

FINAL
EVALUATION

LAO/023

Strengthening the Rule of Law through
Legal University Education

PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Country	Lao People's Democratic Republic
Long project title	Strengthening the Rule of Law through Legal University Education
Short project title	University Studies in Law
LuxDev Code	LAO/023
Version of the Report	May 2015

RATING OF THE PROJECT BY THE EVALUATION MISSION

Global rating (Effectiveness)	2 On a scale of 1 (excellent results, significantly better than expected) to 6 (the Project was unsuccessful, or the situation has deteriorated on balance).
Rating using other evaluation criteria	Relevance: 2 Efficiency: 2 Sustainability: 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Framework of the evaluation mission

The legal system in Laos is not fully developed and rule of law has yet to be fully implemented from a general point of view. In fact, several parallel forms of Justice coexist in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, producing something of a hybrid model, combining traditional law and formal justice (justice of the courts). In addition, the number of lawyers registered within the Lao Bar Association (150) is very low compared to the whole population of the country (6 500 000), with only one registered lawyer for more than 43 000 inhabitants. Because of these shortcomings, the legal system in the Lao People's Democratic Republic has been earmarked as an area for improvement.

With the aim of improving the legal system and to strengthen the rule of law in Laos, the government of Luxembourg signed a bilateral agreement with the Lao People's Democratic Republic on 12 February 2000. In order to fulfill this policy objective, a four-year project, entitled LAO/023 – Strengthening the Rule of Law through Legal University Education project, was launched in June 2010 with a budget of 5 000 000 EUR. The project follows the “Strengthening of Legal Education at the Faculty of Law and Political Science” project led by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, which aimed to improve the quality of graduate students, enhancing the staff capacity building and ultimately increase the global legal skills and proficiency in foreign languages (primarily English).

The primary beneficiary of the project is the Faculty of Law and Political Science of the National University of Laos. The number of students within the Faculty of Law and Political Science has significantly increased during the last years and these can follow five different programmes: Criminal, Civil and Business Law, International Relations and Political Sciences.

The Project has been implemented with a clear project management structure, consisting of – amongst others – a Project Steering Committee, a Technical Coordination Committee and in collaboration with a National Project Director. The actors involved in the project are many and varied. The direct beneficiaries are academics (teachers, lecturers, professors), students and administrative staff at the Law and Political Science, whereas the indirect beneficiaries are the National University of Laos, associations (e.g. Lao Bar Association) or political structures (Ministry of Education and Ministry of Justice).

Objectives of the mission and results achieved

The evaluation team has been commissioned by Lux-Development to carry out the final evaluation of the project, with the objective to evaluate the results achieved by the project at its conclusion, to document lessons learnt and to provide conclusions and recommendations. The mission was performed by a joint team composed of PwC (Mr Christophe Mazand, as the evaluation team leader), a national consultant, Ms Mouthita Phonethrath and two members of the Faculty of Law, Economics and Finance of Luxembourg: Dr Stefan Braum, Dean of the Faculty, and Ms Heleen De Geest, LL.M., lecturer in European criminal law and a PhD researcher.

The overall objective of the project is the following one: “To contribute towards strengthening the rule of law and fostering good governance in Laos through legal university education”, with the specific objective being “to improve the quality of higher education at the Law and Political Science”. This specific objective is divided into two results: “To improve the quality of higher education at the Law and Political Science” (R1) and “To strengthen the physical and institutional capacity of the Law and Political Science” (R2). Both results have been divided into tasks and analysed into details.

Overall, the project has been perceived as having achieved tangible results by almost all the stakeholders the mission could interview. The two main results of the project are detailed below:

- Result 1: The quality of teaching has improved (e.g. qualification of teachers, learning centred approaches), providing the students with an enhanced and practical knowledge, in line with the needs of the labour market (e.g. case studies, textbooks, English course curriculum, student group activities);
- Result 2: The physical and institutional capacity of the Law and Political Science has strengthened in the areas of management, effectiveness and sustainability through institutional empowerment and through the construction of new dormitories as well as other equipment.

As a whole, the final evaluation has shown that the project remains **relevant** in terms of strengthening the Rule of Law by improving the higher education both for the short-term and long-term educational/institutional capacity building of the Law and Political Science. The involved stakeholders have appreciated the level of expertise of the project team members. In terms of **effectiveness**, concrete and significant results related to strengthening the Rule of Law have been achieved. The definition of Objectively Verifiable Indicators related to the overall project objective should be improved, even though project results will materialise only in 10 or 15 years (estimated time duration between the updating of a curriculum and the impact on the market). Furthermore, no complete baseline report measuring these Objectively Verifiable Indicators' was available or done at the project start, which does not facilitate the measurement of the project contribution on the improvement of higher education. The project management and governance were effective, even if the governance of the project has not been implemented as initially planned. Above all, the project has been led with a streamlined project team in an **efficient** manner, since the activities have all been carried out mostly within the foreseen time and budget frame. The constant consideration of efficiency during the project has been illustrated through e.g. reallocating project financial resources depending on the project constraints or looking for other sources of funding for scholarship. Overall, the project has been led on a **sustainable** basis, i.e. implementing activities focusing on technical assistance fostering know-how transfer, developing sustainable buildings (dormitories, lecture hall). Continuing implementing the proposed approaches, such as problem-based learning, requires a full commitment of the Law and Political Science academic staff.

In relation to the objectives/results stated above, three main cross-cutting issues linked to the project achievements were taken into account and therefore in the evaluation. The project capacity to address these issues was assessed: Governance for development (Development Assistance Committee - marker: 2), Gender equality (Development Assistance Committee marker: 1) and environment and climate change (Development Assistance Committee marker: 0). The project promotes governance for development at the institutional level (e.g. improving transparency of internal administrative processes), at the level of the legal sector (e.g. increasing access to legal information to citizen through the Clinical Legal Education) and at the country level (by developing awareness and competences of students related to good governance).

The specific evaluation questions were formulated with a focus on the following subjects. 1/The second **employability study** has been performed directly by the Law and Political Science academic staff with a very limited support of the project, as a good example of capacity building achievement. However, the evaluation recommends reinforcing the methodology for the next study. 2/The Law and Political Science with the support of the project has developed the necessary **operation and maintenance procedures** for the infrastructure. The use of the new learning building could be further developed. 3/The evaluation recommends that the Law and Political Science set up an action plan based on the following **recommendations**: Ensure sustainability of the achievements; Emphasize quality assurance of teaching activities ; Develop quality assurance as an overall process ; Streamline teaching and research activities in line with societal challenges ; Implement specific institutional capacity building activities. 4/Some lessons learnt have been identified related to **training sessions** and workshops, such as the systematic implementation actions following the training sessions in order to confirm the acquisition of competences for the participants.

Conclusions and recommendations

The quality and level of expertise of the project team is undeniable and has definitely played a role in increasing the impact of the project on the Law and Political Science functioning. In addition, the project is well balanced in its scope, and can quite efficiently address educational, institutional or physical capacity building issues thus facilitating concrete benefits. Student group activities, in particular the Clinical Legal Education group is a strong asset for the Law and Political Science. It is an excellent example of approach in terms of strengthening the Rule of Law, capacity-building activities and value for money.

With regards to project monitoring, the stakeholders of the project are involved, but the coordination between stakeholders should have been reinforced through the Project Steering Committee. This coordination is essential for monitoring the project externalities and the evolution of both the legal and higher education sectors in Laos.

The proposed future activities that could be supported have been assessed against decision criteria: Impact on the quality of the higher education in law; Impact on the institutional capacity of the Law and Political Science; Impact on the physical learning environment of the Law and Political Science; Strengthening the Rule of Law and fostering good governance in Lao; Consistency with Lao policy; Law and Political Science priorities and/or other development programmes; Consistency with Luxembourg policy orientations; Sustainability, Cost benefit analyses; Flexibility; and Poverty reduction. The top four activities are: Support student group activities; Emphasize quality assurance related to teaching activities; Assist the Law and Political Science for the development of the Quality Assurance as an overall process; and Streamline teaching and research activities in line with societal challenges.