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Newsletter

Lifelong Learning & Non-Formal Education in Lao PDR and Southeast Asia



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Dear friends and colleagues,

Despite the Covid figures that are still high at the moment, it really feels good to be back to regular office work after months of home office and lockdowns. It is enjoyable to see movements in the different projects again that are beyond online meetings and Zoom conferences. It has become more and more obvious in the times of the Covid Pandemic that adult education is about personal contacts, about face-to-face meetings and interactive learning in groups at one and the same place.

On the other hand, the trend towards the use of digital tools is a process which was not just temporary but which will remain with us. And in many respects, we will be able to take advantage of it. Especially as far as non-formal education is concerned, the perspectives to much better reach the target groups in rural and remote areas through the use of online and digital tools forces us to put more efforts into the integration of new technologies into the education system. In the current project period, we are doing so both in Laos and in Cambodia. In Cambodia, our Lifelong Learning Centres are meant to become education hubs for entire communities. Education hubs that also provide the opportunity of distance and online learning. And in Lao PDR we are now exploring ways and means to use online tools, such as free apps, in pilot non-formal education projects. In the second newsletter of this year, we will most probably be able to tell you more about this.

In this newsletter, we will share perspectives from inside the projects in Southeast Asia with you, but we will also have a look at the global context of adult education – in this case at the importance of citizenship education which is also meant to be an important topic at this year's International Adult Education Conference, CONFINTEA, in Morocco.

And talking about international developments, our thoughts are certainly with our Ukrainian DVV colleagues, their families and all Ukrainian citizens who have now become victims of the Russian aggression. I sincerely hope that the Kremlin will stop this nonsensical war and reconstruction can follow with the help of a supportive international community.

For now, I hope you enjoy this read and I am looking forward to many face-to-face events with you in the future.

Yours sincerely,
Johann Heilmann
Regional Director

Study on the Sustainability of Community Learning Centres (CLC)

Ounpheng Khammang, DVV International

As one sector of the national education system, non-formal education (NFE) is offered in centres at national, central, province and district level as well as in community learning centres (CLCs) at village level. NFE has expanded step by step in order to provide education services to the people. People, in many cases from disadvantaged communities, receive education to improve their livelihoods- The DVV International Regional Office has been supporting the Department of Non-Formal and Education (DNFE) in the Ministry of Education and Sports in the implementation of NFE and adult learning and education in Lao PDR since 2009. DVV International supported the establishment of 24 CLCs in Nong and Sepon District in Savannakhet Province from 2011.

Generally, CLCs have been operating in Lao PDR since 1992 starting from two centres up to 350 officially operating centres in 2015. After that, the number of CLCs decreased to 129 in 2021 and in 2022 only 95 CLCs are still officially used.

CLCs provide opportunities to people to have education, vocational training especially in rural and remote areas. In order to increase the effective functioning of CLCs and increase their sustainability DVV International and the DNFE commissioned research on the success factors for the sustainability CLCs.



*Our NFE advisor at the
DVV International
Regional Office in
Vientiane*



Interview with
villagers in a CLC



Interview with
NFE officers in
an NFE centre

The aim of the research was as follows:

- What are the success factors of CLCs?
- What makes CLCs stand out as providers of non-formal/adult education?
- What are the current difficulties that CLCs face in operating sustainably?
- How can ownership of CLCs be strengthened?
- How can integration in the NFE system be strengthened?
- What more needs to be done to ensure that CLCs can operate sustainably?

are similar problems (e.g., low community participation), treating them by a single prescription may not be effective. Another challenge of the autonomous CLCs is that their communities work on a volunteer basis, thus their members are volunteers who are usually busy with their households in many instances. It is difficult for them to invest time for CLC management. In order to solve this problem, there is a need for an attractive policy to motivate the autonomous committee members.

Result of the research:

The research was conducted in Vientiane, Bolikhamxay and Savannakhet Provinces and can be summarized as follows

In order to move forward the sustainability of CLCs, CLCs need to improve their capacity to develop even more programmes useful for villagers – responding to their needs, particularly to bring

In public CLCs and autonomous CLCs, there is a need

- to improve the capacity of the committees;
- to increase political will and commitments and
- to support CLCs through the NFE system.

The sustainability of public CLCs and autonomous CLCs can be considered as different. If sustainability of CLCs means that CLCs can open daily as government offices, then public CLCs tend to be sustainable. There is permanent staff and there are certain resources supported by the government. However, in terms of community participation, public CLCs need to be developed further in the future based on the needs of the community people. Unlike public CLCs, the autonomous CLCs have more challenges and difficulties to make them become learning centres and develop in a sustainable manner. The autonomous CLCs totally depend on resources and the capacity of villages where the CLCs are located, so the level of CLC development is different from one another depending on community resources and capability. The challenges, problems as well as advantages and disadvantages are also different. Although there

immediate results from their participation. The benefits from CLC participation will increase community participation, contributing to resource mobilisation and sustainability. However, miracles should not be expected. For both public CLCs and autonomous CLCs, there is a need 1) to improve the capacity of the committees; 2) to increase political will and commitments and 3) to support CLCs through the NFE system. These three key needs are enabling conditions to support the CLC programme development. In addition to this, for autonomous CLCs, there is a need for an effective CLC management.

Literacy together with community development

Good occasion to interview DVV International's team leader in Nong and Sepon District: Mr. Bounsuan Nedthongsavanh has worked with DVV International for many years, he coordinates the support for currently 14 Community Learning Centers (CLCs).

Tell us about your work with DVV International:

I coordinate and lead the team, I work directly with the Nong and Sepon Education and Sports Office, particularly with the Non-formal Education (NFE) Section, the District NFE center and partners such as the Lao Women's Union (LWU), the Lao Youth Union (LYU), the District Health Office (DHO) and the District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO). I am further responsible for administrative and technical coordination including planning budgets for activities in the CLCs and the organisation of activities that are approved by the project manager.

What kind of activities are these?

There are many activities such as capacity building for the partners' staff from NFE, LWU, LYU, DHO and DAFO, in order to enable them to support the villagers in developing their local structures. We further do skills and vocational trainings for the youth, provide training equipment and toys for the CLCs. And we organise study tours at village level and district level.

What has changed in the community due to the project activities?

Target villages have changed a lot since our projects started. At an early stage we had literacy classes and constructed the CLCs as proper buildings. Villagers contributed local material, for instance wood, soil and of course their labour for the construction. The villagers have changed many things, villagers learned in many different regards in the CLCs. I can see that their lives improved. They know more about animal husbandry, integrated farming and how to sell their products. Villagers have more income and can thus make more expenses for the household and for general consumption.

So your overall impression is positive?

Villagers are enthusiastic to support each other and to get involved in their entire development processes, to participate in meetings and to prioritize activities for development. They share their opinion and are able to make decisions and to solve the problems occurring in their villages. Villagers can better take advantage of their capacities and their traditional customs by dressing in their traditional clothes at local exhibitions and events. Villagers now have improved their livelihoods because they are able to apply new knowledge in their daily lives.

What knowledge did the villagers gain exactly?

Villagers who attended literacy classes in the past can read and write and make calculations, especially when selling their different products. And many of them can now speak, read and write Lao fluently. Parents are happy to send their children to school and there are not as many



Our team leader in Nong and Sepon District



Villagers assist in doing CLC maintenance work



Activity for children in CLCs in Nong District

students who drop out as before. In several villages, the village authorities were illiterate, but now they know how to read and write and they work more efficiently.

Another focus about knowledge gain is on gender. Women can participate in the village's structures. They can attend meetings, trainings in other districts. The number of early marriages has been reduced. Parents now understand and support their children in going to school, especially girls. Girls can go to vocational schools in different districts and provinces. Gender equality is more normal in families. Men support women much more than earlier, particularly regarding labor and childcare.

What do you wish for the communities to change in the future?

I wish that communities are equal in urban and rural areas, I wish to see good infrastructure and that people can travel easily. And it would be nice if people had decent jobs and better lives as a result of government plans. Maybe one community can develop as a role model for others.

How can Community Learning Centers be made sustainable?

They must have a strong organizational structure and the manager of the center should have the

ability to manage the center. Development and activity plans need to be written and CLCs should work together with others partners. Villagers should contribute more to the maintenance of the CLCs and participate actively in activities. Furthermore, we need community ownership and create an organizational structure that is appropriate for the locals. Communities should have the opportunity to participate in the various activities in the CLCs. Raising awareness of the role of CLCs for lifelong learning for all and for sustainable community development is equally important. We also need further capacity building for the CLC staff and teachers in order to implement education for sustainable development (ESD). We also need to ensure that there are enough resources for the CLCs to work better and that there are appropriate regulations and policies to strengthen the operation of CLCs.

What are the main challenges when working with the community?

As we know, the target villages are relatively poor. Subsequently it is everyone's responsibility including the public and the private sector to work together to support the villagers in order to reduce poverty and to decrease the gap between urban and rural areas. The biggest challenge is the illiteracy of middle age and young people, of those who are unable to attend school. Illiteracy is a big barrier for other aspects such as the perception of information, life skills and vocational training. Other challenges include traditional lifestyles not yet adapted to current changes and the lack of social liberty.

Do you have some final remarks?

I would like to encourage all stakeholders to keep on supporting development with technical, financial and other resources that they can provide and on improving rural areas to move closer to urban standards as the claim "leaving no one behind" says.

The interview was conducted by Dalouny Sisoulath.

The potential of income generation in Community Learning Centres

Johann Heilmann, DVV International

As the study on the sustainability of Community Learning Centres (CLC) that DVV International recently commissioned has shown, it is not at all easy to ensure that CLCs produce lasting impact and continue to do so even without input from external partners. Yet they are an important pillar of the non-formal education system in Lao PDR as they are in many cases the only institution at village level that answers the community's needs for education, especially those of ethnic minorities in rural and remote areas.

In order to increase the value of CLCs for local communities and in order to increase the sustainability of CLCs, DVV International supports income generating activities in seven villages in Nong and Sepon District in Savannakhet Province. These activities target women that are interested in learning new skills that can then turn into additional income once well mastered. The project started with a feasibility study on the potential of income generation in Nong and Sepon in November 2020. This study looked at available skills in the villages, interest and initiative of the women as well as at the needs of local markets and possible supply chains. Based on this study seven villages were identified and all interested women were invited to join.

In a second step, the income of all participating women was measured in January 2021. It is the objective of DVV International to increase the income of 100 women by at least 50 % by the end of 2023. In order to be able to compare the increase in income the project is hoping for, the project needed baseline data that not only included the actual figure of the women's income but also collected information about facilities and surroundings of all participating households. After this, women's groups were founded in each CLC and activities identified that can serve the purpose

of income generation. These activities included particularly the production of handicrafts, broom making, sewing and weaving.

Unfortunately the outbreak of Covid 19 stopped many activities for several months in 2021, shortly after they had begun. Therefore trainings could not be held until the end of 2021. This was a pity because in some villages such as Lateuang in Sepon District broom-making just gained momentum after a project visit of a German delegation with the Governor of Sepon which had also caught the attention of the Provincial Governor. While activities could not be held, DVV International provided some of the CLCs with a Home Biogas unit which enables them to produce their own gas out of animal waste and which hopefully can contribute to income generation in the future as well.



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In 2022, trainings will now be held in a large scale. During a project visit in February 2022 in some of the target villages it became obvious that some of the participating women need more motivation but also actual time to carry out their additional activities. After all, it is no surprise that their many responsibilities in family and society restrict them to a tight schedule. In July/August the level of income of all participating women will be measured again in order to see whether progress towards the project objective has been made yet and to understand which CLCs need particular support.

It is hoped that the project will produce the envisaged results so that these can then serve as evidence of the importance of CLCs within the non-formal education system and of non-formal education in general.



Ratanakkiri Mobile Community Learning Center Project for the Kavet Indigenous People

Vanna Peou, DVV International Cambodia

In Cambodia, DVV International works with the Kavet Indigenous Community in Ratanakkiri Province and supports them in getting access to quality education together with the NGO Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP).

In 2019, DVV I started a Sternsinger-funded project with the duration of 12 months. During that time, three Mobile Community Learning Centers (MCLCs) were built in three different locations in the Kavet Indigenous Community Area. Most of the Kavet area is located in Vern Sai district, Ratanakkiri province in northeastern Cambodia and it is adjacent to the Virachey National Park.

In the area of the indigenous communities, the Kavet live very remotely compared to other communities in Ratanakkiri. At the same time, other social services, including health and education, have very limited access.

At that time in 2019, only four primary schools had been built in the six previous years in six different villages in the target area. The school began

teaching Khmer to students living in the Kavet community. Most of the teachers in the six schools were Lao and Khmer from different locations in Ratanakkiri province.

In the classroom, teachers communicated with students in Khmer, so many students found it difficult to understand what the teacher was teaching due to language barriers. The students knew very little Khmer and their parents only spoke their indigenous language. This language of the Kavet does not have its own characters, Khmer letters are used in consequence.

Apart from language barriers, the culture of living is another challenge because community members have their own culture, which is different from Khmer practice. Most of the Kavet live in the village for 5 months and for another 7 months they will leave their village to set up a plantation. This is the culture and tradition of life and all their children will move and accompany their parents to stay on their farms. All children living on the farm (which is called "Chamkar") do not have easy access to



Our Country Director in Cambodia Office



Mobile Community Learning Centers (MCLCs) located in Vern Sai district, Ratanakkiri province



education because their farm is far from the school and the road to the area is difficult to travel, especially during the rainy season.

After having successfully implemented a one-year pilot project, a large project was launched in 2020. In the beginning, there were already three existing MCLCs being supported. 2 further MCLCs were then created. In the meantime, we selected three volunteer teachers from the three new MCLC locations. Roles and responsibilities of the committee were clearly defined in a participatory process with community members. There are now 3 committee members in the MCLCs and a further 2 are volunteer teachers in charge of non-formal education (NFE) teaching and of recruiting children to the MCLCs for reading classes.

The five MCLC committee members play an important role in helping children with their education, including access to libraries, and complemented by further fun activities. In addition to life skills education, such as growing vegetables and seeds, students' parents are also supported.

It is very important for those indigenous children to receive support from the MCLCs, and it means that if this project was not implemented in the area, those children would not be able to get any basic education. They would simply lose their right to education.

There are 2,087 children who have access to basic education through the establishment of the MCLCs. The implementation of the project at the MCLCs truly contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and the „Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action Towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All“. Students involved at the MCLCs are now literate and can read and write basic Khmer.

It should be noted that the MCLC project is a promising example for non-formal education. The project helps children who did not receive a basic education on the farm to access basic education services in their community as well as on the farm. There are eight books in the NFE program that are included and used in the curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. These 8 books include the Kavet Book Part 1 to Part 6 and the Khmer Books Part 1 to 2. It takes three years of study and teaching to complete those eight books in the curriculum. After completing the three-year program with a successful examination, all students receive a certificate from the educational center and they will be able to use this certificate to continue their education at a public school.

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Many important activities have been underway to help the Kavet community in their remote area through the MCLC program. Project intervention activities further included capacity-building for the MCLC staff, reading classes and computer and sports activities.

During the implementation of this project, some positive experiences were noted on the websites of the MCLCs. A total of five bilingual literacy classes were implemented in the five MCLCs, and another co-funded permanent CLC was established with computer classes. This permanent CLC is also a capacity building facility for NFE volunteer teachers. The permanent CLC is located in the center of the commune where 26 students (11 female) are learning the basics of using a computer. In the future, the permanent CLC will be used as a digital library as well.

The project really is a positive experience as all the children show their enjoyment of studying in bilingual literacy classes, computer classes and

reading books in the library. In addition, it is very helpful for children to have an annual action plan developed by the MCLCs and local authorities. The action plans are shared by the MCLC committee members on all MCLCs websites.

However, during the Covid-19 outbreak in the community, outsiders were not allowed to work in the community. It proved to be a good approach that NTFP recruited all project staff from the target project locations and as a result project activities were still carried out in the community, but in a flexible way. Only some activities such as training and meetings were organized online using Facebook Messenger, Zoom and Google Meet.

In the first year of the second project, 2,113 (female: 878) people were direct beneficiaries. They benefited from a variety of activities, including bilingual literacy classes, illustrated reading events, computer classes, NFE examinations, sports activities, and community meetings using the MCLCs.





The Potential of Online Teaching and Learning in Non-Formal Education in Lao PDR

Pakoulee Xaiyaxang, DVV International

At least since Covid 19 struck us by surprise and had a considerable impact on our lives including learning and teaching in Laos and others countries, learning and teaching online is nowadays needed at every level of education system and has rapidly been developed further.

With this background and in order to learn how non-formal education can actually benefit from these developments, DVV International, in partnership with the Non-Formal Education Development Center, the Ministry of Education and Sports, and, most importantly, experts from the research team of Lao- German Development Consulting (LGDC) implemented a "Feasibility Study on the Potential of Online Teaching and Learning in Non-Formal Education in Lao PDR" with field trips to Sekong and Xiengkhouang provinces in 2021. The objectives were as follows:

- Is it at all feasible to use online teaching and learning in Non-Formal Education in Laos given the limited resources of the Non-Formal Education (NFE) system and the weak infrastructure in many target regions?
- How can, if at all, online teaching and learning be used in Non-Formal Education?
 - What should be the first steps to implement online teaching and learning in Lao PDR?
 - What are the obstacles that need to be overcome to implement online teaching and learning in Non-Formal Education?

The study pointed out that that most of the NFE teachers and students are able to use their phone and internet for communication as well as for learning new things, but there are of

course people who still need training on how to use internet and online teaching and learning or using online learning platforms. As a first step of starting online learning in the NFE system, the situation in terms of network reception needs to be considered. It needs to be identified what content and objectives can be adapted, and it is also important to reflect about relevant online tools. In this regard, the study recommends using existing platforms such as YouTube and Facebook for learning and teaching, because these are the platforms being used by the people anyway. Students involved in the study showed great interest in having online classes, preferably in the evening (73%), but also at the weekend (48%), while teachers prefer to teach online classes during working or in the evenings. The study further revealed that almost all of the students would like to have vocational training as a first choice in online education.

The challenges identified with online learning in non-formal education include a lack of experience on the level of teachers, as well as the necessity to have adequate computers, telephones and other equipment to stay connected. In many cases teachers only have their own private accounts, NFE Wifi is not available. Students, of course, are still in the process of getting used to online learning as well.

However, in 2022, DVV International and the Non-Formal Education Development Centre have plan to do further research and therefore plan an "Analysis of the Availability of Online Teaching and Learning Tools for Non-Formal Education (NFE) in Lao PDR based on the needs of the NFE system". Furthermore, first steps will be taken to pilot a digital tool in non-formal education.



Citizenship Education: A Civil Society Perspective

Johann Heilmann, DVV International

With shrinking spaces for civil society in many countries and with autocratic and dictatorial tendencies in many countries worldwide, it cannot be neglected that citizenship education is a substantial component of all education sectors including adult education. Citizenship Education has therefore also been chosen as a special topic of this year's Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) which will lay the foundation for the discussions at the International Conference on Adult Learning and Education (CONFINTEA) which will be organized by UNESCO in June 2022 in Morocco. In order to also strengthen the civil society perspective, the Arab House for Adult Education and Development (AHAED) and the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), with support from DVV International, have undertaken a year-long process, consulting with members and partners in the Arab and Asia-Pacific region to prepare a policy brief with an important set of recommendations to be considered by national governments when defining their education policies. In Laos, the concept is so far taken up in parts through the Soft Skills approach.

The paper starts by closer looking at the actual meaning of "citizenship education". It states that "citizenship education comes in many forms. Most of us would agree that it aims to enable individuals to actively participate in governance and contribute to community development. It provides the opportunity to learn about the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen of a state. But when it comes to the details of how it is implemented, what topics are being covered in the curricula, and the values that are being instilled in learners, there is much less consensus. It heavily relies on one's definition of citizenship – a term that in itself holds a variety of meanings, particularly in Arabic."

Based on a survey done with many member organisations both in the Arab as well as the Asia-Pacific region, both drafting organisations agree that "ALE has a central role in citizenship education. For many years, citizenship

education has been limited to the education of children and young people in the policy sphere (see e.g. the 2015 Paris Declaration). But this is not where it ends. Globally, people are learning how to claim their rights, develop their local economy, empower their communities to rise up and demand a seat at the decision-making tables. Citizenship education can help to foster common values and an overall more inclusive society. All this and more through innovative, localised initiatives of CSOs."

Having underscored the importance of citizenship education and having illustrated it along a number of case studies in the two regions, the paper comes up with a set of recommendations that need to be taken into account by national governments in order to strengthen citizenship education and take advantage of its great potential. ASPBAE and AHEAD precisely call national governments to:

1. Enhance dialogue with CSOs and academics on national, regional and international level and recognize



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- their practices and experiences in implementing citizenship education in terms of definition, vision, programme design, teaching and learning strategies, capacity building efforts, and ways to measure the impact.
2. Alleviate restrictions on CSOs and reduce bureaucracy at local, national and international levels that delay the work of CSOs. Work with them to address lack of respect for freedom of expression, information, assembly and religion, which continue to control public civic space, and limit the involvement of citizens in civic engagement initiatives.
 3. Increase funding for youth and adult educators, technology and digital literacy, and social and life-skills training. All funding must be made easily accessible to CSOs.
 4. Always prioritise gender equality and the advancement of women's rights in all aspects of citizenship education projects. As customs and traditions play an important role in restricting women's participation and fulfilment of their rights, we encourage learning from the best practices of how to successfully localise programmes from CSOs.
 5. Design curricula, learning resources and delivery, teachers and educators training on citizenship education that is responsive to the diverse identities of learners. Promote inclusive and identity-specific learning in an inclusive, safe, positive, and nurturing environment and create policies that respect the diversity of learners and ensure involvement of marginalised, excluded and vulnerable groups. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.
 6. The climate crisis is one of the main threats we are facing globally. To address the impacts it has on all of us, but particularly on women and marginalised groups, citizenship education curricula, policy and programmes must incorporate climate-related matters and recognise indigenous ways of environmental protection and conservation.
 7. Promote inclusive technology that is accessible to all learners, regardless of income, location, gender, ethnicity, disability, language or any other social, economic, demographic or cultural marker of differentiation. Fair access to technology is essential for providing programmes on digital and media literacy. These new skills enable participants to safely and securely make use of their right to information and expression.
- These recommendations will be further brought forward in the CONFINTEA process. Ideally they will be heard and included in the new Framework for Action to be developed in the aftermath of this year's CONFINTEA.



The Development of Lifelong Learning in Laos – Where we are at the moment

Khamphou Phengsavanh, Department of Non-formal Education,
Ministry of Education and Sports

Concept of Lifelong learning in Laos

The concept of lifelong learning exists as long as there is human society but as a concept it was only brought into global education systems in the mid-20th century. Lifelong learning fundamentally aims at developing human resources. In 2015, when the promotion of lifelong learning for all was determined by the United Nations as a key priority of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and since then is binding for all UN member countries including Laos it is now prioritized within the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED).

In recent years, the Lao literacy and education system have been renovated substantially and a clear path for the development of the education sector had been laid out in the Education and Sports Sector Development Plan (ESSDP). In this context, lifelong learning can lift up the value of all learning platforms, vocational practices and professional skills. However, the adaptation of theories of lifelong learning and actual practice are facing several obstacles and challenges such as people's mindsets as well as technical preconditions.



The officer at the
Department of
Non-formal Education



Importance of lifelong learning policy development

In Laos, the lifelong learning development process is fundamental is therefore included in the current ESSDP which also makes reference to the SDGs and the NSED. Its objectives are as follows:

1. For Laos, to achieve the ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. This requires specific policies or legislation with inclusive encouragement of all learning platforms with the aim to make Laos a learning society.
2. The legislation on education defines the concept of lifelong learning as the overall principle, but cannot yet specify details, principles, system and mechanisms.
3. The LLL decree approved in March 2020 will improve the value of learning outcomes, vocational practices, professional skills from various form of learning and the subject of comparison, recognition, accreditation of prior learning (RPL) including formal, non-formal and informal learning.
4. The approval of the LLL decree is regarded as a source of inspiration and as providing



opportunities for youths and adults who have limited access to education, especially in remote areas, for ethnic communities and refugees. In addition, increased adult and youth literacy rates with reduced disparities related to gender, poverty, ethnicity, disability and location are envisaged.

Lifelong Learning policy structuring procedure

The development of the LLL decree was started in 2012. At the beginning the development was based on many learning pathways such as lessons learned from the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), research from various documents, study visits, and exchanges with other countries which have made different experiences in LLL such as Vietnam, Thailand, South Korea and Germany.

In order for the LLL decree to be approved, the Ministry of Education and Sports convened nine central-level meetings with the relevant ministries and agencies at the central level, with the aim of discussing and commenting the structure and contexts of the LLL decree to align it with the NSEDP. Moreover, the meetings also requested feedback from all stakeholders. The Decree now consists of 9 sections and 36 articles.

Expected outcomes of the LLL Decree

Among many other outcomes, the following ones are certainly envisaged:

- All Lao citizens, including those who have been deprived of their freedoms and who have missed out on better education and vocational training, have more opportunities to upgrade their education, knowledge, vocational skills, expertise in skills that enable them to integrate regionally and internationally;
- Help to increase the literacy rate and numeracy skills of Lao citizens including the reduction of gender, ethnic, social and geographical differences. These figures are related to the index of human assets for emerging from the status of a least developed country;
- Increase the efficiency of government investment in terms of infrastructure, human resource development, and the ability to recruit more people to meet the needs of the labor market;
- Lifelong learning in the form of formal, non-formal and informal learning has a mechanism and common responsible system that can evaluate, recognize, validate and accredit the learning outcomes of all forms, at all levels, integrated with the regional and international education system.

Women Empowerment through Non-Formal Education

Beykham Saleumsouk, DVV International

In cooperation with the Department of Non-Formal Education in the Ministry of Education and Sports, DVV International implements a project to support women in rural and remote areas through adult education. The project started in early 2021 with a needs assessment on the barriers of women in accessing NFE in Laos. Information was gathered from 18th to 26th November in Bolikhamxay and Xiengkhouang province. Based on the data collected, the project was set up and a manual was developed as a guideline for the project's activities.

Based on the manual, the training activities of the project are designed are now designed with NFE trainers, in total 40 NFE colleagues from national and local level.



Our Project Manager
for Women
Empowerment and
Adult Education

The implementation of the Women Empowerment in Non-Formal Education

Activity	Time
Presentation of the concept to the partners	May 2021
Designed of the project with the partners	June 2021
Tryout of the Manual with target group in Bolikhamxay Province	August 2021
Training of trainers at Non-formal Education Development Center	October 2021
Trainer of trainers in the CLC Bovengkham village, Bolikhamxay Province	December 2021
Training of trainers at province level in Luang prabang Province	January 2022
Training of trainers on business skills in Xiengkouang	April 2022
First training of entire manual, Xiengkouang	June 2022
Second training of entire manual, Luang Prabang	August 2022
Second training of entire manual in Bolikhamxay	October 2023

The manual is divided into four sections

Chapter I: Lifelong Learning

Chapter II: Soft Skills

Chapter III: Gender Action Learning System (GALS)

Chapter IV: Business Skills



“A strong civil society plays a significant role in Ukraine now”

Oleg Smirnov from the Ukrainian educational NGO IDCIR who is also the Country Director of DVV International in Ukraine talks about their work supporting citizens caught in a war.

The Russian invasion in Ukraine has drastically changed life in Ukraine. Potentially thousands of civilians have already died in the war, and millions of refugees have fled the country.

However, many Ukrainians have remained in the country, mobilising to protect their country and help each other.

Via email, we managed to talk to Oleg Smirnov, who works for the Ukrainian NGO Integration and Development Centre for Information and Research (IDCIR).

IDCIR focuses on the promotion of innovative approaches to intercultural and peace education. The organisation's mission is to promote the development of an open civil society and democratic relations mainly through formal and non-formal education of children and adults.

In addition to his work at the IDCIR, Smirnov is the country director of the German Adult Education Association, DVV International, in Ukraine. He is also a member of the executive board of EAEA, the European association for the education of adults.

Several members are actively involved in the informational sphere of the war, exposing fake news and disinformation in social media.

Smirnov, together with his wife and son, are staying in the country's capital Kyiv.

“There are many people around us who stay here in Kyiv consciously trying to help other citizens, particularly the seniors, disabled people, or the army. People are also supporting those who have left their homes elsewhere in the country.”

Smirnov is deeply worried for his relatives in the city of Mariupol, which is besieged by the Russian troops. He has not been able to contact them since March 1st.

Despite the situation, IDCIR is still operating. What kind of work are you able to do at the moment?

Currently, we have a vast network of members in all regions of Ukraine. The team has conducted several joint online meetings to discuss what kind of help is required in the different areas.

Main activities initiated during the first days of the Russian invasion were psychological support to teachers and broader communities, mainly in areas affected by military actions. Several team members are involved in communication with foreign organisations and getting humanitarian help to the country.

We also try to respond to and help families with children moving to the western regions of Ukraine or other countries around the world. Several members are actively involved in the informational sphere of the war, exposing fake news and disinformation in social media.

When it comes to DDV International, I am worried for the nine partner organisations, ALE centres, we have throughout Ukraine. One is on the occupied territory in Melitopol, and people there are in danger. One of the founders of the centre there was arrested on Sunday 12th March. We haven't heard from him since.

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IDCIR works to promote a strong civil society and democracy in Ukraine. How do you think this work has been visible in the past weeks?

To me, a strong civil society in Ukraine is one of the last decades' achievements that plays a significant role now. People are prepared to self-organise, have communication skills, they know how to deal in diverse practical situations, use social media, and critically evaluate information. I think this is the result of several factors.

Authorities on national and local levels understand the role of activist groups in building a strong state. The reform of decentralization since 2015 has influenced the transfer of responsibilities from official structures to local communities.

The role of local activists' group, united in civil society organisations (CSOs), in contributing their knowledge and skills for this change, has been immense. We can rely on young people who are more critical, demanding, ambitious and result oriented.

At the same time, many international projects have supported the diversification of CSOs activities. If you look at the list of CSOs with the aim to develop democratic civil society, you will be impressed. It is not just a declaration for most of them but real everyday work on different levels of community life.

Civil society development has also been supported on a legislative level. One essential development, I believe, has happened in people's understanding of their own

identity as a citizen. This is linked to national and cultural identity, respect for other cultures and ethnic groups, ability to preserve Ukrainian traditions and understanding the importance of national memory and its impact on socio-political processes.

What message would you like to send to adult education organisations across Europe?

Being in a stressful state and feeling the war around me, it isn't easy to talk about education as a process that is essentially very long and requires painstaking everyday work.

We are witnessing the results of people being deprived of access to open discussion and cultivating the key values of society: democracy, freedom, responsibility and partnership. This leads to limited knowledge, spreading lies and following the values of power and aggression.

Perhaps my main message to all those working in the field of adult education is finding channels to inform and educate the citizens of Russia.

Our efforts should be aimed at cultivating values that allow people to find ways of self-realisation and opportunities for integration into wider society; to ensure their resilience against other challenges such as corruption, intolerance and ecological issues.

Interesting

Important Website in region

www.nfedi.org
www.rda.org.la
www.aspbae.org
www.seameocelll.org

Interesting publications

Adult Education and Development
AED 86 (2019): The good adult educator
AED 85: Role and Impact of Adult Education
AED 84: Inclusion and Diversity
AED 83: Skills and Competencies

International Perspectives in Adult Education

IPE 79(2019): The contribution of adult education to active participatory citizenship
IPE 77: Rethinking adult learning and education - Asia perspectives
IPE 78: Adult education as a key to development - challenges and success factors
IPE 76: Refugees: A challenge for adult education

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Regional Office Southeast Asia
351/19 Unit; Watnak Nyai Road
Thaphalanxay Village, Sisatthanak District
P.O. Box 1215, Vientiane, Lao PDR
Tel.: +856 21 315832-3
Fax: +856 21 312511
info@dvv-international.la
www.dvv-international.la



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