

Newsletter 2025

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



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Dear reader,

it is my great pleasure to present the newsletter of the year 2025 from DVV International's Regional Office Southeast Asia. When this issue is published, my almost three-year tenure as Regional Director will come to an end. I am very grateful for the experiences I have had in Laos, both professionally and personally. At the same time, this is also a moment to pause and reflect. I think we can all be proud of what we have accomplished in the past few years.

Although there were many great events, results and progress, my personal highlight was the 15th anniversary of the DVV office in Laos, which we celebrated together with our national and international partners at the end of last year as part of an international conference on lifelong learning. The participation of the Laotian Minister of Education, the German Embassy, former regional directors, and national and international partners, guests and friends demonstrated the broad basis and support with which we are promoting lifelong learning in Laos and beyond.

This newsletter informs about progress on our manifold current endeavors. These include the adoption of the National Action Plan for Lifelong Learning, ongoing system assessments for adult learning and education (ALESBA), the piloting of a digital learning App for the equivalency program, the roll-out of the lifelong learning concept in teacher education and the further development of the four Model Community Learning Centers supported since the beginning of our current project phase that started in the year 2024. Our work with partners from the region is illustrated by articles from our country office in Cambodia and from the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE). As you will read in the beginning of this newsletter, regional policy dialogue and research on lifelong learning implementation was also conceptualized and managed directly by the Regional Office in Lao PDR. It goes without saying that all these initiatives would not have been possible without our proven partner network: the Department of Non-formal Education (DNFE) and the Non-formal Education Development Center (NFEDC) from the Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES), the Faculty of Education (FED) from the National University of Laos (NuOL) and the Lao Youth Union (LYU) as well as our regional network partners from Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam.

The goal of DVV International is to strengthen youth and adult education structures worldwide. This undoubtedly requires political will, awareness raising, strong institutions, good approaches, and learning materials. However, all of this is only achievable with committed, qualified, and willing-to-learn individuals who are convinced of the idea of adult education. Looking back over the past few years, I can confidently say that there are many committed advocates for adult education. This gives me great hope that sustainable progress will continue in the future.

In this spirit I would like to thank the entire adult and non-formal education community for the excellent cooperation over the last three years. May you all continue to strive for increasing the access of our target groups to good-quality education in Laos, Cambodia and the whole region of Southeast Asia!

I hope to keep in touch with many of you!

Your sincerely,

Christoph Jost

Regional Director

Regional Cooperation on Lifelong Learning in Southeast Asia

Cross-Country Research and Policy Dialogue

Christoph Jost
DVV International, Laos

The Sustainable Development Goal 4 of the United Nations' Agenda 2030 postulates in its mission statement to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". Almost a decade after releasing SDG 4, having passed the midpoint of Agenda 2030's lifespan, it can be noted that lifelong learning (LLL) has gained momentum in many countries around the globe, including the project countries of DVV International in Southeast Asia – Lao PDR and Cambodia. Policies, strategies, decrees and other frameworks have been adopted or are in the process of completion. Cross-sectoral stakeholder groups exchange in technical and high-level steering committees and through inter-ministerial policy dialogue. The effective implementation of lifelong learning, transitioning from policy to institutionalization, capacity building and concrete learning practice, is now one of the main tasks supported by DVV International's Regional Office Southeast Asia. Against this background and in line with the country projects in Lao PDR and Cambodia, supported by the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), DVV International provides key stakeholders insights into best practice examples for implementing lifelong learning in the region and internationally. This very objective was particularly tackled with two major activity strands in the years 2024 and 2025.

Cross-Country Research

DVV International coordinated a cross-country research study on lifelong learning implementation with a proven set-up of research partners:

- Faculty of Education from Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand
- Faculty of Education from the National University of Laos
- SEAMEO Regional Centre for Lifelong Learning (SEAMEO CELLL) in Vietnam
- Faculty of Education from the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), Cambodia



Following initial consultations with all research partners at the beginning of the year 2024, the study outline and the research framework were agreed upon during a research workshop conducted at the premises of SEAMEO CELLL in July 2024. The draft chapters of the country case studies were presented during an international conference on lifelong learning in Vientiane at the end of the year 2024. At the beginning of the year 2025, all studies were revised, and quality was assured with the support of an international consultant, the former head of the Education Section from UNESCO's Regional Office in Bangkok, who also elaborated a comprehensive comparative analysis and policy recommendations. During a second research workshop in Vientiane in May 2025 all findings were once more presented and verified. The publication was completed in late summer 2025 and supported by the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) in Cambodia. The official launch of the study is now planned to take place during a board meeting of SEAMEO CELLL in October, including lifelong learning policy makers and experts from 13 countries from the region. The study is available for download at the website of the DVV office Laos.

It is hoped that the study will also serve as a useful tool to raise more awareness of the importance of lifelong learning among stakeholders from the whole education and other sectors.

Regional Policy Dialogue

In August 2025, DVV International's Regional Office Southeast Asia organized a Regional Policy Dialogue on Lifelong Learning that was attended by around 30 policy makers and experts from Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. UNESCO's Regional Office in Bangkok and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) partnered with DVV International and sent experts to cover key topics of interest.

The concrete objectives of the meeting were as follows:

- Sharing, discussing and learning about existing policies, strategies and governance mechanisms for lifelong learning from participating countries
- Providing information and promoting interactive discussions on action plans for lifelong learning and their implementation mechanisms from participating countries
- Presenting findings from the cross-country research study on the implementation of lifelong learning in Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam – with particular focus on policy recommendations and insights into global perspectives
- Sharing and learning about university cooperations to support lifelong learning implementation (capacity building, integration of LLL into formal education)
- Presenting, discussing and learning how lifelong learning is supported and implemented in learning institutions at the community level (e.g. LLL Centers, Model Community Learning Center (CLCs)), including a site visit to a community learning center close to the venue location
- Presenting models and mechanisms to strengthen the implementation of lifelong learning and non-formal/adult education (learning cities, Adult Learning and Education System Building Approach (ALESBA), Recognition Validation and Accreditation (RVA))

The Regional Policy Dialogue was deemed very useful by all participants, as they were able to exchange on progress and challenges and learn from each other how to promote the further implementation of lifelong learning in Laos, Cambodia and Thailand.



Site visit to a Model Community Learning Center

ASPBAE's Creative Advocacy Approaches in the 12th Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)



Helen Dabu
ASPBAE

Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) actively engaged in the processes leading to and in the main discussions of the 12th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), highlighting the interlinkages of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4) with the SDGs under review.

Organized from 25 to 28 February 2025 by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) at the UN Conference Center (UNCC) in Bangkok, Thailand, the 12th APFSD focused on the theme of „Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs for leaving no one behind in Asia and the Pacific.“

The 12th APFSD focused on assessing the overall progress on the SDGs and delving deep into specific SDGs under review, specifically Goal 3 on good health and well-being; Goal 5 on gender equality; Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth; Goal 14 on life below water; and Goal 17 on Partnership for the Goals. ASPBAE also actively engaged in the events leading up to the 12th APFSD – specifically, the APFSD Youth Forum and the Peoples’ Forum (APFSD). Further, prior to this main intergovernmental process, ASPBAE has organised a “CSO Orientation, Preparatory, and Updating Meeting for the 2025 Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) and the Voluntary National Review (VNR) Processes” involving its members, including national education coalitions (NECs), on 13 February 2025.

ASPBAE’s delegation to the 12th APFSD brought attention to the important interlinkages between SDG 4 with the Goals up for review in the sessions of the Roundtable Discussions, in which participants build a shared understanding of the regional outlook and progress on the SDGs up for review and discuss priorities for action. ASPBAE highlighted the following points in the Roundtable Discussions:

- Analyze the SDGs in a more holistic approach, ensuring interlinkages with education, poverty, gender and housing, which show the strongest impacts on health.
- Women’s economic empowerment and prioritizing gender-transformative education systems.
- Invest in continuing skills and livelihood training and development, as well as education for decent work and livelihoods of marginalised and socially vulnerable youth groups, including technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and relevant mentorship.
- Develop and strengthen equitable, flexible learning and training pathways, alternative learning programmes and lifelong learning opportunities.

As part of its creative advocacy approaches in this process, ASPBAE, in cooperation with UNESCAP, UNICEF, Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW) and Baha’i International Community, put a spotlight on the stories and experiences of five young women leaders in empowering women and girls in the region through an onsite Brown Bag session entitled “Rise and Thrive: Empowering the Women and Girls of Tomorrow” on 28 February 2025.

ASPBAE also mounted a display booth during the main APFSD from 24 to 28 February 2025. With the theme “Breaking Barriers in Education: Gender Transformative Approaches to Achieving the SDGs,” the booth presented various materials from the organizers, which included ASPBAE, the UN Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI), the Feminist Network for GTE (FemNet4GTE), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), ChildFund Asia and UNESCO Bangkok.

The booth also provided an opportunity to interact with 12th APFSD delegates as it featured a mix of unique elements such as videos and props to take photos, as well as a sign-up sheet for future collaboration. ASPBAE displayed its CSO Spotlight Reports on SDG4 for 2024, which highlighted the issues of education financing, gender equality and social inclusion and climate action. ASPBAE also handed out copies of the Asia Pacific Declaration on Gender-Transformative Education (GTE) which it produced in 2024 in collaboration with feminist organisations, the Pratisandhi Foundation (India), Aahung (Pakistan) and UNGEI.

The outcomes of the discussions - the 12th APFSD report and the Chair’s Summary - fed into the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and contributed to shaping the discussions at the High-Level Political Forum convened from 14 July to 23 July 2025, under the auspices of the ECOSOC in the UN Headquarters in New York.



ASPBAE Team at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development



Good Practices in Soft Advocacy: *The DVV International Cambodia Pilot Project*

Vanna Peou
DVV International, Cambodia

In the heart of Cambodia, an important journey is taking place through the DVV International pilot project. This initiative focuses on helping communities grow through effective soft advocacy, working closely with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), the National Lifelong Learning Secretariat, and the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP). Together, we are using the principles of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) to empower local communities.

Understanding the Need for Change

Community development is always changing, especially in today's world, where effective advocacy is more important than ever. DVV International is proud to support a model of soft advocacy that emphasizes working together, open discussions, and community involvement. By using ALE principles, we aim to create lasting change that truly matters to communities.

The Role of ALE and Andragogy

At the core of our project is the use of ALE techniques, which focus on providing lifelong learning opportunities for adults. Unlike traditional education, our approach prioritizes the unique needs of adult learners. We encourage active participation, critical thinking, and self-directed learning, empowering community members to be active agents of change.

Our programs are designed to be fun and engaging, with workshops and training sessions tailored to meet the specific interests and challenges of community members. This customization helps foster a sense of ownership and commitment, leading to more meaningful results.



Participants graduated from the training course

Community Rating Report: Amplifying Voices

A key part of our project is the “Community Rating Report”, a simple yet powerful tool that helps communities express their concerns. This report encourages community members to share their thoughts, needs, and hopes, creating a space for open dialogue. By using this feedback in our programs, we make sure that Lifelong Learning Centers (LLCs) meet the evolving needs of the community.

This collaborative tool promotes accountability and transparency, allowing community members to actively shape their educational journeys. It strengthens community bonds and builds trust in local institutions, creating a sense of shared ownership and responsibility.

Digital Connectivity through Telegram

In today’s digital age, technology plays an important role in communication and collaboration. To improve connectivity among participants, we have created a Telegram group as the main platform for sharing knowledge and experiences. This online community allows members to exchange resources, best practices, and learning experiences, creating a collaborative environment beyond physical meetings.

The Telegram group has become a vital space for engagement, where community members support each other, celebrate successes, and share challenges. This digital connection enhances learning and fosters a strong network of advocates committed to sustainable community development.

Implementation of the Pilot Project

Launched in 2021 the pilot project has been promoting five Community Learning Centers (CLCs) and five Youth Centers within government structures. This approach makes the best use of available resources, ensuring our efforts are sustainable and impactful.

Our capacity-building initiatives include a variety of programs designed to empower individuals. These initiatives encourage community engagement, provide counseling and support, enhance economic opportunities, and offer digital skills training. Each component contributes to a holistic approach to community growth.



Digital literacy class in the LLLC

Outcomes and Impact

As the project progresses, we are seeing positive changes in community attitudes and engagement. Participants report feeling more confident in voicing their needs. Notably, three out of ten centers have become officially recognized Lifelong Learning Centers by MoEYS, marking a significant achievement in our mission to enhance educational opportunities. One of these centers has even become a role model in the country, inspiring others with its commitment to community support. Many of these centers are now the main voices for their communities, effectively representing their concerns in local discussions.

Since 2024 nine additional learning centers have been joining with our initiative, bringing the total to 19 centers across the country working with DVV International. This expansion will further strengthen our network and improve our ability to serve communities effectively.

The integration of community feedback through the “Community Rating Report” has improved the responsiveness of Lifelong Learning Centers. Our hybrid approach to capacity building—offering both online and in-person training—ensures that our programs are accessible to all, particularly those in remote areas. Coaching and mentoring are crucial in helping participants apply their new skills.

Continued Commitment to Improvement

As we look to the future, DVV International remains dedicated to adapting our strategies based on ongoing evaluations and community feedback. Our focus on capacity building, mentoring, and sustainability ensures that we meet immediate needs while laying a strong foundation for long-term community development.

In this vibrant landscape, the DVV International pilot project stands as a beacon of hope, showing the power of soft advocacy. By nurturing a culture of continuous learning and collaboration, we strengthen community resilience and pave the way for sustainable development throughout Cambodia.



Products from the LLLC

Lao PDR Advances Cross-Sectoral Plan for Lifelong Learning

*Mana Chanthalanonh
DVV International, Laos*

In alignment with global education goals and the country’s long-term development strategy, the Lao PDR is taking coordinated steps to strengthen lifelong learning (LLL). With high-level political support and increasing inter-ministerial collaboration, the government has finalized and adopted National Action Plan for Lifelong Learning (NAP for LLL).

Building a Unified National Framework

Since the approval of the National Lifelong Learning Decree by the Prime Minister in March 2020, there has been steady progress in integrating LLL into existing government programs. To scale these efforts nationwide and ensure consistent progress across all parts of government, the Lao government established a dedicated cross-sectoral task force also referred to as the Technical Steering Committee for Lifelong Learning. This body was inter alia responsible for drafting a National Action Plan for Lifelong Learning to serve as a strategic framework for practical implementation across ministries and institutions. This approach enables the government to ensure that LLL becomes a fully integrated part of national planning, which closely aligns with the priorities of the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDPlan). The initiative underscores the belief that LLL is essential for economic transformation, social cohesion, and sustainable growth. A key component in this process is the role of the National Steering Committee for LLL, which is expected to ensure strong coordination, promote engagement at all levels, and support the development of inclusive policies and programs.

A significant milestone in the process was the first High-Level Steering Committee Meeting held in March 2025. The meeting, attended by over 60 representatives from various government bodies, was chaired by the Minister of Education and Sport. It marked the final

review and approval of the National Action Plan for Lifelong Learning as a key component of the Education and Sports Sector Development Plan.

Key Elements of the National Action Plan for Lifelong Learning

During the meeting, the Lifelong Learning Secretariate which is located in the Department of Non-formal Education (DNFE) presented the NAP for LLL. The plan outlines concrete policy actions, sectoral responsibilities, and implementation strategies designed to ensure:

- Access to educational opportunities
- Development of instructional materials
- Strengthened monitoring and management systems
- Investment in human resource development
- Broader use of digital tools and flexible learning models

The Committee emphasized the importance of collaboration across all ministries and levels of government to guarantee success and meaningful learning opportunities for all Lao citizens.

NAP for LLL 2025–2030 Sets Course for Sector Plans

The approval of the National Action Plan for Lifelong Learning marks a key milestone in the country’s education and development agenda. Covering the period from 2025 to 2030, the plan will now be distributed across sectors to guide the implementation of lifelong learning initiatives. The plan has also been officially printed and will serve as a national reference document to support the creation of a lifelong learning society across Lao PDR. The next step is the development of sector-specific plans.



Meeting of High-level Steering Committee of the National Action Plan for Lifelong Learning

EdApp - Digital Learning in the Lao Non-formal Education

Promising Results from Piloting Phase



Pakoulee Xaiyaxang
DVV International, Laos

The Non-Formal Education Development Centre (NFEDC) and the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) recently completed a pilot phase of the digital learning platform EdApp with Grade 12 learners across four target provinces in Lao PDR. The initial results indicate strong acceptance among learners and highlight the potential of digital tools to revolutionize non-formal education (NFE) in the country.

Learner demographics

A total of 125 learners participated in the user survey, with 90.4% reporting active use of the platform. The gender distribution was balanced. While all participants were enrolled in Grade 12, the age distribution reflects the reality of NFE: 75.2% were between 17 and 21 years old, 15% were aged 22 to 30, and 10% were over 30 years. Therefore, the app is particularly helpful for adult learners returning to education. It provides access to digital learning materials when attending class is not possible, improving the balance between employment and schooling.

Users Engagement and feedback

- **Flexible Learning Opportunities:** Over half (53.1%) reported using the app two to three times per week, mostly in short sessions of 15–20 minutes. This flexibility – allowing learning “anytime, anywhere” – was frequently mentioned as a major advantage.
- **Empowering independence:** The EdApp proved to be a powerful tool for self-directed learning. Learners primarily used the app for tasks such as searching for information, supporting their studies, and completing assignments, reflecting its usefulness in fostering independent learning.
- **Engaging content:** The app’s use of interactive features, images, and videos was noted to enhance both learner motivation and comprehension.

Improved learning strategies:

Respondents reported that the app helped them better understand lesson content and supported their time management skills.

Most learners (96.5%) accessed the EdApp via smartphones, primarily using personal mobile hotspots. This underscores the importance of mobile technology in bridging educational access gaps, especially in rural or remote areas.

Insights for Enhancement

In addition to the positive findings, learners shared constructive feedback for future enhancements. Suggestions included incorporating a wider variety of activity designs, providing more examples to clarify content, and expanding the range of video content. Technical issues such as inconsistent internet access and the need for more intuitive app navigation were also noted.

The pilot has demonstrated that EdApp can effectively support flexible and accessible learning within non-formal education settings. The feedback gathered during this phase is now informing further development of the platform.

Shaping the next phase

The enthusiasm and positive engagement from grade 12 NFE students clearly demonstrate EdApp’s transformative power. Notably, the strong uptake among younger participants underscores the younger generation’s openness to modern, app-based approaches to learning. Based on these encouraging results, NFEDC plans to continue refining EdApp and explore options for expanding its use in other areas of non-formal education. The pilot provides a solid foundation for the integration of digital tools into the NFE, and highlights the growing role of mobile learning in reaching and empowering learners across the country.



Digital learning in action – 12th graders using EdApp

Strengthening Lifelong Learning in Teacher Education in Laos

New Handbooks for Kindergarten, Primary and Secondary School Educators



Khanthong Inthachack
DVV International, Laos

A significant step forward has been made in advancing lifelong learning (LLL) within teacher education in Laos. In April 2025, key stakeholders from universities, teacher training colleges, and government education bodies came together in Vang Vieng District to review and endorse new LLL handbooks specifically designed for Kindergarten and Primary teacher education programs.

A Collaborative Review Process

The meeting was led by the Acting Dean of the Faculty of Education at the National University of Laos (FED-NUOL), alongside an adult education specialist from the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES). Together, they guided the comprehensive review process and offered valuable recommendations to ensure the handbooks meet the needs of educators and learners alike.

Representatives from various departments joined the meeting, along with deans from four public universities, directors of eight teacher training colleges, two Sangha Teacher Training Colleges, and members of FED-NUOL's LLL team. This wide participation highlighted the strong collaboration across institutions aimed at embedding lifelong learning into teacher education throughout the country.

Developing and Piloting the New Handbooks

FED-NUOL has been at the forefront of promoting lifelong learning in teacher education by developing key materials. This includes a comprehensive LLL textbook covering primary, secondary, and kindergarten teacher

education levels, as well as a dedicated LLL handbook for secondary teacher education. Recognizing the specific requirements of Kindergarten and Primary education, two additional handbooks tailored to these levels were developed in partnership with Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs).

These new handbooks were piloted over one semester in various TTIs during 2024, allowing educators to provide feedback and suggest improvements. The pilot phase was crucial for refining the content and making the handbooks more effective and user-friendly. The collaborative nature of this initiative ensures that diverse perspectives from different educational institutions and experts contribute to the quality and relevance of the materials. This approach not only enhances the acceptance of the handbooks but also encourages active engagement from teachers who will use these resources in their professional development. Building on this work, the recent meeting focused on finalizing the handbooks and setting out clear next steps, including follow-up meetings and approval procedures. The group agreed on adopting the handbook's structure, which promotes nine strategic topics essential for lifelong learning in teacher education.

The meeting also established strategies to promote the National Curriculum in TTIs, aiming for a consistent and high-quality teacher training system across Laos. This alignment with the National Curriculum ensures that teacher training is relevant and standardized, helping to improve the overall quality of education in the country and supporting national education goals.

A Milestone for Teacher Development in Laos

This collaborative achievement marks an important milestone in strengthening lifelong learning in Laos' teacher education sector. Supported by DVV International's vision, these efforts will help ensure that future teachers are well-prepared to meet evolving educational demands and contribute to sustainable development in the country.

Looking ahead, the successful implementation of these handbooks is expected to serve as a model for further educational reforms and innovations, fostering a culture of lifelong learning among educators. Continued support and collaboration among educational stakeholders will be crucial to maintain momentum and achieve lasting impact.



Consultation meeting on on the LLL handbook for kindergarten and primary teacher education

Adult Learning and Education System Building Approach (ALESBA) in Lao PDR

Findings from the Demand-Side Assessment



*Mana Chanthalanonh
DVV International, Laos*

What motivates adults in Lao PDR to take part in non-formal education (NFE) programs? What challenges do they face, and how can these programs better respond to their needs? These guiding questions were at the heart of a recently completed demand-side assessment led by DVV International (DVVI), in close collaboration with the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) and the Non-Formal Education Development Center (NFEDC).

The study was conducted as part of the Adult Learning and Education System Building Approach (ALESBA), a multi-step framework developed by DVVI to strengthen the quality and relevance of adult learning services. Originally implemented in African partner countries, ALESBA is now being piloted in four Asian countries including Lao PDR to shape the NFE system with the aim that adult education services are more accessible, better coordinated, and more closely aligned with learners' needs.

Gathering Insights from the Field

To gain a clear understanding of the demands of the NFE target group, the study combined secondary data analysis of existing resources with direct engagement with learners and stakeholders. Fieldwork took place in April 2025 in Bolikhamxay Province and Vientiane Capital, where DVVI conducted surveys and focus group discussions with NFE learners, education providers, and political representatives.

Thanks to the excellent cooperation with DNFE, NFEDC, and the provincial and district authorities, along with the constructive and open participation of respondents, the study was successfully implemented.

Key Findings and Learner Perspectives

The final report offers a comprehensive overview of the current state of government-supported NFE in Lao PDR. It examines who is participating in these programs, how accessible and affordable they are, and which factors influence learner attendance. The study also provides insights into what motivates learners to take part in NFE, the barriers they encounter, and the specific needs they bring. Importantly, the assessment captures learners' perspectives on the quality and relevance of existing programs and highlights areas where improvements are most needed.

Moving Forward with ALESBA

The findings of the demand-side assessment represented an important step within the ALESBA framework. Together with the results of a previously conducted NFE supply-side assessment, they were jointly reviewed in a national workshop with government stakeholders and development partners. During this workshop a delivery chain and a cause-and-effect diagram of current challenges were jointly developed. Based on these results the next steps will be to design and discuss an alternative NFE system coping with the challenges encountered to strengthen non-formal education in holistic manner in Lao PDR.



Collecting data in Bolikhamxay Province

Model Community Learning Center in Laos

Empowering Rural Communities Through Lifelong Learning and Local Innovation



Leklai Southavilay
DVV International, Laos

Located in the Pakxan District, approximately 150 km east of Vientiane, the Buavengkham Community Learning Centre (CLC) has emerged as a vibrant hub for lifelong learning and community-driven development. The center strategically aligns its programs with the real learning needs of the local population, using a highly participatory approach that actively involves the community member's needs. In addition, the CLC promotes holistic community well-being through engaging and impactful activities. These include environmental awareness campaigns, International Children's Day celebrations, and youth-focused drug prevention initiatives.

Empowering Through Education and Practical Skills

The Buavengkham CLC is a model center in tailoring its programs to local livelihoods and economic opportunities. It offers a diverse array of high-quality, free vocational training courses designed to equip learners with practical, income-generating skills. These include frog-raising, vegetable cultivation, sewing, weaving, cooking, and mushroom farming.

Self-Sustaining Mushroom Farming: A Model for Local Enterprise

Demonstrating its strong commitment to sustainability, the Buavengkham CLC has fully embraced the "One CLC, One Product" initiative - a campaign designed to boost local enterprises and foster long-term self-reliance, funded through public support to kick-start community entrepreneurship.

This vision has come to life through the center's pioneering mushroom farming enterprise, which has quickly become an outstanding example of community-driven success. Since its launch in March, 2025. The project has already harvested over 50 kilograms of mushrooms, generating both income and momentum for further growth.

At the core of the initiative are three dedicated community members, each of whom invested their own funds to co-finance the venture. Their commitment reflects strong local ownership and shared responsibility for the project's success. A formal agreement ensures that a portion of the profits is reinvested into the CLC's operational budget, contributing to its long-term sustainability.

Looking ahead, the project aims to produce mushroom spores locally, reducing dependence on external suppliers and further supporting local self-sufficiency. The next phase of the initiative includes the construction of an additional building as well as a borehole to provide reliable water access in order to increase the production and community reach. These developments will enhance the CLC's role as a catalyst for rural innovation, and sustainable local enterprise.

Building Capacity and Confidence Through Support

The progress of the CLC has been significantly bolstered by the presence of a committed "champion" at the district or provincial level, whose advocacy has played a key role in securing vital funding and elevating the confidence of the CLC team. This strategic support has empowered staff to initiate new programs and build structures that ensure continued success.

Backed by the guidance and technical support of DVV International, the center has cultivated a strong internal capacity to design, implement, and sustain high-impact learning programs that meet real community needs.

Driving Lasting Change in the Community

The tireless and exemplary efforts of Buavengkham CLC are already producing tangible, positive changes. Community engagement has increased significantly, particularly in areas such as environmental protection and awareness on children rights. These outcomes reflect not only the dedication of the

CLC team but also the transformative potential of inclusive, community-led education.

Through its innovative programs and inclusive approach, the Buavengkham Community Learning Centre stands as a dynamic force for individual prosperity and collective advancement. Its work is closely aligned with national strategies for lifelong learning and sustainable development, paving the way for a more equitable and empowered future for all.



Youth Leaders as Drivers for Community Learning



Dokkham Xomsihapanya
DVV International, Laos

Youth Leaders as Drivers of Community Learning

Youth represent the majority of Lao PDR's population and are a key force in creating change in their communities. Currently, DVV International is implementing a Sternsinger-funded project to establish Model Community Learning Centers (CLCs) as spaces for meeting, sharing, and learning among community members. The project titled "Promoting Children and Youth Learning Activities in Model CLCs" works directly with youth and children in four communities to implement activities. This initiative is a partnership between DVV International and the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE), under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Sports. The Sternsinger is a German children's foundation.

Youth as Drivers of the Community

Across Lao PDR, young people play a leading role in driving community activities at all levels. They are a powerful force in mobilizing and bringing people together in their communities and surrounding areas, as well as acting as the voice of the community. Youth in the community are well acquainted with their local areas. The project empowers youth leaders to collaborate with CLC staff in organizing meaningful activities that respond to community needs.

The youth leaders were selected through village-level community meetings based on voluntary engagement and defined selection criteria. Correspondingly, in schools, teachers nominate students who actively participate and demonstrate a willingness to help others.

Youth Empowerment

The youth leaders received capacity building by a team of trainers who are specialized in working with youth and support them in developing their potential and practical skills through a variety of activities. Training activities are designed with a specific focus on strengthening emotional, intellectual, and social skills through participatory and experience-based learning.

The implementation of activities, especially trainings, was carried out in collaboration with youth leaders and CLC staff at each of the four Model CLCs. Trainings cover topics relevant to the needs of the community and are based on the Youth and Children Training Manual developed in the initial phase of the Project. These include environmental protection, drug prevention, soft skills, financial literacy, and child rights.

Youth leaders are a driving force and play an important role in raising awareness within the community, encouraging collective action to address local challenges and shape a better future for children, young people, and the community as a whole. They organize and support community dialogues in CLCs and schools to engage peers and stakeholders in addressing pressing issues such as drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, and limited educational opportunities.

Leaders for Change

Promoting youth leadership activities is an important foundation for helping young people become adults who can manage their lives effectively. Creating positive spaces and supporting youth to play a role in addressing community issues is key to empowering and driving sustainable change in communities. By becoming strong leaders—both mentally and emotionally—and experiencing a sense of ownership through making positive changes, youth leaders contribute significantly to their communities. Youth leaders' voices are part of change. Therefore, youth need opportunities and spaces to think, speak, and take action.



The youth leader during the community dialogue in the CLC



Bin Savoeurn
NTFF, Cambodia

Kok Lak Lifelong Learning Center

Community Learning Centers: A Potential Learning Place for the Kavet Indigenous Community, Ratanakiri Province

In the lush landscapes of Ratanakiri Province, the Kok Lak Commune Community Learning Center stands as a vibrant beacon of hope for the Kavet indigenous community. Nestled in the heart of Rok Village, this center has become a transformative force,

opening doors to education, empowerment, and community development.

The Journey of Transformation

Once referred to as the “Kok Lak Commune Training Center,” this hub for volunteer teachers was born from the vision of dedicated community members and the generous support of DVV International Cambodia and other partners. Over time, the center has evolved into a „Lifelong Learning Center“ (LLC), officially recognized by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports on April 30, 2025. This remarkable transformation is not just about a name change; it reflects the resilience and determination of the Kavet people, illustrating what can be achieved when a community unites for a common purpose.

Overcoming Challenges

The Kavet people, one of Cambodia’s indigenous groups, have faced significant challenges due to their remote location near Virachey National Park. Many Kavet children have been denied educational

opportunities, often required to work on farms instead of attending school. Historically, the community struggled with literacy, lacking a written language until materials were developed in 2002. Although literacy classes began in 2008, they were often held in challenging conditions, making learning an ambitious task.

The Drive for Change

Recognizing the urgent need for accessible education, the community passionately advocated for a dedicated training center. From 1998 to 2012, teachers faced obstacles in traveling to training sessions held in rented houses in Veunsai town. In 2018, a vision emerged when a community leader offered land near the Ola Lai waterfall, paving the way for the construction of the Kok Lak Community Training Center in 2019. This initiative, supported by DVV International and other partners, showcased the unwavering commitment of the Kavet community, with members contributing materials and labor to bring their dream to fruition.

A Dedicated Space for Learning

The Kok Lak Community Learning Center was designed to be more than just a building; it was envisioned as a dedicated space for learning and skills development. Its main objectives include:

- Training Volunteer Teachers: Equipping educators with effective teaching skills in both Khmer and Kavet.
- Skills Development: Offering courses in agriculture, health education, and English and computer skills tailored to the community’s needs.
- Community Meetings: Providing a venue for discussions among community representatives, partner organizations, and local authorities.
- Reading Center: Creating a welcoming space for children and youth to explore a variety of books.

A Community-Centric Location

Situated in the stunning Nangam Waterfall area, the Kok Lak Community Learning Center is 15 kilometers from Veunsai District Town and 52 kilometers from Ratanakiri Province Town. It serves a population of 2,874 across four villages, including 1,447 Kavet ethnic minorities. The construction of the center involved significant community participation, fostering a strong sense of ownership and pride among local residents.

Current Status and Programs

Today, the Kok Lak LLC offers vital learning programs, including:

1. **Literacy Training:** Quarterly sessions for teachers on Kavet-Khmer teaching methods.
2. **Life Skills Training:** Programs on agriculture, hygiene, and health education tailored to community needs.



Community dialogue in Kok Lak LLC

3. **English and Computer Classes:** Daily classes taught by community volunteers, supported by Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP Organization).
4. **Reading Promotion:** A vibrant reading center for students after school.

Celebrating Achievements

In 2024, the center celebrated remarkable milestones:

- Trained 74 volunteer teachers.
- Conducted health education sessions with 484 participants.
- Offered life-skill training for 29 individuals.
- Helped 43 students complete basic computer classes.
- Supported 75 students in finishing basic English classes.

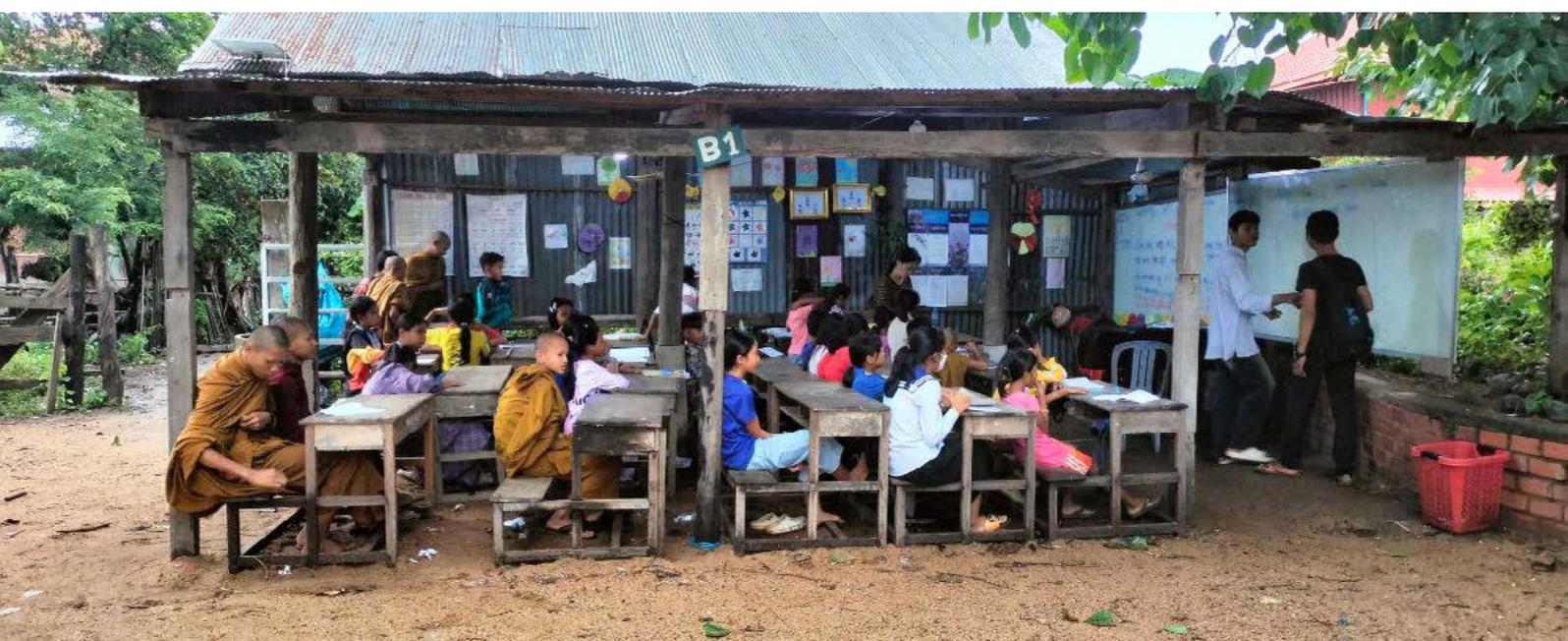
The momentum continued into 2025 with

- Training 84 teachers.
- Raising awareness on health and education for 96 participants.
- Enrolling 28 students in computer classes.

Looking to the Future

As we look ahead, the Ministry of Education has recommended establishing a management committee and enhancing the skills of training teachers to further improve the Kok Lak LLC. By formalizing the internal structure and enhancing agricultural programs, the center will serve as a shining model for the community.

The Kok Lak Community Learning Center stands out not just as a place of learning, but as a testament to the strength and unity of the Kavet people. Together, we are forging a brighter future through education, one step at a time. Each lesson learned and every skill acquired is a building block towards a more empowered and self-sufficient community.



The group of diverse participants joint the literacy training sessions for teachers on Kavet-Khmer teaching methods

Laotian researchers earn PhDs in Lifelong Learning from the University of Cologne, Germany

With the support of DVV International, two researchers from Laos completed their PhDs at the University of Cologne, tackling key challenges in adult learning, education and lifelong learning.

Ms Vanmany Vannasy and Mr Souksakhone Sengsouliya have reached a significant academic milestone, earning their PhDs in Lifelong Learning and Adult Education from the University of Cologne, Germany, in 2025. Their achievement marks an important step in the ongoing collaboration between DVV International's Regional Office in Laos and the Lao government through the Ministry of Education and Sports.

Since 2019, DVV International has supported both researchers in their doctoral research in Germany, aiming to strengthen human resource development in the non-formal education sector and promote lifelong learning in Lao PDR. Under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Michael Schemmann from the Department of Education and Social Science, Faculty of Human Sciences, they conducted research addressing key aspects of lifelong learning in various educational settings.

Research on workplace learning and dropout trends among minority learners

Vannasy's dissertation, „Lifelong Learning Through Workplace Learning: A University Perspective,“ provides a theoretical overview of workplace learning in academic institutions. She analyzes empirical data to identify key factors influencing its success. Meanwhile, Sengsouliya's research, „Dropout Trends among Laotian Hmong Minority Lifelong Learners in Adult Education,“ examines the dropout phenomenon among Hmong students in higher education. Using a case study approach, he explores the reasons behind these dropout trends and proposes strategies to improve recruitment and retention of minority learners, a group often considered vulnerable and hard to reach.

The accomplishments of the two scholars reflect not only their dedication and academic excellence but also a step forward in strengthening adult learning and education in Laos. Their research is expected to inspire further initiatives supporting DVV International's vision of providing lifelong learning opportunities for all.



Ms Vannasy (left) and Mr Sengsouliya (right) from the University of Laos during the defense of their doctoral theses at the DVV International office in Vientiane

Research findings and their potential impact on education in Laos

Ms Vannasy, what led you to choose workplace learning as the focus of your research, and what are your key findings?

Workplace learning is widely recognized as a vital tool for professional growth and institutional development across various sectors, including higher education. However, universities often lack clear strategies for its implementation. My research identified the following ten essential factors for successful integration:

- Personal interest
- Self-confidence
- Individual engagement
- Group learning
- Trust
- Management
- Expertise
- Collaboration
- Policy
- Organizational culture

What are the practical implications of your research for education in Laos?

The Lao government encourages higher education institutions to evolve into learning organizations, supporting the country's transformation into a knowledge-based society. My research highlights the importance of fostering a mindset of continuous self-development in educational setting as it enhances workplace productivity and ensures that professionals remain competitive in their careers. To implement these findings, Laotian universities should prioritize lifelong learning opportunities for their staff by implementing:

- Professional training programs
- Platforms for discussion and knowledge-sharing
- Culture of continuous improvement through:
 - Conducting self-assessments
 - Addressing institutional weaknesses
 - Creating a dynamic learning environment

Mr Sengsouliya, your study examines dropout trends among Laotian Hmong minority learners. What were the most significant reasons for dropout that you identified, and what strategies do you propose to improve retention?

The issue of minority student dropout is complex, and generalizing the factors behind it is challenging. My case study on the Laotian Hmong minority contributes to the existing body of research on this topic. My findings indicate that family-related factors are the primary reasons why Hmong students withdraw from higher education. To improve retention rates, I recommend key strategies such as:

- Recruiting faculty members from minority backgrounds
- Providing psychosocial support services
- Establishing financial assistance programs to support students from economically disadvantaged families

Now that you have completed your PhD, how do you plan to apply your research?

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) emphasizes that educational quality should be measured by equity and equal access. My research provides valuable insights for Laotian educators and policymakers by highlighting ongoing challenges in higher education. By sharing these findings with a wider range of institutions, I hope to help instructors adapt their teaching methods and strategies to support learners from diverse backgrounds. A deeper understanding of students' specific needs can help educators create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, ultimately fostering academic success.

Digital Skills for Lifelong Learning



Dalouny Sisoulath
DVV International, Laos

In a society where technology and information are the main drivers of society, lifelong learning has become increasingly important. No longer limited to classrooms or educational institutions, learning now happens anytime, anywhere. As new knowledge and technologies are constantly emerging, people of all ages need to adapt to a rapidly changing world. Only continuous and lifelong learning will enable us to live properly and happily in society, both now and in the future.

What is digital literacy?

Digital literacy refers to the skills to understand and use digital technologies. It refers to the skills needed to use existing digital tools, devices and technologies such as computers, phones, tablets, computer programs and online media to maximize communication, life and collaboration, or to develop modern and efficient work processes.

Closely related are **digital skills**, which build on digital literacy to enable people to understand, access and effectively use existing digital technologies. These foundational skills are considered essential for everyone, as they connect with other skills, particularly in career development.

Digital learning, in turn, refers to learning in the digital world, using digital tools and technologies to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for modern life. This concept emphasizes that learners adapt quickly to technological and social changes. It also promotes self-directed learning by allowing learners to choose their interests and needs at any time.

Why are digital skills important?

The nature of work is changing rapidly. Jobs once considered secure may be replaced or reshaped by technologies. In this context, lifelong digital learning offers several key benefits:

- **Adaptability:** The skills required in today's workplace are continuously evolving. Lifelong learning enables young people to quickly adapt and effectively cope with these changes.
- **Gaining new skills:** Digital learning equips learners with additional skills needed for work, whether they are technology, business or communication skills.
- **Fostering Creativity:** The internet offers endless resources. Lifelong learners can use these to broaden their perspectives, solve problems creatively, and innovate in their fields.
- **Networking and Connections:** Online learning environments foster global communities where digital learners can share ideas, collaborate with experts, and build meaningful networks.

To unlock these benefits, lifelong learning must be accessible, flexible, and tailored to the learner's needs. In the digital age, this is made possible through a variety of learning formats that adapt to individual goals and preferences, such as:

- **Online Courses:** Platforms like Coursera, edX, Udemy, and Khan Academy allow learners to learn from experts around the world in areas such as English, marketing, product design or even vocational skills like farming, animal husbandry, machinery repair or grafting.
- **Social media:** Platforms like YouTube, Twitter and Instagram are not only communication tools - they are a powerful source of information and learning. Users can follow experts and access valuable content on demand, supporting self-directed learning.
- **Work-based learning:** Digital skills can also be developed in real-life environments such as internships, team projects, or workshops.
- **Artificial intelligence (AI):** AI self-created personalized learning experiences and virtual reality (VR) will simulate learning environments in the near future.

Lifelong learning will become a necessity, for advancing in one's career, as the work environment continuously changes through technology. Utilizing diverse digital tools will help to thrive in an ever-evolving world. What matters now most is the courage to embrace change and take the first step.

Digital Strategy for Education 2025-2035 of the Ministry of Education and Sports of Lao PDR

Strategy Key Priority Areas

Digital Access

Enhancing digital infrastructure to ensure reliable internet connectivity and access to digital devices across all regions, particularly in underserve areas.

Digital Skills

Building digital competencies among educators, students, and education administrators to effectively utilize digital tools and platforms.

Digital Information

Strengthening data management and utilization through robust information systems to support informed decision-making and improve educational outcome.

Digital Learning

Leveraging digital platforms to support teaching and learning, providing high quality localized content, and fostering continuous professional development for educator.

Driving Change through Adult Education: 13 Master Trainers Lead the Way in Lao PDR

*Pakoulee Xaiyaxang
DVV International, Laos*

They don't just teach – they transform. Across Lao PDR, a dedicated group of 13 master trainers is reshaping the landscape of non-formal education. These highly skilled adult educators are more than instructors: they are facilitators of change, guiding communities with practical knowledge, empathy, and a deep understanding of what adult learners truly need.

Their work reaches far beyond the classroom. Whether training youth leaders, supporting women's empowerment, or introducing health and life skills in rural communities – these trainers deliver relevant, learner-centered education that responds directly to local realities.

Between 2016-2017, an initial group of trainers was developed through a long-standing partnership between the Ministry of Education and Sports and DVV International. They were meticulously trained by international experts and national institutions including the Department of Non-Formal Education and the Non-Formal Education Development Centre. Their training is based on Curriculum globALE, a five-module framework developed by the headquarter of DVV International in Germany which was designed to professionalize adult educators worldwide.

The five modules cover the full scope of adult learning

- Module 1: The basis of adult learning and education - provides a foundational and critical understanding of adult education and adult learning – including key concepts, values, roles, and cultural contexts.
- Module 2: Adult learning and adult teaching - explores key learning theories, adult learning processes, didactic principles, types of knowledge, learning motivations, and barriers to participation.
- Module 3: Communication and group dynamics in adult learning and education – focuses on communication and group dynamics in adult education, covering communication theories, techniques, and strategies for managing group processes, roles, and conflicts in diverse learning environments.
- Module 4: Methods of adult learning and education – covers the use of diverse, learner-centered methods in adult education, focusing on their practical application, adaptability, and alignment with group needs and learning goals.
- Module 5: Planning, organization and evaluation in adult learning and education - addresses the full professional cycle of adult education—from needs assessment, planning, and organization to implementation and evaluation—emphasizing quality assurance at all levels of educational practice.

Before any training begins, these trainers conduct thorough needs assessments to tailor their content and approach. Drawing on participatory methods from the Handbook on Participatory Training for Adult Learning in Non-Formal Education, they create inclusive and interactive environments where adult learners can actively contribute and build on their experiences. This practical, learner-centered approach ensures strong engagement and real impact.

Practical training yields measurable results

A recent training with staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in March 2025 shows the impact of this approach. Trainers supported participants in developing their own lesson plans, gave constructive feedback, and led teaching demonstrations. As a result, 85% of participants reached a strong level of competence as trainers themselves. Pre- and post-training assessments revealed significant gains in knowledge about adult education principles and methods.

Fostering Lifelong Learning and Peer Exchange

DVV International's ongoing „Community of Practice“ further strengthens this elite group, ensuring continuous reflection and improvement. This commitment to lifelong learning from the trainers guarantees that they remain at the forefront of educational innovation in Laos. These master trainers are not just a pool of expertise; they are the beating heart of non-formal education in Lao PDR, shaping a brighter future for individuals and communities by fostering a culture of continuous learning and empowerment. Their dedication and innovative approach are a testament to Laos' commitment to ensuring that no one is left behind in the journey of development.



Master trainers with international expert during the refresher training

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Published by DVV International in cooperation with partners in Lao PDR, Cambodia, South East Asia.

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Women Empowerment Handbook for Facilitator (Lao)

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DVV International

Regional Office Southeast Asia

383/19 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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