distinction of this is recognised in the NRES but might be brought into greater focus by adding contextual references: for strategic objective 1# - include something to the effect; “farmers self-employed in subsistence or semi-commercial agriculture”, and in Strategic Objective 4# - “private investments that provides wage employment in both agri-businesses and light industry”. Clearly the working would need to be identified as suitable, but something to this effect would alert the reader to the recognition given to both sectors.

The NRES will be implemented mainly thorough local, District and Provincial agencies. While the strategic objectives of the NRES are very appropriate, these local agencies will need guidance on actions that can take to enable the NRES. As the draft NRES stands now it does not provide any description of the mechanisms or ‘implementation-strategies’ that might be used These may yet be included as the full NRES is developed. It is here that the Project through conducting field activities could provide models of implementation-strategies for the NRES to guide local agencies in taking concrete action. The result of the Project’s field work to date, with VCD for example, are not substantive enough to do this. Furthermore, the MTE found that none of the partners saw the link between the wide range of field activities and development of the NRES.

While the strategic objectives of NRES can be generally expressed, implementation-strategies need to be matched to the context within which they are to be applied. Thus, it would be worthwhile for the NRES to articulate a series of socio-economic contexts which local agencies then recognise as those that they face. Based on the Project target areas observed by the MTE team these could be defined as:

A) Agricultural based – subsistence

- Livelihoods are still challenging, possibly with food security and other issues outstanding
- Agricultural production is for home use with sale of products in small volumes and with variable quality

Response: In such cases ‘rural employment’ interventions as modelled by NRES will be challenged and would be better served by development investment that addresses food, security sanitation, clean water supplies, etc.

B) Agricultural based – semi commercial

- Livelihoods and food security are not issues for the majority of HHs in each community
- Production of a range of products can be scaled-up and bulked across HHs to achieve volume as a first step to achieve commercial production.

Response: conduct VCD work to enable existing agricultural products be produced and traded commercially, giving better returns to labour and thus encouraging rural populations to see agriculture as an attractive occupation, (i.e. in comparison to salaried urban employment).

C) Light industry in rural area

- Light industries are established in predominantly rural areas (above), often competing for resources (land and water) with local communities
- The expectation of these providing employment does not develop, with jobs being filled by foreign workers imported to the area.

Response: dialogue with companies responsible to ensure that they comply with existing labour and investment laws and any specific agreements to address DW, OSH and employment of foreign workers.

These are not intended to be a fulsome definition of such contexts, and this something that should be returned to the NRES team for further consideration. The above contexts can be applied to the Project sites:

- The two Sekong Districts and Sepon District of Savannakhet fit the A) Agriculture-subsistence context. The communities suffer livelihood constraints (food security, water and sanitation issues) and poor access to markets which constrain response to VCD activities. Interventions planned for these districts; irrigation development, community-based tourism have high inputs, site specific and as represent ‘development interventions’.
- The fourth district in Savannakhet, Atsaphone falls into B) agriculture – semi commercial context, where VCD work should be highly applicable. Working-strategies developed there should have wide applicability.
- The third context; C) – Light industry in rural areas. This can be applied in Sepon, where the MTE found three industries in Sepon district; rubber plantation (Chinese); Cassava processing (Vietnamese) and a sandpaper factory (Chinese) where continued employment of foreign workers exists, along with DW and OSH issues.

Foreign operations in Lao have often been difficult for local institutions to deal with. In these cases, the Project might explore forming a coalition of agencies (DLSW, LFTU, LWU, DoI, DPI) to work together, each addressing different aspects and together dialogue with the respective company to formulate a plan to transition to local labour. The project could support such a transition through training (soft skills for employment), DW and OSH reviews to improve work conditions to make work more attractive, etc. This would work towards development of a working-strategy to ensure local employment in industries does accrue. (NOTE: The MTE found that the Sekong LFTU had independently begun an attempt to address DW issues in one rubber plantation in Tateng District, through a similar approach as suggested above)

The process for development of implementation-strategies for rural employment to fit each context could be made proactive. At present the field activities are seen simply as development activities, with an expectation that they will yield lessons/models. Instead when planning each field activity, a 'provisional working-strategy' for rural employment should be articulated, along with specific issues that will be monitored to assess its effectiveness, (e.g. to what degree does activity raise HH incomes by, which agency or agencies are best suited to deliver the activity, etc.) These will provide key points for the 'working groups' to monitor. Overall this will provide opportunity for purposeful learning.

4.2.6 Documentation

The project has not completed targets for Output 3 outputs for increased knowledge base and knowledge sharing. Typically, these would be completed in the final stages of the Project. However several of the studies being conducted now could provide the basis for these (Output 3.2)

Additional point (b): The level of engagement with and satisfaction of the project constituents and direct beneficiaries

The Project main partners recognised that implementation had been slow. Despite being given opportunity to express a lack of satisfaction with progress, during interviews key partner agencies did not do so. This may be due to the often slow progress of work that they are familiar with.

This was similar with the project beneficiaries, the men and women farmers in the Sekong villages. They have seen some activity from trainings in chicken and mushroom production, fish pond construction and raising, and training in motor cycle repair. Small as these activities are in their scope, they have raised the interest of other HHs. However other activities in Dak Cheung have had a long process of dialogue and assessment: irrigation construction, coffee production and processing, and community tourism. Where this is the case there is a sense that if some action is not taken soon, villagers' interest and confidence in these activities will be lost.

SDC as the main donor for the project noted that activities in the field had proceeded slowly and that the Project would struggle to meet its development objectives. At the same time they saw the project design ambitious and perhaps not realistic. SDC had visited the project areas in early 2017 and then recognised that conditions for rural employment activities in areas such as those in Sekong were challenging. It had had hoped that work would progress more quickly in Savannakhet, but to date this has not been the case. In respect to the NRES, SDC recognised drafting this was proceeding well. But they queried how lessons from field activities which now follow the drafting of the NRES could affect its content. ILO has previously responded to this concern, but it was again raised. There is a concern that despite the NRES being accepted at high levels, it will not lead to real action to affect rural employment. In this respect they hope that the strategy is also accompanied by some form of action plan.

4.3 Efficiency

- ***To what extent did the project budget factor in the cost of specific activities, outputs and outcomes to achieve its targets and indicators?***

The Project allocated its total \$3,314,754 as \$1,547,970 (46.6%); \$490,810 (14.8%) and \$202,780 (6.1%) for Outputs 1,2 and 3 respectively, with the remaining \$1,073,144 (32.5%) for various staffing and administration costs. These appear to be balanced allocations.

Of the total funds, \$1,166,535¹¹ (35.2%) was allocated to the outputs that can directly contribute to the Project's development objective, of 2000 HHs with 30% incomes, (i.e., Outputs 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3) through VCD and employment for rural infrastructure/asset development activities. This should be an appropriate commitment of funds for the target. Fund allocation across Outputs 2 and 3 appears to be reasonable.

The use of funds for Output 1 to date has been heavy. For the SDC component (for which detailed use was available to the MTE), of the \$687,236 allocated, \$117,407 (17%) remains. Output #1 is the main output that will generate the development objective. The VCD activities to date have been quite limited in scope, for Sekong only and with limited results. It is possible that expenditures for some activities have been mis-allocated to Output 1, but this was not discussed during the MTE. As Output 1 is key to achieving the development objective, some readjustment of budget may need to be considered.

The Project provided a forward planning spread sheet with costed activities for 2018 and 2019, for a total of \$1,339,000. The Project Financial Status Report, (Oct. 2018) shows \$1,016,002 still remaining. This suggests implementation for most of 2018 has been slow, which is confirmed from field assessment during the MTE. Given the time is limited, the Project will need to reconsider its activities to ensure that funds are used in ways to give priority to activities with potential to affect the greatest number of HHs, while also demonstrating effective working strategies for the NRES.

- ***How did the project define its contribution or subsidies to the support to its partners' mandates and to facilitate market-based approaches?***

The Project has not articulated a specific policy defining its contribution/subsidies towards partners (i.e. DLSW, LFNU, PAFO/DAFO, LWU, etc.) mandates. This would suggest a 'business as usual' approach, but instead the Project is attempting to explore new ways of working that these Partners might use to affect rural employment. To this end the Project identifies interventions and then sources agencies with the capacity to implement these effectively. In some cases, this has involved NGOs or other service providers. Where activities align well with Partners' mandates, and the competency exists then these are contracted. Such contracts then base payments on existing GoL payments of DSA, travel etc. In this way the Project can reinforce the idea that such activities can be included and implemented as part of Partners' normal plans and activities.

Activities contracted to Partners to date have mainly been for training inputs (chickens, mushrooms, motor cycle repair). These have also been used as the basis for curriculum development, and follow-up in the field. While these activities did include some exposure to market/client demand, they have non-the-less been training-based rather than market-based activities. Further activities to establish market links will be needed. Development of farmers capacity to understand market requirements and engage with market actors is outside the competency of GoL Partners. Thus contracting of outside agencies (NGOs etc.) is required.

As a general rule then, where external agencies are engaged and lead the activities, GoL Partner staff are also involved so they build their capacity from this experience. This has in fact been the approach used by the Project to date, thus gaining a balance between achieving outputs and building local capacity.

¹¹ This includes ILO in-kind inputs amounting to \$405,535.

- ***Has the project leveraged resources (financial, partnerships, expertise) to promote its objectives and further sustainability?***

The Project has begun to dialogue with various agencies both to leverage resources and promote its Project objectives and methods so that these might be applied on a wider basis. Such dialogue is not necessarily easy and can be time consuming, with each agency having its own agenda which would need to be adjusted in some way to align with the Project.

In the agriculture sector (Output 1.1) this has included NGOs that are working in the same areas: AVSF in Savannakhet for improved smallholder production, and in Dak Cheung, CARE International for coffee. These dialogues here aimed to obtain technical advice for smallholder production and VCD activities, while also aiming to leverage other development activities of these projects to be applied in the Project target villages. The AVSF suggested activities however do not appear to be well matched to the local conditions, and proposed high charges. This may not proceed. CARE's work in Dak Cheung does appear to be well suited to Project requirements, but its working approach is somewhat different from Filanthrope. While no concrete agreement has been reached, as work proceeds opportunities for cooperation may be found which will benefit both projects (Filanthrope's access to niche and hi-value markets should benefit CARE target villages, and application of CARE's wider development inputs would be very useful in addressing the livelihood issues in the Project villages).

In its aim to enable persons with disabilities to gain effective employment (no specific Output for this), the Project will contract Humanity and Inclusion (HI) to work on changing attitudes of employers to disabled persons and to enable them to participate in VCD activities in Savannakhet and Sekong (\$159,392). HI will begin to implement a USAID \$15M project in Savannakhet. This will provide the Project a major opportunity to see its work continued and for ILO standards to be applied within the larger USAID project. This should be a very productive association.

The Project has begun to provide interim support and mentoring to the Employment Center based at the DLSW in Savannakhet. This offers some linkage with the ADB project for "Strengthening capacity to develop employment service system"¹². This again provides an opportunity for ILO to be a stakeholder in further phases of this project. But again, to the MTE it seems that this mechanism is premature in Savannakhet, unless some quite innovative approaches are considered (eg. using social media).

For the activity of 'rural infrastructure and asset develop' (Output 1.3) could be enhanced through engagement with PRF which has a model for road maintenance by villagers with hand tools. The Project has a specific output for drafting a manual for this type of work (Output 1.3.4). PRF has an opportunity for WB funding for this type of activity. This could see the Project work thus extended and the OSH and DW attributes incorporated into the ongoing work. This linkage has not progressed to date and application faces practical challenges with the feeder road in three District (Lamam, Dak Cheung and Sepon) being far too rough for hand maintenance alone. This model and accompanying manual might still be piloted on feeder roads in Atsaphone. The conditions where road maintenance is better done with machinery could still provide a new model for mixed methods: machinery with supplementary labour. This could be explored by the project and which could have wide application.

- ***What efficiency or cost burdens that could be reduced in the future?***

The Project has operated on a lean basis until now with still low expenditures. Staffing has been low and office facilities are modest. On the management side, some costs for office rental might be reduced

¹² ADB 49332-001

through obtaining office space within the DLSW, if this is available. This would assist in greater coordination between the Project and its main partner. At this late stage in the Project this should not be pursued if it were to distract from achieving outputs.

Similarly, the project is to use funds for long term car rental. This would be better employed to purchase a vehicle, even at this late stage. The Project would then also recruit a driver, which if well selected can be a real asset to project functioning, carrying out a range of administrative duties.

Given the limited time remaining, the Project should re-assess its priorities to see which activities it should focus on so it that is can achieve significant progress towards its development objective, and at the same time provide lessons that will support the NRES. Funds assigned to operational activities should then be examined in this light. The Project is in the process of engaging national staff with considerable field and community development experience. These staff will be better able to guide and mentor GoL agencies. There are several areas where funds might still need to be assigned

- Facilitation of dialogue with selected companies conducting light industry, to address the DW and the high levels of foreign workers
- Support for clean water schemes in Dak Cheung villages where coffee processing is to be piloted.
- Light earth moving equipment to expedite terracing prepared in time for 2019 wet season.

Depending on how all activities are to be prioritised, whether a no-cost-extension is to be considered, some activities might need to be reduced or curtailed.

Additional point (b): The extent to which management arrangements are appropriate to achieve desired results and outcomes within a timely, effective and efficient manner

It was reported that internal ILO procedures of both Geneva and ROAP played some role in slowing his recruitment until some eight months after Project approval. In parallel to this there were the delays in the processing of the MoU to commence work in Savannakhet. Such procedures can be notoriously slow and often need constant follow-up. Given that activities were able to proceed in Sekong, ways might have been found to mobilise Savannakhet. The most suitable agency to do this would be the Project's implementing partner the MLSW, perhaps with timely prompting from ILO. Key institutional work (selection of district; villages.) could not proceed until this was in place.

The Project has suffered from low staffing on site. The Lao National Coordinator who had nurtured the Project from its inception mainly for activities in Sekong, left for another position just prior to the MTE. The project design included additional national staff, who are currently being appointed some sixteen months after Project Inception, or eight months after arrival of the Project Manager. The Project has further been hampered by having no project vehicle or driver, making travel both in the Savannakhet township and outside to villages inconvenient. It is doubtful that this is cost effective and makes simple tasks onerous and time consuming. Drivers when well recruited can often assist in many administrative duties beyond driving and be a project asset.

Finally, the Project has no impressed account for operational funds, but submits plans and fund requirements for transfers from Bangkok some several weeks in advance. This can be accommodated to some extent by forward planning but adds a layer of administration to deal with.

Additional point (d): Assess the quality of operational work planning, budgeting and risk management.

The following points reinforce the above. The Project has suffered from not having an effective Project Manager until Feb 2018. While the Project was managed from ILO Bangkok, this cannot expect to replace responsive on-site management. This has contributed to several issues: (a) full staffing of national coordination was not made (with the reasonable consideration that this should be the prerogative of the Project Manager, once in place); (b) no vehicle was purchased at start-up, so that a decision to not purchase has been made, causing operational inconveniences; and finally (c) Project activities were relegated to familiar areas and activities in Sekong, and finally (d) fund management has not been focussed, so that funds used for these Sekong activities, mainly VCD, was allowed to exceed allocated amounts.

To a larger degree the Project has been overshadowed by the delay in operations. There is one area that the Project has had to assess and compensate for risk. While it recognises the importance of GoL agencies in delivery of project interventions, this had to be balanced against the risk these agencies wouldn't perform and thus not achieve outputs. Until now the Project has tended ensure results through contracting external agencies (NGOs, training institutions). Now with recruitment of all its staff who can mentor their GoL counterparts, the Project will be in a better position to increase the direct involvement of GOL staff.

4.4 Intermediate results and impacts

- ***In which areas does the project have likelihood of producing impacts along project targets and indicators? How can this be improved?***

With the delays in mobilising activities, particularly in Savannakhet, the project will find great difficulty in reaching its development objective of 2000 HH with a 30% increase in income. These numbers can only be derived from the Project's Output 1#

The results towards the Project development objectives are limited. An M+E system has not been in place (currently under development) and thus the MTE can only report on the results observed in those villages visited. These are shown in Table 1. From our understanding of activities to date an active M+E system would not affect these figures substantially.

As noted, for the two Sekong districts and in Sepon district of Savannakhet, VCD work will be challenged by livelihood issues and poor market access. Nevertheless, with careful work some progress should still be achieved. A rough estimation of possible outcomes by the end of 2019 might be 100 HHs per district, with an increase in HH incomes of 10%. If Dak Cheung farmers are able to process coffee and sell into UK and Europe markets, their increase in income might be somewhat higher. In Atsaphone, VCD activities could proceed more quickly, and for more than one product line, along with several production/trading cycles in the year remaining. The number of HHs affected should be higher, perhaps 2-300 HH for the district. The additional income gained could be higher in actual figures, but proportionately still low (~10%) as these HHs are economically better off than those in the other three Districts. In regards, to the Project's development objectives, it is likely that by the end of 2019 the total number of HHs benefiting from VCD interventions might be about 500 HHs, with their incomes increased by about 10%. If the irrigation scheme is completed as planned, then this will contribute 104 HHs to the total of beneficiaries.

District / Village	Ethnicity	No HHs in village	Project Activities	No HHs Participating
Sepon				
B. Pa Nga	Tri	>98	n/a	n/a
Atsapphone				
B. Koot Khene	Phouthai	127	n/a	n/a
B. Na Hang Noi	Phouthai	207	n/a	n/a
Dak cheung				
B. Dak Tlerp	Talian	115	Fish ponds	1 collective pond 21 individual pond
			motorcycle	3
			irrigation	115 (prospective)
B. Dak Seng	Talian	54	Motorcycle	3 persons
			Gender	n/a
B. Dak Yang	Talian	18	Gender	n/a
B. Dak Jing	Talian	12	Gender	n/a
B. Dak Plang	Talian	14	Gender	n/a
Lamam				
B. Tok Ong Keo	Alak	59	Motorcycle	2 persons
			Chicken raising	2 hhs
			Mushroom	3 hhs
B. Pa Heng	Alak	-	Fish Ponds	1 collective 6 individuals
			Mushroom	3 hhs
B. Ta Aoun	Alak	-	Chicken raising	2 hhs
			Fish Ponds	1 collective 6 individuals
			Motorcycle	2 persons

Table 1. Villages visited during MTE and outputs from field activities gained to date

The MTE has noted the incidence of light industries in rural areas which continue to use predominately foreign workers. By addressing this issue, the Project might achieve increased employment of local workers and thus gain a significant contribution to its development objective. Increasing employment of local workers by light industry has tended to be seen as intractable issue. However, the industries in the project sites are not large. As such they could respond to negotiation with a coalition of GoL agencies to comply with existing laws and regulations, to progressively replace foreign with local Lao workers. This might result in several hundred Lao workers gaining employment or gaining income increases. Such changes where local Lao workers are employed could also be a vehicle for skills development and OSH outcomes.

Skills development (Output 1.2) targets appear very ambitious both on terms of the number of local workers to be trained, job placements and the improvement in training standards to be aligned along national lines. Given the overall context of skills demand and weak training capacity available from the existing training institutions in Sekong and Savannakhet, as assessed by ILO specialists, it is not easy to see how the project could achieve these. Enabling additional employment of local Lao workers in the light industries noted above might provide an opportunity target skills development to specific context.

This might be seen as a supporting mechanism to resolve the industries' concerns that local Lao workers will not be effective.

Rural infrastructure development (Output 1.3) has yet to be initiated. There is still opportunity for the target of 100 HHs gaining income from this to be achieved, along with the associated targets of community planning etc.

- ***How can the project improve its results monitoring and impact assessment during the remainder of the project duration?***

The Project has already restructured its log frame, simplifying it and resetting targets. The results to date in terms of the number of HHs affected remain limited (Table 1). However significant other activities have been conducted, (eg curriculum development for chicken raising and motor-cycle repairs). The range of Project activities and their varied nature requires Project to have more than numbers to illustrate results. Case studies might be included in the M+E framework.

M+E should have a dynamic function for the Project and its stakeholders, MLSW, and the PAC and DACs. At present the log frame does not appear to figure in the thinking of the partner institutions. Given the delays in mobilising activities a further review of the log frame could be revised. This could be combined with the introduction of the new M+E system as a process to engage Project Partners with the log frame. (These stakeholders should be engaged and have some ownership of M+E system, and not consider it is simply the concern of the Project office). Finally, having the M+E system as a 'cloud-based' system to allow direct access and even data entry, and as a means to engage partners by observing directly progress towards objectives.

- ***Are there important revisions required to the targets and indicators?***

As noted, the log frame has previously been revised and simplified and key changes have already been achieved. As noted above the level of several of the targets appeared quite ambitious, even if the Project had not suffered from a slow start, e.g. Outcome 1.1: increased incomes are too high and would be quite transformative if achieved; Outcome 1.2: 50% of learning units aligned to national standards. Some review of these and other targets could take place.

The log frame does not include indicators or targets for several activities. This includes firstly support for employment of persons with disabilities. The second is capacity building of GoL staff or institutions. These are both key activities with significant funds being applied for activities related to these. As such there should be some consideration for adding specific indicators and targets for these. In the case of GoL staff and agency capacity building this should be limited to application of interventions already planned and could deserve a specific output under perhaps Output 1.2#.

Any adjustment to the log frame would best not be conducted as an administrative exercise, but with Project partners as part of a refocussing of the project for the remaining time.

4.5 Sustainability

- ***What sustainability strategies are put in place in order to leave long lasting results and capacity improvements at the household, village, and institutional levels?***
- ***What factors reduce likelihood of sustained results? How can this be addressed and improved?***

With the project just establishing most of its activities it may at first seem premature to be considering sustainability. However, it is by positioning activities at the outset that can indeed enable sustainability.

At village level the VCD activities to date have just established models of 'improved production' a worthwhile achievement given the difficult working context in Sekong. These have been established just a few 'model farmers' and can easily be lost if they stop for any reason. Two strategies need to be taken to foster their sustainability and wider impact. These are (a) encouragement of dissemination from the model farmer within each village and to adjacent villages; (b) conducting VCD activities that link the farmers to markets so they gain economic returns. This will encourage them to continue and other HHs to follow them. If and when robust market links are established, the demand from these will encourage sustained production, with this the increased incomes and then further increase in HHs.

Any activity that introduces new assets to a community should be preceded by community consultation to ensure equitable and sustainable use of the new assets, such as for construction of the irrigation scheme (Dak Tlerp village). Considerable consultation has been conducted to ensure equitable access to new paddy land to be developed as paddy, with existing owners agreeing this will be shared with all HHs. This activity once completed should provide a sustainable production of additional rice. Similar high levels of consultation have been applied in regards to community based tourism and introduction of improved coffee cultivation and coffee processing.

Sustainability at institutional levels requires that capacity to be developed, along with the institutional support, and means to continue application of models developed. To mobilize various activities the Project engaged external institutions, (NGOs, etc.) for studies and to lead field activities, and at the same time ensured staff of the relevant GoL agency is also engaged. In this way capacity building is achieved, but at a limited extent. Effective implementation also requires soft skills of planning and processes of working with local communities. The Project's engagement of new national staff should provide greater opportunity for mentoring to instill these soft skills. There remains the challenge of GoL Departments having the means (funds) to replicate work. Lack of budget is a fundamental constraint to effective delivery in Lao PDR. Such Departments are challenged to justify funds to work. Field activities that will increase HHs can also be used to demonstrate the economic returns to effective service delivery, such as VCD. In effect this would as Returns on Investment (RoI), where the 'investment' is the cost of mobilizing staff (dsa, travel etc.). Creating this 'economic assessment' thus provides the agencies concerned with an argument they can use to justify ongoing funding.

Perhaps the greatest sustainability challenge comes with whether the NRES can be implemented effectively. The Project from the outset has conducted this in a highly consultative and participatory manner. This should ensure that there is a high degree of ownership of it from the GoL agencies that would implement it. At the highest level within development objectives for Lao PDR, the NRES has been included in the 2016-25 NESDP. which thus gives it institutional priority.

There are of course pragmatic challenges to its implementation. The first of these is that the various working approaches to implement the NRES have yet to be demonstrated substantially. Thus, for now there is little to inspire local agencies that the working-strategies applied (e.g. VCD) are effective, or for them to have confidence they could replicate these themselves. The second is the complexity of the NRES logframe. While there is some desire to make this as complete and exemplary as possible, this may be too difficult a first step. Instead a simplified first iteration might be designed which would be more achievable.

4.6 Assessment of cross-cutting themes

The Project specified four cross-cutting themes (a) gender equality and women's empowerment; (b) occupational safety and health, working conditions and green jobs; (c) entrepreneurship and employment services; (d) ethnic and cultural perspectives. These are illustrated in the Project Implementation strategy (fig 1).

Project activities at village level have provided a high level of opportunity for women. While there was some favouring of men for some of the activities; m/c repairs and fish raising women were active in poultry raising and mushroom production. In addition to these skills training inputs, LWU staff have received Gender Mainstreaming training and proceeded to provide gender awareness development in most of the Dak Cheung villages, including regular follow-up by trainers and mentors. Villagers themselves claimed (the men and women) that this has changed their way of thinking and results in men sharing in housework and women participating in more activities.

The Project has conducted training in OSH for DLSW staff in Sekong. Field activities to date have provided little opportunity for OSH, and its application with self-employed farmers is doubtful. There are specific issues related to agriculture, such as safe use of agro-chemicals, but again this is not applicable to the current green production models. Application of OSH would be more applicable in the context of light industries in the target areas. Rubber plantations are part of this, and as an agro-industry do represent a growing sub-set of the light industries in Lao PDR. Various equipment and procedures used within agro-industries could benefit from OSH standards. The entry points to address this might be two-fold, through DLSW (here their OSH training would have prepared staff to assess conditions and make recommendations) and through the workers themselves, as members of LFTU, raise these issues.

All the agriculture interventions have used a green works approach, using local renewable resources. Further work could be done here through introduction of forage grasses as feed for fish raising and use of local waste (e.g. rice-bran) as media for mushroom production. The work planned by Filanathrope for the coffee growers in Dak Cheung, will introduce holistic and sustainable technologies such as recycling of agricultural waste to a bio-digester to produce organic fertilizer with zero waste. This is an excellent approach for such a resource poor environment. However, it is complex and will need to prove its economic returns to farmers, of which part will be their access to organic markets in US and Europe. Such initiatives require several years to consolidate. In Dak Cheung the irrigation system in Dak Tlerp planned which will employ local hand labour for digging terraces.

VCD activities have supported agriculture production, and established models of improved production. As the number of farmers increases so will opportunity for development of a range of service providers, e.g community-based suppliers of fish fingerlings, veterinary services, feed producers, etc. This must wait for ongoing VCD work to establish farmers' links to markets to establish demand and so grow the number of producers. The Project is well positioned to do this. The training in m/c maintenance has resulted in a significant number of the trainees establishing small repair shops and is a clear example of development of entrepreneurship. ILO has a range of tools to support development of small businesses, Get Ahead, etc. Plans are in place to provide training of these. They should be linked to the various technical interventions and times for when these activities are expanding, so there is a demand for the service.

The Project has provided support to employment services, (a) the Employment or Job's Center also supported by the ADB, and employment Fairs. These are both based in the urban center of Savannakhet and thus not likely to affect rural employment. As noted earlier it is still difficult to see how the

Employment Center will experience real demand with most private sector operators using other nets to capture new workers. Greater use of these might be made by trying to link them to other initiatives. If the Project was able to engage with the existing light industries in the target areas, the Employment Center might operate as a mobile unit and proactively seek, access, and orientate rural workers for such paid employment.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

The project is highly appropriate given the uneven development between rural and urban areas according to a range of metrics. The design is conceptually elegant, to use field activities to deliver lessons towards development of an NRES, while at the same using these as a vehicle for development of tools and standards that can be used as a basis for ongoing development of a more skilled labor force in Lao PDR. While excellent in its design, the implementation of this is complex, and over-ambitious, both in terms of the timeframe and the targets to be achieved. The original timeframe has been envisaged to be five years. When reduced to three years it becomes difficult to align the interlinked activities effectively. More importantly the Project has been beset by management issues (securing MoU for Savannakhet, delayed assignment of Project Manager and national staff) that have seriously held implementation back. Thus, it is unlikely to achieve its development objective of 2000 HHs with an increase in income of 30%, or many of the intermediary targets by the end of 2019.

Field activities have remained limited to Sekong, with only establishment of governance structures in the second Province of Savannakhet. With few light industries in the target Districts of Sekong, field work these focused on the agriculture sector. This relied on training inputs with a limited group of farmers to demonstrate improved production models for several agricultural products. VCD interventions that link farmer to markets have yet to be applied. Thus, these activities are far from having significant or sustainable impact, and, could not be claimed to represent models or working strategies for enhancing rural employment.

The Project has provided basic capacity building with its training of farmers. As well as training for improved agricultural production, this has included introduction of new skills to enable rural people to begin to act as service providers, e.g. motorcycle repairs. Again, the number of beneficiaries is small. These training activities have been used as a vehicle for development of improved training curriculum with established GoL training institutions (Sekong). However, the resources of these are limited, especially in Savannakhet, and links between them and the industrial sector are not in place. Thus, are not likely to generate any significant number of skilled workers. Capacity building of GoL agencies who would be charged with implementing an NRES is low. The Project has relied on external agencies (i.e. NGOs, Provincial training units) to implement field activities to ensure results. This means that capacity building with these units to manage and deliver these interventions is still weak. With working models emerging and engagement of national staff by the Project, the Project should be able to engage and build their capacity more.

Drafting of an NRES has proceeded well, engaging relevant GoL agencies and has already articulated a relevant set of strategic objectives for the NRES. The draft NRES that has emerged from this consultative process contains strategic objectives that address both the agricultural and light industrial sectors in rural area. The inclusion of objectives addressing light industry is welcome as there are several such industries in Sepon District of Savannakhet. This provides the Project opportunity to address issues particular to this sector; DW, OSH and employment of foreign workers, and at the same time contribute to achieving its development objectives.

The NRES in its present form would be difficult for Provincial and District agencies to relate to the day-to-day issues that they face. The NRES could make the NRES more accessible to the local GoL agencies through articulating a set of scenarios that they will recognize. A set of working strategies that local agencies might apply remain to be articulated. These should develop as the field work bears fruit.

6.0 LESSONS

The Project aimed to formulate an NRES, using field sites to pilot strategies for employment creation. Areas that face livelihood issues may not respond to rural employment strategies but rather require 'development investment'. The Project recognized this and was able to secure new sites in Savannakhet province where scalable rural employment strategies can be piloted. It is important that a good understanding of the purpose of a project is gained by all stakeholders so that sites are selected that will enable scalable models to be developed.

Processing institutional requirements (e.g. MoUs), recruitment of staff can eat into project time and reduce the capacity of a project to reach its objectives. All institutions need to identify ways to fast-track and streamline these processes so project time can be used effectively.

Some technical lessons can be gained from the field activities: (a) follow-up: The activity that had consistent follow-up for the trainers - chicken raising – appeared to be best established, (b) providing appropriate models for farmers: trainers aiming for excellence introduced candidates to best practice farmers. These models of excellence can discourage some candidates as they were beyond what they could replicate. Where models are provided, it is better to use those at the levels that farmers can apply.

Given low delivery capacities of GoL agencies it has been effective to contract agencies (other goL agencies such as SSDC, NGOs, etc) to manage delivery of inputs, while at the same time joining with and working through those GoL agencies that will have responsibility for ongoing delivery. This is an effective strategy to achieve Project outcomes and build capacity of GoL agencies together.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Project stakeholders (ILO, MLSW and SDC) should consider how the project can best use its remaining sixteen months and resources to work towards its development objectives. At the same time this should contribute towards an effective NRES. The following operational and management strategies should be taken into consideration.

1# Operational strategies

- (a) Select activities that will mobilize greater number of work opportunities for local workers, both to work towards achieving the Projects development objectives and to demonstrating models that will be a real contribution to achieving the NRES.
- (b) Explore an implementation-strategy for strategic objective 4# of the NRES. This would examine ongoing employment of foreign workers in light industry (4.1#) and other associated issues i.e. DW (e.g. pay rates); OSH.
- (c) If resources are available for community tourism, these should not be invested in construction of a lodge as it will place too great a burden on the community and likely to be mis-used or fall into miss-use. The investment in this would be better supported through links with other agencies with specific expertise (e.g. Swiss contact)
- (d) Examine the funds remaining and decide how they can best be used to facilitate the above. This could include arranging for a no-cost extension that would provide time for the above to begin to be demonstrated.
- (e) Re-visit the log frame and adjust targets and indicators as part of the refocusing initiative.
- (f) Engage all local partners through PAC and DAC to appreciate the overall project implementing strategy as a means to work towards an NRES. They should then appreciate the role of individual activities as contributions to the NRES, and all field activities should articulate a provisional model or working-strategy as to how the activity could enhance rural employment.

2# Project Management and coordination

- (a) Take all measures it needs to rapid mobilize its capacity, including recruitment of effective national staff, have effective and accessible transport (either purchase or obtain a long-term contract, with a project recruited driver), streamline fund transfers from ILO HQ to the Project in Lao PDR etc. Without taking such measures then the above recommendations will continue to be slowed.
- (b) Enlist GoL as partners in conducting project interventions, but then add external agencies (trainers, NGOs, intl. specialists etc.) to guide and mentor the implementation. In this way, capacity is built, project outputs are achieved, and local GoL agencies can assess interventions in terms of working-strategies for the NRES.

A final comment can be added. While the Project with its slow mobilization may not achieve its objectives in the time remaining, if it can demonstrate progress consideration should be given to find ways to advance this work further through an extension and/or further phases.

8.0 ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 Terms of Reference

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Internal Mid-Term Evaluation

National rural employment strategy in Lao PDR towards increasing opportunities for decent and productive employment in rural areas

Draft 10 September 2018

TC Symbol	106182 - LAO/16/01/CHE
Project Title	National rural employment strategy in Lao PDR towards increasing opportunities for decent and productive employment in rural areas
Country	Lao PDR
Technical field	Rural employment
Technical backstopping unit	ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team for East and South East Asia and the Pacific, based in Thailand
Type of evaluation	Mid-Term Evaluation
Timing of evaluation	1 October – 30 November 2018
Donor	SDC
Project budget	US\$ 2,658,060 (US\$ 2,138,060 contribution from SDC \$ US\$ 520,000 contribution from ILO)
Project duration	May 2017 – April 2020

I. Introduction and Rational for Evaluation

These terms of reference concerns a mid-term evaluation of the Project on National rural employment strategy in Lao PDR towards increasing opportunities for decent and productive employment in rural areas. The project is implemented by the ILO and co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

The main objectives of the project's mid-term evaluation is to assess and analyse progress made towards achieving established outcomes, to identify lessons learnt and to propose recommendations for improved delivery of quality outputs and achievement of outcomes. The evaluation provides an opportunity for reflection and self-learning regarding how the project could improve the effectiveness of its operations in the future.

All costs of the evaluation will be covered under the project. The evaluation report will be in English.

2. Background of the project

At the request of the Government of Lao PDR, and aligning with the United Nations Partnership Framework for Lao PDR (2017-2021) and the ILO Decent Work Country Programme for Lao PDR (2017-2021), the ILO has been working to develop an approach to reducing poverty through promoting employment in the rural areas. Key to this approach is the implementation of a multi-year integrated development project in Savannakhet and Sekong Provinces that hones in on areas of rural poverty to lay the foundation for a national rural employment strategy.

The project contributes to the Decent Work Country Programme, ILO Outcomes, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UN Partnership Framework (UNPF), as well as to national development frameworks, as follows:

- Lao PDR's Decent Work Country Programme (2017-2021) under which the project specifically contributes to Country Programme Outcome LAO176, 'National rural employment strategy developed and implemented in one province and replicated in two provinces in Lao PDR towards increasing opportunities for decent and productive employment in rural areas'
- ILO Programme and Budget Outcome 5, "Decent work in the rural economy", specifically the following indicators:
 - Indicator 5.1 (primary): Member States that have taken concrete steps to integrate decent work into rural development policies and strategies, especially the first criteria: Government integrates decent work into policies or strategies for rural development at the national, regional or sectoral level.
 - Indicator 5.3 (secondary): Member States that have enhanced their knowledge base, analytical capacity and statistics on decent work in the rural economy.
- Sustainable Development Goals, specifically the following goals:
 - Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
 - Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
 - Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
 - Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- Lao PDR-UN Partnership Framework 2017-2021, notably Outcome 1: "By 2021, all women and men have increased opportunities for decent livelihoods and jobs" and Outcome 6: "By 2021, the most vulnerable people benefit from improved food security and nutrition".

Rural employment promotion continues to be one of the country's priorities in national development plan, specifically, the current 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) 2016-2020, which has as its priority the formulation of a national rural employment strategy that creates jobs and income in rural areas and where (formal) employment promotion is a key indicator in ensuring inclusive economic growth.

The National rural employment strategy in Lao PDR towards increasing opportunities for decent and productive employment in rural areas, spanning 2016 - 2020, involves scaling up of the earlier pilot strategy in both its reach and policy impact. It puts an emphasis on national policy implementation and development, with relevance to the implementation of such policies as the labour law, national OSH programme, social protection system, national skills standard and value chain promotion.

The earlier pilot rural employment experience, supported by the ILO during 2012-2016, led the Lao PDR government to promote rural employment for poverty reduction at 24th Labour Ministerial Meeting (LMM) of 2016 ASEAN, where Lao PDR assumed the ASEAN presidency. The ASEAN Declaration on transition from informal employment to formal employment towards decent in ASEAN was adopted at the meeting. ILO was then supported the drafting of

a declaration for discussion among ASEAN Member States and subsequently, drawing up a work plan. The work plan has been a platform for knowledge sharing among ASEAN countries where agriculture and rural development have played an important economic role.

The current project aims to contribute to increasing decent rural employment and income through integrated approaches; supporting the Lao PDR Government to develop a National Rural Employment Strategy that also addresses the ASEAN Declaration on decent work promotion; and increasing the Lao PDR and ASEAN knowledge base on decent rural employment creation.

The project emphasizes women, ethnic minorities and people with disability as they are the most vulnerable groups and more susceptible to poverty and multiple discrimination. These groups are prominent in data collection, inclusion in technical strategy development, training delivery as well as through translations into ethnic language and appropriate project staffing.

Sustainability is ingrained through capacity-building of government departments and officials, implementing agencies and the use of a markets based approach for commercialising rural agriculture.

3. Strategies of the project

While directly contributing to increased rural employment through integrated approaches in target communities, the Project will demonstrate how policies and strategies promoting different pillars of Decent Work are extended to rural economies (please refer to the Project Document for detailed strategies)

Below are the Development Objective and the three Immediate Objectives are listed here as context before outlining the strategy.

Development Objective: Decent employment opportunities increased in rural areas of Lao PDR through development and implementation of a national Rural Employment Strategy.

Immediate Objective 1: Decent rural employment opportunities and income increased through integrated approaches in target communities of selected Sekong and Savannakhet provinces

Immediate Objective 2: National Rural Employment Strategy developed and adopted, linked to support for implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on 'Decent work promotion: Transition to formal economy'

Immediate Objective 3: Increased knowledge base and knowledge sharing enhances decent rural employment creation in Lao PDR.

Details of Output under each strategy is found in Box 1.

Project sustainability is built into the strategies through the following:

- Creation of advisory bodies, including the national, provincial and district advisory committees, that would build ownership of the project among stakeholders as well as continuous learning on rural employment strategies.
- Partnership with social partners, local stakeholders and NGOs in delivery of technical interventions that level up their current support; such partnerships and synergies will be pursued as a sustainability strategy, especially where these organizations have a continuing mandate to promote livelihoods and job creation.

- The envisaged passage of the National Rural Employment Strategy which will imbed institutional commitment and resources to multi-stakeholder and inter-ministerial efforts to extending protection and productive inputs to rural households and work force.

Box 1: Project strategy, objectives and outputs

Immediate Objective 1: Decent rural employment opportunities and income increased through integrated approaches in target communities of two selected provinces

Output 1.1: Value chain processes improved for selected products with demonstrated food security, nutrition, income generation and market linkage elements, with incorporation of gender analysis, OSH and green job considerations

Output 1.2: Decent rural employment increased in line with local market requirements through (i) gender responsive skills development and (ii) access to employment, financial and business support services; incorporating OSH, green job and gender considerations

Output 1.3: Rural infrastructure (including community assets) improved in target areas, incorporating OSH, green job approaches and gender mainstreaming

Output 1.4: Decent working conditions and OSH strengthened through promotion and implementation of the Labour Law and 2nd National OSH Programme, with attention to gender considerations

Immediate Objective 2: National Rural Employment Strategy developed and adopted, linked to support for implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on ‘Decent work promotion: Transition to formal economy’

Output 2.1: National Rural Employment Strategy and action plan formulated and adopted through participatory process and partnership development among relevant stakeholders at all levels, with special attention to gender mainstreaming, needs of ethnic minorities and persons with disability

Output 2.2: Improved collection, management, dissemination and use of sex-disaggregated data on decent work in rural areas provides a strengthened evidence base for the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the rural employment strategy

Output 2.3: Implementation of ASEAN Declaration on ‘Decent work promotion: Transition to formal economy’ is supported in Lao PDR with links to the formulation and implementation of the National Rural Employment Strategy

Immediate Objective 3: Increased knowledge base and knowledge sharing enhances decent rural employment creation in Lao PDR

Output 3.1: Project lessons documented, published, disseminated and used to inform formulation of National Rural Employment Strategy

Output 3.2: Findings of project research initiatives published and disseminated to inform policy and strategy development (including National Rural Employment Strategy at national and provincial levels within Lao PDR

4. Key Partners:

The key partners in delivery of this project are the government of Lao PDR, the Lao Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI), the Lao Federation of Trade Unions, the provincial tripartite plus organizations of Savannakhet and Sekong provinces.

5. Project Management team set-up:

a. The project team consist of:

- One international project manager (P4) based in project office in Savannakhet province, in charge of the daily management of the project and technical support and reporting to all parties involved.
- One Provincial project officer (NO-B) based in project office in Savannakhet province, to support the international project manager
- One Provincial project officer (NO-A) based in Department of Labour and Social Welfare Department of Sekong province to coordinate with the provincial and district as well as target communities in Sekong province and support the international project manager. – Currently re-recruiting.
- One Administrative and Financial Assistant supporting the project team
- One community facilitator recruited under consultant contract from September to December 2018.

b. **Technical backstopping for the project** is provided by the Specialist on Local Strategy for Decent Work together other DWT specialists based in Bangkok, particularly, Employment Specialist, Skills Specialist, Employment Intensive Specialist, Gender, equality and diversity Specialist, OSH Specialist, Statistics Specialist, and Labour inspection Specialist.

c. **The project also has a National Advisory Committee (PAC)** at the national level that meets annually, and a Provincial Advisory Committee at each project province that meetings every six months, supporting the Provincial Advisory Committee are the technical working groups at the provincial levels on each components on skills, value chain, entrepreneurship development, OSH.

6. Objectives of the mid-term evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to review progress against the expected project deliverables and outcomes and to propose any course correction for the project's remaining period. In so doing, the evaluation will identify the achievements, good practise and lessons learned from the project. It is further intended to assess and analyse the continued feasibility of the project design and intervention approaches.

Knowledge and information obtained from this evaluation will be used as a basis for better implementation for the remaining period of the project.. The evaluation will also supports public accountability of the government of Lao PDR and the ILO.

7. Clients and users of the evaluation:

- Project team and ILO Country Office for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR
- DWT – Bangkok, ILO HQ
- Government of Lao PDR, workers’ and employers’ organizations
- Donor – SDC

The findings and recommendations of the evaluation will be shared and discussed with members of the National and Provincial Advisory Committees.

8. Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation covers **all activities undertaken up to September 2018**. The evaluation will cover all the aspects of the project, including the formulation of the National Rural Employment Strategy and the provincial implementation. It involves discussion with national counterparts of the project, provincial partners and Bangkok-based technical specialists. Meetings will be held in Bangkok, Vientiane, Savannakhet and Sekong provinces.

The evaluation will verify good practise, lessons learned from the implementation and management of the project. A set of practical recommendations will be included in the evaluation report aimed at improving the project management, interventions, constituent and partner coordination and overall implementation.

The evaluation will give specific attention to how the intervention is relevant to the ILO’s programme and policy frameworks at the national and global levels, UNDAF, and national sustainable development strategy or other national development framework including any relevant policies for rural development in Lao PDR.

The evaluation will integrate gender equality, disability inclusion and other non-discrimination issues as a cross-cutting concern throughout its methodology and all deliverables, including the final report.

In particular the evaluation should focus on the following:

- g. The **progress of the project** against output and outcome targets
- h. The extent to which management arrangements are appropriate to achieve desired results and outcomes within a timely, effective and efficient manner
- i. The level of engagement with and satisfaction of the project constituents and direct beneficiaries
- j. Assess the quality of operational work planning, budgeting and risk management.
- k. Lessons learned and good practices
- l. Prospects for the model to improve livelihood of rural workers beyond the expected end of the project (exit strategies and sustainability)

9. Evaluation Criteria and questions

The project will be assessed based on the criteria of the following. The assessment is intended to produce recommendations for the remainder of the project.

- a. Relevance and validity of design
 - To what extent do the design of implementation strategies respond to the problem analysis
 - To what extent do the design of implementation strategies contribute to the project indicators and responsive to vulnerable target groups?

- To what extent do the implementation modalities contribute to building the capacities and service offerings of the implementing partners and institutional stakeholders?
- b. Effectiveness
- What types of strategies and measures were taken by the project to achieve project targets?
 - How effective were the measures and strategies in achieving the project targets and indicators?
 - To what extent were the intervention results defined and monitored?
 - What have been the achievements of the project so far and what can be improved to further its effectiveness?
- c. Efficiency
- To what extent did the project budget factor in the cost of specific activities, outputs and outcomes to achieve its targets and indicators?
 - How did the project define its contribution or subsidies to the support to its partners' mandates and to facilitate market-based approaches?
 - Has the project leveraged resources (financial, partnerships, expertise) to promote its objectives and further sustainability?
 - What efficiency or cost burdens that could be reduced in the future?
- d. Intermediate results and impacts
- In which areas does the project have likelihood of producing impacts along project targets and indicators? How can this be improved?
 - How can the project improve its results monitoring and impact assessment during the remainder of the project duration?
 - Are there important revisions required to the targets and indicators?
- e. Sustainability
- What sustainability strategies are put in place in order to leave long lasting results and capacity improvements at the household, village, and institutional levels?
 - What factors reduce likelihood of sustained results? How can this be addressed and improved?

10. Cross-cutting issues/issues of special interest of the ILO

The project pursues outputs that represent cross-cutting work such as gender- and ethnicity sensitive training and interventions. The project brings a strong gender and women entrepreneurship development. It supports productive job creation and the improvement of the living and working conditions of aspiring women ethnic entrepreneurs in the rural setting. It also promotes disability inclusion as a strong component.

Other cross cutting drivers are the promotion of labour standards such as the application of the national labour law, including occupational safety and health, among stakeholders at the provincial and district level

As earlier mentioned, the project also contributes to national development frameworks and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly mentions the drafting and envisaged passage of the National Rural Employment Strategy.

The intervention is an integrated approach which entail sector-wide consultation process, implementation, monitoring and reporting, tripartite workshops, to progressively devise a shared vision for productive employment in the rural sectors. The participatory approach adopted throughout the consultation and implementation raises awareness among line ministries, relevant provincial departments, and district offices, workers' and employers' representatives, NGOs, UN agencies and development partners, as well as the importance of a coordinated, holistic integrated approach to rural employment promotion.

11. Methodology

The ILO evaluation policy 2017 provides the basic framework. The evaluation will be carried out according to the ILO standard policies and procedures.

https://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationreports/WCMS_603265/lang--en/index.htm

The evaluation will use a combination of methods and the detailed methodologies will be elaborated by the Evaluator on the basis of these TORs, subject to the discussion with the CO for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR and the DWT specialist.

It is expected that that evaluation will apply mixed methods that draw on both quantitative and qualitative evidence and involve multiple means of analysis. These include but not limited to the following:

4. A desk review of relevant documents related to the project performance and progress, including the project document, progress reports, project outcomes, etc. The evaluation should also include examining the intervention's theory of change (if non-existence – the evaluator is to reconstruct one), specifically in the light of logical connect between levels of results and their alignments with ILO's strategic objectives and outcomes at the global and national levels, as well as with the relevant SDGs and related targets
5. Interviews with ILO Country Office, Project Manager, Project staff, and ILO DWT specialists who have contributed to the project activities; Lao-based Project Managers will be interviewed in relation to the potential and/or actual synergies with the RE project.
6. Interviews with key project stakeholders at national, provincial and district levels, e.g. constituents, donor, implementing partners, direct beneficiaries (staff of relevant ministries, departments, and offices) and community villagers at project target areas
7. A stakeholder debriefing at the end of the field mission to present preliminary evaluation findings and recommendations.

Gender, disability and youth dimension should be considered as a cross-cutting concern throughout the methodology, deliverables and final report of the evaluation. The evaluation should also review data and information that disaggregated by sex, disabilities, and youth and assess the relevance and effectiveness of the project to improve the lives of women, men, youth and people with disabilities. The particular concerns of vulnerable groups of rural workers should be considered in the evaluation process as well.

The evaluation needs to ensure the involvement of key stakeholders in the implementation as well as in the dissemination process (e.g. stakeholders workshop, debriefing of project manager, evaluation managers, and project steering committee etc.)

Any limitation from the chosen evaluation methods, including those related to representation of specific groups of stakeholders should be specified in the methodology section of the report.

The evaluator may adapt the methodology, but any fundamental changes should be agreed between the evaluation manager and the evaluator(s) , and reflected in the inception report.

12. Main deliverables

1. **Inception Report.** In consultation with the Country Office for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR, project team, and DWT Specialists, the evaluator will draft a brief methodological note that will briefly set out the following:
 - a. the evaluation methodology based on these TORs including the approach to data collection, key stakeholder identification, interviews and indicators
 - b. the work plan for the evaluation, indicating the phases of the evaluation, the key deliverables and milestones
 - c. the list of key stakeholders and other individuals to be interviewed
2. **Evaluation Report.** Draft evaluation report, then the final report, after comments and feedbacks are received from the ILO project team, CO and DWT received and incorporated. The quality of the report will be assessed against the EVAL checklist (annex 1). The report should include sections on the output and outcomes level results against milestone targets as well as sections on lessons learned, good practices and recommendations
3. **Evaluation summary.** An evaluation summary will also be drafted by the Evaluator after the evaluation report is finalized according to the ILO format (annex 2)

All outputs of the evaluation will be produced in English. Copyright of the evaluation report is exclusively with the ILO. Key stakeholders can make appropriate use of the evaluation report in line with its original purpose and with appropriate acknowledgement.

13. Management arrangement

This internal evaluation is co-managed by the Project Manager (Roland Charles) and the Local Strategies for Decent Work Specialist (Sandra Yu), with the overall liaison, administrative and logistical support of the National Coordinator for Lao PDR (Khemphone Phaokhamkeo).

Administrative and logistical support

The project team in Savannakhet and Sekong together with the ILO Country Office (CO) for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR and DWT Specialists will provide relevant documentation, administrative and logistical support to the evaluator. The Project Manager together with the ILO National Coordinator for Lao PDR will also assist in organizing a detailed evaluation mission agenda and in confirming meetings.

The Project Manager and the Country Office will also ensure that all relevant documentation is up to date and available to the Evaluator. The ILO National Coordinator for Lao PDR and the DWT Specialist on Local Strategies for Decent Work will be the main contact persons for the evaluation preparation and implementation and the post evaluation phase.

The following is a tentative calendar covering key outputs and milestones of the mid-term evaluation.

	Actions	Tentative dates	Responsible persons
1	Finalization of the evaluation methodology and mission plan, including skype with Evaluation Managers	1-5 October	Evaluator, ROAP M&E, DWT Specialist, ILO NC
2	Desk review of documents	1-5 October	Evaluator
3	Interviews in Bangkok	8-9 October	Evaluator, DTW-BKK, ROAP M&E
4	Field mission to Savannakhet Province, Lao PDR	9-14 October	Evaluator, ILO NC, Project team
5	Field mission to Sekong Province	15-20 October	Evaluator, ILO NC, Project team
6	Interviews in Vientiane	22-24 October	Evaluator, ILO NC, Project team
7	Interviews and debriefing in Bangkok	24-26 October	Evaluator, DTW-BKK, ROAP M&E
5	Preparation of draft report	29 October – 5 November	Evaluator
6	Draft report is circulated for comments are provided to the evaluator	5-9 November	DWT, CO, Project team
7	Revised and final evaluation report is submitted to CO	By 14 November	Evaluator

ANNEX 2 Schedule and persons met

#	Name and Surname	Organization	Position
Skype interviews 02/10/2018			
1	Dr. Chansthith Chaleunsith	consultant	Base line study, GoL local institutional capacity.
2	Roalnd Charles	ILO	Project CTA
Savannakhet Province, 9/10/2018			
Department of Labour and Social Welfare			
1	Mr. Valin Inthasone	DoLSW	Deputy Head of Department
2	Mr. Chanthavong Bounpheng	DoLSW	Head of Skill Development and Employment Section
3	Mr. Somsackda Sybounheung	DoLSW	Technical Officer, Skill Development and Employment Section and Job Center
Provincial of Agriculture and Forestry			
1	Mr. Bounled Chanthongthip	PAFO	Deputy Head of Department
2	Mr. Soubin Dongduang	PAFO	Head of Rural Development and Corporative Section
3	Mr. Khonexay Chandala	PRF	Head of PRF at Savanakheth
4	Mr. Sengduane	PRF	Technical Officer of PRF at Savanakheth
5	Mr. Boualaphan	PAFO	Coordinator for ILO Project of PAFO
Lao Chamber of Commerce and Industry			
1	Mr. Panyphone Sayyaphone	CCI	General Secretary Savannakhet CCI
Savannakhet, 10/10/2018			
Lao Federation of Trade Unions			
1	Mr. Somjai Sisomphone	LFTU	Deputy Head
2	Mr. Vongsavanh Thongphachanh	LFTU	Technical Staff
Lao Women's Union			
1	Ms. Somvang Lamphouvong	LWU	Head of Development and Vocational Training Section
2	Ms. Dalavanh Khanthabouly	LWU	Technical Officer of Development and Vocational Training Section
Lao Youth's Union			
1	Mr. Thavyxay Khantivong	LYU	Coordinator
Handicap International, Savannakhet			
1	Ms. Duangchai	HI	Coordinator, HI in Savannakhet Province
2	Mr. Bounthoua	HI	Committee, Planning Assistance
3	Mr. Khamsou	HI	Committee, Supporting Assistance
Agronomies and Vetinares sans Frontiers (AVSF)			
1	Mr. Aimeric FERLAY	AVSF	Technical Assistant
2	Mr. Hoa Hoang Hai	AVSF	Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture Team Leader
Sepon District, 11/10/2018			
Labour and Social Welfare Office			
1	Mr. Nounta Liththilath	LSWO	Deputy Head
2	Mr. Siphachan Vonghajak	LSWO	Technical Officer
District of Agriculture and Forestry			
1	Mr. Viengxay Leuammalaysee	DAFO	Technical Assistant
Village visit			
1	Ban Pha Naa cluster	Village committee	Reps from three hamlets (men only)

Adsphone District, 12/10/2018			
Department of Labour and Social Welfare			
1	Mr. Ayan Tuanethammajak	LSWO	Section Head
2	Mr. Thonephet Bouttavong	LSWO	Section Head
Department of Industry and Commerce			
1	Mr. Daovy Boudkhuane	ICO	Deputy Head
Department of Planning and Investment			
1	Mr. Onma Sythammavanh		Section Head
District of Agriculture and Forestry			
1	Mr. Phouluang Vongdalathip	DAFO	Technical Officer
Village visits			
1	Ban Pho Thai	Village committee	Reps fro two hamlets (two women)
2	Ban Naa Hongnoi	Village committee	Reps from two hamlets (one woman)
Champasak Province, 15/10/2018			
Southern Skills Development Center			
1	Mr. Bounthavy Keokhamdee	SSDC	Deputy Head
2	Mr. Khampasong Boudsanngam	SSDC	Head of Technical Section, Contact Person for ILO
Southern Agricultural Promotion Center Pakxong			
1	Mr. Inpan Vensombath	APC	Deputy Head
Xekong Province, 16/10/2018			
Department of Labour and Social Welfare			
1	Mr. Phounsavath Pheangphachanh	DoLSW	Coordinator
2	Mr. Sommay	DoLSW	Coordinator Assistant
Village visit			
	Ban Dak Tlerp	Village committee	
Xekhong Province, 18/10/2018			
Vice Governors office			
1	Mr. Thavone Phommalyoun	Cabinet Office	Vice Governor
2	Mr. Phetoudone Phomvongsa	Cabinet Office	Secretary
Lao Women Unions			
1	Ms. Somvang Chandavong	LWU	Head of LWU
2	Ms. Bounthanom Sysouman	LWU	Head of Vocational Development Division
Provincial Agriculture and Forestry office			
1	Mr. Somphone Phongsavath	PAFO	Deputy Head of Livestock Division
2	Mr. Singsamouth Phiathep	PAFO	Technical Official for Livestock Division, Agricultural Center
3	Mr. Mitta Sounilandone	PAFO	Technical Staff, Irrigation Division
4	Ms. Somphet Soukkaserm	PAFO	Deputy Head of Agriculture Division
5	Ms. Phouvieng Sylavong	PAFO	Deputy Head of Administration Division
Xekong Province, 19/10/2018			
Lao Federation of Trade Union			
1	Ms. Phetdakeo Phonsalath	LFTU	Deputy Head of LFTU
2	Ms. Lathsamy Sengsanga	LFTU	Head of Labour Protection Division
3	Mr. Khamphan Keo-onla	LFTU	Deputy Head of Administration
IVET			
1	Mr. Phouvong Boupphaphan	IVET	Deputy Head
2	Mr. Khamkhong Duangchantha	IVET	Technical staff
3	Ms. Keokanya Chitsalath	IVET	Administrative Deputy Head
Vientiane 22 October			

Ministry of Labour and Social welfare			
1	Ms. Anousone Khamsingsavath	Dept Skills Dev. and Employment	DG.
2	Ms Vannsy	"	ILO Coordinator
3	Mr Singthong	"	Technician
4	Mr Yankou Yangluesai	Dept Planning and Cooperation	DG
Ministry of Planning and Investment			
1	Mr Kalouna Nanthvongduansy	Dept. of Planning	Dpty DG
2	Ms. Samaiphone Bounthideth	Div. Social Dev Planning.	Dpty Director of Div.
Vientiane 23 October			
1	Mr Bounthavy	ILO, Rural employment Project	Ex- National Coordinator
2	Mr Bas Athner	ROAP, ILO	Technical Advisor, infrastructure
3	Ms Khemphone	ILO, Country Office	Country representative
4	Ms. Barbara Jaggi Hasler	SDC	Dpty Dir. Cooperation, Head of employment and skills Domain
5	Ms Bouakai Phimmavong	EDC	Director/consultant
Vientiane 24 October			
1	Michael Woods	Filanthrope	Executive director
ROAP Bangkok			
25 October			
1	Don Clarke	ILO	Consultant, NRES
2	Makiko Matsumoto	ILO	Employment specialist
3	Jittima Srisuknam	ILO	Programme Officer for Thailand, Lao PDR
26 October			
1	Graeme Buckley	ILO	Dir. Decent Work and Training / CO Bangkok
2	Julien Magnat	ILO	Specialist on Skills and Employability
3	Joni Simpson	ILO	Snr. Specialist, Gender, Equity and non-Discrimination

ANNEX 3 Project site maps

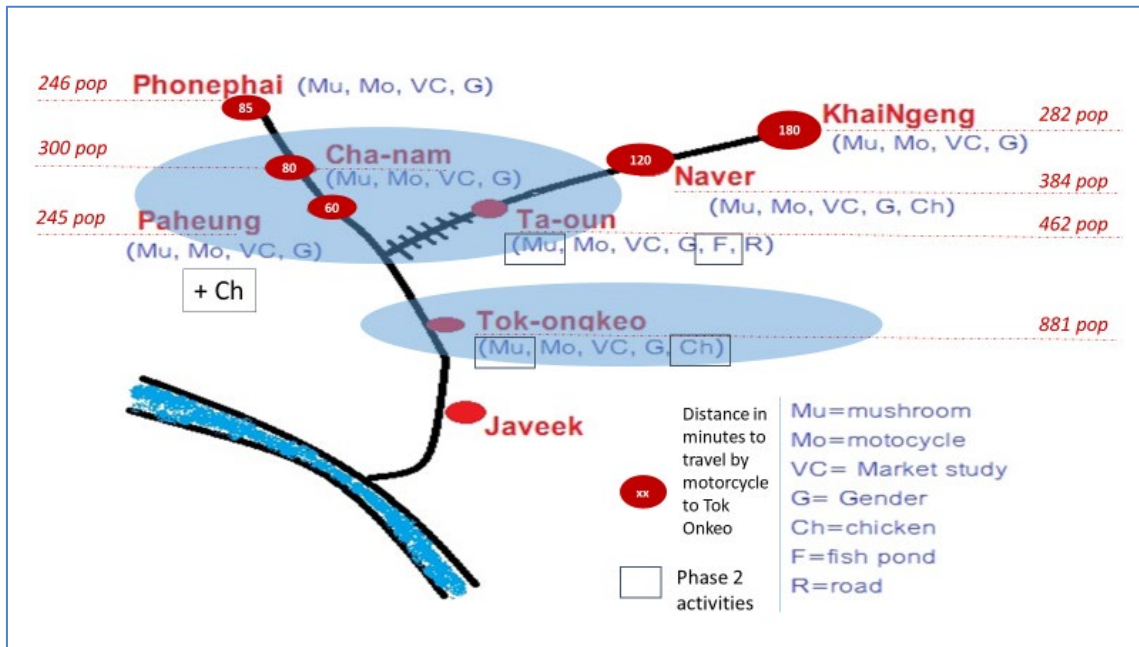


Fig 4. Tok Onkeo cluster, Lamam District, Xekong (project prepared)

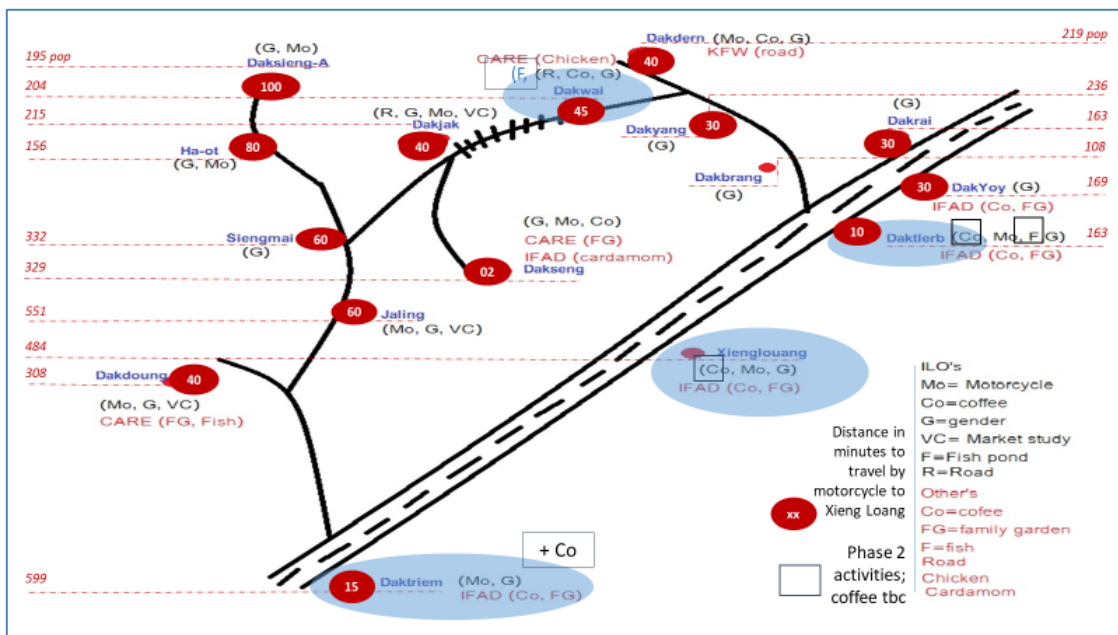


Fig 5. Xieng Louang cluster, Dak Cheung District, Sekong (project prepared)

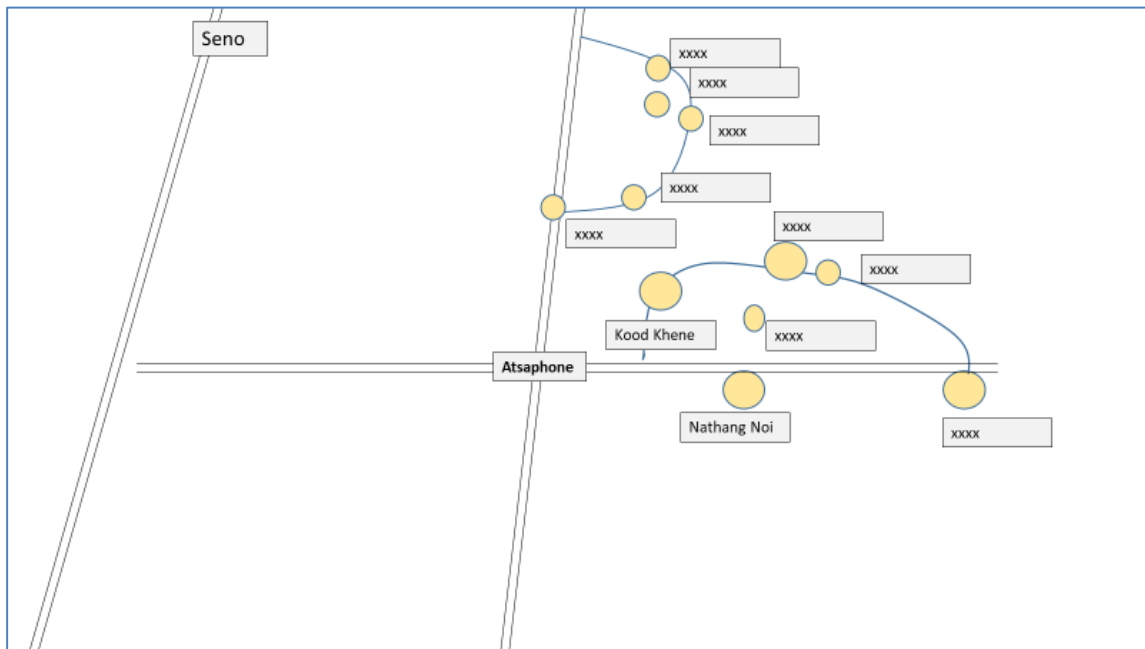


Fig 6 Target villages Atsaphone, Savannakeht

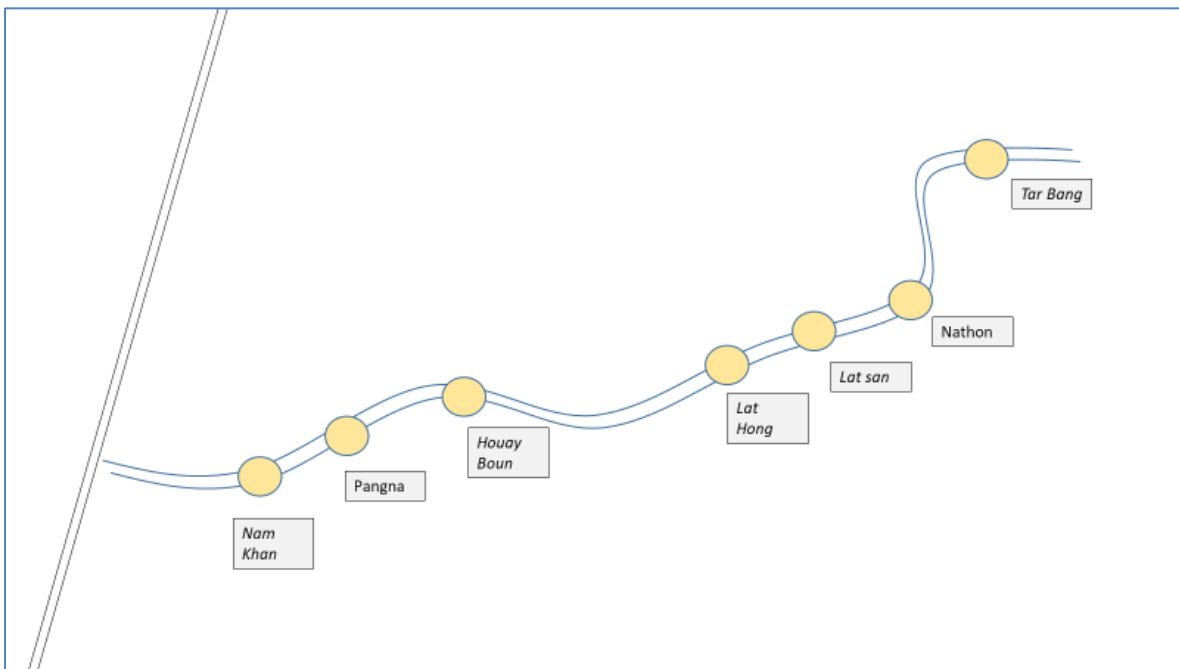


Fig 7 Target villages, Sepone district, Savannakeht