

## CASE STUDY

### Facts and Figures:

- ▶ 616 community volunteers (including 267 women) were trained for reading camps and reading awareness.
- ▶ 18645 VEDC and community members (including 10404 women) participated in reading events/awareness meetings (cumulative till date).
- ▶ 5609 children (including 2842 girls) borrowing books from book banks.
- ▶ 8915 children (including 4300 girls) participated in reading clubs/groups/camps.
- ▶ 14498 children (including 7040 girls) directly benefited from small grants for Village Education Development Committees.

### Total Cost:

48241172.00 €

### Partners:

- ▶ BEQUAL
- ▶ Ministry of Education and Sports
- ▶ Save the Children
- ▶ World Vision
- ▶ ChildFund
- ▶ Plan International

# Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR - BEQUAL

## Community Action for Reading Promotion

Enabling environment for literacy in remote Lao communities – example of an activity led by the BEQUAL NGO Consortium.

*“ Children learn when learning is fun. BEQUAL reading promotion activities are set outside regular school hours, when students get together and with support from the village volunteers and the District Education Sports Bureau. They enjoy the books and creative fun activities. Parents and other community members are encouraged to support and participate making these activities a real collaboration. ”*



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**Mr Somxay Inthasone, Senior Education Advisor**

## Context

Literacy in early grades remains a challenge in Laos, with significant differences between urban, or rural and remote schools where there are larger numbers of students who do not speak Lao as their first language. A literacy assessment carried out in Luang Prabang Province in 2014, identified poor home reading environments and ignorance of formal language of instruction as determinants of poor learning outcomes, with only 5% of children being identified as readers. And non-Lao speakers were much more likely to be non-readers than proficient Lao speakers, amplifying the difficulty for them.

## Objectives

- ▶ In 171 schools and communities across 6 remote districts in 4 provinces:
- ▶ To enable access and increase participation of children who are disadvantaged by language, gender, disability and ethnicity in schools through improved oral Lao language skills and reading promotion in early grades. For the promotion of reading, the focus of the objective is on oral Lao language development and reading practice after school and at home including parents' participation and support.
- ▶ To strengthen community mechanisms to create healthy supportive learning environments in homes and communities for all disadvantaged children. For reading promotion activity, the focus is on capacity building of the Village Education Development Committees, the parents (caregivers) and families.

## Impact

- ▶ Community reading promotion activities including awareness-raising meetings in each village, fun reading groups for children, workshops for parents and reading celebrations for all community members are happening in the 171 target villages.
- ▶ Book banks have been established in every village (with more than 43 000 books) and local communities have enthusiastically participated and contributed resources to build the book banks.
- ▶ Community volunteers (43% female) facilitate reading and literacy activities in Reading camps in each village twice a week. They receive ongoing support from the District Education and Sports bureau.
- ▶ Up to 20 caregivers per village joined a series of seven workshops to learn more about how to encourage their children's literacy development through activities at home. This includes reading/telling stories to their children, discussing what they have read, creating literacy materials and setting up a small reading corner in their house.

► Australian Aid

**Duration:**

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## Testimony

### Meet Mrs Kaenkham Yang, an inspiring community education supporter

*"My name is Mrs Kaenkham Yang. I am 29 years old. I live in Kiewpha village, Houn district, Oudomxay province. Many people in my village speak only their ethnic language and can't understand Lao. This could become really challenging when they need to communicate with people outside our community. When they are sick for example, they need to find someone speaking Lao to go to the hospital and help with translation. They will have to pay for transportation and food for the translator. This is one of the many examples why we should encourage and support our children to study Lao language and learn to become independent.*

*I strongly want to support the education of all children in my community. This is why I volunteered to be a facilitator for the BEQUAL Reading Promotion activities.*

*I received training and plenty of support from the BEQUAL staff and the District Education and Sports Bureau. In the programme, I run after-school reading activities with primary school children, coordinate parents' awareness workshops and help the Village Education Development Committee to identify disadvantaged children from my community eligible for the small grants support for education access and reading promotion. I even supported a Lao language and readiness activity for grade 1 students.*

*I often teach the women in the village about the importance of education and of Lao language acquisition. I motivate parents to send their children to school by explaining to them that learning and studying helps their children develop important life skills for the future.*

*With the BEQUAL programme, I also promote hygiene activities in school and village. I hang posters on the seven stages of handwashing in school reading corner and displays hygiene books in my house and at school.*

*I'm really pleased and proud that I had the opportunity to join this project and to support my community. Through the BEQUAL activities, I've learned many things. I think I will be able to better support the children from my community in their Lao language acquisition and help them to better connect with native Lao speaker classmates. Moreover, I help the children with handwashing techniques, and in that way, help them stay healthy in the future."*



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