

LAO PDR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROJECT SNAPSHOT ONE: PROJECT BACKGROUND AND BASELINE DATA DEMOGRAPHICS

This is the first of four snapshot reports presenting preliminary findings from the Early Childhood Education Study. The ECE Study was initiated to evaluate the Early Childhood Education Project in Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR). This snapshot describes demographic information of the 7,520 children in the baseline sample, including where and how they live.

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROJECT

Lao PDR has sustained robust economic growth and significant poverty reduction over the past decade. Despite these achievements, economic disparities persist across the country's diverse ethnic groups and geographical areas. Education, including early childhood education (ECE), is a priority for the Government of Lao PDR, however, coverage of ECE remains insufficient, with services and resources varying considerably across geographic, socio-economic and ethnic dimensions. This translates into disparities in child development outcomes and long-term implications for the human development of the country. ECE is one of the most cost-effective and equitable interventions, and is demonstrated to improve school readiness which in turn leads to decreased dropout and repetition rates, increase educational attainment and improve learning outcomes. In the long term this leads to improved skills, increased labor force productivity and higher incomes. Based on such evidence, the World Bank Group has provided funding of USD 28 million through an International Development Association (IDA) Grant (USD 14 million) and IDA credit (USD 14 million) to the Government of Lao PDR for the Early Childhood Education Project. The ECE Project seeks to support the expansion of quality ECE services, with the objective of improving the overall development and school readiness of children aged 3-5 years in disadvantaged villages across the country.



The project has three key components: 1) increase the coverage of ECE through provision of grants and training for the construction of up to 250 pre-primary classrooms, as well as the establishment of community child development groups (CCDG) across 71 locations; 2) improve the quality of ECE services through training





for teachers, caregivers and community members, the development of training and pedagogical materials, as well as the provision of support services such as disability screening and school lunches; and 3) project management, capacity development, and monitoring and evaluation at all levels of ECE.

Included within the scope of the funding to the Government of Lao PDR is an independent evaluation of the project's impact on a range of child outcomes, including both cognitive and non-cognitive development. As part of the evaluation, data has been collected across the northern provinces of Lao PDR to provide information on the current status of ECE participation and child outcomes prior to the project's implementation. This is the first of four snapshots developed to present results from the baseline data collection. This first snapshot presents information on the social, demographic and economic situation of families with young children in Northern Lao PDR, the second snapshot presents information on the health and nutrition of children, the third provides information on the skills, knowledge and development of children, and the fourth provides information on availability, access and use of services that support early childhood health and education.

FIGURE 1. PROVINCES IN WHICH BASELINE DATA WERE COLLECTED





BASELINE DATA COLLECTION

Baseline data were collected from November 2015 to March 2016 from families in 7,355 households across five provinces, 14 districts and 376 villages in Northern Lao PDR (see Table 1). There were 7,520 children who completed a direct assessment measuring their development, while their primary caretakers provided information on child health, nutrition, development, education and parenting practices. Data were also collected from each village and household head, including family demographic information and the availability of services and facilities in each village. Together, these data provide a comprehensive picture of the environments in which children in Northern Lao PDR are growing up, and how these environments impact children's early development.

VILLAGES

Village access: Villages were relatively remote, and while almost all could be accessed by car in the dry season (97%), only just over half could be accessed by car in the wet season (53%).

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF VILLAGES AND CHILDREN FROM EACH DISTRICT AND PROVINCE

PROVINCE	DISTRICT	NUMBER OF VILLAGES	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
Phongsaly	Khoua	26	500
	Oudomxay	La	14
	Namor	40	780
	Beng	17	360
	Houn	12	240
	Parkbeng	6	120
Houaphanh	Viengxay	36	720
	Houa Meoung	42	840
	Xam Tai	36	720
	Sobbao	39	780
	Meoung at	41	820
	Kouan	30	600
Xaiyabouly	Saysathan	20	400
Borlikhamxay	Saychamphone	17	340

Electricity: More than half of the villages accessed electricity from government electrical grids (55%), 32% of villages had a mini hydropower generator supporting their households, 8% used solar cells, 1% used battery generators, and less than 1% had a private electrical generator. A small number of villages (4%) did not have access to electricity.

Water: The majority of villages used drinking water



from trenches/drainage pipes (90%), while 91% also used this same water source for washing and cleaning. Villages reported using river water for drinking (39%) and washing/cleaning (62%), as well as container water for drinking (23%). Few villages reported using well water for drinking (9%) and washing/cleaning (11%), underground water for drinking (4%) and washing/cleaning (5%) and rainwater for drinking (1%) and washing/cleaning (5%).

Sanitation: Villages were often using a combination of sanitation processes, with 93% of villages having some households using pit toilets with a water flush, 21% of villages had some households using a dry pit, and 68% of villages had some households that were not using toilets.

Important Events: While 44% of village heads reported that no important events had occurred in the village in the past three years, 32% of villages had experienced crop damage, 9% experienced an epidemic, 9% experienced landslides, 6% experienced fire and another

6% experienced flood, 2% experienced a storm and another 2% experienced aridity. Additionally, a few villages experienced robbery or damage to a bridge (each <1%). On the positive side, 15% had new schools established, 8% had new roads built and 2% had a new health center established. The establishment of a new pre-primary classroom, a new teacher house, a new factory/industry, electricity for the community, a canteen room for children at school, a new temple, a market or a new village office were experienced by 1% of villages.

HOUSEHOLDS

Composition: Households ranged in size from 2–21 members, with the majority of households comprising 2–5 members (41%) or 6–10 members (52%). A smaller number of households had 10–15 members (7%), and fewer than 1% of households had 16–21 members.

Building Materials: Houses were made from a range of different materials. The majority of roofs were made from tiles (51%) and zinc alum (32%), while some were also made from grass (10%), wood (6%), leaves (2%) and concrete (<1%). Most house walls were made from wood (65%), while some were also made from bamboo (18%), bricks/cement (17%) and zinc alum or plywood (<1%). Floors were made from wood (35%), dirt (28%), cement (23%), bamboo/leaves (9%), tiles (5%) and ceramic (<1%).

Socio-economic Status: Households were asked about their assets in order to demonstrate socio-economic status. The majority of households (72%) reported owning agricultural land and at least one duck or chicken (80%), a motorcycle (76%), pig (71%) and mobile or landline phone (75%). Many households also owned at least one cow or buffalo (50%), television (46%), a car, motor boat or tractor (26%). Few households owned at least one goat (11%), bicycle (10%), radio/cassette player (9%) and horse (1%). Just 2% of households had experienced a food shortage for two consecutive days in the past 12 months. Similarly, 4% of households had been unable to purchase enough clothes for their children in the past 12 months, while another 4% had been unable to purchase enough books, stationery and toys for their children in the past 12 months.



CARETAKERS

Relationship to the Child: The majority of caretakers surveyed identified themselves as the mothers of the children being assessed (85%). The remainder were the children’s fathers (11%), grandparents (3%), aunts, uncles and siblings (<1%).

Age: Caretakers ranged in age from 14-78 years old, with the majority aged between 20-29 years (57%). 28% were aged between 30-39 years and 15% aged =40 years or over.

Education and Literacy: Overall, caretakers had low education and literacy levels, with 30% of caretakers never having been to school, 27% had attended but not completed primary school, 29% had completed primary school, 8% had completed secondary school, 2% had completed high school and less than 1% had completed a bachelor degree. When asked to read a short sentence in Lao, 45% of caretakers were not able to read at all, 17% could read a little, and 38% could read the sentence well.

FIGURE 2. CARETAKER EDUCATION

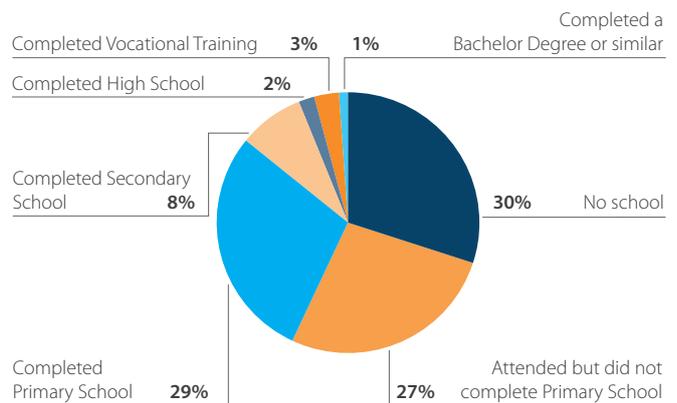
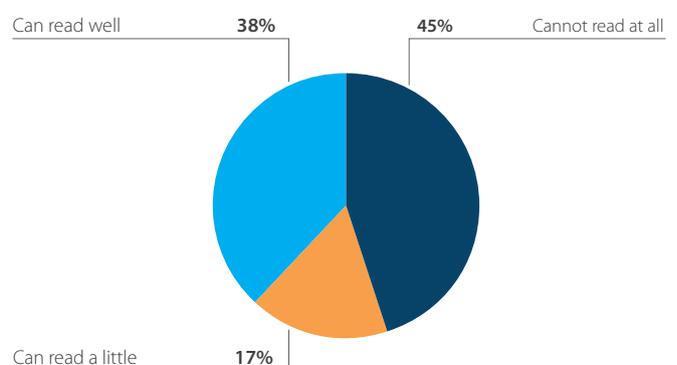


FIGURE 3. CARETAKER LITERACY





CHILDREN

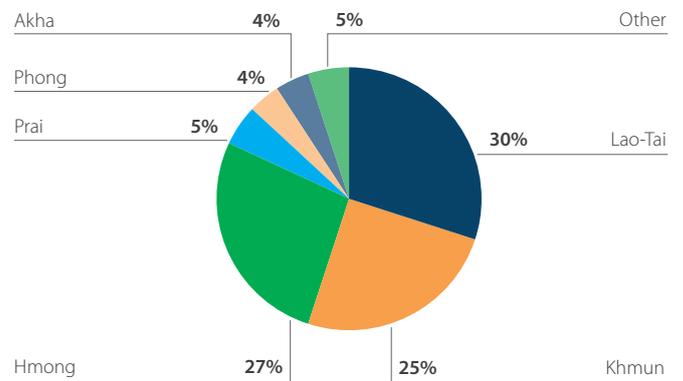
Age and Gender: Children ranged in age from 2–5 years; 51% were male and 49% female. As demonstrated in Table 2 there was a roughly equivalent number of children in each age group, as well as a roughly even number of males and females in each age group.

Ethnicity: The majority of children were Lao-Tai (30%), Khmun (25%) and Hmong (27%). Other children were of

TABLE 2. AGE AND GENDER OF CHILDREN

AGE	NUMBER OF CHILDREN (%)	MALE CHILDREN (%)	FEMALE CHILDREN (%)
2 years old	1,540 (21%)	52%	48%
3 years old	2,005 (27%)	51%	49%
4 years old	2,148 (29%)	51%	49%
5 years old	1,827 (24%)	51%	49%

FIGURE 4. ETHNICITY



Prai (5%), Phong (4%) and Akha (4%) ethnicities, while 1% or less of children were each Lao, Leu, Yang, Cingmoon, Kmer, Toum, Singgili, Hor or Ilmain ethnicities. Table 3 below presents children's ethnicities across the five provinces.

TABLE 3. NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN OF EACH ETHNICITY ACROSS PROVINCES

ETHNICITY	PHONGSALY (%)	OUDOMXAY (%)	HOUAPHANH (%)	XAYABOURY (%)	BORLIKHAMXAY (%)
Lao-Tai	89 (18%)	204 (11%)	1806 (40%)	5 (1%)	123 (36%)
Khmun	215 (43%)	1079 (60%)	530 (12%)	2 (<1%)	69 (20%)
Hmong	4 (1%)	227 (13%)	1738 (39%)	1 (<1%)	73 (22%)
Prai	-	-	1 (<1%)	368 (92%)	-
Phong	-	-	249 (6%)	-	11 (3%)
Akha	163 (33%)	167 (9%)	-	-	-
Lao	-	17 (1%)	-	-	-
Leu	3 (1%)	53 (3%)	-	-	1 (<1%)
Yang	16 (3%)	-	-	-	-
Cingmoon	1 (<1%)	-	79 (2%)	24 (6%)	-
Kmer	-	27 (2%)	-	-	21 (6%)
Toum	-	-	-	-	42 (12%)
Singgili	9 (2%)	21 (1%)	-	-	-
Hor	-	1 (<1%)	-	-	-
Ilmain	-	3 (<1%)	77 (2%)	-	-
TOTAL	500 (100%)	1800 (100%)	4480 (100%)	400 (100%)	340 (100%)



NEXT STEPS FOR THE ECE STUDY:

The results presented in this series of snapshot reports represent the starting point (or “base line”) for the evaluation of the ECE Project. In 2018, the evaluation team will conduct an “end line” survey to re-assess how well children in the studied villages have developed. Information will also be collected on enrolment, attendance and performance of the children at school. It is expected that after the project has been implemented for a couple of years in the studied villages, the children will have improved their health and development status, skills and knowledge. The success (or failure) of the project to improve early childhood developmental outcomes will be evaluated by comparing key outcomes of the children living in the villages where the project has been implemented with outcomes of children living in other similar villages where the project has not been implemented.

As explained earlier, there are three different components of the ECE Project and each of these elements will be evaluated separately. The three different components are:

- 1** Community Child Development Groups, which includes the delivery of community-based playgroups by training locally recruited “teachers” and building a CCDG hut
- 2** Multi Age Teaching (MAT), which includes training local pre-school teachers to deliver the ECE curriculum to children aged 3–5 years in one class, as well as the actual implementation of this approach
- 3** Community Awareness Campaign (CAC), which includes an early childhood health and development training course provided to the local Village Education Development Committees, who will then undertake community awareness training with parents in their village

Each of the different components of the ECE Project should have a positive impact on the health, development and skills of the children living in the villages. The results of the evaluation will inform the Government of Lao PDR about the project’s effectiveness (what works and what does not work to support child health and development), and help determine how to strengthen the quality of health and education projects in Lao PDR.

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For more information about the ECE Project, visit:

<http://www.worldbank.org/projects/P145544/lao-prd-early-childhood-development-project?lang=en>

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