



LAO PDR EDUCATION COVID-19 RESPONSE PLAN

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS



Developed with the support of UNICEF Lao PDR

May 2021

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Introduction

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the coronavirus. The COVID-19 outbreak is a global public health crisis. In this connection, most governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions to control the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected the Lao education and sport sector with the nationwide closures impacting close to two million students. The Education COVID-19 Response Plan was developed by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) with the support of UNICEF and in collaboration with the Education Cluster in April 2020 and finalized in May 2020.

Following a COVID-19 outbreak in the country in mid-April 2021, the Education COVID-19 Response Plan has been updated to reflect the new challenges, acknowledge what has been put in place to date and identify priority response areas.

The intent is to use this plan as a key reference for interventions of the MoES and Development Partners to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the education sector and ensure the health and well-being of students and education staff, as well as support continuity of learning.

Objectives

This response plan has the following objectives:

1. Support learners, educators, caregivers/parents and school communities to prevent the transmission and spread of Covid-19 in line with national public health guidance, and ensure the well-being of learners and education staff
2. Ensure continuity of learning through the implementation of diverse learning activities/opportunities aimed at quality learning and wellbeing of learners, teachers, caregivers/parents, school communities taking into account equity and inclusivity
3. Support the safe and inclusive return to school/educational institutions of learners, teachers, education staff and school communities
4. Ensure a coordinated Government and Development Partners response to COVID-19 prevention and control measures for the education sector, in coordination with other sectors

Education Cluster Coordination

The Lao PDR Education Cluster is led by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), and co-led by UNICEF and Save the Children. Education Cluster members include UN agencies, multilateral and bilateral organizations, INGOs, NGOs and civil society organizations working in the Lao Education Sector. An updated list of Cluster Members is included in the Annex. From MoES, cluster coordination is led by the Office of the Permanent Secretary/Cabinet Office. See contact details below of the Cluster lead and co-leads.

A Cluster WhatsApp group has been set-up as well as [google drive](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12djXGGaUFRf95JwEFp7NSDJOOChHy9nl) shared folder <<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12djXGGaUFRf95JwEFp7NSDJOOChHy9nl>> with a separate [COVID-19 Education Response](#) folder to facilitate sharing of information and materials on the Education COVID-19 response.

The Government of Lao PDR (GoL), under the leadership of the National Task Force Committee for COVID-19 Prevention and Control is leading Lao PDR's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. MoES is part of the National Task Force Committee for COVID-19 Prevention and Control.

Lead	Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES)
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Needs Overview

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020. Like other countries, Lao PDR has also been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with the first case confirmed on 23 March 2020. For most of 2020 and the early part of 2021, Lao PDR managed to avert a health crisis with no local transmission in the country. However, from late April 2021 a growing number of cases were detected prompting lockdowns and school closures in all of the 18 provinces. Latest figures and updates on the COVID-19 situation in Laos are available from the [Lao Government's website on COVID-19](#).

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, all schools and educational institutions in the country were closed from 19 March 2020. This has disrupted the learning of 1,708,501 students enrolled in the pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary as well as technical-vocational schools and other educational institutions throughout the country for the school year (SY) 2019-2020.¹ With the COVID-19 situation quickly under control in the country, the Government allowed a phased re-opening of schools from 1 May 2020 to 15 June 2020.² The school calendar was also extended leaving minimal learning loss from the school closures.

The second wave of the pandemic hit Lao PDR in mid-April 2021, and as cases increased with local transmissions all education institutions in Vientiane Capital were closed from 22 April 2021³ with other Provinces following suit as more cases were detected across the country. This has affected the learning of 1,617,962 students enrolled in ECE programmes, primary, lower and upper secondary education⁴ just as they were entering the last 1.5 months of the school year 2020-21 with national exams set for May. Moreover, some schools are being used as COVID-19 testing centers and may again be used as quarantine centers same in 2020 where an estimated 1,900 schools were used as quarantine centers for returning migrant workers. These schools would need to be properly disinfected before the reopening of schools.

Lao PDR has 3,544 pre-schools, 8,813 primary and 1,831 secondary schools; 12 Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), four universities, and 18 technical and vocational schools under the jurisdiction of MoES. For school year 2020-21, a total of 1,617,962 students were enrolled from ECE to secondary education; 114,636 students were enrolled in TTCs, TVET schools and universities as of school year 2019-20.⁵ According to EMIS data for SY 2020-21, there

¹ Source: MoES.

² Transition grades - Grade 5 (last year of primary education), Grade 9/Secondary Level 4 (end of lower secondary), and Grade 12/Secondary Level 7 (end of upper secondary) – were the first to resume schooling followed by other grades across all levels of education.

³ As per Prime Minister's Order No. 15 and MoES Order No. 421 dated 21 April 2021

⁴ Source: EMIS SY2020-21, MoES

⁵ Enrollment data for TTCs, TVET schools and universities for SY 2021-2020 is not yet available.

are a total of 84,991 teachers (ECE to secondary education);⁶ 16,571 education administration staff; and 1,279 teachers in TTCs.⁷ Community Learning Centers (CLCs) have also been providing non-formal education to out-of-school children who have been as affected by the pandemic as those who are in school. Boarding schools (schools with dormitories) are also common across the country and would require additional support to re-open.

A prolonged school closure could further put children and young people's learning and well-being at risk. The protection of learners and education staff is particularly important, especially as the new COVID-19 virus variants have been seen to also affect children. Precautions are necessary to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19 in school settings. At the same time, care must also be taken to avoid stigmatizing students and staff who may have been exposed to the virus.

Efforts must also be put in place to mitigate the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic. While a health crisis was averted in 2020 with strong leadership from the government, initial analysis of EMIS data indicates a slight drop in secondary enrollment numbers from school year SY 2019-2020 to SY 2020-2021: around 2.8% for lower secondary and 6.6% for upper secondary, with a slightly higher reduction in enrollment numbers for boys than girls across both levels. Enrollment in secondary education is the most likely to be affected by the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic (e.g. reduction or loss of family income) given the higher direct and indirect costs of schooling, and the pull factors of child labour and early marriage.

Dropout in secondary education have already been increasing over the last five years going as high as 10.3% for lower secondary in SY2019-20, which further increased to 10.7% in SY2020-21, and 8.8% for upper secondary for SY2019-20, slightly increasing to 9.4% for the current school year. Additional mitigation measures such as cash transfers and scholarships would be needed to keep children and adolescents in school, particularly in secondary education, amidst the pandemic.

In the last five years, Lao PDR has experienced a surge in natural disasters that have destroyed school facilities, educational equipment and teaching-learning materials, particularly textbooks and teacher guidebooks. This further exacerbated the lack of textbooks, particularly in rural areas. Moreover, the majority of rural households have limited access to national television as well as the internet. Many schools don't have access to electricity. Digital literacy remains low, including among teachers. An estimated 25% of schools do not have water supply or functioning water, hygiene and sanitation (WASH) facilities making it a challenge to practice proper hygiene as part of prevention and control of the spread of COVID-19.

The Lao context necessitates putting in place a mix of interventions to meet the learning needs of the population, including vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. This would include a blend of using print, TV, radio and online platforms to support continuity of learning, accompanied by support to teachers and parents/caregivers so they can facilitate learning at home. When schools re-open, additional support may be needed by some students who have lagged further behind. It is also important to put in place interventions that are inclusive and sustainable and can continue to be used post COVID-19 or during other emergencies, such as closure of schools due to floods. The current situation provides an opportunity for MoES to put in place a sustainable distance/remote education system of good quality, including a satellite education television that can be used both by students and for professional development of teachers.

⁶ This number includes permanent teachers, contract teachers, invited teachers, volunteers teachers and administrative staff who teach.

⁷ This number includes permanent TTC teachers, invited teachers, and administrative staff who teach.

Key interventions implemented to date by MoES

In June 2020, MoES received a grant of USD7 million from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) COVID-19 Accelerated Fund to implement a mix of interventions based on the Education COVID-19 Response Plan (MoES, May 2020). The plan aims to meet the learning needs of the population, including vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. The grant, managed by UNICEF as Grant Agent covers a combination of print, TV, radio and online platforms to support continuity of learning, accompanied by support to teachers and parents/caregivers so they can facilitate learning at home, as well as support to ensure safe return to schools, and safety and well-being of students and teachers.

Since the onset of the pandemic in 2020, MoES have put in place the following key interventions with the support of partners like the GPE, EU, Australia, USAID, Japan, UNICEF and INGOs working in the sector:

1. Setting up of the MoES Teaching and Learning Platform [Khang Panya Lao](#) to facilitate online learning for students, teachers and education staff. The platform can be accessed via the web and as application (APP) allowing for offline access. It can be used both as a supplementary resource for in-classroom learning as well as learning at home (see Annex 3 for more information). Tablets will be provided to selected schools to support access to the platform (ongoing). In addition, the MoES's Department of Non-formal Education (DNFE) is currently partnering with UNESCO Bangkok and Good Neighbors International to pilot a blended non-formal equivalency programme for lower-secondary-aged dropouts.⁸
2. Printing of primary and secondary education textbooks, learning materials and teacher guides, including in Braille (for the new grades 1 and 2 curriculum materials) to ensure students can take home textbooks during school closures. This also includes printing of more storybooks and workbooks for children attending early childhood education (ECE) programmes.
3. Launch of the MoES Education and Sports TV dedicated channel on Lao Satellite and production of more contents to promote learning. TV sets with LaoSat receivers will also be provided to cluster schools in priority districts (ongoing)
4. Production and launch [My House](#), a special TV series for young children that also focuses on how parents and extended family members can support early childhood education and overall child development. The first season included 10 episodes with sign language. Season 2 of My House is under production with 12 episodes.⁹
5. Provision of top-up school grants across all pre-primary and primary public schools in the country for use to buy hygiene supplies particularly soaps for handwashing and cleaning materials as part of COVID-19 prevention measures.¹⁰ Posters on proper handwashing and COVID-19 prevention measures in schools were also distributed to schools across the country along with the [Safe Operations School Guidance](#).
6. Installation of group hand-washing facilities and water connection to schools, along with training on hygiene (ongoing)¹¹
7. For mental health and psychosocial support, hotlines have been set-up by the Lao Women's Union (LWU) and Lao Youth Union (LYU). The LWU helpline number 1362 provides 24/7 counselling and case management support for girls who experience violence in any settings. The LYU hotline numbers are

⁸ This project covers 1) digitalization of teaching-learning content; 2) development of a learning management system; and 3) provision of training on blended learning. As part of the project, international cases on blended learning will be studied, which would allow the implementers to apply the major findings to the Lao PDR's context.

⁹ To view Season 1 episodes of My House visit www.unicef.org/laos/stories/my-house

¹⁰ This was supported both via the GPE COVID-19 Accelerated Fund and GPE-II

¹¹ Under the support of the GPE COVID-19 grant, hand-washing facilities will be installed between July to October 2021 and hygiene training will be rolled out for school year 2021-22.

1554; 020 7788 0044; 020 5536 0978; 020 5536 1055; 020 5513 2507; 020 5513 2303; 020 5401 6336; 020 5536 0961; 020 5513 3045; 020 5513 2046. The hotlines operate 24 hours. Adolescents and young people can call the hotlines for counselling on various issues including COVID-19, mental health, education, employment, relationship and sexual and reproductive health. Messages, tips and guidelines to address stress and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic, including how parents and family members can support were also developed and shared widely.

8. Video conferencing equipment are being provided to MoES central level (two sets) and one set each for all of the 18 Provincial Education and Sports Services (PESS) offices with delivery expected by end of May 2021. Microsoft Teams accounts will also be provided as part of the ICT package to support connectivity.¹² Zoom licenses for key MoES departments/institutes/centers is also being provided.¹³

In March/April 2021, Lao PDR commenced the nationwide rollout of its COVID-19 vaccination programme. The National Deployment and Vaccination Plan for COVID-19 Vaccines includes teachers as a key priority group under essential workers. Essential workers rank as the 4th priority group for COVID-19 vaccines after health workers, older adults (60 years up), and individuals with underlying health conditions.¹⁴

Assumptions

The COVID-19 pandemic is defined by a rapidly changing situation and uncertainty. This Education COVID-19 Response Plan took into consideration the following assumptions:

- While the transmission, spread and affected population is difficult to predict, the closure of schools will be one of the mitigation measures to stem the spread of COVID-19. Schools may be re-opened, in full or partially, if the situation improves but a second, third and other waves of infections could be possible that could again impact on schools staying open. Mass vaccination of the population to attain herd immunity, especially the vaccination of teachers and education staff could contribute to schools being kept open.
- International assistance and funding will be made available for the implementation of response activities to ensure children and young people will be able to continue their education.
- Education Cluster partners have the capacity to support MoES and the government-led national task force in the implementation of the Education COVID-19 response.
- Education Cluster partners will be able to implement programs in affected and non-affected communities. There will be no quarantine, lockdown or moratorium on humanitarian programming.

Strategic principles:

Aligned with National Government policies, plans, and rules and regulations; and priority inter-sectoral interventions

The response plan is drafted based on the National Government's policies, plans, strategies, rules and regulations, and directives, especially in relation to COVID-19 prevention and control. Key interventions, decisions and protocols are guided by the National Task Force Committee for COVID-19 Prevention and Control and orders from the Prime Minister's Office in relation to COVID-19 mitigation measures. It is also important for the response plan to include integrated interventions and reflect coordinated, collective actions across sectors, particularly in line with health and hygiene protocols and communication.

¹² Supported under GPE-II

¹³ Supported by UNICEF

¹⁴ www.who.int/laos/news/detail/02-04-2021-lao-pdr-commences-rollout-of-covax-supported-covid-19-vaccines

Inclusive education, equity, gender, disability

During the COVID-19 crisis, the most marginalized children including those with disabilities, struggling learners, children from non-Lao-Tai ethnic groups, children in the most rural hard-to-reach and poorest communities and girls, particularly as the caregiving burden is exasperated by the closure of schools, may not be able to access remote learning opportunities. Vulnerabilities may also expand, shift, or multiply during health emergencies. For example, girls may be more susceptible to gender-based violence and be more isolated as their school peer support network shrinks. The inability to access learning may be due to a lack of access to internet, failure to afford required equipment or simply because the modality of delivery may not meet their needs.

Building back better/resilience

The response plan strives to build the resilience of school communities through the COVID-19 preparedness and response activities, for example, the development of mixed/inclusive learning opportunities tailored to the different needs of learners, the provision of WASH facilities and soaps, dissemination of hygiene messages, provision of remaining food as take-home rations, amongst others. This also aligns with the MoES aim of strengthening preparedness and resilience of the education sector to disasters.

Response framework

As stated above, the Education COVID-19 Response Plan includes three objectives corresponding to schools remaining open and/or closing: objective 1 – prevention; objective 2 – mitigation, continuity of learning during school closure; and objective 3 – safe return, opening-up better. A fourth objective is to ensure a coordinated response is implemented throughout.

Key interventions are identified below based on specific scenarios. These interventions contribute to achieving the objectives identified in the response plan. Further target setting, prioritization and costing is needed. The interventions will be adjusted based on the context on the ground acknowledging that the fluidity of the situation. Some interventions would be more critical than others depending on the context, including by province or even by district.

SCENARIO 1: Schools remain open and/or decide to close

Priority objectives: prevention; prepare continuity of learning options; coordinated response

Key Interventions

- Continue with hygiene communication messages and risk communication on COVID-19;
- Procurement of hygiene kits (e.g. soaps, tippy taps, cleaning materials, face masks) and distribution to schools along with communication packages. Schools in urban centers, border areas and COVID-19 hot spots may be prioritized, depending on the situation. Consideration should also be given to schools with dormitories, including monastic schools, ethnic minority schools and boarding schools.
- Working with the Government-led communication task force (of which MoES is also a member), continue to develop communication materials on COVID-19 prevention and control (e.g. videos, infographics, posters and flyers) and social media messages (main channels: WhatsApp groups, social media, community radio, TV)¹⁵

¹⁵ UNESCO have translated the "Keeping Girls in the Picture: Community Radio Toolkit" into Lao. The Toolkit could be useful for adapting/creating messages on COVID-19 prevention and control (Scenario 1) and for creating learning content (Scenario 2) using different types of shows.

- Assess risks of especially vulnerable students in the event of school closures (i.e. risk of drop out, loss of school meals, violence, and sexual exploitation also focusing on learners from non-Lao-Tai ethnic groups, learners with disabilities, girls, with a particular focus on education levels that may have overall been disadvantaged in the education response, e.g. early childhood education, secondary, etc.) and coordinate with other sectors, where needed, to provide emergency access to essential services
- Ensure schools follow the [Lao PDR Safe Schools Guidance](#)¹⁶ approved by MoES and MoH and adapted from the global Safe Schools Guidance: “[key messages and actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools](#)” from UNICEF, WHO and IFRC (Mar 2020). This ensures schools are regularly disinfected, particularly in areas where there are COVID-19 outbreaks. The global guidance on [Building Back Equal: Girls Back to School Guide](#) which builds on the UN Framework for Reopening Schools and the Safe Back to School Practitioners Guide can also be used as reference in promoting the development of gender-responsive education systems and targeted actions to ensure girls’ continuity of learning and return to school.¹⁷
- With the nationwide rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination, ensure all teachers, school principals and other school staff are vaccinated, where possible. This includes dissemination of messages promoting vaccination of teachers and education staff.
- Convene Education Cluster meeting(s) for sharing of information and identification of support for MoES; initiate mapping of Development Partner’s support
- Planning for next phase/scenario (if schools are to be closed, provide clear instructions to schools on how to support remote learning during school closures)
- Support for MoES with regular information sharing meetings and monitoring the implementation of the COVID-19 education response interventions.

Scenario 2: Schools are closed (partial or nationwide)

Priority objectives: prevention; continuity of learning options; prepare for opening-up better; coordinated response

Key interventions:

- MoES set target date for school re-opening (if situation permits) and make adjustments to extend/revise the school calendar; communicate plan and new schedule for national exams (Grade 5, 9 and 12, and university entrance exams).¹⁸ Plan for national exams should take into consideration COVID-19 prevention protocols.
- For MoES to provide clear guidance and criteria in coordination with the National COVID-19 Task Force on when schools can be opened or closed when there is a COVID-19 outbreak
- Continue to share key information and messages via the Education network on prevention of COVID-19 spread; continue developing more communication materials, including advocating social distancing, vaccinations, and risk communication
- Identify and implement interventions to support continuous learning while schools are closed. A mix of different interventions can be implemented taking into consideration the needs of different learners, including children from non-Lao-Tai ethnic groups, children with disabilities, children in remote rural areas, etc. and the realities in the communities. Below are some options also based on examples from other countries.

¹⁶ www.unicef.org/laos/reports/covid-19-prevention-and-control-schools-lao-version

¹⁷ www.unicef.org/media/75471/file/Building-back-equal-Girls-back-to-school-guide-2020.pdf. A Lao translation is being prepared by UNESCO Bangkok.

¹⁸ Another option is to adjust the learning priorities to ensure that the curriculum is covered in a shorter time

- Ensure all students bring their textbooks home and assign homework to students in line with curriculum; this requires clear guidance for teachers to monitor students' progress using various applicable modalities
- Printing of textbooks and additional learning materials approved by MoES for distribution to students
- Engage parents/guardians to support home-based learning: with the support of Development Partners, activities can be developed, including routines and learning games to be shared to parents and additional learning materials approved by MoES, as well as tips for parents to support home-learning; many schools already have phone numbers or a WhatsApp group for parents, this network can be used for sharing of information; DESBs, VEDCs and some INGOs can share materials to parents via their networks; this also provides opportunity to increase parental engagement in their children's learning and development
- Develop key learning activities for students and share via various platforms, e.g. community radio, online/social media platforms, etc.; beginning and end of lessons can include key messages on promoting COVID-19 safety and preventive measures
- Promote online learning through the **MoES Teaching and Learning Platform [Khang Panya Lao](#)**¹⁹ where education resources and materials for ECE, primary, lower secondary and secondary are available and can be expanded to include non-formal education and TVET as per MoES Order 421. Also use other internet-based options like Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Zoom, Skype, etc. For higher education, use the designated university online platforms. This will also require digital literacy and related trainings for teachers.²⁰ Online safety will be a key consideration and information on online safety will be shared.
- Produce additional educational programmes building on the TV/radio educational programme aired on satellite TV, national TV and radio channels under MOES and the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism (MICT), including sharing of already aired educational TV programmes like "My Village TV,"²¹ the newly launched My House TV²², and "Learn Together Laos."²³ Develop more programmes as needed for example the parental involvement of children learning to educate about the new way of learning. The additional educational programmes to cover primary and secondary education, including sports, beginning and end of lessons can include key messages on promoting preventative measures. This could include a long-term plan to further expand educational programmes on national TV/satellite TV and radio, which can also be made available online.²⁴
- Provide TV and Satellite Receiver Set to rural schools, where possible. This can also help address the existing shortage of teachers and lack of qualified teachers, particularly in remote areas. Educational TV programmes can also be used as a platform to support professional development of teachers.
- Develop resources (including videos) for teachers on how to support students' remote learning. These can also include how teachers can help their students re-start their education and catch up in their learning when schools re-open. These resources will be made freely available on the MoES Teaching and Learning Platform [Khang Panya Lao](#), the MoES webpage and social media platforms, and disseminated through other means. Use existing social media groups (e.g. WhatsApp and Facebook Groups) or create new ones for teachers to learn from each other and provide peer support.

¹⁹ www.unicef.org/laos/khang-panya-lao

²⁰ Partnerships with internet service providers can be explored for possible subsidized or zero cost of connection to government websites, platforms and online education resources.

²¹ www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gIkZIKxC_8&list=PLbMyT0MNzJVe_dIM1KiaW6HQw1JG51Eo

²² <https://www.unicef.org/laos/stories/my-house>

²³ www.youtube.com/channel/UCWX8AimAWIVBsyVX3CZPFCw

²⁴ According to the 2017 LSIS-II, 79.3% of Lao households have access to a TV (94.1% in urban areas, and 72.2% in rural areas); 92.3% of households (at least one person from the household) have access to a mobile phone: 98.2% in urban areas, and 89.4% in rural areas.

- In rural areas where there is no major COVID-19 outbreaks, if safe to do so, identify locations for small groups of children to meet with their teacher(s) on a regular basis (e.g. every other day/once a week) following strict social distancing protocols
- In coordination with relevant Ministries/Government bodies, provide appropriate psychosocial support to students and education staff, where needed. This could include providing teachers some orientation on providing psychosocial support to students and for their (teachers') own health, wellbeing and self-care, as well as sharing information on the psychosocial support hotline set-up by the Lao Women's Union (hotline 1362) , Lao Youth Union (hotline 1554), among others.
- Disseminate additional materials and messages on helping children and young people cope with stress and anxiety during the pandemic
- Additional strategies/interventions can be tailored for remote areas with limited internet, radio, and TV access, including further discussions on role of Provincial and District Education Officers and Pedagogical Advisers to support continuity of learning during school closures
- Put in place monitoring mechanism to monitor uptake and effectiveness of various continuity of learning options
- Enter into partnerships with Development Partners (e.g. INGOs) who have a presence in communities/districts throughout the country and can support dissemination of messages and continuous learning for children as well as catch-up/remedial support for students (mapping of Development Partners would also be needed)
- Convene Education Cluster meeting(s) for sharing of information and identification of support for MoES (could be virtual meetings)
- If schools are used as COVID-19 testing centers and quarantine centers, in coordination with other Government authorities, ensure schools are properly disinfected before re-opening
- Provision of take-home rations, distributing remaining food stock at the schools to the students and their families while adhering to strict protocols on social distancing and hygiene during distributions
- With the nationwide rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination, ensure all teachers, school principals and other school staff are vaccinated where possible
- To prepare for re-opening of schools, ensure schools are disinfected and have in place water, soap and handwashing facilities and have put in place plans for regular practice of daily group handwashing with soap
- Planning for next phase/scenario

Scenario 3: Safer return/re-opening of schools

Priority objectives: prevention; opening-up better; coordinated response

Key interventions:

- Depending on the situation and as per guidance from national public health authorities, school openings can be staged/phased. For example, they could initially be limited to a few days of the week, or only apply to certain grades or levels. National policies should provide clear guidance for sub-national assessment and decision making. MoES will provide clear guidance and criteria in coordination with the National COVID-19 Task Force on when schools can be opened or closed when there is a COVID-19 outbreak. The [Framework for](#)

[Reopening Schools](#) released by UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank and WFP (April 2020)²⁵ can also be used as reference.

- Launch a “Back to School” campaign for information sharing and to rebuild trust/assure stakeholders on safety and protection of learners and education staff upon school reopening. The campaign will take into account how to reach teachers, parents and students in remote areas.
- MoES in consultation with the National Task Force Committee for COVID-19 Prevention and Control will develop clear and easy-to-understand protocols on physical distancing measures, including prohibiting activities that require large gatherings, staggering the start and close of the school day, staggering feeding times, moving classes to temporary spaces or outdoors, and having school in shifts to reduce class size.²⁶
- Implement the [Lao PDR Safe School Operations Guidance](#)²⁷ and disseminate widely, including trainings for school principals and selected teachers to implement the guidance and on preparing and implementing school level protocols; Disseminate widely via MoES and Development Partners WhatsApp groups and other platforms; (Guidance is adapted from the Safe Schools Guidance: [key messages and actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools](#) from UNICEF, WHO and IFRC (Mar 2020).
- In coordination with the district/provincial health authorities, ensure that schools used as quarantine centers are properly disinfected before reopening.
- Ensure that boarding schools/schools with dormitories, including monastic schools have protocols in place and staff are trained to implement safe operations; Ensure these schools have water, soap, cleaning supplies and face masks
- Learning contents when schools resume may need to be adjusted based on what are the essential parts of the curriculum (or skills/knowledge that need to be mastered) with accompanying learning assessment also adjusted
- Prepare for additional catch-up tutorial / remedial support for children, including those who could not access online media, radio or TV.
- Put in place monitoring mechanisms to monitor implementation of safe school operations guidance and school-level protocols using the MoES Emergency Rapid Needs Assessment Questionnaire that has a special section on COVID-19 education interventions. The questionnaire also feeds into the Lao Education and Sports Education Management Information System (LESMIS). The School Safety Self-Assessment Survey can also be used to assess risks and preparedness. Both are real time monitoring tools can be answered by the school principal or a visiting District Education Official.
- Continue sharing hygiene promotion messages and provision of soaps and tippy taps to schools in need; promotion of frequent handwashing with soap in schools and at home, including daily group handwashing with soap in schools.
- Promote messages that encourage empathy and inclusion, and which discourages stigma and discrimination in the wake of the pandemic. This includes ensuring privacy of learners, teachers and education staff who may have contracted COVID are respected and their identities not shared publicly without their consent.
- Increase the share of schools with safe water, handwashing stations, cleaning supplies and, wherever possible, establish or expand sex segregated toilets or latrines including provisions for menstrual hygiene management. This includes constructing or rehabilitating boreholes and gravity-fed water systems in schools with acute water shortage; and connecting village water points to schools and establish connections within schools to handwashing stations (as well as latrines, kitchens and gardens)

²⁵ English version can be downloaded from: www.unicef.org/documents/framework-reopening-schools and Lao version from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373348_lao

²⁶ As per guidance from the *Framework for Reopening Schools* released by UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank and WFP (April 2020)

²⁷ Lao version available here: www.unicef.org/laos/reports/covid-19-prevention-and-control-schools-lao-version

- Support cleaning /disinfecting schools as needed, including provision of supplies
- Creating Learning Resource Centers within the Cluster Schools, including provision of learning materials both electronic and print to support smaller schools.
- In case of areas where there are many confirmed COVID cases, support schools to provide mental health and psychosocial support to students and teachers by providing training and relevant materials to schools and deploying additional qualified personnel to provide psychosocial support, and disseminating information on how to access special counseling hotlines set-up by government and partners.
- If COVID-19 vaccination is available, ensure all teachers, school principals and other school staff are vaccinated where possible.
- Resume feeding activities at schools that provide school feeding with necessary preventative measures on site to support children from vulnerable households to return to classrooms.
- Convene Education Cluster meeting(s) for sharing of information and identification of support to MoES and affected communities
- Identify any other measures needed to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and support the education system to recover – depending on the severity of the situation (could include assessment on dropout/students not returning back to school, impact on learning outcomes, additional support for catch-up/remedial programmes for students, etc.)

Monitoring and Evaluation

A simple online monitoring and reporting of the COVID-19 education response has been set-up using Kobo Toolbox. The 3W – Who is doing What, Where – template used by emergency clusters around the world is used as reference. This will allow for various development partners to contribute to the monitoring and reporting. Available MoES data from the Education Management Information System (EMIS) will also be used. Note that further target-setting and costing of different interventions need to be prepared.

ANNEX 1: List of MoES Officials (updated as of May 2021)

No.	Name	Position	Email	Phone Number
1.	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Phout SIMMALAVONG	Minister of Education and Sports	Phouth_s@yahoo.com	020-2241-7101 021-253-254
2.	Mr. Bounpanh XAYMOUNTRY (PhD)	Director General of Department of Planning	b_xaymountry@yahoo.com	020-2248-9614
3.	Ms. Daravone Kittiphanh (PhD)	Permanent Secretary, Permanent Secretary Office	kdaravone12@gmail.com	020-9131-5323
4.	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Silinthone SACKLOKHAM	Director General of Department of External Relation	s.silinthone@gmail.com s.sacklokham@nuol.edu.la	020-2220-2563 021-255-109
5.	Mr. Onekeo NUANNAVONG	Director General of Research Institute for Educational Sciences	Onekeo.n@gmail.com	020-2245-1885
6.	Mr. Keth Phanlack	Director General of Department of Teacher Education	Keth_ph@yahoo.com	020-2220-4585
7.	Ms. Khampaseuth KITINGGAVONG	Deputy Director of Department of Planning/Project Director GPEII/ECE	khampaseuth.kitignavong@yahoo.com	020-2222-0471
8.	Mr. Sithong SIKHAO	Deputy Director of Department of Planning	sithong.sikhao@hotmail.com	020-2209-2492
9.	Mr. Banchong LADTHAVARN	Deputy Director of Department of General Education		020-9980-1945
10	Mr. Khamchan LATHHHHOT	Deputy Director General of Research Institute for Educational Sciences	Latthanhotkc62@gmail.com	
11	Mrs. Dara PHAKONEKHAM	Director General Department of Finance	dphakonekham@yahoo.com	020-99779550
12	Mr. Phoukhaoka SACKLOKHAM	Director of Center, Information and Communication Technology Center For Education and Sport	phoukhaoka@gmail.com	020-5533-4311
13	Dara KHIEMTHAMMAKHOUNE	Director of Center, Inclusive Education Center	darakhamphounvong@gmail.com	020-5618-1623
14	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Anoulom VILAYPHONE	Deputy Permanent Secretary , Permanent Secretary Office	anoulomv@yahoo.com	020-2247-5552
15	Ms. Siphaphone MANIVAHN	Acting Director General, Department of Early Childhood Education	sipaponl@yahoo.com	020 22425314
16	Mr. Somsack INTHASONE (PhD)	Computer Science Department, Faculty of Natural Sciences, National University of Laos	somsacki@nuol.edu.la	020-2224-5128

No.	Name	Position	Email	Phone Number
17	Mr. Souphap KHOUNVIXAY	Head of Division, Research and Executive Briefing Permanent Secretary Office	souphap@gmail.com	020-5492-2051
18	Ms. Sathaphone KINGSADA	Deputy Head of Division, Research and Executive Briefing Division, Permanent Secretary Office	soud.kingsada@gmail.com	020-9991-9763
19	Mr. Patthana VILAY	Technical Staff, Research and Executive Briefing Division, Permanent Secretary Office	Vpatthana.pard@gmail.com	020-5555-6219

ANNEX 2: Education Cluster Members – Development Partners (updated as of 24 May 2021)

List of Education Cluster Members from Development Partners				
	Organization	Name	Email	Phone Number
20.	Asian Development Bank	Khamtanh Chanthy	kchanthy@adb.org	
21.	Australia-DFAT	Anna Dyason Davone Bounpheng Kaykhoun Khounvisith	Anna.dyason@dfat.gov.au Davone.Bounpheng@dfat.gov.au Kaykhoun.Khounvisith@dfat.gov.au	55592912 55886606 22868335
22.	British Embassy			
23.	European Union	Bouasvan Bouasy	Bouasvan.BOUASY@eeas.europa.eu	
24.	Catholic Relief Services (CRS)	Cornelia Sage Vatvisa Keosalivong Holly Cantuba	cornelia.sage@crs.org vatvisa.keosalivong@crs.org holly.cantuba@crs.org	
25.	ChildFund Laos	Leklai Southavilay	leklaish@childfund.org.la	20 9584 6822
26.	German Embassy			
27.	GIZ	Alexander Monden, Alexander Winkscha	alexander.monden@giz.de alexander.winkscha@giz.de	
28.	Humanity & Inclusion	Vanhsana SAYASENG Souvanxay PHETCHANPHENG Kiran Dattani PITT	v.sayaseng@hi.org s.phetchanpheng@hi.org be.couturier@hi.org kd.pitt@hi.org	
29.	INGO Network		ingonetw@directoryofngos.org	
30.	International Labour Organisation (ILO)	Keovanlay Phanthavong	phanthavong@ilo.org	
31.	JICA	Sena Nukata	Nukata.Sena@jica.go.jp	
32.	KfW Development Bank	Thavivanh Phanakhone	thavivanh.phanakhone@kfw.de	
33.	KOICA			
34.	Lux Development	Peter Kurt Hansen Tony Donovan	peter.hansen@luxdev.lu Tony.Donovan@luxdev.lu	
35.	Pestalozzi Children's Foundation (PCF)	Khamseng Homdouangxay	k.homdouangxay@pestalozzi.ch	
36.	Plan International	Vilasack Viraphanh Somsak Yang	Vilasack.Viraphanh@plan-international.org Somsak.Yang@plan-international.org	
37.	Room to Read	Chansamone Bouakhamvongsa Bounyang sithinarongsy	chansamone.bouakhamvongsa@roomtoread.org Bounyang.sithinarongsy@roomtoread.org	

38.	Save the Children	Somxay Inthasone	somxay.inthasone@savethechildren.org	
39.	UNESCO Bangkok	Nantawan Hinds	n.hinds@unesco.org	
40.	UNFPA	Oloth Sene-asa	sene-asa@unfpa.org	
41.	UNICEF	Leotes Helin Phouvong Sihalath Pamouane Thongpaseuth	lhelin@unicef.org psihalath@unicef.org pthongpaseuth@unicef.org	2055977074
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44.	World Education	Sarah Bruinooge	sarah_bruinooge@la.worlded.org	
45.	World Food Programme	Fumitsugu Tosu Yangxia Lee	fumitsugu.tosu@wfp.org yangxia.lee@wfp.org	
46.	World Vision	Ajit Parida Phouthaluck Phontsaona	Ajit_Parida@wvi.org phouthaluck_phontsaona@wvi.org	

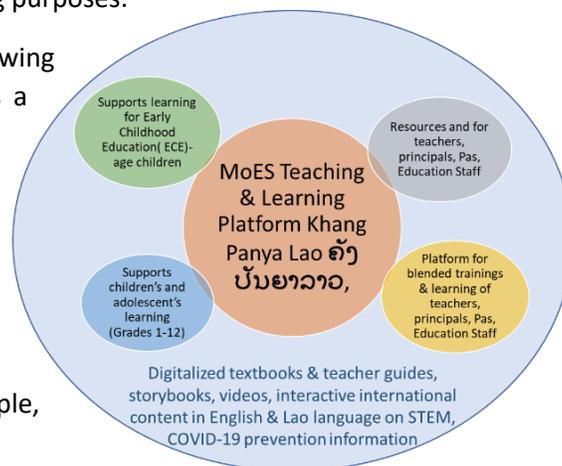
ANNEX 3: MoES Teaching and Learning Platform Khang Panya Lao ຄັງບັນຍາລາວ

Introduction

As part of the ongoing COVID-19 education emergency response, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) with the support of UNICEF and partners like the European Union (EU) and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has developed the *MoES Teaching and Learning Platform Khang Panya Lao ຄັງບັນຍາລາວ (Lao Wisdom Warehouse)*

Khang Panya Lao is an online, mobile and offline tech platform that can be accessed via the web and as an application (APP) allowing for offline access. It serves the following purposes:

- 1) Facilitate the learning of children and adolescents²⁸, allowing for continuity of learning during school closures and as a supplementary learning resource to face-to-face classes and learning at home
- 2) Enhance teaching by supporting the work of and professional development of teachers, principals, pedagogical advisors and education technical staff by providing resources and as a platform for blended trainings
- 3) Enhance the **digital skills** of Lao children, young people, teachers and education staff



Khang Panya Lao can be used for blended learning²⁹, as teaching tool in schools, and as an additional resource for learning at home for students and teachers allowing for continuity of learning in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and related emergencies. It is based on the Learning Passport, which is a partnership between UNICEF and Microsoft. Khang Panya allows for tracking of user progress for courses and issuing of course certificates upon completion. It can be paired with other internet-based programmes that allow for real-time connection and interaction like Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Zoom; or WhatsApp, Skype, etc. as per the MoES directive. Visit www.unicef.org/laos/khang-panya-lao for more information (in English and Lao).

CONTENTS

To support student learning

- ✓ Digitalized official curriculum textbooks for **Grades 1-12** with interactive quizzes, activities
- ✓ Interactive **international resources** available in both Lao and English that promote STEM, e.g. Khan Academy, University of Colorado's PhET Interactive Simulation, CK-12 Foundation's science modules, Tech Interactive at home, etc.
- ✓ **Digital literacy modules** from Microsoft

²⁸ Adolescents cover the age group 10-19 years old

²⁹ The term **blended learning** is generally applied to the practice of using both online and **in-person** learning experiences when teaching students. <https://www.edglossary.org/blended-learning/#:~:text=The%20term%20blended%20learning%20is,learning%20experiences%20when%20teaching%20students.&text=Also%20called%20hybrid%20learning%20and,execution%20from%20school%20to%20school>

- ✓ **Videos** for pre-school to secondary-school age children (e.g. the UNICEF-supported My House ECD TV Series and My Village ECD TV Series; Australia-BEQUAL supported Learn Together; videos produced by MoES-RIES; videos on Comprehensive Sexuality Education produced by MoES with UNFPA support)
- ✓ **Storybooks** for children developed by partners (e.g. decodable readers developed with the support of Australia-BEQUAL; Learn to Read books developed with the support of USAID and Save the Children; Let's Read books developed by the Asia Foundation via the Global Digital Library³⁰).
- ✓ Messages, videos on **COVID-19 safe practices** (from MoES and UNICEF; UNESCO) as well as on **Online safety** (from MoLSW, MICT and UNICEF)
- ✓ New Pre-school curriculum materials (story books, workbooks, etc.) for pre-school children (coming for school year 2021-2022)
- ✓ Materials and guidance for parents to support young children access Khang Panya will also be developed.



To enhance teaching

- ✓ **Videos** on teacher professional development and curriculum-based teaching resources
- ✓ **Teacher guides** based on the curriculum for primary teachers (to be added for school year 2021-22)
- ✓ Videos for teachers on the pre-primary curriculum (under development)
- ✓ **E-courses** for blended learning on school development planning and using the MoES Fundamental Quality Standards for pre-primary classes and primary schools (under development)
- ✓ Teachers can also learn from the interactive **international resources** that promote STEM, e.g. Khan Academy, University of Colorado's Phet Science Simulation, CK-12 Foundation's science course which are available in English with Lao language translation
- ✓ Messages, videos on **COVID-19 safe practices** as well as **Online safety**
- ✓ Materials and other resources in support of the professional development of teachers, principals and pedagogical advisors will be developed with concerned MoES departments, institutes and centers as well as Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs)

All contents uploaded on the platform are approved by MoES. Where possible, accessibility for persons with disabilities, especially children, will be taken into consideration in developing contents, e.g. adding sign language and/or audio to videos and other contents. Online safety will also be a key consideration.

Partnerships for more quality contents

UNICEF will mobilize collaborations and partnerships with various Development Partners to share learning materials they have developed or are developing for uploading to Khang Panya Lao. The collaboration also includes uploading and using Khang Panya Lao to devices, e.g. tablets provided by partners to schools and or education staff in the districts and provinces.

To date, collaboration with the following Lao-based Development Partners have been agreed: Australia-DFAT and BEQUAL, ChildFund, EU, Room to Read, Save the Children, UNESCO, UNFPA, USAID and WFP. Discussions are underway with Humanity and Inclusion (HI), JICA, and World Bank linked to GPE-II Reading Readiness Programme and GPE III: LEAP. More blended learning courses will also be developed with Development Partners.

³⁰ <https://digitallibrary.io/about/>

Ensuring access to the platform

Download APP from google play for phones, tablets

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.lplaos.lplaos>

View via web browser <https://laos.learningpassport.unicef.org/>

Khang Panya Lao can be accessed both via web browser for use online and as an application (APP) via google play, currently, for android devices. Downloading the APP allows the user to select courses/contents, download them and then use offline. Video tutorials on how to register and access the platform via web or the APP have been developed and will continue to be developed. The videos are on the MoES and UNICEF Laos Youtube Channels, websites and will be shared widely on social media.

During the initial phase of the rollout, **help lines** has been set-up with two dedicated *WhatsApp* numbers managed by MoES and UNICEF to reply promptly to any technical questions.



MoES Teaching & Learning Platform Khang Panya Lao Help Lines: 020-97689902 & 020-99280895

UNICEF, with partners like GPE and the EU, will support access to the platform by purchasing and distributing tablets for selected schools, Pedagogical Advisers (PAs) and education staff in districts and provinces. Consideration will be given so as not to deepen the digital divide hence prioritization for provision of devices will be for schools in remote areas. Partnerships with internet service providers will be explored to provide free or subsidized access to the platform. A Windows 10 App is under development. This would allow to transfer all the contents between computers in rural areas using USB memory sticks without a need for internet connection.

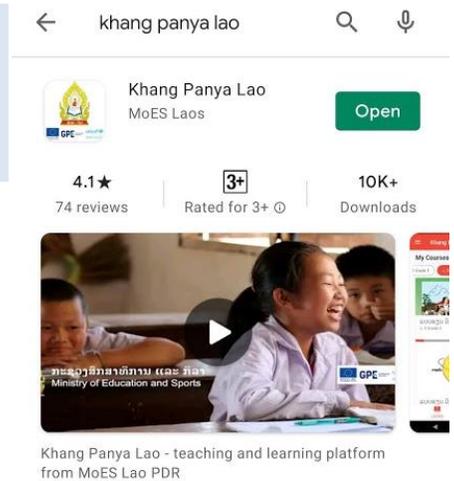
Reaching children with disabilities: The tablets provided for the use of the app have **accessibility options** that can be activated to support students with disabilities.³¹ Most of the Lao language videos in the platform also include subtitles that can be activated for each video. Some contents like My House ECD TV series videos includes sign language interpretation. There are plans to add more audio materials (e.g. read alouds for story books). Learn to Read storybooks will include audio and sign language interpretation.³² All new BEQUAL teacher training videos for primary teachers now include sign language. Australia-DFAT already gave copyright access for materials to be used for Khang Panya Lao. UNICEF Lao PDR is also working with the UNICEF Regional Office to digitalize a teacher training manual on inclusive education in coordination with MoES, Humanity & Inclusion (HI) and other partners.

Trainings

Trainings (face-to-face and online) for teachers, PAs, DESB staff, TTC staff and key MoES staff on how to use the platform as well as on digital literacy will be provided. Pilot training has been carried in Vientiane Capital in March

³¹ These options include: a) display size and font size — These settings allow users to change the size that items are displayed on screen as well as the font size; b) magnification gestures — Allows temporary zooming or magnification of the screen; c) contrast and color options — This can be useful for people who are color-blind or have partial visual impairment to improve the legibility of text through inverting colors, or applying color correction.

³² This is being done by Humanity & Inclusion which is part of the Learn to Read consortium.



2021. Similar trainings will be carried out in rural areas as soon as the COVID-19 situation improves and lockdown is lifted.

A **MoES technical team** led by the Department of Teacher Education (DTE) is now developing a training package on the broader provision of remote learning based on international guidelines (e.g. from UNESCO, UNICEF) as well as using Khang Panya Lao as a teaching resource in schools and as a supplementary learning resource at home. Trainings on Khang Panya Lao and on remote learning will be rolled out by MoES with support of UNICEF. Trainings can also be provided to DPs who are interested so they can support Khang Panya Lao roll out.

Orientation on Khang Panya Lao was also integrated into the Master Trainers Training for the new Grade 3 curriculum and will be integrated into the training of teachers being rolled out by MoES and BEQUAL.

Management of Khang Panya Lao

- Successful development and implementation of the platform calls for strong coordination across MoES departments, centers and TTCs, in particular RIES, DTE, DGE, ICT Center, and the Cabinet Office.
- Given the pivotal role of the platform, MoES is setting-up a Working Group/Committee with representatives from key line departments, institutes and centers to support coordination, content development, quality assurance of contents, rollout of trainings, monitoring, etc. The committee can also include representation from the Private Schools Association. Technical support from the **National University of Laos** will also be mobilized. At the initial launch of the platform, the Working Group/Committee members will also be deployed to support the communication and dissemination plan (see below) as well as providing responses and support to technical questions and issues that target users may meet.
- UNICEF will continue to provide technical support and mobilize funding support, especially in the first three years. Hands-on technical support to strengthen the capacity of MoES to manage and maintain the platform will be provided.
- Other development partners that have developed content to promote learning for Lao children and young people, and resources for use by teachers, PAs, education staff, etc. will also be engaged to facilitate sharing materials on the platform.

Monitoring

A Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan has been developed to monitor uptake and use of the platform and user profiles. Based on the log-in profiles, the following data can be generated: total number of platform registered users and user type (including student by grade level or teacher by grade level), gender, and downloads, public-private schools, and geographic location of users. Progress monitoring will also look at the quantity and type of contents downloaded, course completion, etc. The platform can also record the number of courses completed by user.

MoES with the support of UNICEF will also monitor technical issues faced to improve the platform and its uptake. Starting from School Year 2021-2022, monitoring will also include contribution to improvement in the learning of students.

Communication and Dissemination Plan

An awareness campaign on the **MoES Teaching and Learning Platform Khang Panya Lao ຄັງປັນຍາລາວ**, including how to access and use the platform, is also in place. UNICEF will support MoES with this communication and dissemination plan. The following key activities will be conducted:

1. Share key messages about the platform, its contents, how to access and use it in situations where schools are closed and as a teaching tool during face-to-face classes
2. Share short video tutorials on how to use the platform, e.g. access the web browser or download the app
3. Share short promotional/testimonial videos about the platform, including any specific contents that can be promoted. This can include videos featuring students, teachers, PAs, MoES education staff and high-level officials, parents, etc.
4. A national launch is also anticipated in September 2021, in time for the start of the School Year 2021-22. This will be further discussed with the MoES once the platform is well established after its initial rollout in late April 2021 to respond to the temporary closure of schools.

UNICEF will support in developing messages and videos for approval by MoES. A WhatsApp group that includes development partners to support Khang Panya Lao communication dissemination has been established.

All of the above will be disseminated via:

1. MoES Edu-Sports TV channel and Facebook page, YouTube channel(s), WhatsApp groups
2. UNICEF Laos website, YouTube channel, social media platforms
3. Development Partners will be requested to share via their platforms, including WhatsApp groups
4. Private Schools Association network
5. Media and other outlets, e.g. Lao Youth Radio FM, Tholakhong, Talk to Teens, CCEH-MoH
6. Press briefings can also be organized to support information sharing. UNICEF will support MoES and coordinate with MICT on this.

ກະຊວງສຶກສາທິການ ແລະ ກິລາ
Ministry of Education and Sports

ດາວໂຫຼດ ແອັບ "ຄັງປັນຍາລາວ"
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<https://laos.learningpassport.unicef.org/>

ສະຫະພາບ ເອີລົບ
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