

FINAL

MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORT

*ILO/China South-South Cooperation Project to
Expand Employment Services and Enhance Labour
Market Information in Cambodia and Lao PDR*

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Contents

1. Executive summary.....	5
2. Background and project description.....	9
3. Purposes and scope.....	11
4. Evaluation methodologies and questions.....	12
5. Findings.....	13
5.1 Strategic use of ILO/China SSC Project funds.....	13
5.2 Validity of project design.....	13
5.3 Progress against performance plan.....	14
5.3.1 Cambodia.....	14
5.3.2 Lao PDR.....	21
5.4 Effectiveness of the monitoring mechanism.....	27
5.5 Effectiveness of management arrangements.....	28
5.6 Cross-cutting issue: Gender equality.....	28
6. Conclusions.....	29
7. Recommendations.....	30
8. Lessons learnt.....	33
9. Annexes.....	34

List of Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CAMFEBA	Cambodian Federation of Employers and Business Association
CCTU	Cambodian Confederation of Trade Unions
CCU	Cambodian Confederation of Unions
CLC	Cambodian Labour Confederation
CO	Country Office
DWT	Decent Work Team
DSDE	Department of Skills Development and Employment
ESJC	Employment Service Job Center
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JC	Job Center
LFTU	Lao Federation of Trade Union
LMI	Labour Market Information
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
LNCCI	Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry
MOHRSS	Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security
MOLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MOLVT	Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NACC	National Union Alliance Chambers of Cambodia
NEA	National Employment Agency
PES	Public Employment Service
PRODOC	Project Document

PTO	Project Technical Officer
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations

1. Executive Summary

The ILO/China South-South Cooperation Project to Expand Employment Services and Enhance Labour Market Information System in Cambodia and Lao PDR started in late 2013, with an expected project period of 3 years. The project receives financial and technical support from the Chinese Government, through the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS). The project is being administered by the ILO Country Office in Bangkok (CO-Bangkok) and benefits from the expertise provided through the ILO's Decent Work Team (DWT) Bangkok.

The project is designed with the objective 'to improve labour market efficiency and enhance linkages and information flow between job seekers and employers, which will contribute to the reduction of unemployment and, ultimately, of poverty in Cambodia and Lao PDR'.

The project's development strategy as outlined in the PRODOC includes:

- a) Strengthening the capacities of staff to deliver services, and
- b) Improving the labour market information collection, analysis and dissemination for better information to job seekers and enterprises and to design programmes addressing the needs of youth, women, migrant workers and people with disabilities.

The mid-term internal evaluation was conducted in April, 2015 (through country visits) and through follow-up communications between the consultant and partner agencies in Cambodia and Lao PDR during June-July, 2015. As per the Terms of Reference, the evaluation examined validity of the project design, progress against the performance plan, strategic use of ILO/China funds, the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation mechanism and management arrangement, and cross-cutting issue on gender equality.

The evaluation concludes that:

- i) There has been important progress in three output areas under the immediate objective 1 (output 1.1-1.3). Assessment of the job centers in Cambodia and Lao PDR along with the various capacity building activities implemented can be considered the most significant contributions of the project during the first half of the project period. Both countries (to a lesser extent in Lao PDR) have also been able to develop/adapt several employment service tools while also producing communication materials to be used with the target groups. Job fairs have proven to be an important platform for prospective employers and job seekers, especially those with skills and education.
- ii) While some outreach activities may have been planned and carried out targeting low and semi-skilled job seekers in rural areas, there is still a clear need by stakeholders in both Cambodia and Lao PDR to identify more effective outreach activities for rural job seekers.

- iii) There are potentials for NEA and DSDE to enhance the effectiveness of their provision of public employment services by developing stronger linkages and cooperation with trade unions and employers' organizations as the different agencies share some common interests. The effort by NEA to cooperate with the trade union in Siem Reap province should be assessed and replicated if proven to be effective. In the case of Lao PDR, despite a good rapport between DSDE, the trade union and the employers' organization, programmatic linkages between the different stakeholders in Lao PDR are less evident.
- iv) Data collection and dissemination as per the immediate objective 2 is a crucial aspect for an effective job matching and the provision of employment services, and that this component of the project may have been given less attention and was also facing more challenges during the first half of the project implementation, especially in Lao PDR. The challenges identified have ranged from the lack of basic computer equipments as well as limited staff time and capacity to systematically collect and store data in the case of Lao PDR, to the need for more appropriate IT and database management system which would allow for a better tracking and analysis of the data collected in the case of Cambodia. At the same time, systematic collection and analysis of gender segregated data of job seekers in Lao PDR is lacking.
- v) More activities related to the enhancement of capacity in the area of labour market information can be foreseen. At the same time, higher commitment from project partners along with extensive financial and technical support from the ILO/China SSC project would be highly beneficial in enabling both countries to fulfill the development objectives, both under this project and within the context of the respective national economic and social development plans.
- vi) Considering the part-time arrangement for project administration, coordination and management of the project as per the agreed work plan seems to be adequate. However, to be able to address some of the gaps which are related to project partners' and donor's commitments, the project could benefit from more active engagement of the Project National Steering Committees in both countries.

The evaluation recommends that:

- The ILO Project Coordinating Team discusses with the implementing partners (MOLSW/DSDE) to agree on achievable outputs to focus on as well as additional funding allocation which may be required, given the likelihood that the project in Lao PDR will not achieve all the planned outputs, particularly those under immediate objective 2.
- Collaboration between trade unions, employer's associations and the NEA/DSDE is strengthened. This is especially in the case of Lao PDR where the trade union (LFTU) and the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI) have the capacity

and interest to engage more strategically with DSDE, especially on outreaching activities with LFTU and on LMIS with LNCCI.

- Communications and outreach activities can focus more on the job seekers with low and semi-skills as they are the majority of the work force in both Cambodia and Lao PDR. Effective outreach activities and communication channels for this group of job seekers need to be identified.
- The project can facilitate more on-site capacity building support such as by having Chinese experts (or those from ASEAN countries) to spend a certain period of time with the local teams for on-site coaching so that the experts can also understand the local context and challenges so as to be able to help guide the teams more effectively.
- The project should focus more on strengthening capacity of NEA and DSDE staff in data collection and analysis. For Lao PDR in particular, it is recommended that more efforts will need to be put into outreaching to and registering job seekers as well as ensuring technical training in the subsequent support by the likes of the ILO/China SSC Project.
- The project should explore possible collaboration and synergy with other relevant projects/ initiatives that seek to address similar areas of concern including projects supported by UN or other International agencies such as UN Women, UN Triangle Project and IOM.
- Considering the scope and nature of the project, the level of engagement between partners, stakeholders and the donor agency as well as the diverse areas of activities planned, it is recommended that the current staffing arrangements on the part of ILO should be maintained.
- More active involvement of the National Project Steering Committee in monitoring and review of the project is recommended for the remaining of the project.

Basic Project Information**Project title:**

ILO/China South-South Cooperation Project to Expand Employment Services and Enhance Labour Market Information in Cambodia and Lao PDR

Country: Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic

Administrative unit: CO-Bangkok

Technical unit: DWT-Bangkok

External Implementing**Partners:**

Cambodia: Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MOLVT), National Employment Agency (NEA)

Lao PDR: Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MOLSW)

Time frame: 36 months

Budget: US\$ 1 million

Evaluation type: Mid-term Internal Evaluation

2. Background and project description

Over the last decade, both Cambodia and Lao PDR have experienced a high level of economic growth: Cambodia registered double-digit growth from 2004-2007 before the global crisis while the economy expanded on average of 7.4% from 2001-2011 in Lao PDR.¹ Economic growth in Cambodia was driven by the boom in labour-intensive garment, tourism and construction industries while high growth in Lao PDR was spurred by foreign direct investment (FDI) in extractive industries, hydropower and industrial crop plantations which have not generated adequate employment opportunities in the country. Furthermore, despite a high level of economic growth, rural poverty remains a challenge in both countries. The majority of the labour forces are low- skilled workers engaging in the informal sector employment. At the same time, there appears to be a high demand from the employers and industries who have been struggling to find suitable workers for their enterprises.

As stated in the project document (PRODOC), the ILO/China South-South Cooperation Project to Expand Employment Services and Enhance Labour Market Information System in Cambodia and Lao PDR (ILO/China SSC) was conceived in response to the need of both countries towards reducing poverty and enhancing capacity for public employment services. The project taps on previous engagement of the ILO in assisting both Lao and Cambodian governments to establish employment service job centers in 2009 and 2010 respectively. The current ILO/China SSC project is being supported financially by the People's Republic of China, through the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS). Under the South-South Cooperation Framework, support from the Chinese government also includes a wide range of knowledge exchange initiatives at both national and provincial levels along with technical assistance, advisory services and sharing of good practices by the People's Republic of China with Cambodia and Lao PDR.

The main project's stakeholder in Cambodia is the National Employment Agency (NEA). The Cambodian Federation of Employers and Business Associations (CAMFEBA) which represents the employers' organization and Cambodian Labour Confederation (CLC), Cambodian Confederation of Unions (CCU), Cambodian Confederation of Trade Union (CCTU) and National Assembly Cambodian Confederation (NACC) as workers' organization are also important stakeholders and beneficiaries of the project in Cambodia. As for Lao PDR, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MOLSW) and its Department of Skills Development and Employment (DSDE) are the main stakeholders of the project, along with the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI) representing the employers' organization and the Lao Federation of Trade Union (LFTU) for the workers' organization. Beside these agencies, job seekers and employers are the groups of people that this project seeks to ultimately benefit.

¹ Laos Government and UN (2013) MDG Progress Report for Lao PDR 2013

According to the PRODOC, an important strategy which has been identified to facilitate productive employment and to cushion the impact of economic transition in Cambodia and Lao PDR is that of public employment services (PES). The ILO has been integrating employment services promotion into its Programme Outcomes and Budgets, and this is reflected in the Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) in both countries. At the same time, the governments of Cambodia and Lao PDR have also integrated public employment services as one of the core pillars of their national development plans.

Initial work on public employment services in Cambodia began in 2009 when the ILO assisted MOLVT to establish two pilot job centers in Phnom Penh and Battambang province in response to the need to provide services to retrenched women workers in the garment industry affected by the global economic crisis as well as to new job seekers in search of employment opportunities. Since 2010, the Cambodian government has opened more job centers including in Siem Reap, Kampot and Svay Rieng provinces. As for Lao PDR, MOLSW established three pilot employment services job centers (ESJCs) in Vientiane capital, Champasak and Savannakhet provinces in 2009, with assistance from the ILO.

This ILO/China South-South Cooperation project builds on the above mentioned and existing initiatives in both countries. The overall Development Objective of the project is to improve labour market efficiency and enhance linkages and information flows between job seekers and employers, which will contribute to the reduction of unemployment and, ultimately, of poverty in Cambodia and Lao PDR.

The project has adopted a two-pronged strategy focusing on:

- a) Strengthening the capacities of staff to deliver quality services in PES; and
- b) Improving the labour market information collection, analysis and dissemination for better information to job seekers and enterprises, and to design programmes addressing the needs of youth, women, migrant workers and people with disabilities.

The two-pronged strategy intends to meet the following two immediate objectives and outputs of the project:

Immediate Objective 1: To improve the quality and delivery of the employment services provided by the responsible government institutions and their network of job centers to their clients.

Output 1.1: Employment services tools are developed and utilized by the NEA and MOLSW and their job centers in Cambodia and Lao PDR respectively.

Output 1.2: A communication plan is developed among the general public, employers and trade unions.

Output 1.3: Comprehensive staff capacity building programme is implemented and staff capacity is increased.

Output 1.4: Good practices are documented and shared on the job centers performance among China and the ASEAN community.

Immediate Objective 2: To improve the data collection, analysis and dissemination to allow for better job matching of the jobseekers with enterprises that need workers to fill their job vacancies.

Output 2.1: A web-based database on jobseekers, vacancies and job placements is up-scale to cover more registrants in the concerned regions (Cambodia); A database on jobseekers, vacancies and job placements is developed (Lao PDR).

Output 2.2: Expansion of outreach of the computer-based database to more users (Cambodia); Better outreach of the database to its users (Lao PDR).

Output 2.3: Regular data updates and publications disseminated (Cambodia).

Output 2.4: Labour market programmes designed benefiting specific groups

The duration of the ILO/China SSC project is for three years period with the intended timeline from late 2013 to early 2016. However, the project implementation began in earnest in January 2014 with the signing of MOU between ILO and the national partners in Cambodia and Lao PDR.

3. Purposes and scope

This Mid-term internal evaluation is being carried out in accordance with the project plan and in compliance with ILO Guideline on Evaluation. The evaluation intends to assess the following areas:

- Progress against the performance plan;
- Validity of the project design;
- Strategic use and leverage of ILO/China funds in support of the ILO priorities; and
- Effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that are in place.

In addition, the evaluation will:

- Assess the extent to which the objectives specified in the Project Document have been met;
- Take into account the likely results to be achieved by the end of the project;
- Identify any factors that materially impacted on the project implementation and achievement of the objectives; and
- Identify lessons learnt.

It is expected that findings and recommendations from the evaluation will inform adjustments which may be necessary to enhance effectiveness of the project.

4. Evaluation methodologies and questions

In order to assess the validity of the project design as well as its progress in implementation, the consultant made use of three major sources of information:

- i) information on the project provided by ILO including the project document (PRODOC), the two project's progress reports, other reports;
- ii) information and documents provided by NEA and DSDE team; and
- iii) interviews and discussions with various stakeholders and beneficiaries in Cambodia and Lao PDR.

The consultant's country visits took place during 7-9 April 2015 (Cambodia) and 27-29 April 2015 (Lao PDR) (see Annex II for the list of people interviewed). Additional information from NEA team was obtained through written responses and Skype communication with the consultant on 29 June 2015. As for DSDE team, additional written responses were received on 13 July 2015. The approach of the evaluation was participatory as the consultant tried to develop a good rapport with different stakeholders and facilitated the expression of their views, reflections, concerns and vision for the project, especially among those at the national and local implementation level.

Evaluation questions and observations focused on:

- Understanding the development and labour context/challenges of Cambodia and Lao PDR and how the Project respond to them.
- Understanding and assessing the operations and effectiveness of Job Centers e.g, Who are the target groups (different category of job seekers and employers)?; what system is being used to identify the target groups?; What kind of information is being collected? How is the information processed? Status of job seeker registration and vacancies/ job placement outcome
- Understanding the challenges faced on the operation of Job Center (relevance to the context, technical, human resource capacity, etc).
- Users feedback (job seekers and employers)
- Understanding the coordination/ cooperation between tripartite agencies; the role of each partners.
- Usefulness of different project activities/ learning exchanges, training etc.

- Synergy between different projects being implemented by NEA and DSDE
- Monitoring & support system (internal & from ILO)

5. Findings

5.1 Strategic use and leverage of ILO/China funds

The ILO/China SSC project strategy builds on the core role of public employment services as defined under the ILO Convention No. 88 (on Employment Services). As such, the focus on strengthening the capacities of staff to deliver quality services and improving collection, analysis and dissemination of labour market information can contribute to the ILO's mandate to promote decent and productive work opportunities for women and men. As mentioned earlier, the project also builds upon the initial work on public employment services done in both Cambodia and Lao PDR during 2009-2010. Outcomes of the project will also contribute toward the Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) priorities for 2011-2015 in both Cambodia and Lao PDR.

5.2 Validity of the project design

The rationale of strengthening public employment service to enable a greater decent and productive employment for Cambodia and Lao PDR is an important one given the growing labour market opportunities and the pool of labour available in both countries. The first immediate objective on improving the quality of delivery of services through developing employment services tools, communication and capacity building make good sense when conceptualized through the given frame. Similarly, the second immediate objective on improving data collection and dissemination is fundamental to the effectiveness of public employment services.

Certain activities and output envisioned in the project including study tour and training of trainers (TOT) have proven to be highly relevant as they helped the project partners and stakeholders to better appreciate and understand the importance and functions of public employment service. Similarly, the focus on developing employment services tools and strengthening staff capacity to enable more efficient service provisions and delivery, the development of communications plan to publicize about the services of job centers and the engagement of different stakeholders for more effective coordination are all necessary elements for the success of the project.

However, having reviewed the work done, it can be said that although there is a link between project rationale and its immediate objectives and activities, some of the outputs such as those under 2.1 are rather ambitious and they require commitment on the part of the project partners and extensive technical, including further financial support from within

the ILO/China cooperation framework to ensure the desired outcome, especially in the context of Lao PDR where both appropriate facilities and infrastructure needed for the effective operations of the job centers and database management system are still lacking.

Furthermore, given the contexts of both Cambodia and Lao PDR where although there is a growing number of educated work force, the majority of job seekers remain to be low- and semi-skilled labourers who engage largely in the agriculture/rural sector. In this light, the project design could have paid more attention to the different needs and contexts of this particular group. For example, the focus on developing employment services tools can be very useful in the context where job centers are accessible to job seekers and there are adequate staffs to provide the services. Job seekers such as new graduates can benefit from career counseling and advice to help them prepare the CV and for job interviews. However, for those in rural area and low-skilled job seekers, they may not benefit much from the different services available.

However, it is noted that the communications plan that was drafted in both countries have factored the needs of the job seekers in rural setting and, subsequently, acknowledged by the PES providers along with relevant project partners. It is further noted that some job centers, in both countries, have integrated outreach activities to the job seekers in remote and rural areas with other government activities and in the case of Cambodia, mobile units, have been organized to raise awareness on public employment services to the job seekers in villages. It is envisaged that these efforts should continue to be supported and strengthened throughout the remaining months of the project, and possibly mainstreamed into the daily tasks and routines of ESJC's in both countries.

5.3 Progress against performance plan

5.3.1 Cambodia

Overall, implementation of the project is progressing adequately. Work has been completed for baseline assessments on key project aspects including i) state of the job centers; ii) staff capacity and training needs; and iii) the level of accessibility of IT equipment by job seekers and employers. The results of these assessments are critical in providing NEA and the ILO with systematic information on areas which require attention and further improvement over the project period.

With regards to progress against the performance plan under the two immediate objectives of the project, the following has been observed.

Immediate Objective 1: Improve the quality and delivery of the employment services provided by the responsible government institutions and their network of job centers to their clients.

Output 1.1: Employment service tools are developed and used by the NEA and its job centers.

- After conducting the baseline assessment of the job centers and a study visit to China to learn about public employment services system and practices, the NEA team has undertaken to revise the existing job seekers' registration form which proved to be unpractical for the job seekers given its requirement for detailed and technical information e.g., classification of economic activities and occupation. The new registration form is more simplified and should, therefore, be more users friendly. However, monitoring of the usage of the new registration form will be needed as to ensure the effectiveness of data collection process (link to output 2.1).
- While NEA staff has expressed satisfaction in joining and learning from the study trip to China, they have also expressed the needs for a more in-depth and detailed guidance on the operations of the public employment system especially with regards to the synergy between the functioning and services of job centers, data collection and management as well as developing labour market information system (LMI).
- Current services available at the job centers in Phnom Penh include job seekers' registration, training sessions for job seekers on how to prepare CV, interview techniques and confidence building. Career guidance and counselling services seem to be limited. In view of this, the project has provided opportunities for NEA to improve its counselling and guidance services, in particular to the young job seekers. Interviews with staff responsible for these services could not be made as they were attending a training workshop in Lao PDR during the time of the evaluation mission.
- Interviews with 4 job seekers conducted during the evaluation mission revealed that the job seekers can benefit from the training provided by the job center but that the job-matching process through regular registration channel does not seem to be effective. One job-seeker who was looking for a part-time position mentioned that she registered with the job center 1 year ago, but only found a job through a friend three months ago. At the same time, two new job seekers were trying to register through an online system which has been recently launched, but the system did not work properly and hence they were not able to register (link to 2.1). Therefore, NEA would need to continue to make efforts in upgrading its ability on job placements along with maintaining its online registration system and relevant mechanisms on its website.
- NEA has set up a computer-based job-matching program to facilitate employment service to both job seekers and employers. The program seems to be functioning at some level as a number of job placements have been made. However, it is clear from discussing with the NEA team that there are still gaps in job-matching as well as concerns over low level of referral and placement rate. The gaps seem to be related

to the design and management of the database of job seekers and employers. Existing computer program/system cannot analyze and retrieve data in the way that would allow effective job matching and data tracking. There is a continuing need for support and capacity building of the IT system and team in this respect.

- At the time of this mid-term evaluation, follow-up monitoring of job centers has not been carried out.

Box 1: Employment service tools being developed/translated:

1 st half of the project (2015)	2 nd half of the project (2015-2016)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A manual on youth career counseling ✓ Self-evaluation assessment for high school students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ A trainer’s manual for conducting a workshop ❖ A manual in organizing a job fair ❖ Career Information Handbook ❖ Upgrading of the 3 manuals: Employers’ Relation, Employment Counselling, and Job Centre Operations

Output 1.2: Communications plan is developed among the general public, employers, and trade unions

- Overall, there have been good progresses with regards to development of promotional materials (both print and visual) that can be distributed to job seekers. NEA has developed different strategies for reaching out to different target groups of job seekers e.g., educated vs. low/semi-skilled job seekers. Career guidance seminars and job fairs for example are organized at the university, TVET institutions and high schools while employment forums are organized at provincial NEA job centers and in rural communities. As the consultant did not have a chance to visit provincial JCs, it is not possible to assess the effectiveness of NEA’s services to low or semi-skilled job seekers.
- As for the employment service for educated and urban-based job seekers, the consultant had the opportunity to talk to a job seeker in Phnom Penh who pointed out that job fairs can be an effective avenue for job seekers who are university educated students and graduates to meet potential employers and secure employment. However, when considering the numbers of job placements as outcome of job fairs, the result is still very low (see Box 2). According to NEA staff,

the low rate of job placements compared to the number of job seekers who registered with companies has to do with the fact that job seekers may register with more than one companies. There has also been some challenges for NEA in getting follow-up information from employers about placements of job seekers. Not only has this been an issue in the context of job fairs, but NEA staff has also expressed concerns about not being able to effectively follow up with the employers on the results of job referral and placement in the case of regular provision of employment services at the job centers. According to NEA staff, efforts have been made to collaborate and follow up with the employers but that the latter have not been responsive.

Box 2: Key Job-fairs Statistics from the National Career Fair organized during 21-22 October 2014)

- Number of company exhibitors: 63
- Number of vacancy announcements: 6,038
- Number of visitors to the fair: 25,000
- Number of participants attended the workshop: 1,100
- Number of job seekers registered with NEA: 1,086
- Number of job seekers registered with companies: 15,886
- Number of job seekers interviewed with companies on site: 351
- Number of job placements: 131

(Figures provided by NEA)

- At the time of this mid-term evaluation, there appeared to be limited connection between NEA and the employers' organization. While a representative of CAMFEBA (Cambodian Federation of Employers and Business Association) sits in the National Project Steering Committee, NEA does not have a strong connection with members of the federation and is, therefore, missing out on possible coverage of vacancies data collection. The challenge with following up with companies on job placements may be addressed if a stronger collaboration with the employers' organization can be fostered.²

² According to the ILO Protect Officer, the cooperation with CAMFEBA has improved over the months after the evaluation mission.

- A comprehensive communications plan was scheduled to be developed during the first half of Year I. However, at the time of this mid-term evaluation the communications plan is not yet in place.
- Awareness raising and knowledge sharing with trade unions has been facilitated through training sessions and study trips. However, interviews and discussions with trade union representatives revealed that there can be stronger strategic linkage and cooperation between NEA and trade unions in the area of communicating and publicizing services of NEA/ job center to workers. An initiative by NEA to work more closely with CLC (trade union) in Siem Reap province may be a step in the right direction and the outcome of this should be assessed.

Output 1.3: Staff capacity is increased through the implementation of a comprehensive training program under the triangular cooperation framework

- In general, good progress can be seen in the area of staff capacity development. Assessment of staff capacities and training needs was conducted and a series of specific training program in career counseling have also been carried out including coaching session on employment counseling by Chinese expert, training on career guidance, and skills anticipation.
- Other capacity building programs that have been implemented included a study tour to China to learn about employment services and LMI and a study tour and training on LMI in Thailand, both of which took place in 2014. During the time of the evaluation mission in April 2015, NEA/job center staffs were sent to attend training on Employment Service in Lao PDR.
- Throughout the project term, staff from NEA were nominated and supported to participate in relevant courses at the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin, Italy. The courses are organized annually and some of which included: “Career Guidance Policy and Practice: A strategic tool for Planners and Decision Makers” and “Skills Needs Anticipation and Matching”.

Box 3: Training and capacity building programs conducted during the project up until the mid-term evaluation

❖ **Employment Services**

- ✓ Coaching session on employment counseling by Chinese experts (21

participants from NEA, JCs, CAMFEBA and Trade Union)

- ✓ Study tour in China on employment services and introduction to LMI (13 participants from NEA, CAMFEBA and Trade Union)
- ✓ Training on career guidance policy and practice in Turin, Italy (3 NEA staff)
- ✓ Training on employment services in Lao PDR (8 NEA staff)
- ✓ Training for trainers on soft skills (10 participants)
- ❖ **Labour Market Information**
- ✓ Training on skills needs anticipation and matching in Turin, Italy (1 NEA staff)
- ✓ Study tour and training on LMI and research in Thailand (4 NEA staff)
- ✓ National Workshop on Skills Anticipation (5 NEA staff)
- ✓ Training on data management, ISCO and ISIC (15 NEA staff)

- Despite progress made in accordance with the implementation plan, NEA staff members still feel inadequate and inexperienced in providing services, for example, in career counseling. Thus, they felt the need to receive continued coaching support after the training program in order for them to be able to be more effective in providing services. Although there is a plan for conducting an immersion/on-the job training program for job centers in China, this proposal is now pending.
- There is also inadequate analysis of LMI/data on employment and vacancies by NEA/job center staff that can be used to enhance the quality of career guidance and counselling services. At one level, there seems to be insufficient understanding on the part of NEA/job center staff on the specific qualifications and skills needed by different jobs. At another level, analysis of the mismatch between job seekers and vacancies seems to be lacking. Developing capacity of NEA/job center staff in various aspects of data analysis will enable a more effective career counselling process.

Output 1.4: Good practices are documented and shared on the job centers performance among China and the ASEAN community

- Documentation and sharing of good practices is expected to be implemented mostly in the latter part of the project.
- Meetings of National Project Steering Committee were organized twice in 2014. The next National Project Steering Committee meeting is scheduled to be organized in November 2015.

Immediate Objective 2: Improve the data collection, analysis and dissemination to allow for better job matching

Output 2.1: A web-based database on job seekers, vacancies and job placements is up-scaled to include all registrations in the concerned regions

- The NEA has a website (www.nea.gov.kh) which contains database on job seekers and vacancies. Job seekers and employers can directly register and post their CVs and vacancy announcements on the website. At the time when the mid-term evaluation was taking place, there were approximately 4,000 vacancies and 2,500 job seekers information posted on the website. Database of vacancies include 20 locations (provinces) while that of job seekers include 25 locations. The information on the website is updated daily. According to NEA, the ratio between paper and online registration is about 70:30 (link to 2.2).
- It is important to note the high level of mismatch between the types of jobs available and what the job seekers are looking for. The majority of vacancies are in the field of garment and related trade often requiring low-skilled workers. However, most of job seekers are looking for professional positions. According to the website record at the time of the mid-term evaluation, the majority of job seekers registered on the website are from Phnom Penh (about 1800 persons) – with vocational and university education while locations of vacancies are highest in Kampong Speu province (about 1,200), Phnom Penh (950) and Kandal province (900). Such information should be further analyzed by NEA in order to improve the effectiveness of data collection and job-matching including counselling.
- In addition to the website, NEA publishes and disseminates job vacancy information through the agency's bulletin on a monthly basis.
- With regard to adoption of good practices in data dissemination from China experience, there is currently no implementation.

Output 2.2: Expansion of outreach of the computer-based database to more users

- Assessment of the level of accessibility of IT equipment by job seekers and employers has been conducted by specialists from Thailand in 2014. It is unclear how the result of the assessment will be followed up and supported within the Project. Given the level of project delivery, should there be a follow-up phase to this project, it is understood that more activities in the area of IT and LMI would be enhanced and emphasized.
- NEA has been conducting awareness raising workshop on using NEA web-based registration among university and college students as well as the general public in the first half of 2015.

Output 2.3: Regulate data updates and publications disseminated

- As part of NEA's routine work, data and bulletins of NEA/ job centers are regularly updated. This includes updating number of job seekers and vacancies.
- The NEA plans to visit employers and make contact with new enterprises on a weekly basis. However, this plan seemed to have met with some challenges as, according to NEA staff, employer organizations did not actively respond to NEA. As it was not possible to organize a meeting with employer organization during the time of the mid-term evaluation visit, the consultant was not able to ascertain employers' perspectives on employment services provided by NEA (see also footnote 2).

Output 2.4: Labour program design benefiting specific groups

- NEA plans to undertake studies on the situation/needs of returned migrant workers and young job seekers in order to develop appropriate labour market program targeting these two groups. So far, Employment Forums, Mobile Fairs and Recruitment Events were organized to assist the returned migrant workers to find jobs within Cambodia. As for the young job seekers and students, and within the framework of this Project, the NEA has organized several outreach programmes during most of 2015 along with training on soft skills including career counselling and guidance to young job seekers. The manual on career guidance for young job seekers is anticipated to be piloted towards the end of 2015 and would be an effective tool.

Overall assessment: Based on the visit to Phnom Penh job center and discussions with some key stakeholders, it can be said that project implementation in Cambodia has progressed satisfactorily. Assuming that the situations in provincial job centers are similar to that in Phnom Penh, it is likely that by the end of the project period, most of the project outputs will be achieved. In view of the potential of continued support from the ILO/China, NEA can benefit from the continued work to enhance the effectiveness of its public employment services by strengthening the aspect of data collection and analysis including by working more closely and following up with employers' organization and unions. The building of staff capacity should continue and be conducted on a regular basis. Perhaps, given the level of expertise that most of NEA staff now possesses, job immersion or secondment in countries with good practices in PES would be highly beneficial (i.e. labour market information system and dissemination in the Philippines; counselling in China or Malaysia).

5.3.2 Lao PDR

Overall, implementation of the project activities by MOLSW/ DSDE has seen a slower progress than that of its counterpart in Cambodia but has picked up in 2015. The areas which have seen some progress include development of employment service tools/manuals

and capacity building and training programs. Communications and data collection/ dissemination are the areas that need greater support and monitoring.

Immediate Objective 1: Improve the quality and delivery of the employment services provided by the responsible government institutions and their network of job centers to their clients.

Output 1.1: Employment service tools are developed and used by the MOLSW and its employment job centers (ESJC).

- An important activity which has been completed is the assessment of the state of job centers. In addition, DSDE undertook to update core manuals including Operations Manual, Employers' Relations, and Employment Counselling. However, DSDE staff pointed out that contents of the manuals are not very practical and appropriate for the local context as they are based on international standards and practices. Revision of this manual is therefore necessary and so is training on how to operationalize these manuals. Subsequently, the upgrading of these manuals are in progress and training anticipated to be held in Vientiane, Lao PDR during 2-6 November 2015.
- DSDE is also in the process of translating two handbooks for young job seekers namely: "Guiding Youth Careers: A Handbook for those who Help Young Jobseekers" and "Minute Guide for Young Jobseekers" into local language. A guidebook on employment for people with disabilities will also be translated. It is planned that once finalized, these manuals will be disseminated/ shared with job centers at provincial and district levels. There also remains the potential for DSDE to translate the Career Guidance Manual for Young Job Seekers once the pilot and draft of this manual is successfully launched and concluded.
- With regards to adapting methodologies and experiences on employment services learnt from study visit to China, there is an action plan which has been developed (the consultant requested a copy of action plan from DSDE but has not been provided one). According to DSDE staff, the action plan was shared with MOLSW and among ESJCs and that certain aspects of the plan have been implemented which include: developing and improving labour market information, improving data collection and sharing system, organizing job fairs, building capacity for ESJCs and reaching out to employers and job seekers.
- As about 8 job centers are located in the provinces and are governed by the provincial authorities, DSDE organized an orientation to the high level officials from these provinces in order to enhance their knowledge and understanding on the significance of public employment services along with the contributions to the National Economic and Social Development Plan of Lao PDR. In this manner, there is a potential for PES to receive a higher provincial budget to support activities.

However, it should be noted that in some cases as some high level officials have moved to a different posts or retired (e.g., in Vientiane province), and that this situation has affected support given to the job center staff.

Output 1.2: A communication plan is developed among the general public, employers and trade unions

- At the time of this mid-term evaluation, the communications plan is yet to be fully developed. This aspect of the project is a key for publicizing the services of job centers while linking with and engaging different stakeholders to collaborate in the Project. From discussions with 2 job centers' staff (in Vientiane capital and Vientiane province) as well as with representative of the Lao Federation of Trade Union (LFTU), it became evident that there are challenges in reaching out to job seekers and employers in order to help them become aware of the services of the job centers. Currently, there is a small number of job seekers and employers who come to use the service of job center located in Vientiane Province (no statistics was available). As for the job center in Vientiane capital, according to the center staff, there were apparently companies which have approached the job center to help recruit employees to fill up about 400-500 job vacancies in January 2015. However, the job center did not have any job seekers registering and thus was not able to help with the recruitment.
- There seems to be a good rapport between DSDE, the trade union (LFTU) and the employers' organization (LNCCI). Thus, the potential for a stronger and more effective tripartite collaboration is there. Such collaboration can perhaps be facilitated through the implementation of plan of actions which have been developed jointly between the key stakeholders themselves.
- DSDE is in the process of developing materials and visual communication programs for employment services promotion. At the same time, a job fair by DSDE was organized on 5-6 June 2015. The 2015 National Job Fair's opening ceremony was presided over by H.E. Mr Thongsing Thammavong, the Prime Minister of Lao PDR. The job center in Vientiane capital also planned to organize a national job fair in June 2015, the result of which is reported below.

Box 3: Statistics from the national job fair organized on 5-6 June, 2015

Descriptions	Number
Companies and enterprises	143
Recruitment agencies	12

Visitors to the job fair	5,550
Number of registration by job seekers looking for work	3,585
- Job seekers with basic skills	175
- Job seekers with semi-skills	329
- Job seekers with skills	660
- Number of tradesmen (job seekers with high skills)	1,848
- Number of supervisors (job seekers with professional skills)	573
Number of job vacancies posted	2,000
Number of job placement with companies	1,500

(Data provided by DSDE)

- It can be observed that the national job-fair can provide an effective platform for job seekers with skills and education to find suitable employment for themselves. Considering the high number of job placement as indicated above, it is envisaged that this kind of platform be continued on a regular basis.
- DSDE staff expressed the need for having a more effective approach/ communication plan to reach out to low skilled job seekers, especially those in the rural areas. According to the ILO Project Officer, the communications plans that would be finalized towards the end of September 2015 would highlight this point. There is a need to reach out to villages, in Lao PDR, and it has been noted that personal visits to these villages along with the networking with the village head seems to be the most effective. Another effective medium in reaching to people in the rural communities are radio spots and advertisements through village announcement system.

Output 1.3: Staff capacity is increased through the implementation of a comprehensive training program under the triangular cooperation framework

- Assessment of staff capacity and training need was conducted as part of the job center assessment in 2014. From the assessment report, it was clear that low staff

capacity is one of the main challenges faced by DSDE. Below is the list of training/capacity building sessions already completed as part of this project:³

Box 4: Training sessions conducted/attended by DSDE staff and project's stakeholders

- ✓ **Coaching Session on Employment Service system of the People's Republic of China conducted for the ESJC staff.**
- ✓ **Orientation session on Employment Service system conducted for High Level Provincial Labour and Social Welfare staff/department.**
- ✓ **Three DSDE staff attended study tour and training on Labour Market Information System and Research in Thailand.**
- ✓ **National Training of Trainers on employment services was conducted.**
- ✓ **Three weeks study tour in China to learn about PES (participated by 11 DSDE staff, 1 staff from LFTU and 1 staff from LNCCI).**
- ✓ **One DSDE staff attended the training course on Dual Education System and Career Guidance in Seoul, Republic of Korea.**
- ✓ **Two DSDE staff, 1 staff from LFTU and 1 staff from LNCCI attended the training course on Career Guidance at ITC, Turin, Italy.**
- ✓ **One DSDE staff, 1 staff from LFTU and 1 staff from LNCCI attend the Regional training course on employment services, in Bangkok, Thailand**

- From discussion with DSDE staff and other project stakeholders, it was clear that the various capacity building programs organized, especially the study tour to China, have helped them to better appreciate and understand the importance and functioning of public employment service. However, there is still a big gap in developing capacity of DSDE/ESJC staff to deliver targeted services. According to a staff person at Vientiane capital ESJC, the training she received on the role of employment services has helped her to develop/improve some tools e.g., developing registration form for employers. However, due to the fact that ESJC staff are responsible for more than PES, and hence they are not able to implement the tools

³ According to information provided by the ILO Project Officer, HRD (Human Resources Development) strategy and plan for 2015-17 is being developed whereby the first draft is already delivered and anticipated to be finalized around September 2015. The HRD strategy and plan would be crucial and provides a basis for DSDE to channel resources (current and future) on the types of training for its staff along with information for potential development partners to provide technical and financial support in its endeavours to enhance the capacity in the area of PES.

efficiently (in the case of the staff at Vientiane capital ESJC, she has not used the registration form systematically. Moreover, there are issues of the turnover of staff who have been trained in PES, thus making the provisions of services less effective.

Output 1.4: Good practices are documented and shared on the job centers performance among China and the ASEAN community

- This area of work has not recorded much progress as activities are planned to be implemented in 2015 and 2016.

Immediate Objective 2: Improve the data collection, analysis and dissemination to allow for better job matching

Output 2.1: A web-based database on job seekers, vacancies and job placements is developed

- Given the limited availability of accurate data, computer equipments and technical support system, **this particular targeted output is perhaps the one that is most lagging behind at the moment.** There is limited systematic data collection of employers and job seekers being done by ESJC to enable proper data entry and usage. Most of the data collection including vacancy announcements and job seekers are collected manually in a log book by the staff of the ESJC's. Therefore, in view of the size of financial support required and depth of the technical support, more efforts will need to be put into outreaching to and registering job seekers as well as ensuring technical training in the subsequent support by the likes of the ILO/China SSC Project.
- In view of the level of contribution involved, DSDE may benefit from integrating several development partners' contributions in strengthening its network of PES and LMIS.

Output 2.2 Better outreach of the database to its users

- The outreach work is being constrained due to the lack of systematic data collection. There is currently no dissemination of information through newsletter. At the same time, most ESJC's are not equipped with a computer, and information is kept mainly in log books.
- There seems to be a good rapport between DSDE and LFTU as well as between DSDE and LNCCI. However, more strategic engagement will help strengthen the deliverables and sustainability of the Project.

Output 2.3 Labour market programmes designed benefiting specific groups

- No progress has been made in this area.

Overall assessment: Implementation of planned activities are clearly lagging behind in most areas, although there is evidence of a pick-up in the activities as of 2015 onwards. The two ESJCs visited do not seem to be providing effective employment services. Appropriate communication plans and outreach strategies will need to be developed along with effective data collection system. There is an urgent need for ILO Coordinating Team to discuss with the partner agency to realistically agree on achievable outputs to focus on as it is likely that the project will not achieve all the planned objectives/outputs (based on the work plan that has been agreed upon). Some adjustments may need to be made for example, in prioritizing activities which can meet the needs of DSDE in reaching out to job seekers and developing job seekers and employers' database system. More strategic and active collaboration with other stakeholders can also facilitate successful and effective implementation of the project. In addition, the National Project Steering Committee should be encouraged to be more actively engaged to give direction and set priorities for the remaining period of the project.

5.4 Effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation mechanism

At the level of the implementing partners, both MOLVT/NEA in Cambodia and MOLSW/DSDE in Lao PDR have put in place systems to monitor the progress of the project. For Cambodia, NEA has set up the Project Coordination Task Team which is responsible for monitoring the project implementation based on the project indicators. Progress reports are sent to ILO every six months. In addition, the Job Center Management Team (JCM) has been set up to oversee the operation of the job centers. While monitoring of the job center in Phnom Penh seems to take place more regularly which has enabled an effective monitoring of the progress, the consultant was informed that monitoring of provincial job centers is done through occasional field visits supplemented by telephone reporting. As the consultant did not have a chance to visit provincial job centers, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the monitoring system or employment services provided by provincial job centers.

As for Lao PDR, MOLSW/DSDE has developed a questionnaire sheet as a tool to monitor progress of ESJCs on a monthly basis. This method of monitoring has apparently enabled the identification of challenges and delays in the implementation of activities of the ESJCs which seem to be related largely to limited human and financial resources. The issue is then required to be addressed at the higher level. As for overall monitoring of the project in Lao PDR, a more robust monitoring system is needed for the remaining of the project. It is also recommended that in both countries and especially in Lao PDR the National Project Steering Committee should be more actively engaged in the monitoring and evaluation of the project as to be able to provide direction as well as to recommend and support necessary adjustments if needed.

At the regional level, the ILO Country Office for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR based in Bangkok which is administering the project, monitors the project through regular country visits and through written submission of progress reports by the implementing partners.

The mechanism in place seems to be sufficient to a certain extent as it has enabled timely implementation of project activities, especially with regard to technical assistance by the ILO. However, given the challenges faced in the context of Lao PDR, monitoring can also be more robust.

5.5 Effectiveness of management arrangement

Management arrangements are such that the project is being administered by the ILO Country Office for Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR based in Bangkok while the Decent Work Team for East, South-East Asia and Pacific, through its Senior Skills and Employability Specialist provides technical guidance and knowledge exchange mechanism with other similar initiatives in the region. The project has also made available a part-time Project Technical Officer (PTO) who liaises closely with the counterpart agencies in Cambodia and Lao PDR and the partner institutions in China. A part-time project assistant was also recruited to provide administrative supports for the project. According to the PRODOC however, both positions are budgeted initially for 18 months, after which period the continuation of the posts will be subjected for a review.

Considering the scope and nature of the project, the level of engagement between partners, stakeholders and the donor agency as well as the diverse areas of activities planned, both positions will continue to be important in ensuring a smooth and timely coordination and implementation of the project activities in the remaining period of the project. While the ILO National Coordinators in Cambodia and Lao PDR are expected to liaise with the implementing partners and to provide necessary support, the consultant was under the impression that coordination and support during the first half of the project was done mainly through the part-time PTO and the project assistant who had provided quick and professional supports and services. Considering the scope of work and coordination to be done in the second half of the project, the current staffing arrangements should be maintained.

5.6 Cross-cutting issue: Gender equality

NEA in Cambodia has been keeping some gender segregated data for the employment services provided by the agency since 2010. Available statistics indicated that there are fewer female job seekers who have registered with NEA compared to male job seekers (22,320 and 43,404 persons respectively). However, when it comes to participating in the training course for career preparation, referral to employers and the actual job placement, female job seekers have benefited more from these services. In this regard, analysis of factors influencing usage of employment services by different groups of job seekers can be useful in ensuring that both male and female job seekers can access to and benefit from the variety of services provided.

Box: 5 Statistics of employment services provision by NEA (2010- July 2015)

Activities/ number of job seekers	Male	Female	Total
Job seekers registration	43,404	22,320	65,724
Training course for career preparation	5,038	9,347	14,385
Referral of job seekers to employers	11,355	16,185	27,540
Job placement	3,263	5,376	8,639

(Data provided by NEA)

Unfortunately, gender segregated data of job seekers is not available in the case of DSDE in Lao PDR.

6. Conclusions

The ILO/China South-South Cooperation Project to Expand Employment Services and Enhance Labour Market Information System in Cambodia and Lao PDR is an important initiative that aims to respond to the labour market needs and challenges in both countries through the provision of more effective employment services and management of labour information system. The project benefits from financial and technical cooperation from the Chinese Government as well as from the expertise provided through the ILO's DWT-Bangkok.

Project implementation during the first 15-18 months has seen important development in three output areas under the immediate objective 1 (output 1.1-1.3). The most significant contributions of the project during this period are related to assessment of the job centers in Cambodia and Lao PDR as well as the various capacity building activities implemented. Both countries (to a lesser extent in Lao PDR) have also been able to develop/adapt several employment service tools while also producing communication materials to be used with the target groups. Job fairs have also been successfully organized in Cambodia and Lao PDR. These platforms have proven to be an important mechanism for employment services for prospective employers and job seekers, especially those with skills and education.

With regard to the implementation of outreach activities for job seekers with low and semi skills in rural areas, while some activities may have been planned and carried out such as mobile units in Cambodia, the consultant was not able to assess the effectiveness of the activities due to the limited time for the evaluation mission. Nevertheless, it became clear during the discussion with the stakeholders in both countries that there is a need to focus more on identifying and strengthening appropriate outreach activities for rural job seekers

during the remaining period of the project and as part of the overall public employment services.

Developing linkages and cooperation with partners and stakeholders namely the trade unions and employers' organizations is another key component of the project that has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of the provision of public employment services by NEA and DSDE. The NEA has initiated a cooperation model with some trade unions (e.g., with CLC in Siem Reap province). This effort should be assessed and replicated if proven to be effective. At the same time, it is encouraging to note that the initial challenge faced by NEA with regard to cooperation with CAMFEBA -the employers' organization, has been progressively addressed. As for Lao PDR, while there seems to be a good rapport between DSDE, the trade union and the employers' organization, programmatic linkages between the three agencies are less evident and thus should be strengthened.

It became evident during the evaluation mission that data collection and dissemination as per the immediate objective 2 is a crucial aspect for an effective job matching and the provision of employment services in both countries, and that this component of the project may have been given less attention and was also facing more challenges during the first half of the project implementation, especially in Lao PDR. The challenges identified have ranged from the lack of basic computer equipments as well as limited staff time and capacity to systematically collect and store data in the case of Lao PDR, to the need for more appropriate IT and database management system which would allow for a better tracking and analysis of the data collected in the case of Cambodia. At the same time, systematic collection and analysis of gender segregated data of job seekers in Lao PDR is lacking.

In this respect, more activities related to the enhancement of capacity in the area of labour market information can be foreseen. At the same time, higher commitment from project partners along with extensive financial and technical support from the ILO/China SSC project would be highly beneficial in enabling both countries to fulfill the development objectives, both under this project and within the context of the respective national economic and social development plans.

Finally, considering the part-time arrangement for project administration, coordination and management of the project as per the agreed work plan seems to be adequate. However, to be able to address some of the gaps which are related to project partners' and donor's commitments, the project could benefit from more active and more frequent engagement of the Project National Steering Committee.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Specific recommendation for Lao PDR

As it is likely that the project in Lao PDR will not achieve all the planned outputs, particularly those under immediate objective 2, it is recommended that the ILO Project Coordinating

Team discusses with the implementing partners (MOLSW/DSDE) to agree on achievable outputs to focus on as well as additional funding allocation which may be required. Some adjustments may need to be made for example, in prioritizing activities which can meet the needs of DSDE in reaching out to job seekers and developing job seekers and employers' database system. At the same time, attention and contribution from the Lao government will be required to ensure that necessary computer equipments are available as to enable the development and operation of computer-based data management system.

7.2 General recommendation

In the remaining period of the project, the following aspects should be prioritized/strengthened:

- Strengthening and developing strategic collaboration with Trade Union and the Employers Organization

In both Cambodia and Lao PDR, a tripartite approach constitutes an important aspect of the Project. Representatives of trade unions and employers organizations are members of the National Project Steering Committees in both countries. They were invited to join the study trip to China and have been involved in training organized by ILO on employment services. From the meetings and discussions with representatives from the Trade Unions in both Cambodia and Lao PRD and with the Employers Organization in Lao PDR, it can be said that the stakeholders have a good awareness and knowledge about the Project and they see the initiative as being an important one.

In Cambodia, suggestions have been made by the Trade Unions for a closer and more strategic collaboration with NEA in terms of information dissemination. A pilot initiative is taking place in Siem Reap where the Trade Union (CLC) will work more closely with the job center for job seeker registration and outreach program.

As for Lao PDR, from meetings and discussions with representatives from the Trade Union (LFTU), Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI), and the Employment Service Center, it can be seen that the stakeholders have the capacity and interest to engage more strategically with DSDE in this project. The Trade Union, for example, has developed various communication channels with its members including newspapers, TV and radio programmes, some of which can be used to reach out to job seekers. Similarly, the LNCCI has a functioning website and database of job vacancies from its member organizations. However, it has not been proactive in posting the database onto the website. LNCCI has also conducted survey on labour need of its member companies. It has also collaborated with the Lao National University in organizing job fair to recruit graduates with specialized skills. However, LNCCI indicated that there is a need for DSDE to assist with providing database of job seekers especially those with low or semi-skills. If information sharing can be done more readily with DSDE in the future, then job matching will be more effective. (However, this

may run into the problem of DSDE not being able to effectively reaching out to and registering job seekers).

A potential channel / set up which can more effectively deliver the public employment services in Lao PDR seems to be that of the Employment Service Center (ESC). The agency had previously operated as a state enterprise but has since 2014 come under the Ministry of Labour. Previously, ESC's work focused primarily on facilitating Lao workers to go aboard. However, the agency is trying to also work more with internal job seekers. According to the staff member interviewed, ESC is working on revising/ simplifying registration form for job seekers and developing database system for both job seekers and employers. It is understood that ESC and the job centers will be working more closely in the future to strengthen the effectiveness of employment services in Lao PDR.

In any case, it is recommended that clear strategies and plans be developed for both Cambodia and Lao PDR for engaging with trade unions and the employers' organization.

➤ Communications and outreach

In both Cambodia and Lao PDR, there are needs over effective job matching and reaching out to prospective job seekers especially those with low and semi-skills in the rural areas. It would be useful to learn from the Chinese experience on developing network of public employment services, especially at the local/village level to support rural job seekers to find jobs in manufacturing and other industries requiring semi-skills workers. At the same time, the project should explore ways for NEA and DSDE to arrange with enterprises to collaboratively provide training for workers who need additional skills.

➤ Capacity building

On-going and on-site support/coaching for NEA and DSDE staff on various aspects of employment services will enable the teams to be more effective in delivering the services. Instead of an immersion program in China, it could be more efficient to have Chinese experts (or those from ASEAN countries) to spend a certain period of time with the local teams for on-site coaching so that the experts can also understand the local context and challenges and to help guide the teams more appropriately.

➤ Data collection and analysis

In order to provide effective employment services, reliable labour market data must be available and both NEA and DSDE should have a good understanding/analysis of and capacity to manage the Labour Market Information System (LMIS). Although LMIS is not the key priority/output of the project, some exploration could be made to collaborate with/build on initiatives/projects which focus on this particular aspect that were or are taking place in both countries. In case of Lao PDR, for example the evaluator was informed by a DSDE staff that there is an EU and/or ADB supported project which focuses on developing Labour Market Information System. It would be very important for the ILO-

China SSC project to strengthen capacity of NEA and DSDE staff in the area of data collection and analysis as to enable a more effective provision of employment services in Cambodia and Lao PDR.

➤ Synergy with other relevant projects/ initiatives

There are apparently other projects supported by UN or other International agencies such as UN Women, UN Triangle Project and IOM that can have synergy with the ILO-China South-South Cooperation Project as they focus on labour, skills development, and information dissemination to job seekers and migrants. The possibilities for cooperation between these various projects should be explored to enhance project effectiveness and to ensure sustainability of initiatives.

➤ Engagement of the National Project Steering Committee

More active involvement of the National Project Steering Committee in monitoring and review of the project is recommended for the remaining of the project.

➤ Project staff

Considering the scope and nature of the project, the level of engagement between partners, stakeholders and the donor agency as well as the diverse areas of activities planned, it is recommended that the current staffing arrangements on the part of ILO should be maintained.

8. Lessons learnt

- An important lesson to be learnt from the first part of project is that the project implementation plan needs to clearly consider relationships between different components of the project activities and outputs so that activities will be prioritized accordingly.
- Since activities under the two immediate objectives of the project need to be implemented simultaneously for the effective provisions of employment services, a realistic human resource planning was also needed to carry out the various activities.
- Financial commitment from the project's partners and donor is also crucial for the successful implementation of the project.
- Where there are clearer needs for the project to be implemented (as in the case of Cambodia given a more dynamic labour market) and commitment from the partner agency (which is reflected through the active involvement of key positions from within NEA), the project will be given due attention and can progress more satisfactorily.

9. Annexes

Annex I Terms of Reference

Annex II List of persons met

Cambodia

National Employment Agency

Mr. Kuoch Somean, Deputy Head

Mr. Touch Sophat, Chief of Information Collection and Dissemination Unit

Mr. Phou Ousarachana, Chief of Information System Management Unit

Ms. Dy Chorngkolney, Deputy Chief of Administration and Finance Unit

Ms. Ly Vouchcheng, Director of Planning and Cooperation Department

Mr. Ouch Cheachanmolika, Advisor

Mr. Phim Sophea, Deputy Director of Administration and Finance Unit (overseeing job center)

Trade Unions

Mr. Soy Sayha, CCTU

Mr. Leng Senghong, CCU

Mr. Sok Siem, CLC

Mr. Lim Vicheth, NACC

National consultant

Mr. Nuon Rithy

Job seekers/clients at Phnom Penh job center

Ms. Bun Chanesreyrath (22)

Ms. Chheovn Sophors (22)

Mr. Kem Sotheara (24)

Mr. Hel Sayana (35)

ILO

Mr. Tun Sophorn, National Coordinator

Ms. Peng Lody, Programme Assistant

Lao PDR

Ms. Keo Chanthavixay, Deputy Director General, Department of Skills Development and Employment

Mr. Bounsuan, Technical Officer, Department of Skills Development and Employment

Mr. Samphane Buokevan, Vientiane Provincial Job Center

Ms. Saykham, Vientiane City Job Center

Ms. Maneevone Khammavongkeo, Employment Service Center

Ms. Daovading Phirasayphithak, Chief of the Bureau for Employers' Activities, Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Mr. Inpeng Meunviseth, Deputy Director of International Relation Department, Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU)