

**Lao PDR Systematic Country Diagnostic – Summary of discussions  
Consultation workshop with Civil Society, 26 February 2016**

The World Bank Group (WBG) met with 13 representatives from Civil Society in Vientiane on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016 to exchange views and perceptions on Lao PDR’s development opportunities and pressing challenges. The discussions focused on three guiding questions:

- What are the key challenges for Lao PDR to address in the next 4 years?
- What are the main development opportunities for Lao PDR in the next 4 years?
- Are the development pathways presented earlier realistic and achievable in the next 4 years? What policies, reforms and investments will be most important?

Main sectors of concern: (i) Inclusion; (ii) Education and skills; (iii) Agriculture and rural development; (iv) Institutions and governance.

<b>Comments from Stakeholders</b>
<p><b>Inclusion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not to take poor as homogeneous group – people are not the same and don’t have the same needs and thus we should adapt our programs.</li> <li>- Missing link: How to better include the most vulnerable? How to target them (ethnic minorities, people with disability, women...)?</li> <li>- There is no legal policy framework on disability in the country, but currently process to develop a policy framework to facilitate investment in this sector.</li> <li>- Seems difficult to reach the most vulnerable groups without having a social protection system in place.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Education and skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Skills development – it should be related with the development potential of Laos (ex: train more people in agriculture). Need to develop human capital related to jobs opportunities.</li> <li>- Promote education for young people – particularly informal education</li> <li>- Basic literacy should be improved</li> <li>- Vocational training: access to potential alternatives to continue learning for people who have not been able to finalize formal education. Ex of needed skills: basic management skills or management of natural resources.</li> <li>- In Laos we tell people what to do, what to become; we don’t teach them to be innovative</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agriculture and rural development:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most job opportunities should be created in agriculture as the vast majority of people are active in this sector.</li> <li>- Currently: around 120 organic farms in the country. Need to have a logo/certificate so consumers can recognize/trust organic products from Laos.</li> <li>- Opportunity: sustainable agriculture development (ex: organic agriculture) and improve food security. Laos could have a comparative advantage in AEC in the organic sector, but Laos doesn’t have any processing chain so a lot potential income is lost –how to retain more value?</li> <li>- Extension services should increase</li> <li>- Employment for young people: find a way to retain them in agriculture, so they don’t migrate to the cities.</li> </ul>

**Comments from Stakeholders****Institutions and governance:**

- Voice and accountability has decreased these last years in Laos: could be pointed out as a possible solution/opportunity for the future to increase support to civil society and accountability. Possibility of CSOs to be more involved in watchdog activities towards government, look at budget...
- Fight against corruption and support good governance is important.
- Strengthening public governance: what is included in this? Could include corruption, rule of law, equality...
- State audit organization needs to have budget to do their job and fight against corruption.
- Public wages need to be increased, because low salaries lead to corruption.

**Natural resources:**

- Challenge: Current Nat Res management is weak in the country. Forests are almost depleted and will happen the same with mines.
- What about responsibility of private sector in nat. res. management?
- Need to take into account the livelihood of people in the areas of damns constructions.

**Health:**

- Health is a big issue for disabled persons. Although some immunization programs exist, still many disabled persons live in Laos.
- We don't know if the GoL monitors what is done for disabled people. Could be done?

**Infrastructure and Energy:**

- We have schools and health infrastructure but no maintenance, no equipment, no medicine...
- Electricity: Lao PDR to become the 'battery' for ASEAN

**Business environment:**

- What about Corporate Social Responsibility? Opportunity for private sector development?