

2017 Asia–Pacific Regional ECD Conference

Holistic Approach to Improved Early Childhood Development in Northern Laos

By Oulath Saengouthay, Education Advisor
1–3 March, 2017, Siem Reap, Cambodia

List of Contents

- I. Overview of ECE in Laos
- II. Why CFL's Interventions in Northern Laos
- III. CFL's ECE Approach
- IV. Key ECE Achievements and Mechanisms to Achieve them
- V. Challenges
- VI. Conclusion and What We Might Take Away

Overview of ECE in Laos

Problems and Opportunities:

- Emphasis on primary and thus under-investment in ECE
- DPs' low interest in ECE
- Language policy and ECE
- Need for ECE in Northern Laos as identified by local governments and communities
- Alignment with government priorities and SDG goals
SDG 4.2: "by 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education"
- Increased awareness on ECE/ECCD
- Increasing ECE activities despite main focus on primary education

The Recent World Bank Study

STARTING EARLY, STARTING SMART:

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

IN NORTHERN LAO PDR

Early childhood (between 0-8) is the most important phase in life. It determines the health, well-being, behavior and professional achievements of adults. In Northern Lao PDR, many challenges impact children's early development.

STUDY SNAPSHOT

Baseline data collected from



7,520
CHILDREN AGED
2-5 YEARS OLD



5 PROVINCES
14 DISTRICTS
376 VILLAGES IN
NORTHERN LAO PDR



NUTRITION

50%
OF CHILDREN
ARE STUNTED



Stunting is largely irreversible and can have negative consequences in later life, such as poor motor and cognitive skills. Good nutrition is essential for children's survival, healthy development and growth.

EARLY LITERACY

ONLY **12%** WERE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE AND NAME A LETTER OF THE ALPHABET

ONLY **41%** WERE ABLE TO OPEN A BOOK CORRECTLY

ONLY **39%** WERE ABLE TO COUNT TO 3

Hmong and Khmun children had poorer development than Lao-Tai children and without these basic skills they will not be ready for school.

HEALTH AND EDUCATION



ONLY **25%**
OF CHILDREN ATTEND
SOME FORM OF EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



ONLY **22%**
OF CHILDREN RECEIVED
SOME FORM OF HEALTH
SERVICES IN THE
PAST MONTH

Access to quality health care and early education promotes good child health and prepares children for continued learning at school.

HOME STIMULATION



82% OF CARETAKERS HAD NOT PLAYED GAMES WITH THEIR CHILD IN THE PAST WEEK

A nurturing home environment that provides safety, love and actively provides opportunities to learn and play is essential for healthy child development.

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) project, supported by the World Bank, aims to improve the development and school readiness of children aged 2-5 in disadvantaged villages by:


BUILDING 250 PRE-PRIMARY
CLASSROOMS


ESTABLISHING 71 COMMUNITY
CHILD DEVELOPMENT GROUPS


PROMOTING COMMUNITY
AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS


PROVIDING
SCHOOL MEALS

Why CFL's Interventions in Northern Laos

- **Impact of ChildFund Australia's 2015–2020 Strategic Plan**
- **Impact of Dakar Framework for Action: good quality ECE can have a positive impact on the growth, survival and the developmental and learning potential of children**
- **High repetition rate for Grade 1 at high number of students not completing the full five years of primary schooling**
- **Huaphanh and Xiengkhuang identified as two of the lowest scoring provinces in the country with Grade 5 students achieving independent functioning in Lao language**
- **Reinforcing Govt Implementation of Education Sector Development Plans**
- **Aiming to strengthen young children's development opportunities in Xiengkhuang and Huaphanh Provinces**

CFL's ECE Approach ECE

- **Participatory Project Design**
- **Integrating with previous experiences**
- **Linking with other relevant projects**
- **Community led with strong engagement of govt partners**
- **Seeking innovation with other players**

Key ECE Achievements and Mechanisms to Achieve them

Reached 370 pre–primary school aged children in Nonghet, is reaching 340 pre–primary school aged children in Huameuang + numerous teachers, parents, community members, DESB and PESS members through:

- Community–led construction/upgrade of ECE centres equipped with appropriate furniture and teaching materials
- ECE teachers recruited, trained and deployed in ECEs

Key ECE Achievements and Mechanisms to Achieve them

(Cont)

- ECE teacher performance assessed and developed through further training and coaching
- Project Construction Committees (PCCs) trained and supported to manage ECE construction
- Child- and youth-led monitoring teams trained and supported to monitor ECE construction
- VEDCs facilitate community-level activities that create/improve links between villages and schools

Key ECE Achievements and Mechanisms to Achieve them

(Cont)

- **ECCD training and support for Community Volunteers**
- **ECCD awareness-raising and information session for parents and caregivers**
- **ECCD support for parent and caregiver groups**
- **IEC materials produced and distributed promoting ECCD**

Challenges

- ECE teacher not allocated for ECE centres
- Capacity of community volunteers to convey ECCD message to parents and caregivers remains a challenge
- Understanding ECCD materials remains a challenge for non-Lao speaking parents and caregivers
- Participation of children in ECE centre construction
- Low language acquisition of ethnic children: objectives vs. achievements

Conclusion and What We Might Take Away

- ECE/ECD still has a long way to go for Laos despite increasing awareness of it
- CFL's ECE interventions in Northern Laos are a substantial shift and flagship initiatives leading to a holistic development approach
- Promising and replicable interventions
- Challenges call for stronger ownership of relevant players, improved ECD awareness, investment and innovation

Some Pictures of CFL's ECE Interventions



