

Reading Promotion and Library in Lao PDR Supporting by Room to Read Laos

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Country Profile:

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is a small country with a land area of 236,000 square kilometers, stretching more than 1700 kms from north to south and between 100 to 400 kilometers from east to west. It is a landlocked country bordering China to the north, Vietnam to the east, Cambodia in the south, and Myanmar and Thailand in the West. The Western border follows mainly the north-south course of the Mekong River. Some 80% of the country is mountainous and almost half of it is covered with forest (47%). The mountains pose difficulties for transportation and communication. Together with abundance of rivers, however, the mountains produce vast potential for the development of hydroelectric power. Forest consists of wide varieties of species, including hardwoods. Sizable deposits of minerals such as iron ore and coal are scattered across the mountainous area.

Laos is the least densely populated country in Southeast Asia with 24 persons per square kilometer. In the 2005 census, the population was 5,621,982 inhabitants and the growth was estimated to be 2.1%. In 2009, it is estimated to be 6,100,000 inhabitants. Most of the population lives in rural areas (80%) in or near small villages. The physical characteristics and lacks of development have led to wide disparities in economic conditions, health, education, and other aspect of life, particularly in the rural and remote areas. The country is divided into 16 provinces and a Capital City. Each province is divided into Districts and Villages. There are in total 142 districts with 47 of them considered as poorest and where priorities program of the government should go there, and 10,500 villages throughout the county.

Lao PDR is an agricultural country, (livestock, fisheries, and forestry) which employees 85% of the labor force, mostly within the subsistence economy. Women makes up of 45 percent of the labor force. The industrial and service sectors of the economy account for about 40 percent of GDP. The annual per capita income is 500 US\$ in 2005 and 800-900 US\$ in 2009(estimation). Under the incentives of the New Economic Mechanism, adopted in 1986, the industrial, manufacturing, and the wholesale and retail trade in the services sectors have steadily grown.

The Education Information:

The Lao education system was reconstructed in 1975. It now consists of five year of primary, three years of lower-secondary and three years of upper-secondary schooling (5+3+3). As the general educational sub- sector reform initiated during the national conference in 2006, this structure will be changed to 5+4+3, beginning the school year 2009-10. Currently there are 8,871 Primary schools (51,9% is completion primary schools) , 1,125 Secondary Schools.

Literacy is defined as ability to reading, writing, and numeracy. Non formal education as well as primary school enrollments, varies from province to province. Adult literacy rates ranges from 43.1 to 91.7 percent. The national average of Literacy rate for 15-40 age group is 85%, for adults over 15+ is 77%, and net enrolment ratios from 73.6 percent in Luangnamtha to 94.2 percent in the Vientiane Capital. Literacy rates both for youth and adult were low in percentage and poor in quality in remote mountainous and ethnic groups' areas, because of the quality of teachers. Literacy classes normally are organized after primary school hours, and taught by primary class-room teachers. In most of the case these teachers are themselves untrained (15-18%) of the total number of primary schools teachers in the whole country, and are mostly in these regions.

The adults and youth literacy rates in the country in the Lao Literacy Survey 2001 were for each group ages as follow: Population aged 15+ :Total :68.7 % , :Female: 60.9% and Male 77.0% . Adults: Aged 15-39, Total: 75.4%, Female:71.1% and Male 80.2%. Adults Aged 15-59, Total: 72.3%, Female: 65.5% and Male 79.5%.Among the provinces , Vientiane Capital registered the highest adult (aged 15+ literacy rates with 93.8% for males and 86.7% for females. Champasack Province stood second interm of adult literacy with 83% for both gender, Vientiane Province, second in term of socio-economic standing, were mediocre in term of adult literacy: only 81.4% for males and 67.8% for females. Females literacy rates were very low (lower than 50%) in Saravan, Phongsaly, Luangnamtha, Oudomxay, Huaphanh, Luangprabang and Bokeo. For Room to Read provinces the figure were as follow:

Reported literacy rates (in Lao Language) in Provinces where is RtR Laos implementation.

Province	Population Aged 15+			Adults :Aged 15-39		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Lao PDR	77.0%	60.9%	68.7%	80.2%	71.1%	75.4%
Vientiane Capital	93.8%	86.7%	90.2%	94.6%	94.5%	94.5%
Phongsaly	56.2%	37.2%	46.5%	60.1%	48.0%	53.8%
Oudomxay	69.1%	41.8%	55.3%	73.3%	49.9%	61.2%
Bokeo	72.1%	48.6%	59.6%	77.3%	63.3%	69.7%
Xayabouly	78.9%	69.8%	74.3%	82.9%	81.3%	82.0%
Vientiane Province	81.4%	67.8%	74.5%	85.9%	79.3%	82.4%
Bolikhamxay	83.7%	69.2%	76.3%	87.1%	79.1%	82.8%
Savannakhet	72.2%	56.8%	64.1%	76.7%	70.4%	73.4%
Salavane	57.9%	36.8%	47.1%	57.4%	41.9%	49.5%

The data collected by the Department of Non Formal Education for the School Year 2008-2009, from the Reports of the Provinces, although not completed, data collected from only 8,925 villages out of 10,500 villages for the whole Country, have given us general view on the Literacy Rates of the Country. The Report gave the numbers of illiterate peoples. The Rates in the table below were calculation by the Consultant.

Illiteracy rates in some and Room to Read supported Province

Province	6-14 years illiteracy Rates		15-24 years illiteracy Rates		25-40 illiteracy Rates		40+ illiteracy Rates	
	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female
Lao PDR	5.01%	5.45%	4.52%	5.76%	5.81%	7.26%	18.34%	20.49%
Vientiane Cap.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.34%	3.14%
<i>Phongsaly</i>	28.0%	30.3%	28.0%	46.0%	29.76%	33.64%	60.79%	73.79%
<i>Oudomxay</i>	1.98%	2.54%	3.08%	3.78%	5.56%	6.69%	29.53%	34.64%
<i>Bokeo</i>	8.99%	11.30%	12.1%	13.76%	17.17%	22.11%	25.52%	28.47%
<i>Xayabouly</i>	0.38%	0.39%	0.97%	1.3%	1.60%	1.82%	2.50%	3.26%
<i>Vientiane Prov.</i>	0.8%	0.8%	1.60%	1.82%	2.50%	3.26%	11.87%	12.17%
<i>Bolikhamxay</i>	1.88%	2.27%	2.96%	4.28%	5.80%	8.14%	15.76%	19.62%
<i>Savannakhet</i>	8.99%	10.16%	6.41%	8.19%	7.54%	8.83%	20.07%	24.34%
<i>Salavane</i>	15%	15%	6.98%	8.39%	7.40%	8.19%	22.86%	23.12%
<i>Champasak</i>	0.41%	0.41%	0.18%	0.21%	0.33%	0.37%	4.19%	5.16%

Source: Department of Non Formal Education 2008-2009

Reading Promotion in Laos:

The survey of reading practices among primary school children undertaken by the National Library of Laos and the General Education Department of the Ministry of Education from 1975 to 1988, found that children who were studying in the first three grades of school were unable to read (i.e. they could only recite by heart). Even those who completed their school education could not read well. The survey, which was conducted in every province of Laos, found that children did not enjoy reading because there were no books of a suitable level for them. In fact there were only school textbooks, but no illustrated children's books suitable for their ages. Many people say that Lao people do not like to read books, but in fact they do have a long literary and storytelling tradition, which has been passed down through the ages. From the survey they saw that children love to read, but lacked materials and people who could nurture their interest. As a result, the Ministry of Information and Culture and the Ministry of Education set up the National Reading Promotion Program, which has been running since 1989 until the present day, and which is planned to continue until 2020, to build a reading society.

The activities of the program are the printing of children's books, mobile libraries, portable libraries, reading rooms, school libraries and community libraries. For children

who have not been to school, there is a team of storytellers who use puppet shows at the village level and promote understanding about the importance of children's education and reading among parents.

Following rural survey and outreach activities to raise awareness about the importance of literacy and library services, the National Library requests external funding to cover construction costs, and has received support from many countries. However, while they are grateful for this support, like the rain in Laos, it sometimes arrives in large quantities in one place and other places are left dry. Over the past 20 years, the program has only been able to cover about 40 percent of the country, which leaves a huge number of children remaining in need. According to statistics collected by the Ministry of Education, there are approximately 8,400 primary schools in the country, of which our mobile libraries now reach 6,800. Each mobile library has one box containing 250 books. Schools which provide a spare room to us receive a dedicated reading room or if space is more limited, a 'reading corner.' When they have sufficient funds, they construct separate library buildings, of about 5m by 7m in size, with 1,500 – 3,000 books. They are also constructing public libraries for each province, but have only completed nine out of 17 provinces as of 2010. They emphasize the role of these provincial public libraries as centers to provide services to their satellite libraries.

In summary, external funding has enabled us to provide over 6,000 mobile libraries, almost 1,000 school reading rooms, and 35 joint community and school libraries and learning centers, and nine major provincial libraries. The main sponsors include the Room to Read Laos, Shanti Volunteer Association (SVA), Action for Lao Children (ACL), the American Library Project, Empowerment for All (EFA), Collectif de Bibliothécaires et Intervenants en Action Culturelle (COBIAC), etc. In addition, they have a '10 day' library construction project run by the leader of the Reading Promotion Project and their team. In this project, volunteers from abroad join the National Library team for 10 days, during which they experience a home stay with rural Lao families. This project is greatly enjoyed by all participants and by the local communities and people are astonished that beautiful libraries can be constructed in such a short time, and have labeled the team leader as the 'miracle woman of library construction.'

The Reading Promotion program as we present above has been contributing to the improvement of the quality of education in remote areas and addressing a gap of book access of Laos for over 20 years. Significant progress has been made in reducing the disparity in the quality of education in urban and rural areas, and children in many rural areas now have improved access to educational resources such as library services, and teachers have also improved their pedagogical methods. As we observed the illiteracy rate, the GoL encourage to promote reading habit in Lao PDR by allowing to many INGOs support reading activities in Laos PDR and how to decrease the gap of book access and improving the learning outcomes (Quality of Education).

While the government would like education to be available in all parts of the country with quality improvement, in practice there remain significant inequalities in its provision. In particular, literacy levels have been very low in primary schools, both in rural and urban schools. Children from ethnic groups must learn Lao in the first year of

primary school before beginning the regular curriculum in the second year. The Lao Government has made significant progress in the construction of rural schools from kindergarten to secondary levels, which are now found throughout the country, with little difference between urban and rural areas. The government has also produced and distributed textbooks to all schools, and teachers receive additional training each year. However, there is still a significant disparity in the quality of education in rural areas and urban areas, where there is greater access to resources such as libraries and book shops, computers, and the Internet. These resources are largely lacking in rural areas, where the majority of Lao children live. In order to lessen this inequality and one important skill to help children to meet with quality of education is “Reading Skill Developing “. Thus the Room to Read Laos has established a program to improve literacy in rural areas, including reading, writing and speaking, through building libraries, publishing many local language books for children and the distribution of books to school where already has a libraries , etc. The overall aim of these programs is to improve the services related to the provision of education and knowledge for children in Laos.

At the start of the program, we faced many challenges. For example, supplementary reading materials to support their education were lacking, and the books that were available were mostly been for adults, which are too difficult for young children to read. Room to Read found that one solution to this situation is to publish more children’s books but were unsatisfactory for both teachers and students due to their different cultural content. At that time, Lao writers were not yet producing books, therefore we organize the writing workshop for youth writers to produce a good and attractive books for children. From this idea, the Room to Read Laos printed more than 80 titles in last 5 years and we also got award on “ Producing the best books for children “ in 2 years continued by Ministry of Information and Culture.

Room to Read Laos from 2005 – 2010:

Room to Read works in partnership with the Lao government and key NGO’s to help foster reading habits among primary school children in Laos. In keeping with the Room to Read conviction that local teams are best for local work, the Room to Read Laos has a dedicated team of staff who apart from speaking the language is familiar with the customs and laws, and more importantly, understand the issues related to program implementation.

Room to Read flagged off three programs in Laos with the support of the Ministry of Education and the Department of General Education. These include the School Room, Reading Room, and Local Language Publishing Programs. Later, the Girls’ Education Program was added to the list.

Five years ago, Room to Read Laos the “Enhancing Education for Lao Children” project as “We believe that World Change Starts with Educated Children”. Our thrust

areas include establishing Reading Rooms, constructing School Rooms, publishing Local language books, and providing scholarship to girls.

This report captures a summary of our work. Our figures are a testimony of our dedication and commitment to fulfill our goals and to accomplish our mission.

We work hard to include new schools to our present list we are also committed to focus on the quality and content of each of our programs especially the quality book access in our libraries, this is ensured by a very exacting monitoring and evaluation system apart from the unstinting support of our community, school principals, and teachers who work hard to ensure these programs are implemented without compromising on quality. We also respect the decision of the community and encourage them to be co-owners of the program right from the inception of the program. We also receive good cooperation from the Ministry of Education, Provincial Education Service and District Education Bureau. As true partners, they inspire, encourage and help us at every stage. Of special value to us is their support to monitor and train our teams in addition to taking over the reins of the program at the end of our three-year support phase. The support from the government guarantees long term sustainability to our work.

Reading Room program:

The Reading Room program was initiated to promote a reading culture among children so that they could benefit from the habit of reading. Room to Read Laos partners with the Government through the Department of Education, as well as the school and the local community to set up libraries in schools-which in our parlance are referred to as Reading Room (RR)

We have two different models for Reading Room in Laos - A separate room (SR) or a library filled with books and reading materials; as well a second model which is class room library (CR) which is in effect cupboards and book shelves kept in the corner of the class for easy access and Construction Reading Room (CRR) to schools where has many children.

Each library is supported for three years, with reading materials as well as training for the library teachers/facilitators. The trainings are focused on library management and to promote reading activities and how children can access the books as equally in school and community level.

Our endeavor is to instill confidence and skills in the community and the school to help them to take ownership of the project by the end of three years.

During this report period, we have conducted several activities across all the six provinces we work (18 districts and 424 libraries) to encourage children to read. All these activities were well attended and infused the children with a curiosity to hear or

read more stories. In all **8229** students, **589** teachers, and 2055 people from community attended these activities.

Achievements:

Following is the year wise break-up of the number of Reading Rooms we have established

2005: 50 RR

2006: 102 RR

2007: 210 RR

2008: 170 RR

2009: 160 RR

2010: 160 RR

Total: **852** Reading Rooms

Local Language Publishing Program:

Laos is lacking of attractive and creative books for children and local authors and illustrators are also less of experiences on children book producing. According to this information RtR Laos is not only focusing on Reading Room establishing we also focus on producing attracted and creative books for children through cooperation with local authors, illustrators and Publishing Department in Laos for publishing more books for children.

Room to Read started publishing books for children in their native language to address a need-based gap in this area. We realized from our experience of working in the field that in order to excite children and get them interested in reading, the child needs to understand the language and the context well. Most books available in English were in effect actually distancing the child from reading as they were not familiar with some of words and sometimes did not even understand the context as they were not tailored to suit the local culture.

Since the establishment of the first Reading Room in the year 2005, our libraries have grown to include a variety of child friendly and age appropriate reading materials. Our activity-focused programs have encouraged students to read as well as to do better in their academic work. We have also noted that our programs have fostered confidence in the children and they are now more articulate and sociable in school.

The Local Language Publishing program (LLP) in Laos scouts for local talented writers and illustrators and then trains them to write for our school children; so that children in rural schools have access to grade and age appropriate books which are culturally and locally relevant.

Apart from publishing our own books, our team cooperates with many local authors and illustrators to publish books. These reading materials are distributed to our Reading Rooms in the Provinces in addition to supplying books to other organizations

which request us for materials for their community and distribution these books to other poor provinces and other libraries for decreasing the gap of book access in Laos.

In addition to our regular work, our Local Language Publishing Program and Reading Room Program, organize Book events with teachers and children in neglected provinces (for example in Mekong province which is not Room to Read's target area.) At these events we share books, exchanges ideas about how to foster a reading habit among children who do not have opportunities to access books.

Achievements:

Printed 561,000 copies and Published 98 new titles of books, posters and picture story cards.

Awards

We are proud to share that our publications are very popular and have won several awards

2008: The Best Book of the Year Award - Title "Candle Light"

2009: The Best Book of the Year Award for 2 books -
Title "Nang Oy's Dream" and "Many Bags"

Room to Read's Local Language Publications won two of the four 2009 Laos Book Excellence Awards giving annually by the Ministry of Information and Culture

Good story:

Children in Laos Need Books

In February 2009 Room to Read staff along with friends from *Warehouse Associates* visited Xekong Province, in the south of Laos to distribute books to schools in these remote provinces. We were warmly welcomed by the Provincial Education Service staff. All of them were delighted to hear that Room to Read Laos had come with books to their province even though this province is not in the work ambit of Room to Read Laos.

At the *Xekong Complete Secondary School* a large gathering of teachers were waiting for the books. They were excited to see the many books and some of the teachers started to read these books almost immediately. Many of them were interested in Room to Read publications in particular.

Mr. Lisaka Priayen, the Director of *Thonglay Primary School*, Lamam District, Xekong Province said "I came here today because I heard that Room To Read would be distributing their books free of cost and I hoped to receive some books for my students who are waiting for me at my school. I am happy to see these story books both English and Lao. We are particularly thankful for this privilege as my school was in need of good story books for our students.

I would like to thank Room to Read for reaching out to our province which is one of the poorest areas in Laos with books. I would also like to invite Room to Read Laos to expand its' programs to Xekong and publish more books especially on Lao literature, local poems, Lao folktales for our children."

School Room Program:

Room to Read's School Room Program was born out a need to ensure schools had a place to accommodate a Reading Room and this is a one factor to address the gap of book access because schools needs space for conducting reading promotion activities and also that it was a child friendly structure. Since we work with disadvantaged groups in rural settings, we found there were many schools that were dilapidated and not the best environment for a child to look forward to coming to school. We have since then taken forward the challenge of supporting schools with better infrastructure with the support of the local community to ensure ownership and sustainability.

Our Challenge Grant provides meaningful opportunities for communities to contribute to the project, both financially and through decision-making. The School Room Challenge Grant ensures robust community participation; community contribution and post construction maintenance

Key objectives of the Challenge Grant

- To encourage active participation by the community in the construction process
- To develop a sense of ownership among community towards school
- To promote project sustainability by taking responsibility of the maintenance of assets and continuation of good practices demonstrated during program implementation.
- To build community capacity in school management
- To strengthen the relationship between School, Room to Read and the community
- To ensure women's participation in community decisions
- To reduce the School Room project cost to Room to Read and our donors

In addition to the *Challenge Grant*, we ensure community participation in building schools by entrusting the community to take the lead. Village members are elected to form the 'School Construction Committee' (SCC) and this Committee is responsible for executing the program under the supervision of Room to Read's expertise. The team, which has a fair representation of women from the villages; includes school teachers, village authorities, and members of the School Parent Association, members from the local youth and women unions in addition to esteemed village persons. This group takes responsibility of buying materials, supervising the construction, and controlling the expenditure in addition to ensuring that a member is appointed to update the village on a routine basis about the project.

In areas where village committees are active the committee is given the responsibility to monitor the School Room projects. However, if committees are not

active or unable to take up this responsibility, the SCC is the body that is responsible to ensuring that School Room project is in accordance to what was planned.

Roles and responsibility of SCC

- The SCC is the body that signs the MoU with Room to Read.
- The SCC is responsible to mobilize the village. SCC involves them and keeps them informed the construction work. The SCC ensures co-operation and support for the program from the entire village.
- The Committee participates in all the Room to Read's community-based construction activities
- They are also responsible for forming sub-committees for separate activities such as material purchasing committee, book keeping committee and allocate these responsibilities
- The team procures material in required quantities as per specifications and procedures
- They engage & monitor the skilled and unskilled labor for the project
- Last but not the least, they collect "challenge grant" from community/government and other parties

Achievements

2005: 8 School Rooms

2006: 16 School Rooms

2007: 48 School Rooms

2008: 38 School Rooms

2009: 32 School Rooms

2010: 30 School Rooms

Total: 172 School Rooms

Girl's Education program

Room to Read's Girls Education program is an important constituent of our work as it helps young disadvantaged girls to study. Our team identifies young girls from marginalized and economically weak communities and provides them with scholarship till they finish their schooling in addition to giving them books, uniforms, additional tuitions, life skill trainings and even bicycles where needed so that girls can complete their education.

We pay special emphasis to include girls in secondary school because we found, that is where the biggest gaps in gender equality in education exist.

In Laos, our scholars are selected starting from Grade 3 to be scholars in Grade 4 and again from Grade 5 to be scholars in Grade 6 as secondary level. Room to Read together with Provincial Education Service (PES) and District Education Bureau (DEB) set up girl selection committee which include the master of the village, members from

the student's women union, the village economist, teachers and parents from each school in the area to help select the girls.

We have also decided to entrust the Community by using Group Base Approach to guide us about selection the girls. As a result, we have focused on areas where there is evidence of discrimination between girls and boys and have enrolled girls from minority groups who are not supported by the Government. In 2008, we enrolled 52 girls from a minority group and placed them in a boarding school as these girls could not be accommodated on the government quota at other schools.

The Girls Education Program provides financial support to our scholars to cover their tuition fees, provides educational materials such as text books, note books, stationery, school uniforms, shoes, bags and a bicycle for children who live more than 2.5 km away from school.

In addition, the program provides tutoring - called need-based tutoring - for the main subjects for the entire academic year. Intensive tutoring is also given to some students for a month before the examinations. This program further provides "life skill" training so that the girls learn to be confident, have increased self esteem, hone their decision making skills so that they can negotiate and decide for themselves.

Apart from ensuring the girls' academic progress, the program ensures that the scholars keep good health and facilitates for periodic health checkups.

Our staff spends time with the parents of our scholars to sensitize them and to encourage their daughters to study instead of sending them to work in Thailand.

Achievements

2007: 200 girls

2008: 325 girls

2009: 300 girls

2010: 250 girls

Total: **1075** Scholars

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Room to Read takes pride in being a responsible and transparent organization. Our Monitoring and Evaluation team is vigilant and is constantly finding ways to encourage all the teams to raise the bar. This in turn, ensures that all programs operate as planned and achieve expected objectives and goals apart from helping our donors and stake holders to have confidence in our working methodology.

This exercise also alerts staff to take corrective measures in time thereby ensuring sustainability of our programs; all of which translates as benefits for our Lao children as they receive a better educational opportunities.

Our M & E teams pay great attention to check how many books students borrow to take home each day, how many students visit the library, which are the most preferred books by children in addition to monitoring reading room activities and the content of the bi-monthly meetings to engage students to visit libraries. The exercise also includes vetting reading scores of students in Grade 1 – 3 and periodic evaluations give us a fairly accurate picture of how these students are performing as these exercises are conducted every six months.

Room to Read Laos with support from staff from Regional and Global Offices have made great efforts in designing M&E systems/mechanism. We have in place a Global Solutions Database (GSD) which is accessible to all staff across the world. This is an important tool for field data collection and at the click of a button we have access to a wide field of accurate data which could include anything from the no of new schools built in the last year or the number of libraries that will be phased out in the present year the number of students in each program.

In the last five years Room to Read's four major programs have supported education in Laos by providing Reading Rooms, School Rooms, scholarships to girls and books in the local language. These programs have provided opportunities to hundreds of children especially those who stay in rural areas and disadvantaged settings to access schools with books as well.

Strategic Planning of Room to Read Laos: (2011 – 2016)

Vision Statement

Room to Read believes that world change starts with educated children. We envision a world in which all children can pursue a quality education that enables them to reach their full potential and contribute to their community and the world.

Mission Statement

Room to Read seeks to transform the lives of millions of children in developing countries by focusing on literacy and gender equality in education. Working in collaboration with local communities, partner organizations and governments, we develop literacy skills and a habit of reading among primary school children, and support girls to complete secondary school with the relevant life skills to succeed in school and beyond.

As we get ready to mark our ten-years of hard work across the globe, Room to Read is ready to shift gears to move to the next level. We have identified Literacy and Girls Education Program to be our two important core areas as we move forward. This

shift would now require us to change from ‘creating a reading habit’ to ensuring children become ‘independent readers’ and also change our target groups from pre-school and secondary students to primary school students where the focus will be on Grade 1 and 2 students. As a result, all of our programs will eventually cease to be stand-alone programs and will instead become collaborative components of the Literacy and Girl’s Education Programs.

The following are our plans for our different programs:

Reading Room Program

1. Ensuring more opportunities for children to access reading material that is culturally relevant, age- appropriate, and reflecting gender equality
2. Building capacity for teachers and librarians to promote literacy and to develop a reading habit among primary school children
3. Improving school environments to make it child friendly
4. Sensitizing parents, peer groups and communities to support and encourage reading
5. Collaborating with the government in order to garner support for implementing policies and strategic plans in primary schools

Local Language Publishing Program

1. Closely cooperate & collaborate with Reading Room & Literacy in producing materials to support reading habit and reading skills. Local Language Publishing will identify reading leveling and produce books to match reading each level.
2. Develop writing and illustrating skills for local writers and illustrators to produce materials to support literacy, particularly early readers like primary grade 2.
3. Support both Reading Room and Literacy programs.

School Room Program

1. Providing access to educational infrastructure that would be child friendly by ensuring clean, bright, well-constructed learning spaces
2. Collect school data in the joint school profile form and identify schools for literacy and/or GEP programs.
3. Begin literacy or GEP program at the school.
4. Analyze infrastructure needs, and prepare school-wise construction budgets.
5. Support schools with additional infrastructure improvements as needed.
6. Provide regular monitoring and technical assistance for ongoing maintenance

Girl’s Education Program

1. Enlisting more girls on the scholarship program by using community based approach
2. Identify communities where there is a high proportion of disparity between boys and girls
3. Providing tutoring and mentoring where necessary

4. Providing life skill training for all scholars
5. Innovating our programs to ensure program sustainability

Conclusion

During the past 5 years, significant progress has been made through our efforts to address the gap of book access and reduce the disparity in the quality of education in urban and rural areas of Laos. Children in many rural areas now have improved access to educational resources such as library services, and teachers have also improved their pedagogical methods. This has been a contribution from the Room to Read's project towards the Lao Governments overall goals for education provision.

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