

The Inclusive Teaching and Learning Evaluative Study 2024-2026



Overview and Approach



Why is diversity and inclusion important for learning?

Classroom diversity enhances student learning. When nurtured it provides vibrant learning opportunities that promote empathy, critical thinking, problem solving, and innovation.

Lao PDR is richly diverse, with 50 official ethnic groups comprised of 167 subgroups with different dialects, languages, cultures and traditions.¹ Languages other than Lao are spoken by more than 40% of Lao PDR citizens. Together with varied perspectives shaped by gender, disability, geography, and socio-economic backgrounds, this diversity creates abundant opportunities for learning and growth.

National assessments of student learning outcomes in Lao PDR show that students with a home language other than Lao often score lower on standardised tests than their Lao-speaking peers. Similarly, students who are frequently absent, from lower socio-economic backgrounds, or living with a disability are more likely to have lower test scores. When these factors intersect—such as for a girl who doesn't speak Lao at home and has a disability—learning disparities are more pronounced.²

To address these disparities, the Education and Sports Sector Development Plan 2021-25 (ESSDP 2021-25) of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) targets *'an increased number of graduates at all levels with improved learning outcomes with special focus on disadvantaged students and gender equity'*.³

The Government of Australia's (GoA's) bilateral partnership with the Government of Lao PDR (GoL) through the Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR (BEQUAL) program reflects a shared commitment to addressing social inequality and advancing 'gender equality and the rights of people with disabilities'⁴ with a program goal of *more primary school-aged children, particularly those experiencing disadvantage, demonstrate increased engagement in learning and improved learning outcomes*.⁵

Inclusive education means all students have access to quality education that effectively meets their diverse needs in a responsive, accepting, respectful and supportive environment. Inclusive education takes place in shared educational settings where students of different backgrounds and abilities are supported to overcome barriers that lead to exclusion.

Inclusive teaching is teachers' facilitation of students diverse learning needs.

Inclusive learning is engagement and learning for students from varied gender, ability, language and socio-economic backgrounds.

1 MoES Class Attendance Guidance, including list of languages used in Lao PDR as per Population Demographics from Population Census 2015 based on the 6th General National Assembly Meeting 108/NA 5 December 2018.

2 UNESCO and UNICEF (2021) *5-Year Progress Review of SDG 4 – Education 2030 in Asia-Pacific*. 'Literacy in Lao PDR is least prevalent among women from rural areas, those that are poorest and those from minority ethnic populations.'

3 High level outcome (HLO) 1, ESSDP 2021 – 2025.

4 Commonwealth of Australia, DFAT, Australia's International Development Policy

5 BEQUAL <https://bequal-laos.org/>

What is the Inclusive Study?

In 2024, MoES in collaboration with GoA launched an exciting study to explore student belonging and engagement in school, and their impact on student learning outcomes.

The Inclusive Teaching and Learning Evaluative Study (Inclusive Study) is a longitudinal study being conducted over three years across 30 target districts in seven provinces supported by the BEQUAL program.

The Inclusive Study is looking for quality teaching practices that lead to increased student engagement and improved learning outcomes in grades one, two and three. The study is focusing on the learning experiences of girls and boys who face disadvantages in the school system due to home language, living with a disability, or frequently being absent from school. Insights from the study will help education stakeholders at all levels to better understand the challenges and opportunities for enhancing these students' sense of belonging at school, engagement in learning, and learning outcomes.

The Inclusive Study includes the collection of qualitative and quantitative data over three years. In February and March each year, qualitative case study research is carried out through interviews with students, parents and their teachers in 21 target schools. In April each year, Lao language tests are carried out in 120 schools starting with grade one students in 2024, and following their progress through to grade two and three. Every semester, monitoring data such as classroom observations are collected together with teachers and the people supporting them.



The key questions that guide the Inclusive Study are:

1. How and to what extent have teaching practices improved across the teacher sample?
2. How has an inclusive learning culture been created for students?
3. How are improved teaching practices impacting on student engagement and learning across the student sample?
4. How and to what extent has student engagement and learning changed across the student sample?



A unique data analysis approach: Belonging Framework

We all want to feel like we belong. Our sense of belonging within our family, community and society is an important foundation from which we flourish to be our best selves. Research shows that when a student feels a sense of kinship with their teachers and classmates and school feels like a family, they enjoy being at school and have better learning outcomes.⁶

Do you have a childhood memory of a teacher who positively impacted your life? What were they like? Perhaps they offered you a listening ear or an encouraging smile. Perhaps they saw your unique interests and encouraged you to pursue them. Most likely, they created a sense of **BELONGING** – a **sanctuary** where you felt safe, **harmony** in the group, and recognition of the **significance** of your unique contributions.

The diagram on the next page describes these three aspects of belonging being explored through the Inclusive Study: **sanctuary**, **harmony** and **significance**.

How will the belonging framework be used in the study?

The Belonging Framework was specifically developed for this study to draw on shared Lao and Australian First Nations cultural values. It was developed to ensure that the study takes into account the social, psychological and environmental factors that influence students' learning, rather than only looking at their test scores.

The data collection tools, data analysis process, and enumerator team training, are guided by the Belonging Framework.

⁶ Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (2018) results showed 'In a majority of countries and economies, 15-year-old students who reported a stronger sense of belonging at school scored higher in reading, even after accounting for the socio-economic profile of students and schools.' OECD (2019) *PISA 2018 Results (Volume III): What Schools Life Means for Students' Lives*. This included in Southeast Asian countries of Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia.

BELONGING FRAMEWORK



Who is involved in the study?

The study is being led by MoES' Department of Teacher Education (DTE) in collaboration with national and subnational stakeholders.



Design and overseeing the study

- Department of Teacher Education



Lao Language student assessments

- Research Institute for Educational Sciences



Qualitative case studies

- DTE
- Inclusive Education Promotion Center
- MoES' Division for the Advancement of Women, Mothers, and Children
- Gender Equality and Inclusive Education personnel in target Teacher Training Colleges
- BEQUAL staff



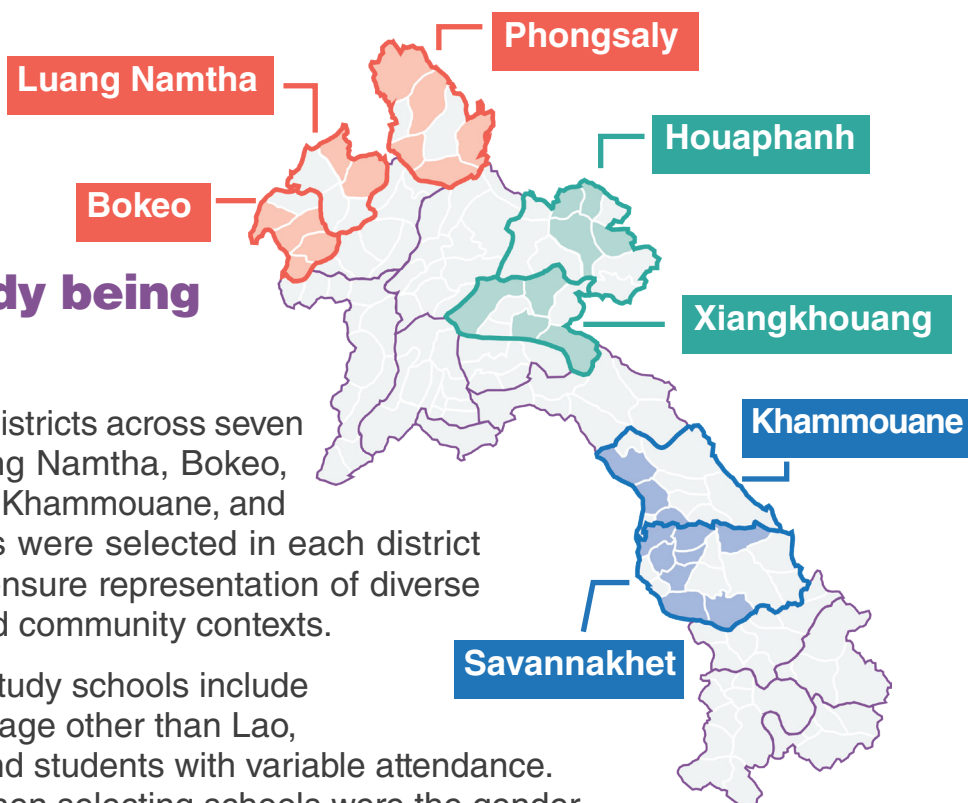
Monitoring of teachers' practices

- Teacher Training Colleges
- Internal Pedagogical Support (IPS) staff
- District Education and Sports Bureaus
- Provincial Education and Sports Services
- Department of General Education

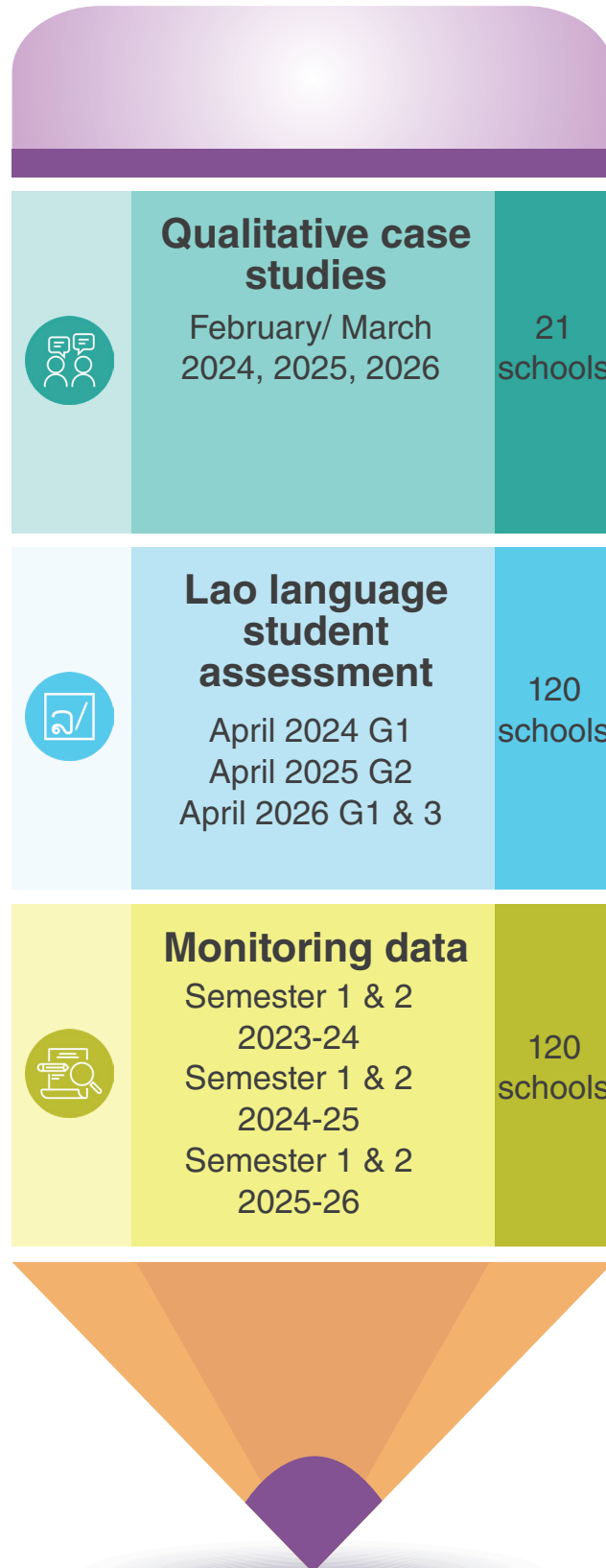
Where is the study being implemented?

The study covers 30 target districts across seven provinces: Phongsaly, Luang Namtha, Bokeo, Houaphanh, Xiangkhouang, Khammouane, and Savannakhet. Four schools were selected in each district across these provinces to ensure representation of diverse student, teacher, school and community contexts.

As a result, selected case study schools include students with a home language other than Lao, students with a disability, and students with variable attendance. Other criteria considered when selecting schools were the gender of teachers and principals, geographic location, the need for multigrade classroom teaching, and whether the school is implementing remedial spoken Lao language lessons.



What is the timeline for the study?



Leading to

- Insights from qualitative case studies 2024, 2025 and 2026.
- Student language assessment changes over three years.
- Resource for teachers.
- Resource for parents.



Expected results and next steps

By the end of the 2026, it is anticipated the Inclusive Study will:

1. **Identify practical examples of effective teaching practices** to promote inclusive teaching and learning.
2. **Demonstrate positive changes** that have occurred through CPD activities led by MoES and with the support of the BEQUAL program.
3. **Finalise a Belonging Framework specific to the Lao context** that can be used by education stakeholders for designing future research and evaluations.
4. **Share the most promising approaches** with teachers and the wider school community, to foster an inclusive learning environment for a diverse range of students.

For more information on the Inclusive Study scan this QR code



BEQUAL is a program led by the Ministry of Education and Sports of Lao PDR with the support from the Australian Government

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