

DOCUMENTATION OF TEXTBOOK MANAGEMENT SYSTEM STRENGTHENING: A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Textbook Management System Strengthening (TMSS) partnership included support to the planning, procurement, printing, storage, distribution, maintenance and classroom care of textbooks and materials. Various divisions and units within Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) manage specific tasks, but the Department of Finance (DoF) is responsible for overall textbook management. Development and finalization of the materials is the responsibility of the Research Institute for Educational Sciences (RIES) while classroom care, maintenance and re-use is managed by Asset Management focal points at District Education and Sports Bureaus (DESBs) and schools.

Between 2014-2016 the MoES, UNICEF and Australian Department of Foreign Aid and Trade (DFAT) agreed to a partnership to strengthen textbook management and to attain the national target of 1:1 Textbook-Student Ratio in primary schools. The TMSS partnership was designed as a holistic approach to address the low levels of textbook availability in classrooms across the country. The TMSS process started with MoES-UNICEF partnership in 2014/15 to reach Grades One and Two (100 per cent coverage) and to reach Grades Three-Five in 2015-2016 (50 per cent replenish) through the partnership between MoES, DFAT and UNICEF.

These partnerships envisioned a system wide approach to strengthening textbook management, and supported the preparation of Camera Ready Copies (CRC), the planning and monitoring of replenishment, the local and off shore procurement of printing, the storage and distribution of textbooks to DESBs and from DESBs to schools, and the communication to improve registration, care and re-use of textbooks. Communication efforts included preparation of 16 key messages (Do's and Don'ts) on textbook care - which were used in illustrated cartoon posters and in radio/television spots in Lao, Hmong and Khmu languages. Innovative textbook storage in Districts and school based textbook management pilots were carried out in Attapeu and Bokeo provinces, with the Bokeo pilot a partnership with Plan International.

The purpose of the TMSS Documentation Report is two-fold: to provide an overview of the activities supported with a description of key findings, good practices and lessons learned; and to provide recommendations to improve and strengthen textbook management. The Findings and Recommendations in this report can be reviewed when finalizing the draft Textbook Policy and when planning the roll out of the new Primary Curriculum.

The methodology included a desk review augmented by interviews with government staff from a range of Departments and Centers and with Development Partners (DPs), which resulted in the Inception Report. Field visits were organized in May 2017 to two southern Provinces where interviews were organized with Provincial authorities. Visits were made to

4 DESBs (Nongbok and Xebanfai in Khammouane; Sanamxai and Phouvong in Attapeu) with observations and interviews conducted in 11 rural primary schools. An Internal Consultation Meeting was convened by Director General, DoF on 27 June 2017 to review the draft Findings and Recommendations, with participation from key stakeholders across MoES. Based on these comments and on feedback from the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) Focus Group 3 meeting on 2 September 2017, this Final Report was prepared.

The report is divided into 5 sections representing aspects of textbook management supported under TMSS, including (1) Textbook Planning; (2) Textbook Procurement and Printing; (3) Textbook Distribution and Storage; (4) Textbook Registration, Care, Management and Re-use; and (5) Textbook Partnerships and Coordination. Each section contains an Introduction, Findings and Recommendations.

(1) Textbook Planning

In relation to Textbook Planning, the Report finds that a long term costed textbook plan has not been developed, even though this was a planned outcome of the TMSS. MoES continues to use an estimated standard rate of 10 per cent for each grade of primary textbooks when projecting replenishment levels and budget requirements. This figure, however, is not based upon any empirical evidence and no clear picture exists of actual textbook re-use and wastage. Accurate textbook information for planning is not being collected. Even with the revised Forms and protocols, there is no clear analysis or understanding of data at schools or DESBs. The web-based Textbook Information Management System (TIMS) designed by DoF has potential to improve textbook planning and monitoring. TIMS was designed to help DESBs enter data from schools and generate reports, but due to software design problems, it is not yet fully functioning and reports cannot be generated. The revised textbook replenishment and monitoring tools with indicators have not been shared with the Education Management Information System (EMIS) Center for review to ensure their alignment with official standards and definitions. Key recommendations in relation to Textbook Planning include:

- 1. Conduct a Survey(s) of Textbook Re-use and Care*
- 2. Develop a Long-Term Costed Textbook Plan*
- 3. Review Planning Sections of the draft Textbook Policy*
- 4. Maintain and Use Accurate Data and Records*
- 5. Improve TIMS Software and Implementation*

(2) Textbook Procurement and Printing

In 2014/15, the Education Printing Enterprise State Company printed 20 per cent of the total requirement for Grade 1 and 2 textbooks and teacher guides, while the remaining 80 per cent of the textbook and teachers' guides were printed offshore. Both local and offshore printing was on time and with good quality. In 2015/16, the 40 per cent of Grade 3, 4 and 5

textbooks were printed offshore by the DPs as the unit costs of local printers were considerably higher, while MoES printed its 10 per cent replenishment through the Education Printing Enterprise State Company. Findings related to storage Procurement and Printing include delays with offshore printing related in part to poor storage of final ‘Proofed Camera Ready Copies’ – with several final proofed CRCs not returned to RIES by the Education Printing Enterprise. Key recommendations include:

- 6. Enable RIES to Maintain all Final ‘Proofed’ Camera Ready Copies*
- 7. Camera Ready Copies should be Finalized at Least 5 Months Before Distribution*
- 8. Development of capacity of Local Printers should be Considered*

(3) Textbook Distribution and Storage

The MoES Warehouse and its fleet of 8 trucks have the capacity and experience to distribute materials efficiently as do the local private companies who delivered the textbooks printed offshore to DESBs. The capacity and accountability at DESB to ensure all schools receive their textbooks on time remains weak – and this remains a major bottleneck within TMSS. None of the DESBs visited could show a textbook distribution plan or up to date stock list detailing where, when and how materials were sent to schools. DESBs and schools agreed that receiving books in late May before the end of school is best. Delivery in August can be difficult due to rains and bad roads and is the second best option. The Do’s and Don’ts Posters, which were resource materials printed separately, were poorly distributed and several Provinces did not receive them. Storage of books centrally in the MoES Warehouse is safe, secure and sufficient, although record keeping could be improved. At District levels, DESBs have insufficient safe and secure storage space. The Sea Container storage piloted in Bokeo and Attapeu Provinces provided safe, secure and sufficient space at DESBs but the costs of foundations and sun/rain roofs were quite high. Key recommendations include:

- 9. Continue to Send Books to DESB and From DESB to Schools*
- 10. Book Distribution to DESBs should be Scheduled for end May*
- 11. DESB should be Made Accountable for Textbooks Reaching Schools*
- 12. Books and Resource Materials should be Distributed Together*
- 13. Sea Containers for DESB Storage needs Further Review*

(4) Textbook Registration, Care, Management and Re-use

The findings on textbook registration, care, maintenance and re-use in schools are mixed. In classroom observation, the use of textbooks is limited and many teachers still copied pages from textbooks on the board. Book Registration was extremely poor, with no records on the number of books available in any of the schools visited. None of the textbooks observed had the Registration Table on the inside back cover filled out. There were positive examples, such as poor rural classrooms with all students in early grades having complete sets of books - all of which were covered with protective wrapping. Other schools and classrooms

had very low Textbook-Pupil Ratio and poor maintenance of textbooks. The Pedagogical Advisers and VEDC members play no official role and in-service teacher training has not included textbook management. The 16 key Do's and Don'ts messages on good and bad textbook behaviour were developed by RIES and incorporated into a Poster depicting all 16 behaviours with miniaturized cartoon illustrations. Key Do's and Don'ts messages were included in the Introduction to the Textbooks and also made into Radio/Television spots (in Lao, Hmong and Khmu). These messages were unknown to teachers and students interviewed. Do's and Don'ts Posters, if available in schools were stored in cupboards. Recommendations include:

14. Mainstream Textbook Care into School Management

15. Re-think "Do's and Don'ts" Messages and Communication

16. Review the Use of National Radio and TV

17. Strengthen Textbook Registration at Schools

(5) Textbook Partnerships and Coordination

With diverse stakeholders engaged in various aspects of textbook management, coordination and partnerships are critical. Efforts were made to strengthen coordination through regular meetings and communication but programmatic partnerships could have been stronger. The development of the Textbook Policy also experienced gaps in coordination – with limited feedback provided by key stakeholders on the drafts to date. In the draft Textbook Policy, the roles of key stakeholders and coordination mechanisms are not clearly defined. Key recommendations include:

18. Strengthen Coordination through Textbook Policy Development

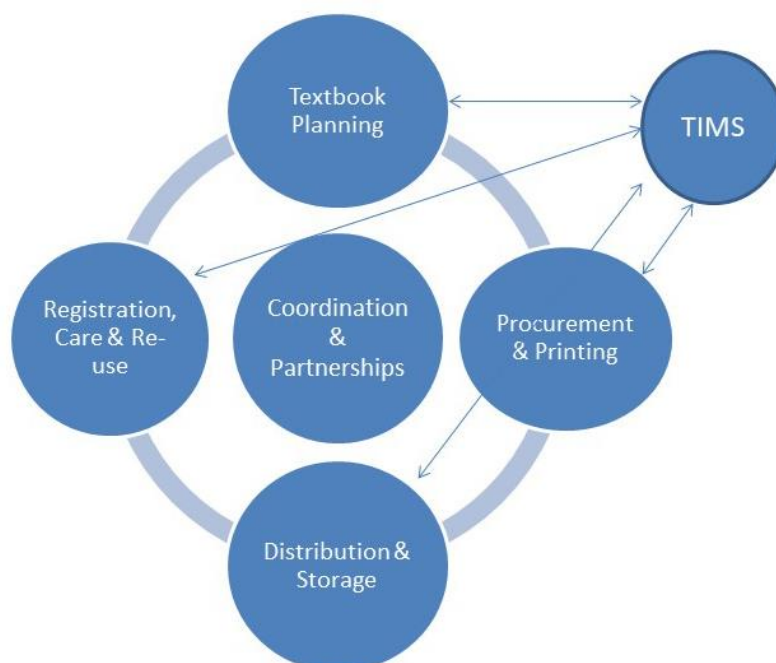
19. Clarify Roles and Responsibilities in Textbook Management

Section I: Background

Textbook Management System Strengthening

The Textbook Management System Strengthening (TMSS) was a partnership initiated by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and UNICEF in 2014/15. The Rapid Assessment of Availability of Primary Textbooks, carried out by the MoES in 2011 found high levels of primary textbook unavailability in schools and very low textbook pupil ratios, which confirmed the concerns raised in the 2010 Education Sector Development Plan. The goal of TMSS was to achieve target of 1:1 Textbook-Pupil Ratio in all primary classrooms across the country – starting with Grades 1 and 2. In 2015/16, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) joined the partnership with MoES and UNICEF to provide textbooks for Grades 3-5.

The TMSS Concept Note envisioned a systems wide approach to textbook support – which involved engagement with actors across the various aspects of the textbook management. This comprehensive design included support to textbook planning and monitoring (including the Textbook Information Management System, TIMS), to textbook procurement and printing; to textbook distribution and storage, to textbook maintenance and care through communication and to textbook coordination and partnerships. The diagram below illustrates the 5 main areas of textbook management supported by the TMSS, with the TIMS designed to link with them all.



The MoES has designated the Asset Management Division of the Department of Finance (DoF) as the focal point for textbook management - responsible for the overall process of procurement, distribution, storage, care and maintenance of textbooks. At the District Education and Sports Bureaus (DESB), the Asset Management teams consist of one Asset Manager and one Store Person, working within the Administrative Division. Amongst other duties, the DESB Asset Manager is expected to compile and review school textbook data, to prepare a District Textbook Replenishment request, to develop and implement a District Textbook Distribution Plan, to manage the delivery of books to schools and to monitor and support the care and re-use of textbooks. At primary schools, an Asset Management focal point is identified from amongst teachers and is responsible for textbook registration, maintenance and care of learning materials.

The MoES established a 10 per cent replenishment rate for damaged primary textbooks and allocates Ministry of Finance funds for printing and distribution annually. These textbooks are procured from and printed at the Education Printing Enterprise State Company and distributed by the MoES Warehouse with their fleet of trucks. The process of primary textbook distribution involves two-steps - first delivering textbooks direct from Vientiane to DESBs and second, getting the materials from the DESBs to schools.

TMSS was designed to target Grades 1 and 2 in 2014/15 school year with 100 per cent coverage and plus 5 per cent for the DESBs to be maintained as a stock to address any unforeseen demand. To achieve this, Education Management Information System (EMIS) enrolment data was used to project printing requirements for all Grade 1 and 2 students to receive a new set of 3 core textbooks (Math, Lao, World Around Us) with Teachers Guides printed for all 6 primary subjects. TMSS supported the Asset Management Division within DoF to revise existing monitoring forms and guidelines in order to strengthen bottom up planning processes. Information requested on the Textbook Replenishment Forms were revised and simplified through a series of workshops with DoF and DESB staff organized by a long term TMSS Technical Adviser. DoF also funded the development of a software programme, called TIMS that was designed to use school level data, entered by DESB teams, for real time monitoring and planning.

In 2014/15, under the MoES-UNICEF collaboration, 80 per cent of the books were printed through global tender in Thailand. The remaining 20 per cent were printed by the Education Printing Enterprise State Company. In addition, the 10 per cent annual replenishment by MoES was also printed by the Education Printing Enterprise State Company. In 2015/16, through a MoES, UNICEF and DFAT partnership, Grade 3-5 textbooks were printed based on 50 per cent of projected enrolment rates. The decision to print for 50 per cent of student enrolment in primary Grades 3-5 was based on initial findings from TIMS monitoring data in 2014/15 and on information gathered from Bokeo Province using textbook return records. The procurement of Grade 3-5 textbooks involved UNICEF/DFAT printing 40 per cent

offshore after global tender and the remaining 10 per cent replenished by MoES through Education Printing Enterprise State Company.

Distribution to DESBs from Vientiane in 2014/15 involved a private local contractor and the MoES Warehouse who both delivered the materials to all 148 Districts. In 2015/16, the distribution was planned so that UNICEF/DFAT globally tendered books were distributed by the private local contractor to 116 DESBs while the 10 per cent procured through the Education Printing Enterprise State Company were distributed by MoES Warehouse to 32 Districts.

The TMSS also supported the distribution of textbooks to schools from the DESBs. In 2014/15, to deliver Grade 1 and 2 materials from the DESBs to schools, the Asset Management Division developed detailed district distribution plans based on the costs of reimbursing schools after collecting their books. These district distribution plans categorized three types of schools for budget purposes - nearby, rural and remote schools. Each category was entitled to different levels of transport support (nearby schools received no funds), based upon which budgets were allocated to DESBs. For the Grade 3-5 textbooks in 2015/16, a slightly different approach was followed while using the same three categories. In 2015/16, the centrally prepared plans estimated costs based upon delivery to rural and remote schools by DESB - calculating petrol costs, daily allowance for DESB staff and/or costs for sub-contracting private vehicles. The cost of delivery from DESB to primary schools for both modalities was not so different. In total, distribution cost for two years was around US\$300,000, or approximately US\$150,000 per year.

The Research Institute for Education Sciences (RIES) of MoES developed a set of 16 key messages (the Do's and Don'ts) for communication efforts regarding textbook care. After field testing, key Do's and Don'ts messages are summarized in the Introduction of all primary textbooks. The messages were also made into an illustrated cartoon Poster for classrooms. The Do's and Don'ts messages were also used to develop radio and television spots which were broadcast on National TV and Radio in Lao, Hmong and Khmu languages. A Registration Table for tracking the use and re-use of textbooks is printed on the inside back cover of all primary textbooks.

Pilot initiatives were introduced in 2 Provinces – Bokeo and Attapeu – which included provision of sea containers with foundations and protective roofing as storage facilities in DESBs. The pilot also included special training for DESB staff and school principals on textbook distribution, record keeping and maintenance. Orientations for Village Education Development Committee (VEDC) members on textbook management and support for Pedagogical Advisers to monitor textbook maintenance in schools were piloted in Bokeo through Plan International – a partner in the Bokeo pilot.

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of this documentation is two-fold. First is to provide a summary of the key findings, good practices, lessons learned and challenges of the TMSS, focussing on the following 5 areas:

- i) Textbook Planning;
- ii) Textbook Procurement and Printing;
- iii) Textbook Distribution and Storage;
- iv) Textbook Registration, Use, Care and Management; and
- v) Textbook Partnerships and Coordination.

Second is to provide recommendations for MoES and development partners to further improve and strengthen the textbook management system.

Documentation of the TMSS is timely in that it can be used as a reference when finalizing the national Textbook Policy as drafted by the Department of Secondary Education (DSE). The findings and recommendations can also be considered when designing the national roll out of the new Primary Curriculum planned for 2018/19.

Methodology

The key methods used for the documentation include desk review, interviews, group discussions and field observation. The documentation process required an Inception Report, which looked at the full range of existing TMSS documents, including the initial Concept Note, monitoring reports and Final Report from the UNICEF long term international consultant, and internal UNICEF reports and procurement documents. MoES guidelines, forms and reports - as well as the draft National Textbook Policy and the Education Sector Development Plan were also reviewed.

Interviews with key informants were designed to verify which activities took place – how they were implemented – and the impact they made. Recommendations and advice for improving TMSS were solicited as were lessons learned. At the MoES, the following Departments and Centers were interviewed: DoF; Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education (DPPE); DSE; Education Printing Enterprise State Company; Research Institute for Education Sciences (RIES); EMIS Center; and MoES Warehouse. (Please see Annex 2 for details).

To review the use of Lao National Radio and Television, an interview was held with the Department of Information in the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism (MoICT). Development Partners who were active in aspects of the TMSS or in textbook processes more generally were also interviewed – including PLAN International, the Basic Education Quality and Access in Laos (BEQUAL), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and UNICEF.

Field Visits were organized to 11 rural primary schools in four Districts of two southern Provinces (Khammouane - Nongbok and Xebanfai and Attapeu - Sanamxai and Phouvong) in May 2017 before the end of the school year. At the Schools, interviews were held with school principals, Asset Management focal points, VEDC members and students - with observation of facilities and textbooks. Debriefing meetings were held at the four DESBs and at the two Provincial Education and Sports Service (PESS) with the Director and Deputy Director, the DPPE team, Administration, Asset Management staff.

An initial set of findings and recommendations was prepared and discussed with key stakeholders in MoES. The Director General, Department of Finance then convened an Internal Consultation Meeting to review the draft findings and recommendations with participation from DSE, EMIS, DPPE, RIES, Education Printing Enterprise State Company, MoES Warehouse and others on 27 June 2017. Based on the feedback from the Internal Review and on inputs provided by the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) Focus Group 3 meeting on 2 September 2017, this Final Report has been prepared.

Section II: Textbook planning

General Introduction

The MoES textbook management system currently requires all schools to submit their projected textbook requirements for the coming school year to the DESB by 31 May. The DESBs must then compile all school Textbook Replenishment Forms with data and submit to the PESS, by 14 June for review. The PESS has one week, until 21 June, to review DESB requests before sending them to the Asset Management Division in DoF. Under TMSS, Forms and Guidelines for the Asset Management focal points in Schools and for Asset Managers at DESB were revised. Training and Manuals for DESBs and the Asset Management Division in DoF were supported to strengthen the use of data from schools and to better estimate and plan actual book replenishment needs. DoF invested MoES resources to develop the TIMS – a computer programme to help use school data for real time planning. TIMS was piloted in Bokeo Province and then expanded nationwide, with web-based applications for DESBs to enter school level data.

Under TMSS, no training was provided to Asset Management focal points in schools. However, in the Pilot Provinces, school principals were provided a 1-day orientation on Textbook Management and Care, including on the forms and data required for planning and monitoring. In Bokeo, VEDC members received an orientation in how to support textbook management. Pedagogical Advisers were also provided an additional page of Textbook Management related tasks to observe and monitor during school visits. This was reported to have been very successful, and is one reason why these Districts in Bokeo have such high re-use rates - according to the Asset Management Division in DoF.

In addition, all DESB Asset Managers across the country have received a 5-day annual training for the past 5 years (not funded under TMSS but under Secondary Education Development Project). Of the 5 days of training – 1 ½ days are dedicated to textbook management.

Findings

In the TMSS Concept Note, a 5-Year costed textbook plan was to be developed by January 2015. It was expected that the data collected during 2014/15 would be used in preparing an initial 5 year projection, which could then be updated and extended on an annual basis. Data from the Bokeo TIMS pilot and DESB field data was used for the estimation that 50 per cent of Grade 3-5 students required new textbooks in 2015/16 in order to reach the Target of 1:1 Textbook-Student Ratio. However, a 5-Year Costed Textbook Plan was not prepared. The MoES still relies on a 10 per cent replenishment level which is calculated annually based on EMIS projected enrolment data. Regardless of the data produced by schools on actual textbook replenishment need, MoES applies a standard estimate of 90 per cent textbook re-use across all grades of Primary. As a result, the data being collected under TIMS is not being

used to develop costed textbook projections. Some data from the schools as compiled by DESB may have been used when developing Distribution Plans, but that is discussed in Section 4 (Distribution and Storage) below.

The planning processes and systems for book replenishment based on school data are in place nationally. However, there is no point in maintaining accurate data on textbook re-use and replenishment needs if all schools receive replenishment for 10 per cent of enrolment levels automatically. Currently, even though schools fill-out and send Replenishment Forms to DESBs, the data itself may not be accurate. At the schools visited, most Asset Manager focal points and many school principals had difficulties understanding the textbook management forms and what information was expected in each column. This remains a major challenge. Record keeping for information management at schools is very poor. The schools visited did not keep records or any information on what books they have in stock. No school principal could report how many textbooks they had requested, had received or had damaged during the current year. A few schools had written summaries of some of the figures from Textbook Received Forms in their notebooks but in all schools visited, the levels of re-use and the number of damaged books over the current year were not known. A good practice observed in one District visited was for schools to receive an additional copy of the Textbooks Received Form from the DESB, which they could keep as a record.

In field visits, DESBs did maintain records of the Textbook Receipt Form for each school, which include the number of books received by schools with date and stamped/signed by the school principal. There is no data history at the DESB to see how replenishment requests from schools compare to the number of textbooks received. No DESB could identify the schools with the highest or lowest levels of re-use – nor could they estimate the Student-Textbook Ratio for the District. At the four DESBs visited, no clear picture exists of actual re-use levels in Primary schools or how the level of re-use differs between Grades and schools.

To date, the actual use of the TIMS is limited. There have been problems with the software design, and DESBs are unable to generate any reports for their Districts. In addition, most DESBs are unable to connect to the internet – so the value of web-based application is lost. To date, 23 DESBs have entered and uploaded their data via TIMS, but they remain unable to print any reports or generate any analysis from the data sets. It is strategic for DoF to develop its own information system with the required sectoral data and this is in line with the new EMIS Policy. However, there has not been any significant coordination with the EMIS Center on definitions and standards used in TIMS or on lessons learned from other sectoral units within MoES (Teacher Training and Technical and Vocational Education and Training, TVET) who have recently developed real time, web-based data systems.

Recommendations

1. Conduct a Survey of Textbook Re-use and Care

The MoES should undertake a comprehensive survey to determine actual levels of textbook damage and re-use for each grade of primary school. This will allow for more accurate projections of budget requirements for replenishment under the target of 1:1 Textbook-Pupil Ratio. There has been no survey conducted to examine actual levels of textbook re-use and availability. BEQUAL, in its survey of Facilities in 2016, did include some indicators on textbook availability in schools, but limited data has been collected on levels of re-use. A Textbook Survey should be designed to provide data on levels of textbook damage for different grades of primary school and to identify factors which improve re-use. The Survey can be designed to assess the accuracy of data as collected under TIMS and to identify those bottlenecks and capacity gaps that are affecting data quality in the system. The timing of the survey depends on the sense of urgency, but a process could be initiated in 2018/19 as part of the roll out of the new primary curriculum. It is important to view the Survey as a longitudinal exercise that would follow the life of books and provide findings over the course of several years.

2. Develop a Costed Long-Term Textbook Plan

MoES should develop a rolling 5-Year Costed Textbook Plan. The Plan should be updated annually and be informed by the Survey findings and TIMS reports – with estimations of what are actual replenishment needs, what is possible to print with existing MoES funds, and what is the gap. The 5-year Costed Textbook Plan and National Strategy will support the implementation of the Textbook Policy. The Plan would need to include the roll-out of the new primary curriculum, textbooks and teacher resource materials, starting with Grade 1 in 2018/19, as well as replenishment of existing Grade 2-5 materials through 2021/22.

3. Review Planning Sections of draft Textbook Policy

The current draft of the Textbook Policy does not adequately address the planning system – including the processes required to use more accurate projections for printing and distribution plans. The sequencing of textbook procurement and distribution should take into consideration when schools should submit their Textbook Replenishment Forms to DESBs. Considering the optimal time for DESBs to receive books and send them on the schools is May, before the monsoon, the current practice of schools sending their Replenishment Forms on 31 May will not work. Schools will need to send data on the textbook replenishment needs in mid-April in order for data to be used in plans for textbook distribution in late May. If distribution of textbooks is planned for mid-August (the second

best time according to the DESBs and schools visited), then the sequencing of processes should be scheduled accordingly. It is important that the new Textbook Policy aligns the timing of reporting, planning, procurement and distribution in consultation with stakeholders, and in sync with the in-service teacher training schedule.

4. Maintain and Use Accurate Data and Records

It is impossible to improve accuracy of data if no records exist and if stakeholders never use their data for decisions. A system for providing schools and DESBs with two copies of essential forms (i.e., schools receive two copies of Replenishment Forms so they can keep one; and DESBs receive 2 copies of Book Receipt Forms to leave one at schools) will help in keeping records. The TMSS training for school principals was appreciated, but one off training does not have much impact. Annual orientations on Textbook Planning and Management for school principals with DESBs using real school data should be planned for and budgeted by MoES. Essential tables for DESB monitoring and planning should include re-usable vs. damaged books; new books requested vs. new books received; and pupil/textbook ratios. Textbook management and care should also be seen as a key element of the Pedagogical Advisers (PAs) role within 'School Based Management'. PAs should actively support textbook registration, maintenance and monitoring during their school visits, which requires changes to their Job Descriptions by the Department of Personnel (see Recommendation #14).

5. Improve TIMS Software and Implementation

Innovation within DoF on the development of TIM's data collection forms and web-based software should be continued. Although issues need to be fixed with the software, textbook management is an ideal area for innovative information management, including web-based applications. However, it is necessary to develop two version of TIMS (web-based and computer based) – with templates shared both on the 'cloud' and on CD-ROM/flash drives. This will allow DESB Asset Managers to print reports and analysis based on the data they have collected and entered from schools without having access to internet. In terms of connectivity, it may be more practical to design smart phone applications that allow school principals and DESBs to enter data directly into templates on their phone. More interaction between DoF and the EMIS Center to review the standards and definition prepared by the Asset Management Unit is required. Integration of data between sectoral Departments is only possible when standards and definitions across data sets are the same– as per the new EMIS Policy. A review of TIMS indicators, standards and definitions by the EMIS Center should be carried out before the next version of TIMS software is finalized. The EMIS Center can also share lessons learned on web-based EMIS systems from Teacher Training Colleges and Technical and Vocation Education and Training Centers. In the short term, MoES must ensure that DESBs can use TIMS to better understand the data collected.

Section III: Textbook Procurement and Printing

General Introduction

The annual process of replenishing 10 per cent of primary textbooks starts with RIES. The CRC of all textbooks and education materials are developed and updated by RIES, who then forward these to the Education Printing Enterprise State Company, which is contracted annually by the DoF to carry out the 10 per cent replenishment printing. Once the Education Printing Enterprise State Company receives the CRC from RIES, they begin the process of preparing the 'Proofs' – the final version of the documents before they are printed. There are always a number of misspellings, grammar errors and design issues which are found in the CRC while making the Proofs. These are corrected by the Education Printing Enterprise in consultation with RIES and finalized.

As mentioned in the Background, Phase One of the TMSS provided all Grade 1 and 2 students with a new set of 3 textbooks. Teacher Guides for all 6 subjects were also printed for blanket coverage to all schools. To determine the size of the procurement, EMIS data was used with enrolment numbers and Grade 1 and 2 teacher figures projected for the 2014/15 school year. It was agreed that within the Grade 1 and 2 textbooks procurement order, 80 per cent of textbooks would be printed offshore and 20% printed locally through the Education Printing Enterprise State Company.

In 2015/16, Grade 3-5 Textbooks were printed (not the Teacher Guides) for 50 per cent of student enrolment levels. Of this amount, UNICEF/DFAT funds were used to procure 40 per cent of the textbooks through off-shore printing, while MoES funds were used to procure textbooks for the remaining 10 per cent through the Education Printing Enterprise State Company as their annual replenishment.

Findings

Once the Proofed CRC is approved for printing, the storage and electronic filing of this final 'proofed CRC' version has been problematic. RIES could not locate the final 'Proofed CRC' versions of several Textbooks when required for offshore procurement during 2015/16. After some delay, these were finally located within the Education Printing Enterprise State Company computers. The Publications Unit within RIES has limited capacity and resources in terms of computers, legitimate software and recurrent specialized training to manage the storage of final 'proofed CRC' files effectively. Lack of wi-fi and internet access also makes sharing and storage of final Proofed CRCs difficult.

A number of factors influenced the decision to stop the local tenders in 2015/16 and to only print offshore with UNICEF/DFAT funding - but the key determinant was cost. The following Table, based upon UNICEF procurement documents, highlights the different Unit Costs for Grade 1 books between Offshore and the Education Printing Enterprise State Company.

	Offshore Cost (Kip)	Education Press (Kip)
Grade 1 Lao	5,379	9,000
Grade 1 Math	4,951	6,600
Grade 1 WAU	3,582	6,500

In a more balanced review of the three options for printing, this review finds positive and negative aspects for both offshore and local printing. Offshore Printing does nothing to develop local capacity or economy and does little to strengthen systems. Significant delays were experienced in finalizing the Proofs Offshore during 2015/16 - including misplaced proofed CRC and issues related to violent/graphic illustrations - which delayed the process by 3 months. A similar delay in offshore printing was experienced in Lower Secondary with the Asia Development Bank funded Secondary Education Development Project. With regards to printing locally, while there is a much lower risk of delays related to the Proofs, the printing capacity is much lower when compared to large offshore printers and with significantly higher prices.

Regarding the book binding, concerns were raised in some reports over the weak binding in locally printed books. During field visits, however, no one interviewed reported any issues with binding. In addition, a large number of Grade 3-5 books printed by Education Printing Enterprise State Company in 2009 were still being used in classrooms. With the thicker books (more pages) being designed as part of the new Curriculum, concerns over binding will continue to be raised. The Education Printing Enterprise State Company has still not obtained funding to acquire more advanced PUR (polyurethane reactive) binding equipment, which would significantly strengthen the bindings of its books.

Although local private printing presses have expanded their capacity over the past few years and their prices have been reduced, the use of local private presses by MoES and development partners remains limited. The costs remain higher than offshore competition and any local procurement orders would need to be of a smaller scale.

Recommendations

6. Enable RIES to Maintain all Final 'Proofed' Camera Ready Copies

RIES is responsible for preparing and maintaining Camera Ready Copies and while the protocols exist, the systems for storing the final 'Proofed' versions of CRC copies need to be strengthened. The designated focal points and stakeholders across Units and Sections require regular training and orientation. Equipment and memory, including sufficient computers, legitimate software and access to wi-fi connectivity needs to be resourced. As a whole new wave of Textbooks, Teacher Guides and Resource Materials are being developed for the new primary curriculum, it is important that the systems, equipment and capacity are put in place within RIES as soon as possible. As staff are transferred and skills and roles

are pooled, it is important that recurrent training and orientations for RIES staff on storage and management of Proofed CRCs be provided over the course of the new curriculum roll out.

7. Camera Ready Copy should be finalized at least 5 months before Distribution.

To ensure timely completion of printing, the CRC versions should be ready at least 5 months before distribution to DESBs is expected to begin. Delays in the Proofs process can be substantial, especially when printing offshore. If Development Partners have mandatory reviews of textbook illustrations/content (i.e., from gender or rights perspectives) as part of their funding for printing, additional time should be factored. As stated in Recommendation #4 above, the preferred time for textbooks to be delivered to schools is late May, with the second preferred option of August.

8. Development of Local Printers should be Considered

In order to build capacity of local printers, both the Education Printing Enterprise State Company and Local Private Printers should be given opportunities to bid for segments of the new primary curriculum. Local procurement orders would necessarily be of limited scope and size, but the benefits in terms of expanded local investment, greater private sector engagement and strengthened systems for local partnerships should justify the potential higher costs and administrative challenges. Expanding the pool of local state enterprises and private printers eligible to bid for printing contracts could potentially reduce costs and provide efficiencies. To improve local competitiveness and to reflect Government priorities, a streamlined Tax Exemption process should be given to imported paper, ink and glues which are used for printing textbooks and other educational materials.

Section IV: Textbook Distribution and Storage

General Introduction

The MoES distributes the annual 10 per cent textbook replenishment by having the MoES Warehouse deliver these materials - along with other print materials, office supplies, equipment and DESB supplies/materials – direct to DESBs. The fleet of 8 trucks at the MoES Warehouse can be used to deliver the 10 per cent primary textbooks replenishment to all Districts nationally within a period of two weeks. Under the TMSS, training was provided to MoES Warehouse staff in Vientiane on Textbook Storage and Management. Guidelines on Textbook Storage were also prepared for MoES Warehouse staff and these were also included in the one day training DESB Asset Managers received. Textbooks printed offshore were distributed to DESBs through a local private distribution company, which provided photographs of books being handed over to DESB staff as part of their monitoring reports.

In 2014/15, Grade 1 and 2 textbooks and teacher guides printed offshore were distributed by a local contractor to all 148 DESB offices - along with 24 Sea Containers delivered to DESBs in Attapeu and Bokeo and to the MoES Warehouse. The total cost of the distribution of textbooks, teacher guides and Sea Containers from Vientiane to DESBs was US\$175,000. In 2015/16, the local distribution company delivered Grade 3-5 textbooks to 116 DESB offices at a cost of US\$96,600, with MoES Warehouse delivering Grade 3-5 textbooks to 32 Districts.

It should be noted that in the Secondary Education Development Project (SEDP), Lower Secondary Grades 3 and 4 textbooks were sent to nearly 1,700 Lower Secondary schools directly from Vientiane by a private distribution company. For Grade 1 and 2 of Lower Secondary under SEDP, textbooks were delivered directly to DESBs. However, due to the bottlenecks at the DESBs in delivering these books to lower secondary schools equitably, SEDP now has the local private distributor deliver textbooks directly to all lower secondary schools from Vientiane.

Transport of textbooks from DESB to primary schools has been identified by MoES as a major bottleneck and source of disparity. If left up to schools to collect textbooks (using their School Block Grants), then students in small, distant schools and in schools with weak management may not receive their books. No funds are provided to DESB by MoES explicitly for books transport – although a general contingency fund does exist at the DESB which could be used. The VEDC is not officially instructed to support textbook collection from DESBs – although they do this in some cases. Many school principals use School Block Grants to collect their books – or combine official travel to the DESB for meetings as an opportunity to bring books back – but this is not always practical and may require several trips. This has resulted in a first come first serve approach to book distribution with chronic disparities and lack of textbooks affecting remote and less proactive schools.

In 2014/15, a distribution plan per District was prepared by Asset Management Unit and UNICEF in Vientiane in close communication with the DESB Asset Managers. The approach applied three categories to schools: i) nearby – which did not require any additional funds to collect their books; ii) rural – which are somewhat distant and for whom a standard amount was provided; and iii) remote - for which a sliding scale was established. Based upon the costed District Distribution Plans, US\$150,000 was allocated for DESBs to support schools to collect their materials. In 2015/16, a new approach was applied, whereby DESBs were responsible for ensuring books reached schools. A similar central planning process used the same three categories of schools, but this time calculated the costs of daily allowance for DESB staff, of petrol for DESB transport vehicles and/or of sub-contracting private vehicles for delivery. These plans were finalized in Vientiane in close consultation with DESB Asset Managers with a total budget in 2015/16 of US\$146,000. For both years, it was not clear in the review of documentation or during field visits whether the DESBs actually implemented these Distribution Plans or how the budget for textbook transport, once received by the DESB, was actually allocated.

Findings

The MoES Warehouse, located at KM 3 in Vientiane, appears adequate in terms of sufficient, secure and sheltered space – although some textbook materials were found lying unprotected and dusty during the observation visit. There is limited shelving and there were no forklifts or trolleys available. While the Guidelines and training on storage and asset management provided under TMSS were appreciated – the one off training did not appear to have sustained impact. Record keeping at the MoES Warehouse remains weak and there is limited information available on what is in stock, how long it is has been in stock or the plans for future distribution.

Storage at DESBs is poor and textbooks may end up being stored in hallways and meeting rooms before they are sent to schools (See Annex 3 photos). Similarly, record keeping by Asset Managers at DESB on the in-flow and out-flow of materials was very weak. In several DESBs visited in Attapeu, a list of materials received was available, though this was not up to date and the record of when and where they were distributed was blank. DESBs received an additional 10 per cent of textbooks for distribution by DESB in 2014/15, but there is no record as to how long these were stored and where they were distributed.

As a pilot, all DESB in Attapeu, 3 DESBs in Bokeo and the MoES Warehouse received used 20 foot Sea Containers along with funds for the construction of a foundation and rain/sun cover (see Annex 3). At the DESBs visited, the Containers were very much appreciated. These containers continue to provide sufficient, secure and sheltered space with no termites or water damage. While hot inside, this did not affect the affect the materials - although it was sometimes too hot for staff to work comfortably inside. The unit cost of the sea containers could not be determined as the unit costs for procurement and delivery were not broken down in the contracts received for review. However, the construction of

foundations and roofing shelter for each sea container was significantly higher than the planned cost of US\$ 3,000 – with the actual costs totalling US\$7,000 per container for the foundation and roofing.

Distribution of the textbooks from Vientiane to the DESBs went very well in both 2014/15 and 2015/16. MoES Warehouse and the local distributor were able to deliver textbooks and teacher guides on time without any damage reported. However, the distribution of the Do's and Don'ts posters (see Section V) was not completed satisfactorily. These posters, printed under a separate contract, were not included in the textbook distribution plans but added on at the end. This proved to be quite problematic and a number of Provinces did not receive the Do's and Don'ts posters, including Attapeu where we visited.

As mentioned above, primary textbooks are delivered to DESBs from Vientiane and the PESS are not required to receive or store any textbooks. Both PESS visited expressed their desire to receive information from the Asset Management Unit on Textbook Distribution to DESBs in a more timely manner so they could support and monitor textbook distribution in their Districts. PESS reported that they receive information on the Distribution to DESBs only after the exercise is completed.

For ease of distribution, textbooks were packaged into bundles of 5 and wrapped in plastic. This helped protect books during transport. Interviews at all levels confirmed the appreciation for the plastic wrapped bundles which reduced damage and waste. However, delivering in blocks of 5 meant that small requests from schools - for 1-2 books - would still receive a bundle of 5 books as the replenishment requests are rounded up. With a limited stock, the DESBs quickly run out of textbooks when giving out 5 at a time – further reinforcing the principle of first come first served.

Funds provided to DESB under this project were stated by many local informants to be a critical element in ensuring schools could receive their books quickly. However, Distribution Plans - with a description of methods for distribution (delivery or pickup) or with routes and costs - were not available for review in any DESB visited. Nor was there any record or documentation available at the DESBs visited which could explain how the 10 per cent additional stock of Grade 1 and 2 books in 2014/15 were distributed. Simply having a budget for transport does not guarantee DESB success in getting books to schools – as was observed during our visit to several schools not very far from District Headquarters with very few textbooks per classroom. However, in several poor, ethnic rural schools we found 1:1 pupil-textbook ratios in early grades, with all textbooks covered with thick paper. In Grades 4-5, even in the best schools visited, there was still a shortage of textbooks with teachers introducing systems for pairs of students to share books.

There was a common concern amongst senior DESB, PESS and MoES staff that 'paying' schools to collect textbooks could undermine the willingness of schools and communities to contribute resources for school management or transport after the project ends. It was

clear from interviews that MoES is not prepared to use government funds for distribution of learning materials from DESBs to schools – unless this is highly targeted as ‘social welfare’ or emergency response. There is a fundamental principle in MoES and Government of Lao PDR (GoL) that communities need to contribute to their own development – and collecting materials for schools, or for health posts or for agriculture extension from the District headquarters should be one of the contributions provided by community members. If project funds from development partners are given directly to communities to collect materials, after the project ends, there is a perceived risk that communities will not resume their spirit of contribution.

Recommendations

9. Continue to send books direct to DESB and from there to schools

It is recommended to maintain the existing MoES system of sending books from Vientiane to DESBs – and then from the DESBs to schools. Arranging transport of primary materials from Vientiane direct to 8,700 primary schools across the country through private sector contractors will be expensive and will not strengthen government systems. Staff and structures are in place to support DESB to deliver textbooks to schools in a timely manner. Additional efforts are required to make the processes more efficient and better organized. Using the MoES Warehouse trucks to reach 148 DESBs in a timely manner with new Grade 1 Textbooks, Teacher Guides and Teacher Resource Materials is not possible without public-private partnerships or sub-contracting. If development partners intend to print textbooks under global tender, it is recommended that the Asset Management Unit be included when preparing the Terms of References for national distribution and to review the bids received from local private distributors. DESB capacity to prepare costed district distribution plans should also be strengthened rather than rely on centrally prepared plans and budgets.

10. Book Distribution to DESBs should be Scheduled for end-May or August

DESB and schools consistently reported that they preferred to receive their new books in late May. In several rural schools visited without storage for monsoon holidays, systems were reported to be in place to safely and securely store books at teachers’ homes. As mentioned in recommendation #3, the second best time to receive books in schools was August, before the new school year begins, although the DESBs and schools visited reported that August monsoon rains made transport difficult and could result in books arriving after 1 September, the first day of school. In order to deliver textbooks to schools by end May, Education Printing Enterprise State Company or off-shore printers would need to receive the procurement order in early January – at the start of the GoL fiscal year. TIMS data and replenishment requests from schools would need to be ready in late April in order for book distribution in late May to be based on actual replenishment needs. The schedule for teacher training on the new Curriculum will also determine processes for delivering the materials to training venues. As the accuracy of data for replenishment improves, projections based on TIMS will be more reliable for overall planning and distribution.

11. DESB should be Made Accountable for Textbooks Reaching Schools

In the field, the belief remains that schools are responsible for getting books – not that DESB are responsible for getting books to all schools. A change of thinking and shift of responsibility is required. For the new Curriculum, DESB Asset Managers should prepare their textbook distribution plans with budgets, which can be reviewed by PESS before approval from DoF. The system of categorizing schools should be maintained – with nearby schools using their school block grants if necessary to collect books. The DESB can oversee delivery of books to distant and remote schools by using their own vehicles, by sub-contracting others or by reimbursing those schools who arrange to collect themselves. There is an acknowledged risk that VEDC and community support to schools can be undermined by paying schools directly for collecting books. This recommendation does not necessarily provide funds directly to schools – but provides DESBs with capacity and resources to ensure textbooks and learning materials can reach all rural and remote schools on time.

12. Books and Resource Materials should be Distributed Together

It is important to send complete sets of all textbooks, teacher guides and support materials to schools together. Innovative packaging (i.e., plastic wrap) by school and/or labelling of materials by school in warehouses in Vientiane before sending them to DESBs could help ensure that complete sets of new textbooks and resource materials arrive at schools together. If it is not possible to distribute the New Textbooks and Teacher Resource Kits jointly, serious attention must be given to planning and monitoring these two distribution processes – especially from DESBs to schools. These distribution processes would be on top of the distribution plans required at DESBs for the replenishment of the existing curriculum.

13. Sea Containers for DESB Storage needs Further Review

The Sea Containers appear to offer DESBs with a safe, secure and sufficient storage facility which was highly appreciated. However, the high cost of the foundation and sun/rain roof requires a review of their design. The effectiveness of a small ventilation fan can also be explored in a revised design - which could be piloted by the Asset Management Unit in a few DESBs near Vientiane. There is great potential to use Sea Containers in an expanded manner but only after further review by DoF of the design and cost.

Section V: Textbook Registration, use, care and return and maintenance

General Introduction

The School principals at schools sign the Receipt of Books Form when they receive their books from the DESB (or the sub-contracted party). This is a key document kept at DESB and is used as proof of textbook delivery to schools. After receiving their replenishment textbooks, schools are expected to update their list of school learning materials (stock list) detailing all textbooks, teacher guides and other learning materials maintained by the school.

When the school year starts, teachers and students are expected to fill out the Registration Table printed on the inside back cover of every Primary Textbook. This Table includes basic information such as the year, the student's name and the teacher's name – and there are rows so that each year, a different student can fill out their information in the Registration Table.

A list of 16 Do's and Don'ts - describing good and bad student behavior in relation to textbook care - were developed and field tested by RIES. The Do's and Don'ts messages are summarized in the Introduction to all primary textbooks, in the section to teachers just before Lesson One. Examples of Do's and Don'ts messages include "Do make a cover for your book", and "Don't let your book get wet with rain." Under the TMSS, the Do's and Don'ts messages were also transformed into a fun illustrated Poster – where the different Do's and Don'ts are depicted with cartoons. This poster was printed and sent to DESBs to forward to schools so that it could be hung in every primary school classroom nationally.

The Do's and Don'ts were also integrated into TV and Radio spots, relying on local media companies to develop the spots following a competitive bidding process. The spots were developed in 3 languages (Lao, Khmu and Hmong) and broadcast on National and Provincial Television and Radio under the Ministry of Information, Communication and Tourism (MoICT) with UNICEF paying broadcast fees at negotiated rates. This combination of different communication efforts was expected to help change behaviour at school and classroom levels in relation to textbook maintenance, return and re-use. There has been no evaluation of these efforts and such analysis is beyond the scope of this documentation process.

At the community level, no orientations were provided to VEDC members on textbook management, care and re-use. The existing Guidelines for VEDC's do not include support for textbook registration, care and maintenance or for textbook transportation and management. However, as part of the TMSS pilot in Bokeo Province, PLAN International provided VEDC members a one hour orientation on their potential role in supporting

textbook management. This has been reported by PLAN and DoF as having an impact on textbook maintenance and care.

There was no support provided under the TMSS for PAs who are based at the DESB and who play a critical role in improving school management and quality. In the existing Guideline for PAs, their roles and responsibilities do not include support to textbook care, maintenance and re-use. If the purpose of textbook use, registration and care is to ensure quality learning in schools – then textbook management in classrooms should be part of school management and included in the roles of PAs. PLAN International, in the TMSS Pilot in Bokeo, gave PAs training and a one-page supplement to their existing School Management Monitoring package. This extra page focussed on textbook registration and care helped to strengthen the PA focus on textbook management. There were no efforts under TMSS to integrate textbook maintenance and care into in-service primary teacher training.

Findings

The goal of textbooks management is for students to have their own set of textbooks which will help them to learn more effectively when complemented by classroom activities as organized by the teacher. However, in the classrooms observed during field visits, actual textbook use during lessons was often disappointing. Only a few classrooms demonstrated student centered or group learning activities. In many classrooms visited, teachers still copied the pages of the textbook on the blackboard – which students then repeated out loud and copied into their notebooks.

Significant efforts by MoES, development partners and communities have resulted in almost all schools having at least one secure room where books can be safe and securely maintained after school hours. However, some schools still do not have safe and secure space to maintain materials during the long monsoon holiday and must rely on space in the homes of teachers or VEDC members to store their books. To ensure new books can be safely maintained during monsoon holidays, school principals may use School Block Grants to buy plastic sheets and other materials to improve the homes of teachers or VEDC members who store textbooks for the school during the holiday monsoons.

Book registration in the schools visited was very poor. There were limited records and no examples of updated ‘stock lists’ with details on the number of textbooks by Grade and their condition. School principals had no idea how many books they currently had in their schools – nor could they recollect the number of books damaged during the current school year. The lack of records and basic information make it impossible to calculate the level of re-use and textbook wastage annually from existing school data.

In all schools visited, not a single textbook had anything written in the Registration Table printed on the inside back cover. The Registration Table may have been designed to improve textbook responsibility and record keeping in teachers – but this is not happening. One school principal described their initiative to get parents to sign a receipt for the

textbooks in order to strengthen care of the books at home. Parents preferred that their children not receive the textbooks rather than sign any receipt – so the school principal gave up his idea to require any signatures from parents.

There were tremendous differences in the level of covered textbooks in the schools visited. In some schools and some classrooms, over 97 per cent of the textbooks were covered with newspaper, old calendars or other types of protective paper. In other schools and classrooms visited, only 5 per cent of textbooks were covered. In all schools the level of observed textbook damage was quite high (the visits were timed for the end of the school year - in May) - especially in some Grade 1 and 2 classes where many students had textbooks with torn front and back cover pages.

During the field visits, no teacher interviewed knew that the Do's and Don'ts were summarized in the Introduction to the Textbooks – and they struggled to remember any of the Do's and Don'ts messages. No student was familiar with the Introduction to their books before Lesson One and none could recall any of the Do's and Don'ts messages. The Posters intended to be hung in every classroom never reached Attapeu and several other Provinces. In Khammouane, only one Poster was seen hanging (in the Teachers Office of a school) while many other Posters were found rolled up in storage cabinets.

While MoICT was informed by TMSS of the communication activities, but there was no strategic communication plan developed jointly for these efforts. During the field visit, no one at school the level could recall either the TV or Radio Spots. In the Khammouane PESS, one staff could remember hearing the radio spot – but his only recollection was that the Hmong spot he had heard was not appropriate for the children living there.

Recommendations

14. Textbook Care and Maintenance should be Mainstreamed into School Management

The Department of Pre-primary and Primary Education (now part of the Department of General Education, DGE) must take a greater role in strengthening textbook registration, care, maintenance and re-use in classroom and schools. The teacher remains a key player in determining whether or not students cover their books. The DoF is the lead Department for Textbook Management – but at the school and classroom level, the role of school principals, Teachers and PAs under DGE should be stronger. PAs should be required to monitor textbook care (covering books) as well as Registration Tables completed by teachers and Stock Lists maintained by school principals. In-service and Pre-service Teacher Training provided under Department of Teacher Training should include greater focus on textbook care and registration, as should regular school principal training and meetings held at the DESB. The Department of Personnel should review the roles and responsibilities of PAs, school principals and VEDC members and include textbook management in their performance measures.

15. Re-think “Do’s and Don’ts” Messages and Communication

The 16 Do’s and Don’ts messages make quite a long list. This may be appropriate for Grades 4 or 5 but for Grades 1 and 2 they are too complex. Simplified messages on textbook care should be identified and introduced within the first Lesson of Grade 1 Textbooks. The first 2 pages of Lesson One in all primary textbooks could showcase how to care for books and introduce the Registration Table in the back. The content can be expanded with more detail and more messages in Grades 3-5. It is recommended that further innovation and field testing of the Do’s and Don’ts messages, posters and communication materials be undertaken – with several versions field tested for different grade levels and for teachers.

16. Review the use of National Radio and TV

The use of National Radio or TV for communication on textbook care and re-use should not be supported unless this is part of a communication plan - developed with inputs from MoICT. Without a clear strategic plan that links target populations with the appropriate medium and message, the national broadcasting of TV and Radio spots will remain costly and largely ineffective. If target populations are children and parents in remote areas, then the use of Provincial Radio to develop local language messages based upon the revised Do’s and Don’ts messages should be explored.

17. Strengthen Textbook Registration at Schools

Greater effort is required to improve textbook registration and record keeping in schools and classrooms. In addition to ensuring that all textbooks are covered with protective wrapping, a collective effort to strengthen book registration will help build ownership and responsibility for maintaining preserving books for the next school year. Having a clear picture of the total stock of books in a school will allow school principals and PAs to plan with Asset Managers at the DESB to replenish books based on actual needs. Revising Roles and Accountabilities of school principals and PAs by the Department of Personnel to include textbook management (as per #14 above) will help.

Section VI: Coordination and Partnership

General Introduction

Textbook Management requires communication and coordination between many departments and centers within MoES as well as with a wide range of private sector stakeholders. The Textbook Management Committee - composed of all key MoES Departments, Centers and State Companies - is chaired by the Director General of DoF and helps to coordinate the planning, procurement, distribution and monitoring of textbooks. The TMSS did not target any support for the senior Committees or central Coordination mechanisms.

During the period of the TMSS, the MoES began drafting the Textbook Policy. This initiative was undertaken as a condition for the Asian Development Bank (ADB) loan to the DSE for Lower Secondary (Secondary Education Development Project, SEDP). The DSE was required to develop a Textbook Policy – focusing on lower secondary education – as part of the deliverables for the loan. Over the past 2 years, DSE revised this draft Textbook Policy a number of times – and the scope expanded to include primary education (though not yet pre-schools technical/vocational education, non-formal education or higher education).

Another key partnership in textbook management is with private sector. Regulations exist that allow MoES at all levels to sub-contract private sector to distribute educational materials, to print and copy materials and to support the education system in a variety of ways. The TMSS used both offshore printing contracted directly by UNICEF – as well as local printers contracted under Education Printing Enterprise State Company. Delivery of the textbooks printed offshore to DESBs was contracted by UNICEF to a local private distributor after competitive bidding. Local private companies also developed and produced the radio and television spots. All these assignments were completed on time with satisfactory quality.

Findings

The internal coordination between DoF and other key Departments and Centers could be stronger. With the Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education (DPPE), more could be done to create synergies with the Pas and VEDC members. Incorporating relevant textbook management lessons into both pre-service and in-service teacher training requires expanded partnerships with the Department of Teacher Training. Similarly, coordination with the EMIS Center could strengthen the TIMS and the compatibility of indicators and standards.

The development of the draft Textbook Policy is another example where coordination and collaboration could be improved. During the interviews with Departments and Centers across MoES, very few had received the draft Textbook Policy from DSE for review and there was very limited consultation. At the time of the desk review, the draft Textbook Policy

does not clearly spell out the internal coordination mechanisms for Textbook Management or assign defined roles and responsibilities to key stakeholders.

In general, there were very positive experiences reported in the contracts with local private sector. In terms of quality and timeliness – local contractors for printing and distribution completed assignments to full satisfaction. Sub-contracting private sector is quite common but there is no comprehensive public-private strategy in place within MoES to increase effectiveness of private sector and civil society engagement.

Recommendations

18. Strengthen Coordination through Textbook Policy Development

There are two aspects to strengthening coordination – through the process to develop the policy and through the policy itself. In the later, the current draft Textbook Policy requires more attention in describing the mechanisms for coordination and the responsibilities across Departments for the different aspects of textbook management –considering the different needs of pre-primary, non-formal, technical/vocational and higher education. Regarding the process, since the DSE was merged into the DGE, MoES must now decide which Department - DoF or DGE - will be the focal point to complete the Textbook Policy. Whichever Department leads, a consultation process with stakeholders at all levels should be carried out before the Textbook Policy is finalized.

19. Clarify roles and responsibilities in Textbook Management

A process to review Roles and the Responsibilities for all aspects of the textbook management cycle should be completed. This cross-cutting review should bring together stakeholders to provide the Department of Personnel with revised accountabilities and performance which must be incorporated into revised Job Descriptions. The roles of private sector as partners, rather than just as sub-contractors, should be considered with the provision for local competitive bidding by private sector and civil society organizations in relation to the new Curriculum - for distribution to targeted areas, for monitoring the care and maintenance of books and for developing and supplying supplementary books and resource materials.

Section VII: Conclusion

National textbook management is complex by nature – with many different stakeholders responsible for key steps in the process. The management and administration of learning materials is the responsibility of the Textbook Management Unit within the DoF. While MoES has the systems in place to allow for the efficient management of primary textbooks – there are a number of issues facing the Ministry and its development partners to effectively manage these systems.

The MoES remains committed to its Target of 1:1 Textbook-Pupil Ratio in all primary schools nationally. Under the TMSS, MoES introduced a number of measures to more effectively implement textbook management at national and local levels. As per the findings in this Report, many of these efforts should be continued while others need to be improved. It is hoped that the identification of good practices and recommendations in this Report will help the GoL to further develop an effective Textbook Policy and to strengthen the overall textbook management systems.

Plans for the rollout of the new Primary Curriculum have focused on textbook preparation, including the sequencing of learning outcomes and the field testing and revision of lessons and materials. More attention is required for other elements of textbook management, including planning, procurement, distribution, and care in classrooms and monitoring. With the findings documented and the experiences gained through the implementation of the TMSS, the MoES is better positioned to manage the new Primary Curriculum roll out - starting with new Grade 1 textbooks in 2018/19 – and to replenish textbooks for Grades 2-5 in a more efficient and equitable manner through 2021/22.

In total, there are 19 Recommendations included in this report (see Annex One). While these are intended to be practical, they also require enabling policy, institutional commitment and in some cases development partner support to be fully implemented. A complete set of textbooks for all students in all primary schools is a key element in ensuring that all children can learn and attain their right to a quality basic education.

ANNEX 1: List of Recommendations

1. *Conduct a Survey of Textbook Re-use and Care*
2. *Develop a Costed Long-Term Textbook Plan*
3. *Review Planning Sections of draft Textbook Policy*
4. *Maintain and Use Accurate Data and Records*
5. *Improve TIMS Software and Implementation*
6. *Enable RIES to Maintain all Final 'Proofed' Camera Ready Copies*
7. *Camera Ready Copy should be Finalized at Least 5 Months Before Distribution*
8. *Development of Local Printers should be Considered*
9. *Continue to Send Books to DESB and from There to Schools with secured funds*
10. *Book Distribution to DESBs should be Scheduled for end May or August*
11. *DESB should be Made Accountable for Textbooks Reaching Schools*
12. *Books and Resource Materials should be Distributed Together*
13. *Sea Containers for DESB Storage needs Further Review*
14. *Textbook Care and Maintenance should be Mainstreamed into School Management*
15. *Re-think "Do's and Don'ts" Messages and Communication*
16. *Review the use of National Radio and TV*
17. *Strengthen Textbook Registration at Schools*
18. *Strengthen Coordination through Textbook Policy Development*
19. *Clarify Roles and Responsibilities in Textbook Management*

ANNEX 2: Persons Interviewed and Places Visited

Dr. Sisouk Vongvachit, Director General, Department of Secondary Education
Dr. Mithong, Director General, Department of Pre-school and Primary Education
Mr. Vimonth Sisouva, Deputy Director, Asset Management Unit, DoF
Mr. Bounthong Khantixayalath - Deputy Director – Education Printing Enterprise State Company
Ms. Keomanivanh Phimmahasay, Deputy Director General, Dep't of Secondary Education
Ms. Pakian Luangxaysana, Deputy Director General, Research Institute for Educational Sciences
Mr. Rory Crowe – Education Materials Production and Distribution Specialist, BEQUAL
Ms. Alison Bullock, Teaching and Learning Resources Specialist, BEQUAL
Mr. Sengthong Kaomuanvong, Education Coordinator, PLAN International Laos
Mr. Somxay Inthasone, ECCD and Education Advisor, PLAN International
Mr. Yasumasa Nagaoka, Education Policy Adviser, JICA
Mr. Phouvong Sihalath, Senior Consultant (Educational Finance), JICA
Mr. Soutchai, Officer, Asset Management Unit, DoF
Ms. Siamphone Buakhamvongsa UNICEF
Mr. Doudou Luemba, Operations Chief, UNICEF

In Khammouane:

In PESS:

Mr. Nanthaxai, Deputy Director of Khammouane PESS
Ms. Phongxai, Deputy Head of General Education Unit, Khammouane PESS
Mr. Seng Phothisane, Deputy Head of Administration Unit, Khammouane PESS
Mr. Keodavone Xayavong, Secondary Education PA, Khammouane PESS

In Nongbok:

Mr. Khambang, DG of Nongbok DESB
Mr. Khamphanh, Asset Management, Nongbok DESB
School principals, Asset Management focal points and VEDC members of Navangthong, Tantheung and Sadeu Primary Schools

In Xebanfai

Mr. Lodvilay, DG of Xebangfai DESB
Mr. Khamxai, Administration Unit, Xebangfai DESB
School principals, Asset Management focal points and VEDC members of Nongphang, Thahad and Thakhor Primary Schools

In Attapeu:

In PESS

Mr. Kanha, DG of Attapeu PESS
Mr. Khamkheung, Asset Management staff, Attapeu PESS
Mr. Phouthone, Head of Administration Unit, Attapeu PESS
Mr. Khaimoukda, General Education Staff, Attapeu PESS

In Sanamxai District

Mr. Thongxai Bouthondee, DG of Sanamxai DESB
Mr. Vankham, Asset Management staff, Sanamxai DESB
Head of Administration Unit, Sanamxai DESB
School principals, Asset Management focal points and VEDC members of Tamoryord, Hinlard and Bounkeo Primary Schools

ANNEX 3: Photos



Grades 3, 4 and 5 textbooks being stored in the hallway of a DESB in 2015



Office Room (2m x 5m) used as Store Room in DESB - 2017



Sea Container Storage Pilot – DESB Office in Attapeu - 2017

