

# EDUCATION ANALYTICS SERVICE: TEACHER DEVELOPMENT MULTI-YEAR STUDIES

## Evaluation of Australia's Investment in Teacher Development in Lao PDR Interim Report 1

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Australian Government  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



Education Analytics Service is supported by the Australian Government  
and implemented by Australian Council for Educational Research.

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*Teacher Development Multi-Year Study Series. Evaluation of Australia's investment in teacher development in Lao PDR: Interim report 1*

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ISBN 978-1-74286-674-1

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### **Recommended citation (APA 7th ed)**

Hollingsworth, H., Wong, D., Cassity, E., Anderson, P., & Thompson, J. (2022). *Teacher development multi-year study series. Evaluation of Australia's investment in teacher development in Lao PDR: Interim report 1*. Australian Council for Educational Research. <https://doi.org/10.37517/978-1-74286-674-1>  
<https://research.acer.edu.au/eas/>

## Amendment history

Version No.	Date	Brief description of change	Authors
1	22 December 2021	Draft 1 submitted	Hilary Hollingsworth, Debbie Wong, Elizabeth Cassity, Prue Anderson, Jessica Thompson
2	31 March 2022	Draft 2 submitted	Hilary Hollingsworth, Debbie Wong, Elizabeth Cassity, Prue Anderson, Jessica Thompson
3	5 May 2022	Final submitted	Hilary Hollingsworth, Debbie Wong, Elizabeth Cassity, Prue Anderson, Jessica Thompson

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
BEQUAL	Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR
COP	communities of practice
DESB	District Education and Sports Bureau
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
EAS	Education Analytics Services
EDC	Education Section (DFAT)
EOPO	End of Program Outcome
G1, G2	Grade 1, Grade 2
GEDSI	gender equality, disability and social inclusion
IRL	Indochina Research Laos
IRT	Item response theory
LADLF	Laos-Australia Development Learning Facility
LL	Lao language
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
PA	Pedagogical Adviser
PEPI	Primary Education Performance Index
PESS	Provincial Education and Sports Service
SAL	self-access learning
TEI	Teacher Education Institution
VEDC	Village Education Development Committee

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The Government of Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is undertaking significant primary education reforms, supported by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) through its flagship Basic Education Quality and Access in Laos program (BEQUAL). The Australian Government has commissioned a study to investigate how the BEQUAL program is making a difference to improving teaching quality and student learning outcomes. This research is part of a multi-year study series undertaken by DFAT's Education Analytics Service to investigate teacher and learning development initiatives in three countries: Lao PDR, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu.

In 2019, the new curriculum for Lao language and other subjects was introduced for Grade 1 (G1) and is being phased in across all five primary grades. The new curriculum promotes teaching practices that support pedagogies focused on student-centred approaches, active learning, assessment of student learning progress, and a phonics approach to teaching reading. Teachers are being provided with teacher guides and other teaching and learning resources, and receive face-to-face orientation on the new curriculum. In BEQUAL-targeted districts, education support grants are also available to facilitate additional in-service support for teachers and principals, such as participation in communities of practice and use of self-access learning tools.

This study has provided the opportunity to investigate teaching quality and student literacy outcomes in Lao PDR over two rounds of data collection, with another planned for October 2022. The Baseline Report captured 'state of play' information in 2019 prior to major curriculum changes, as well as the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This summary provides an overview of findings and recommendations from the second year (2021) of the study, following two years of BEQUAL support for the implementation of the new G1 Lao language curriculum.

## Methodology

The EAS Teacher Development Multi-Year Study for Lao PDR (the Study) seeks to answer the question: ***To what extent does BEQUAL support improve teaching quality and student literacy in Lao PDR?***

The two key questions are:

- 1) To what extent and how does teaching quality change following BEQUAL-supported in-service program?
- 2) To what extent and how do students' literacy outcomes change following the new curriculum implementation?

The Study adopts a mixed methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The Study follows teachers and principals over three cycles of data collection while the new G1 Lao language curriculum is rolled out in the original 32 BEQUAL target districts – some of

the country's most disadvantaged districts. The table below provides a snapshot of the 2021 sample.

Quantitative	Qualitative
Surveyed 355 schools	Case studies in 12 schools
345 principal questionnaires (21% female (F); 79% male (M))	33 interviews with principals, G1 teachers and pedagogical advisers
363 G1 teacher questionnaires (54% F; 46% M)	30 classroom observations of G1 Lao language lessons
3,120 G1 students (47% F; 53% M)	
2,212 G1 students tested (51% F; 49% M)	

Table: Snapshot of 2021 sample

## Summary of findings

**Overall, the BEQUAL teacher development investment is making some positive contributions to improving teaching quality, but there is yet to be an impact on student learning outcomes.** The new curriculum requires significant change for teachers and more time and support is needed before teachers can comprehensively understand and incorporate these new approaches into their teaching practice. Changes to teaching quality are not yet substantial enough to impact student literacy outcomes.

### To what extent and how does teaching quality change following BEQUAL-supported in-service program?

The 2021 results show that the majority (87%) of G1 teachers participated in the Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES)/BEQUAL new curriculum orientation. Overall, this BEQUAL-supported in-service program has strengthened aspects of G1 teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices in line with the new curriculum for Lao language. While it is possible that the extent of improvement in G1 teaching practices have been curbed by COVID-19 disruptions, these outcomes are in line with the expectations of BEQUAL, following 1 to 2 years of implementation. That is, teachers are becoming increasingly familiar with the new curriculum, are showing more confidence with using the resources, and are engaging more with curriculum support systems and resources. Nevertheless, reports from respondents and the concerning results of the G1 Lao language literacy test indicate teachers need much more professional learning support for Lao language.

#### ***To what extent do teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices, change following the in-service program?***

Two years following the introduction of the new G1 curriculum for Lao language, G1 teachers are reporting increased awareness of the new pedagogies, have broadened their range of teaching and learning activities and use of resources, and are engaging more with formative assessment methods as part of their Lao language teaching.

Notable positive changes between May 2019 and April 2021 that were perceived and reported by participants, or observed by researchers include:

- significantly increased awareness and confidence of student-centred teaching methods, with some limited improvement in understanding these methods
- high use of and reliance on the new teachers' guides and textbooks for preparing lessons
- greater emphasis on active teaching and learning activities, including increased use of group and paired work (i.e. in addition to whole-class and individual activities), more activities such as story-telling, games, songs and drama, as well as use of a broader range of resources
- greater awareness and confidence about assessment methods, and some increased use of formative assessment practices in the classroom
- more consistency in hours spent teaching Lao language, but difficulties with having enough time to teach the Lao language curriculum each week remains.

Areas for further investigation in the final year of data collection relate to teachers' use of strategies to support gender equality, high achieving students, and students with difficulties.

***What factors enable or impede teachers aligning their practice to the new curriculum?***

Respondents identified a number of factors enabling and impeding changes to teaching practice. The 2021 results show higher levels of participation in Lao language training, more engagement with communities of practice and self-access learning, and that teachers are receiving higher levels of technical support for their Lao language teaching from their colleagues. As an example, pedagogical adviser (PA) support has increased significantly in 2021.

While teachers appreciated and valued the orientation sessions, the new curriculum and its pedagogies represent a significant departure from the former curriculum. Teacher knowledge and experience of Lao language and understanding of the new curriculum were reported as a key challenge. Teachers noted they need more professional learning. Many respondents felt that the teaching methods were challenging, that the orientation was too short, and expressed the need for more professional learning, particularly on the Lao language curriculum, Lao language teaching methods, and teaching Lao to non-Lao speakers.

In terms of student factors, teachers reported that G1 students' low Lao language skills, high levels of student absenteeism and limited parental support were key issues for teaching Lao language.

**To what extent and how do students' literacy outcomes change following the new curriculum implementation?**

***To what extent do students' literacy outcomes change following the new curriculum implementation?***

Results from the 2021 G1 student Lao language literacy test are concerning. While they indicate slight improvement in overall student performance after the introduction of the new G1 curriculum, this result needs to be considered with caution as less than one per cent of G1



students met the expectations of the new G1 Lao language curriculum. Consistent with 2019 results, nearly 25 per cent of G1 students tested in 2021 had very limited or no Lao language literacy skills for G1.

Notably, students found giving sounds extremely hard. Giving sounds for letters was introduced in the 2021 test, as a phonics approach represents a major shift in the new curriculum to teaching reading. The test data suggest that teachers are not yet able to effectively teach letter sounds.

There were regional variations in student performance. In both 2019 and 2021, Phongsali had the highest proportion of students in the low performing levels (48% in 2021), while Sekong had the highest proportion in the high performing levels (31% in 2021). This disparity has widened over this period.

While there were no gender differences in 2019, in 2021 female students performed better than male students, both overall and across half of the provinces (Sekong, Saravane and Savannakhet). This is particularly stark in Sekong, where there are twice as many high performing female students than male students. The proportions of low performing male students were similar in both years.

***How does the new curriculum influence students' attitudes and disposition towards learning?***

Findings about students' attitudes and dispositions towards learning emanated from teacher perception data and classroom observations focused on the classroom environment. The 2021 results indicate small positive shifts in enjoyment of Lao language lessons and more consistent classroom culture, teacher-student relationships and interactions.

***Do changes in teaching quality correlate with changes in students' literacy outcomes?***

Data collected in 2021 showed that correlations between teaching practices and student performance were weak. This likely indicates that the early changes made by teachers to their practice are not yet substantial enough to impact student learning.

However, the 2021 results indicate certain student and teacher factors were associated with G1 student performance levels. Student factors that were positively associated with higher G1 test performance included students' participation in kindergarten or pre-school, students' home language if Lao-Tai, more exposure to stories and Lao language resources at home and in the community, higher family wealth, and lower absenteeism levels.

Teachers who were female, older, more experienced and had permanent teaching status tended to have students who performed better in G1 tests. Alignment between the student and teachers' home language if Lao-Tai was also associated with stronger test performance. Unlike in 2019, more hours spent per week teaching Lao language were positively associated with higher G1 test performance in 2021.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Key findings from the Baseline Report and this Interim Report 1 highlight the complex interface between context, curriculum and teaching, and the important role teachers and

parents play in supporting children to transition to school, particularly given many are not prepared for G1. Recommendations for policymakers are:

**Focus on building students' oral language skills in Lao language.** The 2021 Lao language literacy results suggest the standards of the new Lao language curriculum may be too high for the majority of G1 students. Many students have extremely limited oral language skills in Lao. More time is needed to teach students to speak and understand Lao language proficiently before they can start to learn to read and write in Lao. Students need the opportunity for intensive Lao language instruction and stimulation to improve their general cognitive abilities (short-term memory and executive function) before they are ready for the G1 curriculum. It is unlikely that the current offering of pre-school/kindergarten provides this focused support, and that a different program is required.

**Embed ongoing professional learning for teachers, principals and PAs.** Although there are indications of improved teaching practices, teachers still find Lao language teaching to be difficult and this is evident in the poor student learning results. There is a need for ongoing professional learning and resources for teachers, principals and PAs to extend their knowledge and application of effective Lao language teaching strategies. In particular, teaching Lao to non-Lao speakers, how to engage with classes made up of diverse ethnicities and language groups, and a better understanding of phonics, needs to be an explicit focus of future training.

Small, targeted and regular professional learning programs could build on and integrate the gains made so far in improving teaching practices. Providing PAs and principals with the opportunity and resources to establish new and strengthen existing communities of practice could be a more cost-effective measure than large-scale training programs.

**Target interventions for the lowest performing students and boys.** Additional student and teacher interventions to support boys and the lowest performing students need to be considered. While this Study provides a starting point for understanding some of the key factors for low performance, further research into boys' underperformance and the underperformance of students in Phongsali is recommended.

**Advocate and educate parents and communities on the role they can play in promoting students' readiness for school and the inclusion of children with disabilities.** Parents have a role to play in providing a stimulating environment for their children and developing early oral language skills, even in low-literacy contexts. Teachers and principals need advice on how to work with parents and communities to improve parental engagement in student learning, both at home and in schools. Teachers, principals, parents and carers also need to have the knowledge and skills on how to effectively support children with disabilities in both the school and in the home. A government-run advocacy campaign could complement this work.

## 1. Introduction

The Australian Government, through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), is supporting significant education reforms in Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Timor-Leste and Vanuatu. Through the Education Analytics Services (EAS), DFAT is investigating teaching and learning development initiatives in a study series known as the Teacher Development Multi-Year Study Series.

In the context of Lao PDR, the EAS is investigating how the Basic Education Quality and Access in Laos program (BEQUAL) through its support of the Government of Laos' ongoing primary education reforms is making a difference to improving teaching quality and student learning outcomes.

Two reports present the findings at certain points on the project's timeline.

The [Baseline Report](#) presents quantitative and qualitative data collected in 2019 which captures 'state of play' information on primary school teaching practice and student learning outcomes just before the implementation of a new primary education curriculum and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Baseline Report identified the need for intensive action on Lao language literacy, targeted teacher training on the new curriculum with a special emphasis on second language learners, and deepened engagement with school communities to reduce student absenteeism and improve student readiness for school.

This Interim Report 1 presents quantitative and qualitative data collected in 2021, following two years of implementation of BEQUAL support for the curriculum rollout from Grade 1. The report identifies key findings and recommendations for policy, programming and research.

A third and final year of qualitative data collection will take place in 2022, allowing for continued detailed investigation of teaching practice and student learning in case study schools. The Final Report will reflect on the three cycles of data collection, and contribute to analysis across the three countries in the study series.

### 1.1 Context of education in Lao PDR

Lao PDR has made significant progress towards achieving universal primary education and gender parity in primary enrolment in the last 10 years, however, the quality of education remains a major challenge. High rates of drop-out and grade repetition are persistent problems (MoES, 2020). The results from national and regional assessments in Grade 3 (MoES, 2018), Grade 5 (UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2021) and Grade 9 (MoES, 2020) show very low levels of proficiency in Lao language and mathematics. Student achievement is generally lower in rural and remote agricultural communities with high concentrations of ethnic and linguistic diversity (LADLF, n.d.). Underlying factors include limited exposure to print materials outside of formal schooling and a linguistic mismatch between the Lao language of instruction and students' mother tongue (ACER, 2015). The Lao education system faces a range of challenges that impact teaching quality. Teaching methods have historically typically emphasised rote learning. The minimum qualification to become a teacher is lower secondary education, and the system has struggled to attract and maintain qualified teachers in remote and ethnic

areas. Staffing challenges contribute to the problems of incomplete schools (that is, where the school does not offer all primary grades) and multi-grade classes (DFAT, 2014).

## 1.2 About the new curriculum in Lao PDR

The new curriculum for Lao language and other subjects was introduced in the 2019–20 school year, and is being phased-in across all five primary grades. The rollout began with Grade 1 (G1) in September 2019 and Grade 2 (G2) in September 2020. BEQUAL’s in-service teacher development program commenced orientation on the new curriculum for G1 teachers in July 2019.

As part of the new curriculum, teachers are provided with teacher guides and other teaching and learning resources (including to support Lao language teaching). Specific teaching practices, including student-centred learning approaches, active learning, formative and summative assessment of student learning progress, and a phonics approach to teaching reading, are also being introduced. These represent a substantial change to the former curriculum. These practices are complemented by an in-service teacher professional development program to support Provincial Education and Sports Services (PESS) to deliver face-to-face teacher orientation training. This orientation comprises of six days of face-to-face training, of which a portion was dedicated to Lao language. Additional in-service support is provided to teachers, principals and schools in the original 32 BEQUAL-targeted districts through strengthening communities of practice (COP), monitoring visits, teacher cluster meetings and district level education support grants.

## 1.3 The Basic Education Quality and Access Program in Lao PDR

The specific focus of BEQUAL is to support the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) to implement Laos’ new primary education curriculum and align teaching practice. BEQUAL is DFAT’s flagship program supporting primary education in Lao PDR. The goal of BEQUAL is ‘more girls and boys of primary school age, particularly those experiencing disadvantage, achieve functional literacy and numeracy and acquire life skills’. This will be delivered through ‘more effective teaching’ and ‘better governance’, which are both End of Program Outcomes (EPOs). More effective teaching is understood as the alignment of teaching practice with the new curriculum. Better governance refers to the expected increased capacity of government line agencies to support teachers to implement the new curriculum.

## 1.4 Objectives of the Study

The EAS Teacher Development Multi-Year Study for Lao PDR (the Study) seeks to answer the question:

‘To what extent does BEQUAL support improve teaching quality and student literacy in Lao PDR?’

This question can be answered by focusing on changes in the areas of teaching quality (EPO 1) and student literacy outcomes (a component of the BEQUAL goal).

The Study is evaluating teaching quality and student literacy outcomes by researching the questions and sub-questions in Table 1.

Table 1: Study questions

Key questions	Sub-questions
<p><b>A) Teaching Quality</b> To what extent and how does teaching quality change following BEQUAL-supported in-service program?</p>	<p><b>A1.</b> To what extent do teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices, change following the in-service program?</p> <p><b>A2.</b> What factors enable or impede teachers aligning their practice to the new curriculum?</p>
<p><b>B) Literacy Outcomes</b> To what extent and how do students' literacy outcomes change following the new curriculum implementation?</p>	<p><b>B1.</b> To what extent do students' literacy outcomes change following the new curriculum implementation?</p> <p><b>B2.</b> How does the new curriculum influence students' attitudes and disposition towards learning?</p> <p><b>B3.</b> Do changes in teaching quality correlate with changes in students' literacy outcomes?</p>

## 2. Methodology

The Study, designed in 2019 (LADLF & ACER, 2019), adopts a mixed methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The Study follows teachers and principals over three cycles of data collection while the new G1 Lao language curriculum is rolled out.

The Study design was updated in late 2020 due to the global impact of COVID-19 on schools and governments, its associated border closures and travel restrictions, and changes to funding priorities of the Australian aid program. The planned April 2020 data collection was delayed for one year, to April 2021.

### 2.1 Modified study design

The modified study design maintains the original purpose and intent of the Study. Key features of the study design are retained.

There are three points of data collection: baseline (2019), two years after the rollout of the new G1 curriculum (2021) and three years after (2022).

The mixed methods approach of using qualitative and quantitative data is used but with the updates described below.

#### Quantitative components

- Data collection has been reduced from three to two points, which were completed in 2019 and 2021.
- To maintain the representativeness of the sample across the 32 BEQUAL target districts, the full sample of 362 schools used for the baseline is maintained.
- There is also a cross-sectional approach that tracks teachers and principals within schools longitudinally, and G1 students by cohort. With the students being assessed at the end of

the school year, the theory of change in this is that the teachers in G1 are having an impact on learning up to this point, therefore with the same teachers acquiring new skills and familiarity with the curriculum over time there is an expectation that the conditional (on a set of background factors) ability of G1 students will go up.

- G2 teachers and students are no longer part of the Study, given the planned 2020 data collection could not go ahead.

## Qualitative components

- Case studies are retained across the three data collection points, with the final data collection in 2022.
- The full sample of 12 case study schools used for the baseline is maintained. The case studies are a key feature of the Teacher Development Multi-Year Study Series as they provide the opportunity to understand the differences within and across Lao PDR, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu.

Schooling in Lao PDR was disrupted in 2020 with most schools across the country closed for a time with limited remote education solutions available. Additional COVID-19 questions were added to the 2021 data collection of survey and case study data to assess the impact of COVID-19 school disruptions on Lao language teaching.

Annex A presents a map of timeframes related to the Lao school year, estimated COVID-19 school closures, G1 new curriculum orientation training, and data collection.

## 2.2 Data collection

### Quantitative data

The quantitative data collected in 2021 comprised the G1 Teacher Questionnaire, Principal Questionnaire, G1 test, Student Questionnaire and Student Background Questionnaire.

Data were collected from 362 public primary schools in Khammouane (60 schools), Luangnamtha (35), Phongsali (43), Saravane (62), Savannakhet (129) and Sekong (26). The data collection undertaken by 22 teams (of 2–3 members) commenced in March and concluded in April 2021. This ensured that data were collected well before the end of the school year.

The quantitative analysis focused on comparing the 2019 and 2021 results. Annex B provides further details on sampling, instruments and analytic approach.

Table 2 provides an overview of the sample of principals, G1 teachers and G1 students from the 2019 and 2021 data collections. Annex C provides further details on the sample.

There was a high proportion of G1 teacher turnover between 2019 and 2021, with only 60 per cent of the original G1 teachers retained. The main reasons reported were that the previous G1 teacher was posted to a new school or class. As was the case in 2019, the number of G1 students tested was lower than targeted, mostly due to high levels of absenteeism.

Table 2: Principal, G1 teacher and G1 student sample for 2019 and 2021 data collections

2019	2021
355 schools	355 schools
348 principals (23% female; 77% male)	335 principals + 10 replacement principals (21% female; 79% male)
347 G1 teachers (55% female; 45% male)	205 + 158 replacement teachers (54% female; 46% male)
3,367 G1 students (47% female; 53% male)	3,120 G1 students (47% female; 53% male)
2,269 G1 students tested (49% female; 51% male)	2,212 G1 students tested (51% female; 49% male)

## Qualitative data

For the qualitative component, data were collected from the same 12 case study schools in the baseline study which were purposively sampled in six districts in three BEQUAL-targeted provinces located across Lao PDR.

Stakeholder interviews and classroom observations were the primary data collection methods for the case studies. The case studies are comprised of individual semi-structured interviews with G1 teachers, their principals and pedagogical advisers (PAs), and classroom observations of G1 Lao literacy lessons. The classroom observation tool was purposefully designed to capture information relevant to the new Lao language curriculum and the Teacher Development Multi-Year Studies. Annex B provides further details on sampling, instruments and analytic approach.

A team of four researchers (two pairs of one lead researcher and one supporting researcher) commenced collecting the data in March and concluded in early April 2021. There were 33 interviews conducted with 15 teachers, 12 principals and six PAs, and 30 classroom observations of G1 Lao language lessons (two in each of the 15 teachers' classes). Annex C provides details on the surveyed teacher, principal and student samples.

## 2.3 Study limitations

There are some limitations to the Lao PDR study.

First is the issue of attribution within a study investigating teaching quality and student learning outcomes. Attribution is easier to establish when there is a clear causal relationship between the outcome and any preceding outputs. Teaching itself is a 'noise-filled' context. There are a wide range of contextual factors that enable and constrain productive investments in teachers, teaching and education communities. While there may be relationships between various factors associated with student learning outcomes, direct causal relationships are difficult to determine.

Second, the qualitative case studies are not intended to generalise the impact of BEQUAL across Lao PDR. Case studies are intended to explore the experience of the investment by educational stakeholders in a small sample of schools, but across a multitude of variables, to

enrich understanding of the ways the investment contributes to improved teaching and student outcomes. In this way, the case studies are intensive rather than extensive. The ability to extract this level of detail from the investment is an important part of the overall study design.

Third, G1 teachers have had no teaching continuity with the new curriculum due to COVID-19 school disruptions. G1 teachers participated in the new curriculum orientation training in June/July 2019. The theory of change assumes that G1 teachers are acquiring new skills and familiarity with the new curriculum over the course of a school year, however, these teachers only had the opportunity to complete a full year of G1 teaching with the new curriculum in school year 2020-21. It is possible that improvements in G1 teaching practices have been curbed by COVID-19 disruptions.

Fourth, unexpectedly there has been a large turnover of G1 teachers in the study. Only 60 per cent of the G1 teachers surveyed in 2019, also participated in 2021. Five of the 15 case study teachers are also new to the study in 2021. These are much higher attrition rates than envisaged under the original evaluation plan (20%). Survey responses have been presented in some cases differentiating G1 teacher cohorts who are 'new' to this study. In 2022 there will be a third and final round of qualitative data collection, with interviews and classroom observations taking place in the same 12 case study schools. Detailed investigations will take place into the perspectives and experiences of the participants who have been involved in the study since 2019.

Finally, due to the design of the sample, and the absence of population level data to inform design and weighting, standard errors which take into account the complex sample design could not be computed for any of the estimated parameters presented in this report. This limited how the data can be analysed including the ability to use significance tests for any observed differences between groups. For the same reason, caution needs to be used when interpreting the quantitative results presented in this report.

### 3. Key findings about teaching quality

#### 3.1 Findings about teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices

The 2021 data collection captured details about changes in teaching practices after two years of BEQUAL support for the G1 curriculum rollout. 'Teaching practice' refers to teachers' application of their professional knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes to provide learning experiences for students. It includes what teachers do to plan, implement and evaluate learning experiences, and ways teachers incorporate principles of teaching and learning (ACER, 2017).

Table 3 sets out the intended outcomes set out by the BEQUAL program for its in-service program. At the time of data collection – two years following the curriculum orientation training – the focus is on the short-term outcomes.



Table 3: Intended outcomes for BEQUAL in-service program

Horizon	Outcomes
<b>Short-term (1-2 years)</b>	Teachers are familiar with the new curriculum and are confident to use the teacher guides and resource pack
	Teachers effectively engage with curriculum support systems and resources
<b>Medium term (3-5 years)</b>	Teachers select/adapt content and teaching techniques conducive to learning
	Teachers plan their own professional development with support from principals
<b>Long-term (6-10 years)</b>	Teachers take responsibility for their learning and development
	Principals lead on designing and implementing school-based continuous professional development

Results from the 2021 data collection indicate that the BEQUAL-supported in-service program has been effective in strengthening some facets of G1 teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices in line with aspects promoted in the new curriculum for Lao language. The majority of G1 teachers participated in the MoES/BEQUAL new curriculum orientation and there has been a slight increase in their levels of participation in COP and other professional learning activities. Overall, G1 teachers are more aware of the new pedagogical approaches, have broadened their range of teaching and learning activities and use of resources, and are engaging more with formative assessment methods as part of their Lao language teaching. It is possible that improvements in G1 teaching practices have been curbed by COVID-19 disruptions. However, these outcomes are largely in line with the short-term expected outcomes set out in Table 3.

Table 4 provides a high-level summary of changes to teacher knowledge, attitudes and practices between 2019 and 2021 as perceived and reported by participants, or observed by researchers.

Table 4: Summary of changes to teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices between 2019 and 2021

	Positive change	No change or negative change
<b>Overall</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased confidence and awareness of new pedagogies (SR-S)</li> </ul>	
<b>Lesson preparation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High use of and reliance on teachers' guides and textbooks for lesson preparation (SR-S)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Similar levels in frequency of preparing lesson plans (SR-S)</li> <li>Fewer lessons plans in place during observations (obs)</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusive education</b>		

	Positive change	No change or negative change
Student-centered learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significantly increased awareness and confidence (SR-S)</li> <li>• Some improvement in understanding (SR-I)</li> </ul>	
Localisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness and confidence (SR-S)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar levels of references to local aspects in observations (obs)</li> </ul>
Gender equality		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More uneven practice in selecting girls and boys observed (obs)</li> </ul>
Students with difficulties		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar range of strategies (SR-I)</li> </ul>
High achieving students		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fewer range of strategies (SR-I)</li> </ul>
Non-Lao speaking students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slightly increased use of another language where students have non-Lao mother tongue (SR-S)</li> </ul>	
<b>Active learning</b>		
Classroom interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness and confidence of group and paired work (SR-S)</li> <li>• More instances of group and paired work observed (obs)</li> </ul>	
Reference to prior knowledge and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness and confidence (SR-S)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar levels of references to prior knowledge/skills (obs)</li> </ul>
Activity types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased emphasis on story-telling, books, games, matching activities, songs, drama, physical actions (SR-I, SR-S)</li> </ul>	
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater use of a range of resources (SR-S)</li> <li>• Greater use of curriculum materials (SR-S)</li> <li>• Sufficient access to textbooks observed (obs)</li> </ul>	
Classroom set up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More classrooms set up to facilitate group work (obs)</li> </ul>	
<b>Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater awareness and confidence (SR-S)</li> <li>• Greater use of data for different purposes (SR-S)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar assessment methods of reading and writing through copying, dictation (SR-I)</li> </ul>

	Positive change	No change or negative change
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significantly increased instances of checking for understanding (obs)</li> <li>All teachers observed students practicing or applying learnings (obs)</li> <li>Slightly increased regularity of feedback to students (SR-S)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Similar assessment frequency (SR-S)</li> <li>Similar regularity and focus of conversation with parents (SR-S)</li> </ul>
<b>Time spent teaching LL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater consistency in hours of time spent teaching LL (SR-S, SR-I)</li> <li>Slightly fewer teachers did not have sufficient time to teach LL curriculum (SR-S)</li> </ul>	
<b>Professional development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher levels of participation in LL training (SR-S)</li> <li>Slightly more participation in COP (SR-S, SR-I)</li> <li>Slightly more participation in Self-learning activities (SR-S, SR-I)</li> </ul>	

SR = self-reported S = survey I = case study interview Obs = case study observation

The following sections provide more detailed findings in relation teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices. Annex D provides further analysis and data.

### ***Confidence in Lao language teaching***

As in 2019, nearly all the teachers (88-93%) surveyed in 2021 indicated overall confidence in their Lao language teaching. Notably, there has been a positive shift in levels of teachers' confidence and awareness of the new pedagogies associated with the new curriculum. While many teachers continued to find aspects of Lao language teaching to be difficult or very difficult, more teachers in 2021 reported sight words, phonics, simple writing tasks and handwriting to be easier to teach.

Case study teachers indicated varying levels of overall confidence and attributed this to their ability to understand and teach the new curriculum. For the most part, teachers in the North expressed higher levels of confidence in teaching than those in the South and Central provinces. A number of respondents said that their lack of understanding of the new curriculum contributed to low levels of confidence in Lao language teaching. At the same time teachers and principals attributed professional training as an effective means to supporting them implement the new curriculum.

### ***Lesson preparation***

Nearly all the teachers (98%) surveyed in 2019 and 2021 reported that they undertake lesson preparation for Lao language teaching. In 2021, teachers reported high use of, and reliance on, the new curriculum resources for lesson preparation. During the 2021 classroom observations, fewer case study teachers were observed to have lesson plans in place compared to 2019. However, there is an expectation that the highly structured Teachers' Guide now act as a proxy for teacher-generated lesson plans.

Many case study teachers also reported that they value the teaching materials recommended in the new curriculum to support Lao language teaching and learning. However, in some locations provision and/or preparation of sufficient resources was reported to be an ongoing issue.

### ***Teaching and learning activities***

In 2019, teachers reported using a limited set of pedagogical practices and resources. The predominant teaching and learning activities reported by the case study teachers were: practising pronunciation, reading text written on the board, and students writing. Teachers relied heavily on the use of flashcards and pictures as resources. In the observed lessons, nearly all lessons commenced with whole class activity, and whole class activity was used across large portions of all lessons. More than half of surveyed teachers reported in 2019 that they were not aware of student-centred teaching methods.

In 2021, several case study teachers and principals emphasised the use of teaching methods (such as storytelling, matching activities, games) rather than activities associated with language dimensions (such as speaking and listening, reading, and writing). While flashcards and pictures continue to be well used resources, more teachers reported in 2021 using other resources, such as books, songs, games and puzzles. All teachers reported they used curriculum materials.

Partner or group activities in lessons increased in 2021, and some teachers made use of these types of interactions for greater portions of observed lessons. The set up in many case study classrooms had changed enabling students to engage in group work.

Nearly all surveyed teachers reported that they were aware of student-centred teaching methods; and although progress has been made in this area (in 2019, 41% of teachers were aware of these methods in 2019 compared to 99% in 2021), they still appeared to have limited conceptions of what these methods entail. Case study respondents gave examples of student-centred methods, and cited most frequently involving students in group work, encouraging students to learn by doing, playing a facilitating role to support student learning, and allowing more student talk.

### ***Supporting students with particular needs***

In 2019 and 2021, nearly all teachers reported they were able to support students who had difficulty learning Lao language as well as extend students who needed it. The 2021 case study respondents identified a similar range of strategies to assist students with difficulties as were reported in 2019. Providing targeted help in class and extra instruction were common strategies. However, in 2021 teachers and principals were less able to identify strategies to extend high-achieving students.

### ***Use of mother tongue***

For both data collection periods, Mon-Khmer was the most common student language group (48%), followed by Lao-Tai (37%). Nearly three-quarters of teachers (73%) whose native language was *other than Lao* indicated that they used a mother tongue language while teaching Lao. This was slightly higher than teachers reported in 2019 (67%).

Teachers' use of mother tongue language during Lao language lessons in 2021 was focused primarily on providing explanations and connections for non-Lao speakers. It was reported by some case study teachers that this practice was encouraged by MoES at the new curriculum orientation.

### ***Assessment***

In 2019 and 2021 almost all surveyed teachers reported that they undertook some form of student assessment. However, in 2021, more teachers and principals surveyed reported they used assessment data for different purposes. All respondents reported they used assessment data for planning next steps for learning, reporting student achievement, ranking students and monitoring student performance. Again, the main assessment methods were students reading and writing through copying or dictation, which likely indicates teachers are still drawing on more traditional methods for assessment.

In 2021, eight of the 15 case study teachers explicitly checked for students' understanding in both lessons (compared to four in 2019) and there was a two-fold increase in the frequency with which they did this. All case study teachers were found to observe students practising or applying what they had learnt. In 2019, case study teachers in Southern schools did not do this at all.

### ***Time spent teaching Lao language***

In 2021 there was greater consistency in the amount of time teachers reported they spend teaching Lao language each week. The majority of teachers (84%) reported they teach Lao language between nine to 11 hours a week, averaging ten hours per week. About ten per cent teach for eight hours or fewer per week, and six per cent for 12 hours or more per week.

More than half of surveyed and case study teachers reported they did not have enough time to teach the Lao language curriculum in a typical week, or could only do so sometimes.

### ***Professional development***

In 2021, 87 per cent of survey teachers and 82 per cent of surveyed principals reported they had attended the face-to-face MoES/BEQUAL new curriculum orientation session for G1 teachers. This was somewhat consistent across provinces, ranging from three-quarters of surveyed teachers in Phongsali to almost all teachers in Sekong (96%) and Khammouane (97%).

While case study teachers appreciated the orientation sessions, many felt that the teaching methods in the new curriculum were challenging and expressed the need for more professional learning. Several reported the training was not extensive enough and noted the need for further training related to the new Lao language curriculum. Some principals and PAs similarly reported the training duration was too short.

Generally, surveyed teachers had greater access to in-service training during the last two years, at 74 per cent in 2021 (47% in 2019) with less variation across provinces. Only 28 per cent of teachers had undertaken in-service training focused on Lao language in the two years preceding 2019, compared to nearly all teachers in 2021. In case study schools in 2021, only two of the 15 teachers reported they had received further in-service training on Lao language

teaching during the last year, one in a Northern school and one in a Central school – both organised by DESB.

The new curriculum orientation sessions also covered associated support resources, such as participation in COP and use of self-access learning (SAL) tools. In BEQUAL targeted districts, it was planned that education support grants to DESBs would be specifically used to facilitate additional in-service support of these kinds for teachers and principals.

In 2021, slightly higher proportions of surveyed teachers reported they had participated in COP or SAL than they had in 2019. Many case study teachers reported that cluster meetings and WhatsApp groups were useful supports for their Lao language teaching, as they provided opportunities to exchange information with their peers.

### 3.2 Findings about factors affecting teaching practice

The 2019 and 2021 data collection rounds provided opportunities to understand and capture factors that supported or impeded teachers' practice prior to the new curriculum rollout and early in its implementation. Data at both collection times were collected through questionnaires and case study interviews.

**Results from the 2021 data show that, overall, teachers have reported receiving higher levels of technical support for Lao language teaching from their principals, teacher colleagues and PAs. Fewer case study respondents reported a lack of training on Lao language and access to teaching materials and resources as key constraints to improving teaching practices. However challenges related to teacher knowledge and experience of Lao language teaching continued to be reported as an impediment in nearly all case study schools. Almost all surveyed teachers and principals requested the need for additional training to support Lao language teaching.**

In 2019 and 2021, surveyed teachers reported their perception that G1 students' low Lao language skills remained the most serious issue in their class. Case study respondents highlighted high levels of student absenteeism as a major issue for teaching Lao language.

COVID-19 disruptions in 2020 impacted student learning, with most schools unable to practically provide remote education. Teachers received little teaching support during this period or when their schools reopened.

Table 5 provides a high-level summary of changes in factors that supported or impeded teachers' practice between 2019 and 2021, as perceived and reported by participants.

Table 5: Summary of changes to factors that supported or impeded teachers' practices between 2019 and 2021

	Positive change	No change or negative change
<b>Professional development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher levels of participation in LL training (SR-S)</li> <li>Slightly more participation in COP (SR-S, SR-I)</li> <li>Slightly more participation in Self-learning activities (SR-S, SR-I)</li> </ul>	

<b>Technical support to teachers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significantly increased support from PAs – PA support more valued (SR-S, SR-I)</li> <li>• More support from principals (SR-S, SR-I)</li> <li>• More support from other teachers (SR-S, SR-I)</li> </ul>	
<b>Impediments – resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fewer schools reported lack of teaching materials and resources as an impediment, but more resources requested (SR-I)</li> </ul>	
<b>Impediments – teachers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers had more access to training, but more training requested (SR-I)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of teacher knowledge and experience of LL as an ongoing challenge (SR-I, SR-S)</li> </ul>
<b>Impediments – students</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of students’ low levels of LL skills as most serious challenge (SR-S)</li> <li>• Perception of high rates of absenteeism as a challenge (SR-I, SR-S)</li> <li>• Limited parental support reported more as an impediment (SR-I)</li> </ul>

SR = self-reported S = survey I = case study interview Obs = case study observation

The following section provides more detailed findings about supports and impediments affecting teaching practice. Annex E provides more detail analysis and data.

### ***Technical supports at the school level***

In 2021, teachers reported receiving slightly greater levels of technical support from their principals and teacher colleagues, and that this support was valued. The majority of surveyed teachers (84%) reported their principals had observed their teaching and provided them with feedback or advice during the school year, compared to 77 per cent in 2019. Case study teachers reported that the types of support provided by principals included assistance with preparing materials, lesson planning, teaching methods and monitoring teaching and learning. While the majority of case study principals felt confident in their ability to support teachers to implement the new curriculum, those who had not had training reported they lack confidence. With respect to what might help them support teachers more effectively, principals most often suggested further training related to Lao language teaching for their teachers, themselves, or both.

While more than half of surveyed teachers (58%) reported they had been observed by teacher colleagues at least once in the school year, nearly all teachers (90%) reported that they worked with other teachers on Lao language teaching. Many case study teachers reported they valued exchanging teaching knowledge and experience with colleagues within and external to their

schools. School clusters provided opportunities for many case study teachers to engage in this type of sharing, as did WhatsApp groups which was evident across Northern and Central case study schools.

### ***Technical supports at the district/provincial level***

PA support to schools appears to have significantly increased in 2021, with nearly all surveyed teachers reporting visits from their PA in the last school year. This increased from 2019 when one-quarter of surveyed teachers reported their PAs did not visit. Nearly half of case study teachers reported that support from their PA was among the most helpful that they received. PAs provided classroom observations, advice about teaching methods, assistance with lesson planning and use of teaching materials, advice about classroom management, and helped to assess student learning to monitor progress. It is likely that education support grants provided by BEQUAL facilitated these.

### ***Access to resource materials***

In 2019, case study teachers and principals often reported that a lack of materials was a key constraint to Lao language teaching. In 2021, most case study respondents reported that Lao language teaching materials had been provided, and many regarded the new curriculum teachers' guide as a useful resource. However, nearly all surveyed teachers and principals indicated that greater access to curriculum materials, including teacher guides and resources, would support them to improve their teaching of Lao language. Some case study respondents raised challenges associated with materials getting worn, the need for more variety, and the time it takes to self-produce additional teaching aids.

### ***Perceptions of teacher factors that impede teaching***

Surveyed principals were asked to what extent a lack of qualified teachers, teacher absenteeism and teacher turnover were issues in their school. In 2021, 40 per cent of the principals (55% in 2019) reported that a lack of qualified teachers was an issue in their school, followed by teacher absenteeism at 32 per cent (33% in 2019) and teacher turnover at 28 per cent (29% in 2019).

In 2021, respondents across nearly all case study schools continued to report that teachers' knowledge of Lao language and understanding key elements of the curriculum, like lesson planning and assessment, remained challenging. Given most teachers had participated in BEQUAL supported orientation training, training access was no longer reported as a key challenge. Nevertheless, almost all surveyed principals and teachers reported additional training about Lao language curriculum, Lao language teaching methods and teaching Lao to non-Lao speakers would support Lao language teaching. This perhaps reflects the finding that the new Lao language curriculum requires significant change for teachers and therefore more professional learning is needed.



***Perceptions of student characteristics that impede teaching***

In 2019 and 2021, surveyed teachers were asked to what extent certain student-characteristics were issues in their class. In both years, teachers perceived G1 students' low Lao language skills as the greatest impediment in making learning progress (75% in 2021; 70% in 2019). This was followed by readiness for transition to school (64% in 2021; 53% in 2019), lack of interest or motivation (57% in 2021; 50% in 2019), and absenteeism (56% in 2021; 49% in 2019).

In 2021, case study respondents highlighted high rates of student absenteeism, often due to children accompanying their parents to work in the field, as a major challenge to teaching Lao language. This was followed by the challenges related to limited parental support, and student ethnicity and their home language.

***COVID-19 impact***

There was quite limited support provided to students for remote learning during lockdown. Many case study respondents reported that remote learning was not feasible due to challenges related to rural locations, limited access to the internet and low levels of parental literacy.

A key issue reported by most case study respondents was that they perceived that students forgot the lessons upon their return to school. G1 teachers reported that very limited or no support was provided to them to teach Lao language during the disruption.

## 4. Key findings about students' literacy outcomes

Information about students' literacy outcomes was collected through a Lao language literacy test for G1 students and case study interviews. The G1 test was administered in 2019 and again in 2021. The 2019 administration was conducted before COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic.

The test had five parts:

- letter and sound recognition
- speaking
- reading fluency and comprehension
- listening comprehension
- writing (Tasks 1 and 2).

The skills assessed in the test are included in the new Lao language curriculum for G1 and were also included in the previous curriculum.

While the 2021 G1 cohort were not affected by COVID-19 related school closures, it may be possible that their kindergarten/pre-school experience was impacted. They are also the first cohort to experience the new G1 curriculum in its entirety, noting however that data was collected for this study prior to the end of the school year.

**Results from the 2021 G1 test indicate slight improvement in overall student performance in Lao language literacy after the introduction of the new G1 curriculum, but this needs to**

**be considered with caution. There is still wide variation in the extent of students' Lao language literacy proficiency and less than one per cent of G1 students met the expectations of the new G1 Lao language curriculum. Of concern and consistent with 2019, nearly 25 per cent of G1 students tested in 2021 have very limited or no Lao language literacy skills for G1.**

## 4.1 Findings about students' literacy outcomes

Students' Lao language literacy proficiency is described in terms of levels in this report.<sup>1</sup> Level 1 describes the easiest skills and Level 6+ the hardest skills. Students in each level can demonstrate the skills described in all of the levels below them, so students in Level 4 can also demonstrate all the skills described in Levels 3, 2 and 1.

To be meeting the G1 Lao language curriculum expectations, students are expected to be able to master the skills from Level 1 through to Level 6+. For this report, the levels have been grouped into 'high performing' (levels 5 to 6+, noting that 6 and 6+ have been collapsed in subsequent analysis), 'mid performing' (levels 3 and 4), and 'low performing' (levels 1 and 2).<sup>2</sup>

### **Overall student performance**

In 2021, overall student performance in Lao language literacy improved slightly, but this result needs to be considered with caution.

Figures 1 and Table 6 both show the distribution of students' Lao language literacy skills between 2019 and 2021 across the described levels. They show a slight overall improvement in student achievement between the years. The line in the box of Figure 1 is the median, which shows that approximately half of the students in 2021 were in Level 4 or above, compared to Level 3 in 2019. Table 6 shows slightly more students in Level 5 and slightly fewer in Level 3 compared with 2019. Thus, there has been a slight shift in proportion of students from mid performing into high performing levels. There continues to be a wide variation in the extent of students' Lao language literacy proficiency.

Overall the distribution of students' skills remained relatively stable with some small fluctuations across different literacy skills, some of which were slightly harder, or slightly easier in 2021 compared with 2019.

In 2021, less than one per cent of G1 students met the expectations of the new G1 Lao language curriculum. However, more G1 students can demonstrate some of the harder skills expected, with a shift in the proportion of students in mid-performing levels into high performing levels compared to 2019. There is still a concerning cohort of low performing students who showed very low or no literacy skills.

<sup>1</sup> Item Response Theory (IRT) was used to analyse the students' responses to the literacy assessment. Students were then located in levels. This involved estimating a score for each student (using IRT software), which placed them on a scale and applying cut points along the scale dividing the students into seven levels.

<sup>2</sup> The students within a level have varied skills. Students whose test scores put them near the top of a level can do all the skills described in that level. Students, whose test scores put them near the bottom of a level, can only do a few of the skills in that level.

In 2021, the top 22 per cent of students (13% in 2019) started to read and write a few words and could listen to simple texts with understanding. They are meeting some but not all of the G1 Lao language curriculum expectations. They knew 14 letter names, described a picture saying 6 or more Lao words in a sentence, read and wrote at least 3 correctly spelled Lao words and listened to and fully understood a very short, simple text. Only four per cent could read and then follow a short instruction and only one per cent knew the sounds for 4 consonants and 3 vowels. Some of this improvement may possibly be associated with the increased focus on oral language skills development in the new curriculum. However, improved oral language skills in 2021 may also reflect changes made to the visual prompt in the G1 test to ensure it was familiar to all students.

The middle 55 per cent of students (62% in 2019) started to recognise and write some familiar letters and words, with limited understanding of simple texts that were read aloud. This cohort is still a long way from meeting many of the G1 Lao language curriculum expectations for these skills. These students knew 5 to 8 letter names, but no sounds, described a picture saying at least 3 Lao words in short phrases, read some single words and wrote 1 or 2 Lao words typically with spelling errors, and listened to, but only partially understood a very short, simple text.

Of concern and consistent with 2019, nearly 25 per cent of G1 students tested in 2021 had very limited or no Lao language literacy skills for G1. These students do not yet meet any of the G1 Lao language curriculum expectations. They either said nothing, or could only say 1 or 2 Lao words to describe a picture. They had no other literacy skills. To prevent the achievement gap from persisting or widening over time, it is urgent that curriculum, teacher and student-focused interventions are targeted towards lifting the performance of these lowest-performing students.

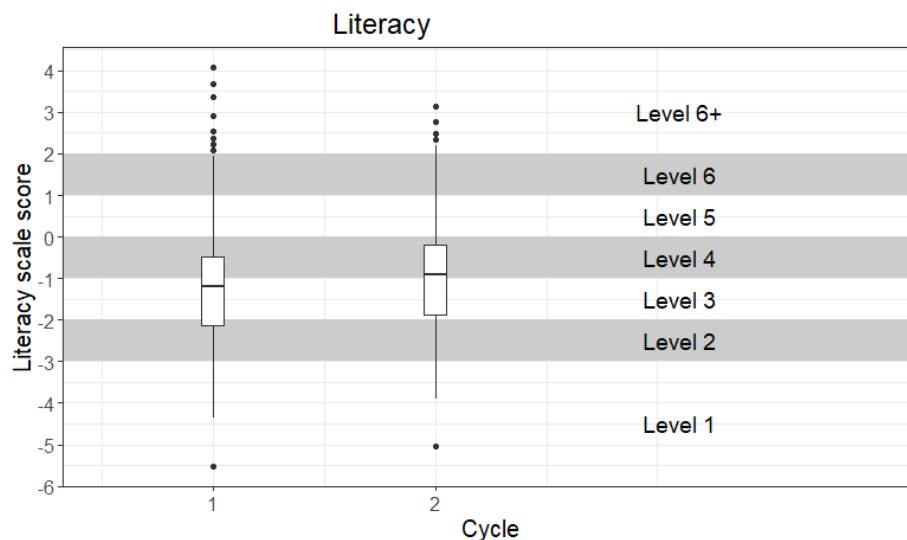


Figure 1: Distributions for Lao language literacy student achievement in cycle 1 (2019) and cycle 2 (2021)

Table 6: Comparison of percentage of students by level in 2019 and 2021

Level		2019	2021
	6+	X	0.8%
'High'	6	3.6%	4.7%
	5	8.8%	15.6%
'Mid'	4	30.9%	29.2%
	3	31.1%	26.3%
'Low'	2	11.7%	13.2%
	1	13.9%	10.1%

X indicates this level was not calculated in 2019

Annex F provides further data about student literacy outcomes, including detailed discussion of each part of the test with discussion following the format of findings and new curriculum links (links to the new G1 curriculum outcomes). Of note, are the results for letter and sound recognition. Giving sounds for letters was only in the 2021 test, as a phonics approach represents a major shift in the new curriculum to teaching reading. The students found giving sounds extremely hard. The new Lao language curriculum expects that by the end of G1 students will know the names and sounds of many basic consonants and vowels. In 2021, just over half the students named 8 basic consonants, but almost none knew their sounds. Only 20 per cent named 6 basic vowels and only five per cent also knew the sounds. This indicates that teachers are not yet able to effectively teach letter sounds. The 2021 test administrator training also showed that highly experienced individuals undertaking the test administration were not familiar with the idea that Lao had letter sounds and required audio recordings for support. It is possible that Lao teachers may also be unfamiliar with letter sounds, or lack confidence that they can pronounce them correctly or teach them effectively.

It is also possible that strict phonemic segregation may not be appropriate in Lao language. Lao is generally classified as an alphasyllabic language (Haspelmath et al., 2005). Lao is considered phonetically transparent, but it is also possible that disaggregating the phonemes for those consonants and vowels that typically appear together as syllables makes less sense than teaching the sound of the syllable. However, it also possible that rote learning of Lao words by sight has been standard practice in reading and a phonics approach is entirely new to most educators. The lack of understanding about a phonetic approach to learning to read is also reflected in students' very limited writing skills. If students are taught the phonemic awareness skills required to hear all the phonemes in spoken words and also know the letter associated with each phoneme, they should be able to spell any words composed of known letter-sounds.

Students' limited listening comprehension suggests most are not yet ready to learn to read. Between 40 to 60 per cent could not answer two questions about literal information and only five per cent (10% in 2019) of students could make a simple inference in a very short listening comprehension story. Students need sufficient language proficiency to understand a simple text that is read to them before they start learning to read themselves. Otherwise learning to read is a meaningless task – even if the text is read to them they have little or no capacity to

understand it. Students need improved Lao language skills and greatly improved listening comprehension skills before they start learning to read.

### ***Teachers' perceptions of student performance***

Interestingly, despite this evidence of generally low levels of student learning outcomes, a greater number of case study teachers in 2021 compared to 2019 reported they perceived their G1 students were progressing as expected. These perceptions were based on teachers' observations of their students' speaking, reading and writing skills, and assessment scores (10 of 15 teachers in 2021; 6 of 15 teachers in 2019). Some teachers attributed this to the new curriculum. It is possible there is a gap between teachers' understanding of what progressing as expected means and the new curriculum expectations. Similar challenges to student learning were reported by respondents in 2021 as in 2019. These included: student absenteeism, underage, disability, lack of interest, ethnicity, and lack of parental support for student learning.

### ***Performance by region***

There were regional variations in student performance. Table 7 below shows 2021 low and high performing students as identified by the student clusters, by province.

In both 2019 and 2021, Phongsali had the highest proportion of students in the low performing levels (Levels 1 and 2), while Sekong had the highest proportion of students in the high performing levels (Levels 5 and 6+). This disparity in outcomes has widened over this period.

In 2021, almost half of students in Phongsali were in the low performing levels (48%), compared to one-third (34%) in 2019. In Sekong, almost one-third of students (31%) were in high performing levels in 2021, an increase from 16% in 2019.

Compared to 2019, in 2021 there were positive shifts in the proportion of students into the high performing levels from Khammouane (24% in 2021; 11% in 2019) and Savannakhet (22% in 2021; 12% in 2019).

Table 7: 2021 Student province by low and high performance cluster

	Student performance cluster	
	Level 1 and 2	Level 5 and 6+
	%	%
Khammouane	9.7	24.4
Luangnamtha	23.6	13.5
Phongsali	47.7	13.7
Saravene	25.0	19.4
Savannakhet	22.5	22.2
Sekong	16.3	30.7

### ***Performance by gender***

While there were no gender differences in 2019, in 2021 female students performed better than male students, both overall and across half of the provinces (Sekong, Saravane and Savannakhet). Male students slightly outperformed female students in Luangnamtha and Khammouane. There were no gender differences in Phongsali.

Table 8 below shows that in 2021, more female students are performing better – students in levels 5 and 6+ were more likely to be female. This is particularly stark in Sekong where 40 per cent of female students were high performing, compared to 21 per cent of male students. In 2021, there were higher proportions of high performing female students (23% in 2021; 13.9% in 2019) and fewer low performers (22.3% in 2021; 26.4% in 2019). There were similar proportions – around one-quarter – of low performing male students in 2019 and 2021.

Table 8: 2021 Student province and gender by low and high performance cluster

		Student performance cluster	
		Level 1 and 2	Level 5 and 6+
		%	%
Khammouane	Male	8.4	24.4
	Female	11.1	24.4
Luangnamtha	Male	23.1	14.3
	Female	24.1	12.6
Phongsali	Male	47.6	13.3
	Female	47.8	14.1
Saravane	Male	26.6	18.5
	Female	23.4	20.4
Savannakhet	Male	23.8	19.9
	Female	21.4	24.2
Sekong	Male	20.2	21.2
	Female	12.6	39.8
Overall	Male	24.4	19.2
	Female	22.3	23.0

## 4.2 Findings about students' attitudes and dispositions towards learning

In 2019 and 2021, data about students' attitudes and dispositions towards learning were collected primarily through teachers' perceptions via the Teacher Questionnaire, case study interviews about students' enjoyment of Lao language classes, and classroom observations focused on the classroom environment. Classroom environments were judged to be 'cooperative and supportive', 'compliant' or 'unruly' as detailed in Table 9. Cooperative and supportive environments are more likely to indicate the presence of positive student attitudes and dispositions towards learning.

**Results from the 2021 data collection about students' attitudes and dispositions towards learning indicate positive shifts in enjoyment of Lao language lessons and classroom culture, including teacher–student relationships and interactions.**

### *Student enjoyment*

Survey data on perceptions of student enjoyment of Lao language lessons in 2019 and 2021 report similar levels of enjoyment, with nearly all teachers reporting their students enjoyed Lao language lessons to a large or moderate extent. All case study respondents in 2021

responded G1 students enjoy or sometimes enjoy lessons. Respondents noted students enjoyed the pictures, stories and games in the new curriculum.

### ***Classroom environment***

In 2021, researchers recorded less variation among the classroom environments they observed, with the majority assessed as 'compliant'. Eleven of 15 teachers had 'compliant' classes for both observations. In 2019, researchers observed greater range in classroom environments. When comparing observations between 2019 and 2021 for teachers who participated in both administrations, most teachers who had 'cooperative and 'supportive' or 'unruly' environments in 2019, were assessed to have 'compliant' classes in 2021.

Further analysis and data is presented in Annex G.

Table 9: Classroom environment section of classroom observation instrument

Class is....	Evidence might include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Cooperative and supportive of one another</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teachers and students work together harmoniously</li> <li>○ Classroom atmosphere is joyful</li> <li>○ Interactions are respectful, kind and encouraging</li> <li>○ Most activity focused on learning</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Compliant</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Students do what the teacher says</li> <li>○ Classroom atmosphere is complacent</li> <li>○ Interactions are respectful but may not be kind or encouraging</li> <li>○ Most activity focused on procedures and completing tasks</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Unruly</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Students <u>do not</u> do what the teacher says</li> <li>○ Classroom atmosphere is disrupted</li> <li>○ Interactions are disrespectful</li> <li>○ Most activity focused on managing student behaviour</li> </ul>

## 4.3 Findings about factors affecting student literacy outcomes

Results from the 2021 data collection indicate certain student and teacher factors were associated with G1 student performance levels.

**In 2021, student factors that were positively associated with higher levels of G1 test performance included students' participation in kindergarten or pre-school, students' home language if Lao-Tai, more exposure to stories and Lao language resources at home and in the community, higher family wealth, and lower absenteeism levels.**

**Teachers who were female, older, more experienced and had permanent teaching status tended to have students who performed better in G1 tests. Alignment between the student and teachers' home language if Lao-Tai was also associated with stronger test performance. Unlike in 2019, more hours spent per week teaching Lao language were positively associated with higher G1 test performance in 2021.**

**Yet, data collected in 2021 showed that correlations between teaching practices and student performance were weak.** The new curriculum represents significant change to both teaching and assessment practices. It is likely to take more time for teachers to understand and fully incorporate these new approaches into their teaching practice. While teachers are

demonstrating more awareness and early adoption of some new (and possibly easier) approaches into their practice, the results indicate that these changes are not substantial enough to impact student learning.

Annex H provides more data and analysis about the factors associated with student performance.

## Student factors

Student characteristics reported against were age, kindergarten/pre-school experience, home language, exposure to Lao language resources, family wealth and absenteeism. Table 10 summarises the students' average percent correct scores in 2021 for these main factors. Selected factors are discussed in more detail below.

Table 10: Summary of 2021 average percent correct scores by student factor

Student factors	2021 Average percent correct scores		
<b>Age</b>	Aged 6 and below 27%	Aged 7-9 30%	Aged 10 and above 29%
<b>Participation in kindergarten or pre-school</b>	Attended 30%	Did not attend 24%	
<b>Language at home</b>	Lao-Tai 36%	Other 10%-24%	
<b>Exposure to stories at home</b>	Told stories 32%	Not told stories 26%	
<b>Exposure to Lao language resources outside of school</b>	Had access 31%	No access 24%	
<b>Family wealth</b>	Highest quartile 35%	Lowest quartile 21%	
<b>Absenteeism level</b>	Not absent 31%	11 days or more 24%	
<b>Disability – physical difficulties</b>	No difficulty 29%	Any difficulty 21%	
<b>Disability – cognitive difficulties</b>	No difficult 29%	Any difficulty 26%	

### *Students' age*

There was a slight tendency for older students to answer more test items correctly in 2021, with students aged six and below answering 27 per cent correctly, compared with students aged seven to nine answering 30 per cent correctly and students aged 10 or above answering 29 per cent correctly. These results are similar to those from 2019.

Table 11 shows the distribution of age across the provinces. Around 80 per cent of students in Phongsali were age 6 years or younger, compared to 71 per cent in Luangnamtha and around half in the other provinces.



Table 11: 2021 Student age group by province

	Student age group		
	6 years or younger	7 to 9 years	10 years or older
	%	%	%
Khammouane	52.1	47.0	0.9
Luangnamtha	71.3	26.4	2.3
Phongsali	79.7	19.9	0.4
Saravene	56.0	42.3	1.7
Savannakhet	56.5	41.0	2.5
Sekong	46.8	46.8	6.3

### ***Students' participation in kindergarten or pre-school***

In 2019 and 2021 students who attended kindergarten or pre-school performed better in the G1 Lao language literacy test (30% in 2021) than students who did not (24%). Almost two-thirds (60%) of the 2021 student sample had attended kindergarten or pre-school, compared to half of the 2019 student sample (52%).

Table 12 shows the proportion of students in the low and high clusters who attended kindergarten or pre-school. Students at Levels 5 and 6+ were more likely to attend kindergarten or pre-school compared to those at Levels 1 and 2.

Table 12: 2021 Student attended kindergarten or pre-school by low and high performance cluster

	Student performance cluster	
	Level 1 and 2	Level 5 and 6+
Kindergarten/pre-school attendance	%	%
Yes	20.2	23.8
No	30.9	14.6

Table 13 looks at kindergarten attendance by province. Students in Phongsali were most likely to attend kindergarten (78%), followed by those in Sekong, Luangnamtha and Khammouane (73.8%, 71.9% and 71.2% respectively).

Table 13: 2021 Student attended kindergarten by province

	Attended kindergarten
	%
Khammouane	71.2
Luangnamtha	71.9
Phongsali	78.0
Saravene	69.2
Savannakhet	68.5
Sekong	73.8

### ***Students' home language***

As in 2019, students who spoke Lao-Tai at home answered more test items correctly in 2021 (36%) than students who spoke other languages at home (10% to 24%). Students who spoke Hmong-Lu Mien at home answered the least test items correctly (10%).

The gap in performance between student language groups widened between 2019 and 2021. Students who spoke Lao-Tai improved their test performance slightly (36% in 2021 compared to 34% in 2019), while students who spoke Hmong-Lu Mien, Chine-Tibet or other languages experienced a decline in performance (10% in 2021 compared to 14% in 2019; 17% compared to 19%; and 20% compared to 27%). There were no differences in the performance of male and female students within these language groups.

Table 14 shows the proportion of students in the low and high clusters who spoke Lao-Tai at home. Students at Levels 5 and 6+ were more likely to speak Lao-Tai at home either always or sometimes compared to those at Levels 1 and 2. Students in Levels 1 and 2 were less likely to speak Lao-Tai at home compared to students at Levels 5 or 6+.

Table 14: 2021 Student home language by low and high performance cluster

	Student performance cluster	
	Level 1 and 2	Level 5 and 6+
Speak Lao at home	%	%
Yes, always	9.4	29.8
Only sometimes	10.8	33.2
Not at all	37.6	11.0

Table 15 shows that students in Luangnamtha and Phongsali were least likely to speak Lao at home, with 76 per cent and 67 per cent respectively not speaking Lao at all at home.

Table 15: 2021 Student speaks Lao at home by province

	Student speaks Lao at home		
	Not at all	Only sometimes	Yes, always
	%	%	%
Khammouane	20.9	17.4	61.8
Luangnamtha	75.8	9.0	15.2
Phongsali	66.8	13.3	19.9
Saravene	47.3	9.6	43.1
Savannakhet	47.3	13.8	38.9
Sekong	57.9	16.8	25.2

### ***Students' exposure to stories at home***

For both data collection years, students were asked whether anyone at home told them stories, and if so, how often.<sup>3</sup> These data were analysed for the first time in 2021. Around two-fifths of students were told stories (44% in 2019; 40% in 2021), and half of these said it was daily (50% in 2019; 54% in 2021).

Those who were told stories at home tended to perform better than those who weren't, answering on average 32 per cent of questions correctly compared to 26 per cent. Those who were told stories everyday answered on average 33 per cent of questions correctly, compared to 30 per cent correct for those who were told stories sometimes.

<sup>3</sup> The survey did not specify the language, so stories could be told in any language.

**Students' exposure to Lao language resources**

Students in 2019 and 2021 who had access to books at home, or could go to places to borrow, read, or look at books answered more test items correctly (31% for both years) than students who do not have this exposure outside of school (23% and 24% respectively).

**Student family wealth**

In 2021, student family wealth was analysed for the first time.<sup>4</sup> Students from higher family wealth homes tended to answer more test items correctly (between 28% and 36% correctly), than students from the lower family wealth homes (between 10% and 27% correctly).

Table 16 shows the proportion of students in the low and high cluster across the family wealth quartiles. Students at Levels 5 and 6+ were more likely to be from a higher wealth background compared to those at Levels 1 and 2.

Table 16: 2021 Student family wealth quartile by low and high performance cluster

	Student performance cluster	
	Level 1 and 2	Level 5 and 6+
	%	%
1	42.1	13.3
2	23.1	18.2
3	16.0	25.8
4	8.4	31.9

This achievement gap was particularly stark in Phongsali where the low family wealth students answered on average 10 per cent of questions correctly compared to an average of 32 per cent correct for the high family wealth students.

**Student absenteeism**

In 2019 and 2021, students who were absent from school for more days answered fewer test items correctly. In 2021, students with 6-10 days performed least well (23% test items answered correctly) followed by those who were absent for 11 days or more (24%). Students who were not absent in March 2021 performed the best with 31 per cent of test items answered correctly.

**Student disability**

One objective of this study was to gather data about children with disabilities. Teachers (or principals) were asked about each student (tested and absent) having difficulty doing activities due to health problems. The categories were based on the Washington Group guidance (Washington Group, 2016). Three-quarters of students had no difficulties across all the categories (76%). Only three per cent of students were reported to have some level of physical difficulty, while 23 per cent were reported as having some cognitive difficulties. The most

<sup>4</sup> A family wealth measure comprised of books in the home, items in the home (including but not limited to electricity, television and radio) and meals in a day. Factor analysis was used to create a factor score which was then split into quartiles reflecting students from low family wealth backgrounds through to those with higher family wealth.

common difficulty was ‘remembering or concentrating’, with one-fifth of students having ‘some difficulty’ or ‘a lot of difficulty’ (20%).

On average, students with no difficulties answered more test items correctly compared to those with some difficulties. The lowest performing students were those who have some level of difficulty hearing, speaking using their own language or seeing. Where the highest proportion of students were reported as having a difficulty, remembering and concentrating, there was the smallest difference in test items answered correctly, with those students answering, on average, 27 per cent of items correctly compared to students with no difficulty answering 29 per cent of items correctly compared.

## Teacher factors

Teacher characteristics reported against were gender, age, years of teaching experience, qualifications, professional status, participation in in-service training, and alignment between the teacher and students’ home language. Also investigated were relationships between students’ performance and hours spent teaching Lao language, teachers’ use of resources, and teacher-reported hindrances to or enablers of effective Lao language teaching. Data about teachers was collected using the teacher questionnaire.

Table 17 summarises the students’ average percent correct scores in 2021 for some of these factors. Selected factors are discussed in more detail below.

Table 17: Summary of 2021 average percent correct scores by teacher factor

Teacher factors	2021 Average percent correct scores		
<b>Gender</b>	Female 31%-32%	Male 23%-24%	
<b>Age</b>	Aged under 30 24%-25%	Aged 30-49 26%-31%	Aged 50 and over 31%-42%
<b>Years of teaching experience</b>	Up to 5 years 23%-27%	21+ years 32%-36%	
<b>Highest level of education</b>	Vocational 27%-28%	Diploma 26%-33%	Bachelor degree of higher 13%-32%
<b>Type of training received at TTC</b>	Basic 33-34%	Mid-level 27-28%	High-level 25%-33%
<b>Participation in G1 orientation training</b>	Completed 29%	Not completed 25%	
<b>Professional status</b>	Government permanent 28%-30%	Contract 6-25%	Volunteer 23%
<b>Teacher and students’ language at home</b>	Both Lao-Tai 36%	Do not share same language 22%-26%	
<b>Hours spent teaching Lao language</b>	1-5 hours 11%-15%	6-10 hours 27%-29%	10 or more hours 28%-30%

***Teachers' gender, age and teaching experience***

Consistent with 2019, just over half of the 2021 teachers (54%) were female. Again, Phongsali had a higher proportion of female teachers and principals compared to other provinces.

As in 2019, in 2021 students of female teachers performed better (31% to 32%) than male teachers (23% to 24%). Students of older teachers also tended to perform more strongly in the test.

Also, students of teachers who had more years of overall teaching experience, answered more test items correctly in 2021. For example, students who had teachers with more than 21 years of teaching experience answered on average 32 to 36 per cent of test items correctly, compared to 23 to 27 per cent for teachers with under five years of teaching experience.

***Teacher training and qualifications***

In 2021, there were small positive differences in test performance of students of teachers who participated in the G1 curriculum orientation training held in 2019 and students of teachers that did not participate. There were some anomalies associated with teachers' highest education level and qualifications.

***Teachers' professional status***

Consistent with 2019, in 2021 the majority of teachers (84%) were government permanent employees, but 14 per cent were volunteer teachers and two per cent contract. Khammouane, in particular, had a high percentage of volunteer G1 teachers at 20 per cent. All teachers in Sekong were government permanent employees.

As in 2019, students of government (permanent) teachers answered more test items correctly (28 to 30%), compared to contract (6 to 25%) and volunteer teachers (23%).

***Teacher and students' home language***

As in 2019, students who shared the same home language as their teachers answered more test items correctly in 2021, if this language was Lao-Tai (36%). Students who did not share the same home language as their teacher answered, on average, between 22 to 26 per cent.

Where students and teachers both shared Mon-Khmer as their home language, these students on average answered 24 per cent of test items correctly. Where the common language was Chine-Tibet or Hmong-Lu Mien, student performance levels were weaker (13 to 17% for Chine-Tibet; 12% for Hmong-Lu Mien).

Table 18 shows that while most students and teachers did not share a mother tongue across all provinces, there was a higher proportion in Phongsali, Saravene and Savannakhet (84%, 82% and 80% respectively). Around a third of students in Khammouane, Luangnamtha and Sekong shared the same mother tongue as their teacher (33%, 30% and 34% respectively). In Khammouane only, this shared language was mostly Lao-Tai.

Table 18: 2021 Teacher and student share the same mother tongue by province

	Teacher and student share the same mother tongue			
	Different mother tongue	Lao - Tai	Mon - Khmer	Chine - Tibet
	%	%	%	%
Khammouane	67.2	30.3	2.5	0.0
Luangnamtha	69.9	8.3	11.6	10.2
Phongsali	83.9	7.7	4.2	4.2
Saravene	81.6	7.3	11.1	0.0
Savannakhet	80.3	10.7	9.0	0.0
Sekong	65.8	3.5	30.6	0.0

### **Teaching practices**

In 2021, there was a positive association between teachers who spent more hours per week teaching Lao language and their students' higher G1 test performance. In 2019 there were only minor differences. In 2021, students whose teacher spent one to five hours per week teaching Lao language answered less test items correctly (11 to 15%) compared to those who had six to ten hours (27 to 29%) and those who had ten or more hours (28 to 30%).

There were weak correlations between the teaching practices and student performance investigated. Weak but positive associations were found with the following teaching practices: teachers' greater use of a range of Lao language resources; teacher confidence in using different Lao language teaching methods; and less frequent use of mother tongue languages in Lao language teaching.

### **School factors**

School characteristics reported by principals included prevalence of multi-grade G1 class(es) and school facilities. Also investigated were relationships between student performance and principals' perceived hindrances to teaching. This data about principals and schools was collected using the principal questionnaire.

In 2021, students at schools with either no multi-grade G1 class or two multi-grade G1 classes tended to perform better in their G1 test than students at schools with only one multi-grade G1 class.

There was a weak but positive association between student test performance and the number of school facilities. Students attending schools with more facilities available tended to answer more test items correctly in both 2019 and 2021.

## 5. Recommendations

This Study has provided the opportunity to investigate teaching quality and student literacy outcomes in Lao PDR over two rounds of data collection, with another planned for 2022. The Baseline Report captured ‘state of play’ information in 2019 prior to major curriculum changes, as well as the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key findings from the Baseline Report pointed to the need for intensive action on Lao language literacy, targeted teacher training on the new curriculum with a special emphasis on second language learners, and deepened engagement with school communities to reduce student absenteeism and improve student readiness for school. The key findings from this Interim Report 1 confirm these issues remain crucial and require continued and dedicated focus.

### 5.1 Lao language teaching and student literacy

#### Insights from the 2021 data collection

- The BEQUAL-supported in-service program facilitated teachers’ familiarity with the new curriculum and teachers were demonstrating greater awareness of the new pedagogies and engaging more with support systems. However, teacher knowledge and experience of Lao language teaching continued to be reported as an impediment, and there were requests from principals and teachers for more training to support Lao language teaching. The results of the G1 test indicate that teachers need more support to teach Lao language effectively.
- Overall student performance remains concerning – less than one per cent of G1 students met the expectations of the new G1 Lao language curriculum and nearly 25 per cent had very limited or no Lao language literacy skills for G1. Of note are the poor results for letter and sound recognition, given a major shift in the new curriculum is the introduction of a phonics approach to teaching reading.
- As in 2019, the key challenges to Lao language teaching perceived by teachers and principals included teachers’ knowledge of Lao language and understanding key elements of the curriculum, students’ low Lao language skills and high rates of student absenteeism.
- A range of student and teacher factors were associated with G1 student performance levels. Student factors positively associated with stronger test performance included participation in kindergarten or pre-school, their home language if Lao-Tai, exposure to Lao language resources at home, higher family wealth, and lower absenteeism levels. Teachers who were female, older, more experienced and had permanent teaching status tended to have students who performed better in G1 tests. Alignment between the student and teachers’ home language if Lao-Tai was also associated with stronger test performance. Correlations between teaching practices and student performance were weak.
- With the new curriculum, female students performed better than male students, both overall and across half of the six BEQUAL target provinces. The proportion of low performing male students were similar in 2019 and 2021.
- Consistent with 2019, there were regional variations in student performance. Again, students in Phongsali were the lowest performers and students from Sekong the strongest

performers, but this disparity has widened over time. Further analysis of students from Phongsali indicates they were most likely to attend kindergarten of all the provinces, but less likely to speak Lao at home or share a mother tongue with their teacher. The achievement gap by wealth was also particularly stark in Phongsali.

- Upon school resumption after COVID-19 school closures, most teachers took a ‘business as usual’ approach. Few teachers adjusted their teaching practices or used formative assessment methods to understand the learning needs of their students.

These findings highlight the complex interface between context, curriculum and teaching, and the important role teachers and parents play in supporting children to transition to school, particularly given many are not prepared for G1.

The low levels of Lao language literacy, for both native and non-native speakers, requires structured and supported teaching and learning practices. Further, there is a need for targeted interventions towards the lowest performing students, particularly in Phongsali, and towards boys to prevent their achievement gap from persisting or widening over time.

## Recommendations for policy and programming

### ***Focus on building students’ oral language skills in Lao language***

With so few G1 students meeting the expectations of the new G1 curriculum, the standards of the new Lao language curriculum may be too high for the majority of G1 students. This poses a difficult dilemma for teachers who feel obligated to complete all the prescribed lessons even if their students are finding the lessons difficult. The low Lao literacy results indicate that many students have extremely limited oral language skills in Lao. More time is needed to teach students to speak and understand Lao language proficiently before they can start to learn to read and write in Lao, and be ready to progress to G2.

While there is some association between higher test performance and students’ participation in pre-school and kindergarten, high participation and poor results in Phongsali indicates the quality of early childhood education is varied, and provision may not be focused on building early oral language literacy skills or skills focused on school readiness.

- Students are likely to need intensive oral Lao language instruction (3 to 4 hours per day for 6 to 9 months at least) and intensive stimulation to improve their general cognitive abilities (short-term memory and executive function) before they are ready for the G1 curriculum.

BEQUAL has been supporting MoES to pilot a spoken Lao curriculum for non-Lao speaking G1 students in specified remote primary schools. These students are provided with an additional hour of instruction a day, three to five times a week (BEQUAL, 2021).

Ideally, teachers would be provided more flexibility to adjust the teaching program and pace to meet students’ learning needs, but the new curriculum does not allow teachers to deviate markedly from what is prescribed. Also, this approach would require a focus on building teachers’ capacities in their application and understanding of classroom based assessment, and intensive support on how to teach oral language skills and general cognitive abilities.



### ***Embed ongoing professional learning for teachers, principals and PAs***

There is a need for ongoing professional learning and resources for teachers, principals and PAs to extend their knowledge and application of effective Lao language teaching strategies.

G1 teachers benefited from the BEQUAL-supported new curriculum orientation and associated teaching and learning materials. The 2021 data collection indicated teachers were more aware of the new pedagogies. Many broadened their range of pedagogical practices, assessment practices, and use of resources. However, half of the surveyed teachers indicated they found most aspects of Lao language teaching to be difficult, and this is evident in the poor student learning results. Further, teaching Lao language is particularly challenging for teachers who are non-native Lao speakers.

The data also showed there was continued demand for training as an effective way to support teachers and principals with implementing the new curriculum. Some respondents noted the duration of training was too short. Almost all surveyed principals and teachers reported that additional training in areas including Lao language curriculum, Lao language teaching methods, and teaching Lao to non-Lao speakers would support their Lao language teaching. Teachers also need a great deal more support to be confident about teaching lesson sounds and also to understand why phonics is an effective way to teach literacy.

Improving teaching practice requires small, targeted professional development programs conducted at regular intervals over a substantial period of time (e.g. fortnightly over a semester or school year) with follow-up and accountability measures, rather than one-off large scale training. Embedding teacher development into systems is critical to sustaining and integrating gains from initial teacher development inputs.

The 2021 results indicated teachers valued the higher levels of technical support provided by their principals, teacher colleagues and PAs. Teachers also reported they collaborated more with other teachers on Lao language. Exchanging teaching knowledge and experience about Lao language teaching across schools was also reported to be highly valued. School clusters provided opportunities for many teachers to engage in this type of sharing, as did WhatsApp groups. There are opportunities to build on these gains to further strengthen teacher support mechanisms.

- The current model of providing orientation training on the new curriculum needs to be reviewed.
- G1 teachers need refresher training on the Lao language curriculum and Lao language teaching methods given it was first delivered in 2019 and COVID-19 disrupted continuity of teaching. G1 teachers did not have the opportunity to deliver the new curriculum in its entirety until the 2020–21 school year. Also, teachers who missed out on the 2019 training should receive other training opportunities related to the new curriculum.
- Training in teaching Lao to non-Lao speakers, and how to engage with classes made up of diverse ethnicities and language groups, needs to be an explicit focus of future training. Teachers who are especially in need of this training are those who are non-native Lao speakers.
- PAs, along with other provincial and district officers, should be encouraged and supported to establish new or strengthen existing COPs across schools and within clusters. It would

be important for MoES to build in accountability measures to set up these platforms and provide recurrent funding to facilitate travel and materials.

- Principals need to be equipped to lead professional learning and collaboration on Lao learning in schools through teacher working groups and peer learning.
- PAs and principals need to participate in all training offered on the new curriculum and be provided with new curriculum materials. Not all principals received training or were provided with materials for G1. To be more effective in their roles, PAs and principals need training on coaching and mentoring methods to ensure they know how best to support their teachers with Lao language teaching.

It is important to continue to review and evaluate the quality of training that is provided to teachers. In 2021, there were small differences in test performance of students of teachers who participated in the G1 curriculum orientation training, and some anomalies associated with teachers' highest education level and qualifications. While few teachers currently are drawn from teacher education institutions, given their potential impact on the teacher workforce over the longer-term, it is still important to make teacher education institutions more accountable in being required to demonstrate that their pedagogies do work in building early literacy skills.

Reviewing and evaluating the training that is provided as part of the new curriculum implementation is important to ensure these initial inputs are of high quality and appropriate duration.

- Teacher education institutions could become involved in supporting demonstration or lighthouse (exemplary) schools. For example, lecturers could provide professional development to current teachers and provide demonstration lessons to both current teachers and their own pre-service students. Pre-service students could undertake practicum activities, applying their skills under the supervision of their lecturer and class teacher. Students in lighthouse schools should be regularly assessed to demonstrate the efficacy of the institutions' approach to teaching early literacy. Not only could this strategy foster more innovative approaches to teaching Lao language, but it would also provide much needed opportunities for lecturers and practicum teachers to work closely with school communities.

### ***Target interventions for the lowest performing students and boys***

Additional student and teacher interventions to support boys and the lowest performing students need to be considered. Detailed information about what students know and can do is essential for informing systems-level and classroom-level strategies to improve learning and reduce inequity.

- To inform systems-level strategies, further research is needed to understand the factors that are associated with the lowest performing 25 per cent of students as a precursor to designing specific interventions. This is also what is needed to understand boys' underperformance and why students in Phongsali are lagging behind. The analysis in this report provides a starting point, but further research is recommended.

Classroom-based assessment data can be used to help teachers develop strategies that target students' individual learning needs.

## 5.2 Community engagement

### Insights from the 2021 data collection

- As in 2019, high rates of student absenteeism continued to be reported as a critical issue for student learning in 2021. Absenteeism was also reflected in the significant proportion of G1 students who were absent on the day of the G1 test.
- In 2021, teachers (or principals) reported whether students in the study sample had specific difficulties. Only three per cent of students were reported to have some level of physical disability, while 23 per cent had some cognitive disability (mostly remembering or concentrating).
- Student factors that were positively associated with higher levels of G1 test performance included students' participation in kindergarten or pre-school and more exposure to stories and Lao language resources at home and in the community. Lack of parental support was highlighted as a significant challenge.
- The low levels of Lao language literacy point to the need to strengthen parental and community engagement in student learning. Student absenteeism could also relate to the level of community support and engagement on students' individual learning progress.

### Recommendations for policy and programming

#### ***Advocate and educate parents and communities on the role they can play in promoting students' readiness for school and the inclusion of children with disabilities***

Foundational literacy and numeracy skills start in the home. Parents have a role to play in providing a stimulating environment for their children and developing early oral language skills. Parents do not need to have high levels of literacy to support their children to develop their short-term memory, oral language and early literacy and numeracy skills. For example, parents can play games, count small collections, tell stories and have frequent conversations with their child, even when undergoing their daily home activities (e.g. farming, cooking, foraging).

In 2021, the majority of teachers and principals said they have conversations with parents. As in 2019, the majority of conversations with parents focused on student attendance rather than Lao language learning or other learning concerns.

- Teachers and principals need to be provided with advice on how to engage with the school community and specifically parents on Lao language learning. A set of key messages or a discussion framework could be helpful in ensuring consistent messaging about the importance of parental engagement in student learning, both at home and in schools. Providing a set of practical tips outlining games and activities that teachers and principals can share and talk to parents about, as well as ways in which parents could become involved in supporting schools, would be helpful in empowering parents to support their children's learning.

Another area that requires close collaboration between schools, parents and communities is disability-inclusion. The low numbers of students with physical disabilities reported by teachers and principals suggests children with disabilities are mostly kept at home.

- Teachers and principals need to be provided with advice on how to engage with parents and communities on the inclusion of children with disabilities in school. Teachers, principals and parents need to have the skills and knowledge to support children with disabilities both in school and in the home. The delivery of disability-inclusion training to teachers and principals could assist them with identifying disabilities and developing classroom strategies and teaching aids to more effectively support children with disabilities. Parents and carers also need to be provided with coaching on approaches that can support their children in the home.
- A government-run advocacy campaign could complement the work schools are doing to encourage parental engagement in schools and in learning. This campaign could also address the importance of children’s participation in kindergarten or pre-school programs, the importance of minimising absenteeism, and the importance of ensuring children with disabilities have the opportunity to enrol and attend school.

## 6. Conclusions and next steps

As presented in this Interim Report 1, there are a number of findings that provide insight into the extent to which teaching practices are changing with the implementation of the new G1 Lao language curriculum, the level of support available to teachers and principals, and progress in student learning outcomes. Although there have been examples of positive progress towards improved teaching quality, low levels of Lao literacy and the need to strengthen community engagement are issues that remain crucial and require continued and dedicated focus.

In 2022 there will be a third and final round of qualitative data collection, with interviews and classroom observations taking place in the same 12 case study schools. The data collection will involve capturing the perspectives and experiences of G1 teachers, principals and PAs, three years after the introduction of the new G1 Lao language curriculum. As part of this reporting, possible 2022 case study questions have been documented. These questions emanate from unresolved and arising questions in 2021, and will form part of the continued detailed investigation of teaching practice and student learning in case study schools.

The data collected will provide further evidence on which to ascertain the extent to which BEQUAL supports and encourages improved teaching quality and student literacy in Lao PDR. The Final Report will reflect on the three cycles of data collection, and contribute to analysis across the three countries in the Teacher Development Multi-Year Study Series – Lao PDR, Vanuatu and Timor-Leste.

To read the full Baseline Report please visit the [DFAT website](#).

### Annex A: Timeframe map

	Sept 2018	Jan 2019	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2020	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 2021	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	
SY 2018-19 (G1 baseline cohort)	→																														
Baseline 2019 data collection																															
G1 new curriculum training and distribution of materials																															
SY 2019-20 (G1 cohort A)																															
School closures																															
SY 2020-21 (G1 cohort B)																															
2021 data collection																															

## Annex B: Sampling, instruments and analytic approach

### Sampling

The baseline school sample for both quantitative and qualitative components were retained for the 2021 collection. G2 teachers and students were no longer part of the Study.

Maintaining the full sample of 362 public primary schools used for the baseline ensures representativeness of the sample across the 32 BEQUAL target districts. Figure B.1 illustrates the sampling approach for the quantitative component of the Study.

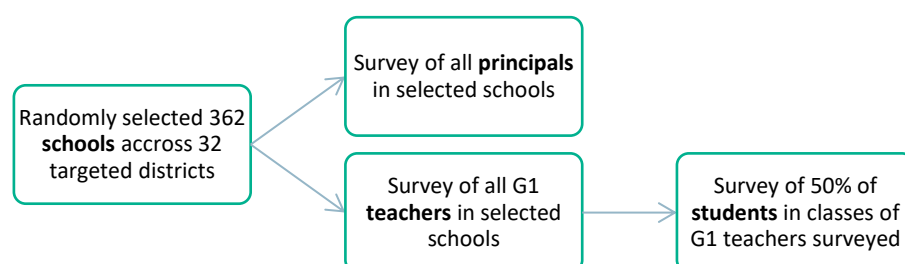


Figure B.1: Sampling approach for quantitative data

For the qualitative component, data was collected from the same 12 case study schools in the baseline, purposively sampled in six districts in three BEQUAL targeted provinces located across the country. Details of the schools are shown in Table B.1.

Further details on sampling can also be found in the 2019 Baseline Report.

Table B.1: Case studies sample

Region	Province	District Name	PEPI <sup>5</sup> District Rank	School ID for Study
North	Luangnamtha	Nalae	9	School_A
	Luangnamtha	Nalae	9	School_B
	Luangnamtha	Long	105	School_C
	Luangnamtha	Long	105	School_D
Central	Khammouane	Xebangfay	26	School_E
	Khammouane	Xebangfay	26	School_F
	Khammouane	Nakai	142	School_G
	Khammouane	Nakai	142	School_H
South	Sekong	Thateng	136	School_I
	Sekong	Thateng	136	School_J
	Sekong	Dakcheung	147	School_K
	Sekong	Dakcheung	147	School_L

<sup>5</sup> PEPI is the Primary Education Performance Index developed by LADLF using 2017 data. This is a measure of primary education performance at the district level using net enrolment, drop-out, repetition, survival and completion rates. Number 1 is the highest performing district, and 148 the lowest.

## Instruments and analytic approach

Table B.2 summarises the data collection tools and changes that were made for the 2021 data collection.

Table B.2: Summary of data collection tools and updates made for 2021

Tools	A. Teaching quality	B. Literacy outcomes	Updates made
<b>1. Survey of teachers and principals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative data on change in teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Correlation between students' literacy levels and different teaching practices (aligned or not aligned with new curriculum)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minor changes made to questionnaires to reflect lessons from 2019</li> <li>Separate questionnaires for 2019 participants and new study participants</li> <li>New COVID-19 questions</li> </ul>
<b>2. G1 Lao language literacy test</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative data on students' literacy levels at G1 and G2, and improvement between end of G1 and end of G2, with comparison between cohorts of students studying the previous curriculum and students studying the new curriculum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some new items and minor changes made to G1 test</li> <li>G2 test removed due to study design modification</li> <li>Minor changes made to student questionnaires to improve socio-economic data</li> </ul>
<b>3. School case studies in 12 schools located in 6 districts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom observation of teacher attitudes and practices in the classroom.</li> <li>Qualitative data on change and factors of change in teachers' knowledge, attitude and practices.</li> <li>Principal and PA's perceptions of challenges and change in teaching quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom observations of students' attitudes and dispositions toward learning.</li> <li>Teachers' and principals' perceptions of change in students' literacy outcomes.</li> <li>Qualitative data on the relation between students' participation and teaching quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minor changes made to interview guides and classroom observation tools to reflect lessons from 2019</li> <li>Separate interview guides for 2019 participants and new study participants</li> <li>New COVID-19 questions</li> </ul>

### **Quantitative**

The quantitative data collected in 2021 included the G1 teacher questionnaire, principal questionnaire, G1 test, student questionnaire and student background questionnaire.

The teacher and principal questionnaires were designed to be administered one-to-one in Lao language, with the administrator asking teachers and principals each question and recording the response on a tablet.

The G1 test was designed to also be administered one-to-one with the administrator asking the student each question and recording the response on a tablet. Hard copies of any material students needed to see, such as letters, words or pictures were created to enable the student to hold and point to their answers.

Accompanying the test was a student questionnaire and a student background questionnaire. The student questionnaire was administered to each tested G1 student, requesting information about their background. The student background questionnaire was a more comprehensive questionnaire about each tested G1 student, to be completed by either the students' G1 teacher or the school principal.

This data was collected in March/April and completed 10 April 2021 by 22 teams (each consisting of two or three team members). This design ensured data was collected prior to the end of the school year.

The quantitative analysis for the questionnaire data focused on comparing the 2019 and 2021 results. Therefore, the range of analysis methods reflected those undertaken for the baseline study: descriptive statistics; correlational analysis to determine the relationship between two factors or variables; and item response theory (IRT) to construct a metric for expressing teacher- and principal- level factors measured by the questionnaires.

### **Qualitative**

Stakeholder interviews and classroom observations were the primary data collection methods for the case studies. The case studies were comprised of individual semi-structured interviews with G1 teachers, their principals and pedagogical advisers (PAs), and classroom observations of G1 Lao literacy lessons<sup>6</sup>.

A team of four researchers (grouped into pairs of one lead researcher and one supporting researcher) collected the data in March/April, completing on 7 April 2021.

As in 2019, analysis of the data occurred over two phases. Firstly, ACER held a data analysis workshop to enable active involvement of researchers in the initial data analysis process, acknowledging that they had extensive and rich knowledge to contribute.

The second stage of work involved ACER conducting more detailed analysis of the interview transcripts. This involved collating evidence from interview data against the sub-themes

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<sup>6</sup> The classroom observation tool was purposefully designed to capture information relevant to this teacher development study. It included four main sections: 1) Background information (details including school, teacher, grade, lesson time); 2) Pre-lesson tasks (details including lesson number, lesson plan, notes related to lesson preparation); 3) Lesson observation template (details of direct observations during the lesson, including items in three foci areas – student-centred activity, formative assessment, inclusiveness); 4) Post-lesson tasks (details including resources for Lao Language teaching and learning, classroom set up, classroom environment, additional notes to inform understanding of the lesson).



identified in 2019 and through the data analysis workshop to look both within schools and across schools (and regions) for similarities and differences, and tabulating responses.

ACER then analysed the classroom observations. This involved reviewing the contextual information recorded by researchers, creating observation maps by theme (interactions, pedagogy, gender, inclusivity), undertaking quantitative analysis of theme activities observed across the duration of lessons, and reviewing records of the classroom environment. ACER further developed the visual displays of the data created for the baseline study in an attempt to understand and represent changes over the study period.

Further details about methodology can also be found in the 2019 Baseline Report.

## Annex C: Survey and case study participants

In total 362 target schools were included in the baseline study sample. As shown in Table C.1, data was collected from 355 schools across both years. In the 2021 administration, five schools were dropped as they did not have G1 classes in the academic year and two schools were permanently closed.

Table C.1: Survey locations in 2019 and 2021

Province	Districts	Number of schools	
		2019	2021
Khammouane	6	61	60
Luangnamtha	4	34	35
Phongsali	5	43	43
Saravane	5	61	62
Savannakhet	9	131	129
Sekong	3	25	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>355</b>

### Teacher and principal sample

Teacher and principal study IDs were issued to 375 G1 teachers and 355 principals for the baseline, and these IDs were utilised for the 2021 data collection where the participant was retained. Absent and substitute teachers and principals were removed.

Table C.2 presents the achieved samples for both cycles of data collection by province. Of the 348 principals surveyed in 2019, 335 participated in 2021 alongside 10 additional principals. In 2021, 205 of the teachers surveyed in 2019 participated alongside 158 additional (or replacement) teachers. Table C.3 shows the reasons reported for the substantial number of replacement teachers. It is not clear why there was such a high level of teacher turnover between 2019 and 2021 in the sample schools, and whether this level of turnover is considered regular in the Lao education system.

Table C.2: Teacher and principal achieved sample, by province in 2019 and 2021

Province	Teachers			Principals		
	2019	2021		2019	2021	
		Retained	Additional		Retained	Additional
Khammouane	62	36	25	60	58	1
Luangnamtha	33	13	23	34	34	1
Phongsali	45	20	24	39	36	4
Saravane	57	38	25	61	57	1
Savannakhet	126	80	51	129	125	2
Sekong	24	18	10	25	25	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>10</b>

Table C.3: Reasons for replacement teachers in 2021 survey administration

Reason for G1 teacher replacement	Teachers	
	Total N	%
2019 teacher posted to new school	108	68.4
2019 teacher assigned to new class (not G1)	36	22.8
2019 teacher on maternity or > 3 months sick leave	7	4.4
2019 teacher retired	4	2.5
2019 teacher same, but not interviewed in 2019	3	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>100</b>

### Gender

As shown in Table C.4, consistent with 2019, just over half of the 2021 teachers (54%) were female while 79 per cent of the principals were male. Again, Phongsali had a higher proportion of female teachers and principals compared to other provinces. Overall, there was a slightly higher proportion of male teachers in the additional sample who were participating in the survey for the first time in 2021 (51%) compared to those who participated in both 2019 and 2021 (41%).

Table C.4: Gender of surveyed teachers and principals, by province in 2019 and 2021

Province	Teachers				Principals			
	2019		2021		2019		2021	
	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %
Khammouane	46.8	53.2	48.3	51.7	81.7	18.3	81.4	18.6
Luangnamtha	48.5	51.5	41.7	58.3	82.4	17.6	88.6	11.4
Phongsali	26.7	73.3	38.6	61.4	59.0	41.0	55.0	45.0
Saravane	49.1	50.9	50.8	49.2	82.0	18.0	84.5	15.5
Savannakhet	50.0	50.0	46.4	53.6	72.9	27.1	76.4	23.6
Sekong	37.5	62.5	44.4	55.6	92.0	8.0	92.3	7.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>45.2</b>	<b>54.8</b>	<b>45.9</b>	<b>54.1</b>	<b>76.7</b>	<b>23.3</b>	<b>78.6</b>	<b>21.4</b>

### Professional status

Consistent with 2019, in 2021 the majority of teachers (84%) were government permanent employees, but 14 per cent were volunteer teachers, as per Table C.5. Khammouane, in particular, has a high percentage of volunteer G1 teachers at 20 per cent. All teachers in Sekong were government permanent employees. There were no differences in professional status of the first-time participating teachers and the teachers who participated in both 2019 and 2021.

Table C.5: Professional status of surveyed teachers, by province in 2019 and 2021

Province	2019			2021		
	Government permanent %	Contract %	Volunteer %	Government permanent %	Contract %	Volunteer %
Khammouane	69.4	1.6	29.0	76.7	3.3	20.0
Luangnamtha	90.9	-	9.1	83.3	2.8	13.9
Phongsali	86.7	4.4	8.9	81.8	4.5	13.6
Saravane	89.5	1.8	8.8	88.1	3.4	8.5
Savannakhet	80.2	0.8	19.0	82.4	0.8	16.8
Sekong	100.0	-	-	100.0	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>83.0</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>83.8</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>14.0</b>

### *Education and experience*

In 2021, only about two per cent of teachers and principals had undertaken basic training (5+3, 8+1, 8+2), and most had completed mid-level (8+3, 11+1) or high-level teacher training (11+3, 11+4)<sup>7</sup>. A higher proportion of principals (49%) had completed high-level training compared to G1 teachers (34%).

Years of overall teaching experience for G1 teachers surveyed in both 2019 and 2021 ranged from three to 38 years, with an average of 16 years. Eight per cent of these teachers had been teaching for five years or less. In terms of their G1 teaching experience, this ranged from three to 36 years, with an average of 10 years.

Those teachers participating for the first time in the study in 2021 tended to be slightly newer to the teaching profession (range 6 months – 37 years, average 12 years). Sixteen per cent of these teachers had been teaching for five years or less. The extent of their G1 teaching experience was also less (range <6 months – 35 years, average 5 years).

### *Language*

In total, 54 per cent of teachers surveyed indicated that Lao-Tai was their mother tongue in 2021 (refer Table C.6), a slight decrease from 57 per cent in 2019. Most other teachers indicated that they could speak Lao-Tai fluently.

More than half of all teachers spoke a second language (52%). When considered by language, only 17 per cent of Lao-Tai speakers spoke another language fluently whereas nearly 95 per cent of Mon-Khmer speakers spoke an additional language, and speakers of other languages all spoke one or two additional languages. There were no differences in language across the two participant groups (first time participants and those who participated in both years).

<sup>7</sup> These represent the different teacher education programs in Lao PDR. For example: '5+3' involves five years of primary education plus three years at a Teacher Education Institution (TEI); '8+1' involves five years of primary and three years of lower secondary education (8) plus one year at a TEI; '11+3' involves five years of primary, three years of lower secondary and three years of upper secondary education (11) plus three years at a TEI.

Table C.6: Surveyed teachers languages spoken as a mother tongue and fluently in 2021

Province	Teachers			Principals <sup>8</sup>		
	Lao-Tai as mother tongue %	Speak Lao-Tai 'fluently' %	Other/ Not fluent %	Lao-Tai as mother tongue %	Speak Lao-Tai 'fluently' %	Other/ Not fluent %
Khammouane	78.7	14.8	6.6	91.7	8.3	-
Luangnamtha	55.6	44.4	-	70.6	29.4	-
Phongsali	27.3	68.2	4.5	43.6	53.8	2.6
Saravane	55.6	33.3	11.1	68.9	31.1	--
Savannakhet	58.0	35.9	6.1	65.1	34.9	-
Sekong	21.4	64.3	14.3	24.0	76.0	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>54.3</b>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>65.5</b>	<b>34.2</b>	<b>0.3</b>

In 2021, principals were not asked questions about their mother tongue. Among principals surveyed in 2019, Lao-Tai as mother tongue was more common (66%) than for teachers (57%). In the provinces of Khammouane, Luangnamtha and Phongsali, the proportion of principals whose mother tongue is Lao-Tai was notably higher than for G1 teachers. Half of all principals could speak at least one other language fluently. About one quarter of principals (24%) whose mother tongue was Lao-Tai spoke another language fluently. All principals whose mother tongue was not Lao-Tai indicated that they spoke at least one other language fluently.

## Student sample

For the baseline study, there were 3,367 in the student sample after following the in-school sampling procedures.

In the 2021 target sample there were 3,400 students, with data collected on 3,120 students. Of these students, 2,212 G1 students participated in G1 testing in 2021, compared to 2,269 in 2019, due to student absenteeism or withdrawal of consent (refer Table C.7). Information about each student was gathered through the student background questionnaire completed by either the G1 teacher or principal.

Table C.7: Student sample, by province and gender in 2021

Province	Target student sample		Final numbers (absent students removed)			
	Total N	%	Total N	%	N Male	N Female
Khammouane	549	16.1	340	15.4	168	172
Luangnamtha	315	9.3	178	8.0	91	87
Phongsali	423	12.4	241	10.9	128	113
Saravane	558	16.4	448	20.3	222	226
Savannakhet	1295	38.1	803	36.3	378	425
Sekong	260	7.6	202	9.1	99	103
<b>Total</b>	<b>3400</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2212</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1086</b>	<b>1126</b>

<sup>8</sup> Principals were not asked this question in 2021, so the table is based on how they responded in 2019.

### **Gender and age**

The sample in 2021 consisted of 1,617 boys and 1,503 girls (53% male, 47% female). Of this sample, 58 per cent were aged six or below (51% male), 40 per cent were aged between seven and nine years (54% male), and two per cent were aged 10 or above (60% male).

### **Participation in kindergarten or pre-school and repetition**

Almost two-thirds of the 2021 sample (60%) had attended kindergarten or pre-school compared to around half in 2019 (52%). Half (51%) of the students who attended kindergarten or pre-school were male, and 53 per cent of the students who did not attend were male.

In 2021, 14 per cent of students were repeating G1. Slightly more than half (54%) of the students who were repeating G1 were male, and 52 per cent of the students who were not repeating were male.

### **Disability**

Table C.8 shows the proportion of students in 2021 whose teacher reported specific difficulties across the six categories. There were no students who could not see, hear, remember or concentrate, or do things independently at all, however there was one student who couldn't walk or climb stairs and another who couldn't speak using their usual language.

The difficulties were grouped according to physical (seeing, hearing and walking) and cognitive (remembering or concentrating, independence and speaking). Only three per cent of students had some level of physical difficulty, while 23 per cent had some cognitive difficulties. The most common difficulty was 'remembering or concentrating', with one-fifth of students having 'some difficulty' or 'a lot of difficulty' (20%).

Table C.8: Student difficulties as reported by teachers surveyed in 2021

	No difficulty	Any difficulty	Some difficulty	A lot of difficulty	Cannot do it at all
	%	%	%	%	%
See or wear glasses	99.17	0.83	0.74	0.10	0.00
Hear or wear hearing aid	97.40	2.60	2.18	0.42	0.00
Walk or climb steps	99.52	0.48	0.32	0.13	0.03
Remember or concentrate	79.65	20.35	16.96	3.37	0.03
Do things independently	98.49	1.51	1.09	0.42	0.00
Speak using their usual language	91.96	8.04	6.31	1.70	0.03
<b>Physical difficulties</b>	<b>96.60</b>	<b>3.40</b>			
<b>Cognitive difficulties</b>	<b>77.02</b>	<b>22.98</b>			

### **Language at home**

Around two-fifths of students in 2021 spoke Mon-Khmer (44%) or Lao-Tai (42%) at home, while the majority of student in 2019 spoke Mon-Khmer (53%) and around one-third spoke Lao-Tai (37%). Only seven per cent of students spoke Chine-Tibet across both years.

## Case study school sample

This section provides a brief description of the case study respondents. As shown in Table C.10, 33 interviews (15 teachers, 12 principals and six PAs) and 30 classroom observations (G1 Lao language lessons) were completed for the case studies.

Table C.10: Case study sample, by province and school in 2021

	Province	School	PA interviews	Principal interviews	Teacher interviews	Classroom observations
North	Luangnamtha	A	1	1	1	2
	Luangnamtha	B		1	2	4
	Luangnamtha	C		1	1	2
	Luangnamtha	D	1	1	1	2
Central	Khammouane	E		1	1	2
	Khammouane	F	1	1	2	4
	Khammouane	G		1	1	2
	Khammouane	H	1	1	1	2
South	Sekong	I	1	1	1	2
	Sekong	J		1	2	4
	Sekong	K	1	1	1	2
	Sekong	L		1	1	2
<b>Total</b>			<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>30</b>

### Teachers

One school in each province had two G1 teachers, and in two schools (Schools A and I) the principal was also the G1 teacher.

One-third (5 of 15) of the G1 teachers were replacement teachers and therefore participating in the study for the first time in 2021. Years of teaching experience for teachers ranged from three to 36 years. Only three of the 15 teachers had less than 10 years of teaching experience. All of the newly participating teachers had prior experience teaching G1.

### Principals

Case study principals had on average worked for 12 years as a principal, with the range from three to 21 years. Two of the 12 principals had been a principal for five years or fewer.

### Pedagogical advisers

PAs are district level staff tasked with providing pedagogical support to schools. All six PAs had classroom teaching experience. None of the PAs were new to their positions, with their PA experience ranging from six to 20 years.

## Annex D: Teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices

This Annex D provides more detailed findings in relation teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices.

### D.1. Confidence in teaching Lao language

#### Overall confidence in teaching Lao language

- The majority of surveyed teachers participating for the first time in 2021 indicated they were either quite confident (38%) or very confident (50%) regarding their Lao language teaching overall. Similarly, teachers who participated in both administrations reported they were either quite confident (31%) or very confident (62%) when asked about their confidence in teaching the Lao language using the new G1 curriculum.
- As in 2019, there was no or little difference in 2021 in the proportion of very confident teachers between those who spoke Lao as their mother tongue (61%) and those who spoke another language (62%). Consistently, government permanent teachers were more likely to be very confident (63%) compared to volunteer teachers (52%). Where the majority of students spoke Lao at home, teachers were more likely to be very confident (64%) than where the majority of students did not speak Lao at home (60%).
- The 2021 case study data suggest varying levels of confidence in teaching Lao language. For the most part, teachers in the North expressed higher levels of confidence in teaching than those in the South and Central provinces. A number of respondents said that their lack of understanding of the new curriculum contributed to low levels of confidence in Lao language teaching. At the same time teachers and principals attributed training as an effective means to supporting them implement the new curriculum. The teachers below commented on their confidence:

I feel confident when my students understand what I teach and certainly I lose my confidence when my students don't understand the lesson. My confidence is reduced by the changes of the new curriculum. In the past, I teach confidently without referring much to the teacher's guide. But now I always have to look at it. (Teacher, School J)

I am confident but it may take many years. I was familiar with the old curriculum. I have to learn the new one...The new curriculum is better because there are many pictures making students interested in. (Teacher, School G)

I am not quite confident because I don't know how teaching the new curriculum looks like. I think I am 50% confident...I am not confident in providing support because I haven't received any in-service training. I only learnt when I was at the TTC. (Principal, School L)

#### **Proposed 2022 case study questions**

- What are some ways that you can be better supported to teach the new curriculum?
- What kind of support do you need to implement the new curriculum *other* than training?



## Confidence in using various teaching methods when teaching Lao language

- Consistent with overall confidence in teaching, more than half of teachers surveyed in 2021 were very confident with most of the teaching methods canvassed in the questionnaire (refer Figure D.1). Surveyed teachers were least familiar or confident with multi-grade teaching, while almost two-fifths were not very confident with individual work.
- The 2021 results differ markedly from 2019. More than half the teachers reported they were not aware of the methods canvassed with the exception of multi-grade teaching and individual work, where they indicated confidence in their delivery.

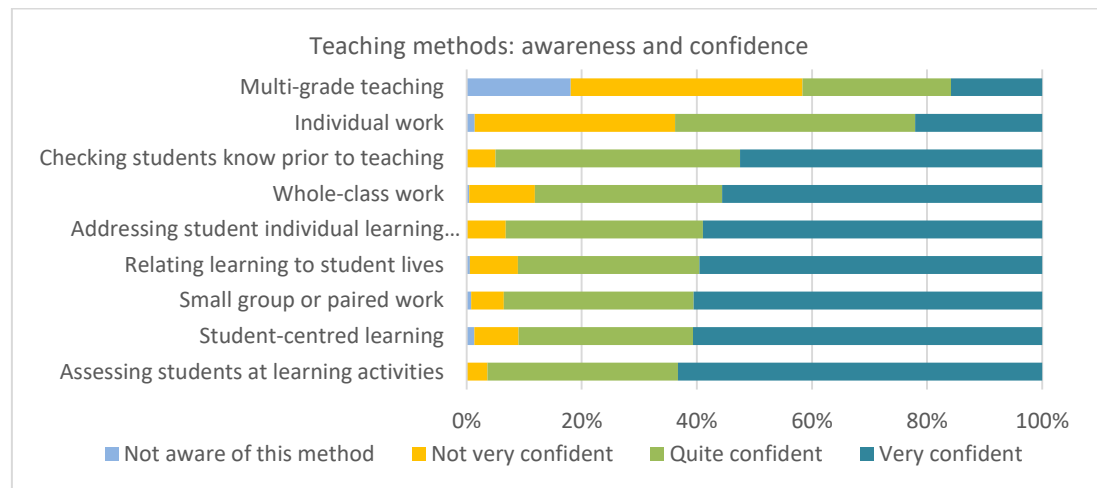


Figure D.1: Surveyed teachers' perspectives of their confidence in using various teaching methods when teaching Lao language in 2021

## Ease of teaching various aspects of Lao language

- Although teachers expressed confidence, as shown in Figure D.2, half of them indicated that they found aspects of Lao language teaching to be difficult or very difficult, and half to be easy or very easy. Consistently across speaking, reading and writing, teachers had the most difficulty with different types of texts. When comparing 2019 to 2021 results, more teachers are finding difficulty with teaching 'writing to express ideas/information'. However, more teachers are reporting 'sight words', 'phonics', 'simple writing tasks' and 'handwriting' to be easier to teach.

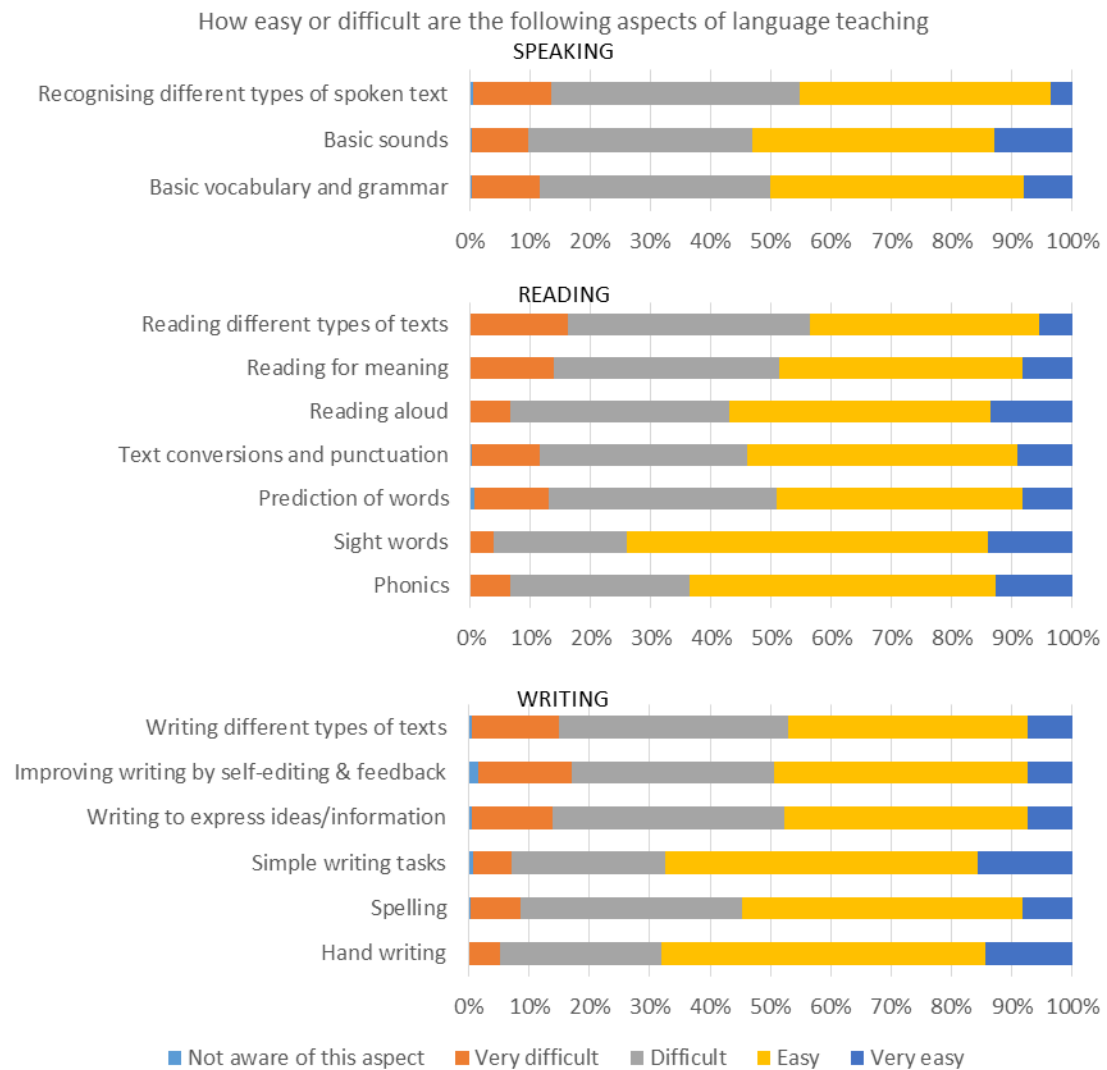


Figure D.2: Surveyed teachers’ perspectives of ease of teaching aspects of Lao language in 2021

## D.2 Teaching practice

### Lesson preparation

The teachers’ guide for the new curriculum contains detailed model lessons. The amount of information given for each lesson is gradually reduced throughout the year, and teachers are required to make detailed lesson plans following the models. Over time, as teachers become more familiar with the new curriculum, it might be anticipated that their reliance on the teachers’ guide would reduce.

- Similarly to 2019, nearly all teachers surveyed in 2021 (98%) reported they prepare lesson plans for Lao language teaching: 44 per cent daily; 28 per cent weekly; 9 per cent monthly; and 18 per cent each semester. In 2021 more teachers (61%) reported they refer to curriculum materials including teachers’ guides and textbooks daily (52% in 2019).
- Of the 15 case study teachers in 2019, only two teachers responded they did not do lesson planning, however seven teachers were observed not to have a lesson plan in place.

- In 2021, of the 15 case study teachers, six responded that they prepare plans for all lessons, six responded that they sometimes prepare lesson plans, and three responded that they do not prepare lesson plans. Eleven teachers were observed not to have a lesson plan in place, and four teachers had plans for both of their observed lessons. One possible reason why the number of teachers who did not have plans in place in 2021 was more than in 2019 might be that the detailed teaching approaches and materials provided in the new curriculum resources act as a proxy for teacher-prepared plans, with teachers depending on them heavily before and during lessons.
- Of the teachers who reported that they do not prepare plans, two noted that they refer to the teachers' guide and textbook and one noted that s/he is now very familiar with the new curriculum.

I referred to the teachers' guide a lot about what to do in a lesson. Now I can remember them... I don't have to refer to it much. Now I do not have lesson plans. (Teacher, School C)

- Among the challenges reported by teachers who only sometimes prepared lesson plans were: managing the quantity of plans they need to prepare, having limited time due to family reasons, and having to prepare multiple plans for multigrade classes.
- For lesson preparation, 2021 case study teachers in each of the provinces (North, Central, South) reported using the teachers' guide and/or student textbook, and most teachers (14 out of 15) reported using teaching materials referred to in these. In some locations teachers said these teaching materials were provided along with the new curriculum documents and in other locations teachers reported making their own materials.

I read the teachers' guide. I study the textbook. What the activities are about, what has to be done first. I study each activity. (Teacher, School F)

Before each class I read the teachers' guide to make sure I understand steps and to prepare the teaching materials. I rely heavily on the teachers' guide in my lesson preparation... I am able to prepare the lesson plan based on the teachers' guide for all lesson topics beforehand. (Teacher, School J)

I have to prepare the lesson plan and I do. When I prepare the plan, I look at the instructions about learning materials and teaching methods in the teachers' guide. (Teacher, School L)

- The use of resources for preparing lessons by teachers in the South appears to have increased since 2019 when few or no resources were being utilised. However, the provision of sufficient teaching materials to teach the new curriculum was reported to be an issue in some 2021 case study schools.

I honestly say that I don't use all required teaching materials, especially pictures, because I don't have them. This new curriculum needs to use many resources to support teaching and learning. I am advised that I should produce the materials and I have done some but I can't produce all the required ones. (Teacher, School J)

### ***Possible 2022 case study questions***

- Has your approach to planning Lao language lessons changed since the new curriculum has been implemented?
- How do you use the new curriculum materials – teacher's guide and student textbook – to plan Lao language lessons?

- How do you use the new curriculum materials during Lao language lessons?
- Is there anything that would help you to plan Lao language lessons more effectively?

### Classroom interaction type

An expectation of the new curriculum is that teachers will facilitate a mix of classroom interaction types. For example, teacher-directed whole class activities will prepare students for practice and application activities. Practice and application activities are usually pair, small group or individual activities to support students to work independently with the teacher's support.

In case study schools in 2019 and 2021, researchers observed and coded against three classroom interaction types used by teachers in their lessons: whole class activity, pair or group activity, and individual activity.

- In 2021, as in 2019, almost all lessons (29 of 30) commenced with whole class activity, and whole class activity was used across large portions of many lessons, especially in the North and South provinces.
- Most teachers (13 of 15) used individual activity during at least one lesson.
- Many teachers included a mix of whole class and individual activity in their lessons, however two teachers in the North used whole class activities extensively through their lessons, and three teachers in the South used individual activity extensively through their lessons (that is, for more than 30 minutes of the lesson time where no other interaction type was also used).
- Pair or group activities were included in more lessons in 2021 (13 of 30 lessons) than in 2019 (9 of 30 lessons), and some teachers used pair or group activities across more of the observed lesson times in 2021 than they did in 2019.

#### *Example vignette*

Figure D.3 displays an example of the increased focus on pair/group activity demonstrated by one teacher in School F. In 2019, this teacher used pair/group activity in only three lesson segments in one of the lessons observed, whereas in 2021, they used pair/group activity in seven lesson segments in both of the lessons observed.

Pair/group activity	Lesson Minutes											
	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60
2019 - L1												
2019 - L2												
2021 - L1												
2021 - L2												

Figure D.3: Instances of pair/group activity in lesson segments in two lessons observed in 2019 and 2021 for a teacher in School F

This teacher regarded grouping students to be an aspect of the “student-centred” teaching methods they use.

Students are gathered in groups. I ask questions and give some explanation and allow them to do by themselves. Then they answer the questions. (Teacher, School F)

#### **Possible 2022 case study questions**

- How has your approach to engaging students in whole class, pair/group, or individual activities in Lao language lessons changed since the new curriculum implementation?
- How has this affected your teaching, and student learning?
- How confident are you in implementing these different kinds of interaction types in Lao language lessons?

## Teaching and learning activities

### Prior knowledge and skills

In 2019 and 2021, case study researchers were asked to observe whether teachers made explicit reference to students’ prior knowledge and/or skills, either through asking students what they already know or promoting their recall of an earlier activity. The new curriculum encourages teachers to do this as a strategy to introduce new lesson content in a clear and meaningful way.

- Seven of 15 teachers were observed to make references to students’ prior knowledge and skills in both observed lessons, four during one lesson only. Four teachers made no references at all. The majority of references were in the first five (15 instances) to 10 minutes (8 instances) of the lesson. Five instances of reference to prior knowledge and skills were observed beyond 10 minutes of the lesson.
- There was some variation between provinces with very few references to prior knowledge and/or skills in the Central province compared to the North and South provinces.
- Case study researchers noted in their observations that teachers often reviewed or asked students what they had learned in the previous lesson.

#### **Proposed 2022 case study questions**

- How does asking students about their prior knowledge and experience help them understand new content and make links between lessons?

### Activity types

Case study researchers in 2019 and 2021 were able to both ask about and observe the types of teaching and learning activities that teachers used in Lao language lessons.

- In 2019, the predominant teaching and learning activities reported by the case study teachers were: practising pronunciation, reading text written on the board (including teacher demonstration, whole class choral, and individual students), and students writing (including copying from the board and responding to teacher dictation). Nearly all teachers (14 of 15) used at least one of these activities in the lessons observed.
- In 2021, some case study teachers and principals spoke about similar activities reported in 2019, including practising pronunciation, reading text written on the board, and students writing.

Listening and speaking. I read flashcards for students then tell them to read and it depends on what lesson it is. There are different ways to deliver instruction. Extra reading for students is also used every Wednesday. (Teacher, School J)

The new curriculum is more suitable than the old one because in the old curriculum it focuses on writing and then reading, but the students write too slow, it takes a long time. The new curriculum focuses on reading and talking. (Principal, School D)

Listening, speaking, writing. Reading and writing have to be emphasised. I think it is consistent with the curriculum because he follows up on the Teacher's Guide. (Principal, School G)

- Other teachers and principals emphasised teaching methods (such as story-telling, matching activities, games) rather than activities associated with language dimensions.

The activities that I often use in teaching Lao language include matching consonants and vowels, group work and storytelling. (Teacher, School F)

Games, writing competition, telling stories. Friday is story-telling day and we do some supplementary reading. (Teacher, School G)

I explain the lesson for students and then they do themselves, like making words from alphabet and consonants. (Teacher, School C)

My teaching activities depend on the lesson topic and teacher's guide. I follow what it says in the teacher's guide. If the book says 'reading' I let students read. If the instruction says student working in groups I tell them to work in groups. (Teacher, School L)

- During different teaching and learning activities in Lao language lessons, teachers in 2019 and 2021 often reported and were observed making use of the blackboard, flashcards and pictures. An increase in the use of songs and physical activity was evident in lessons observed in 2021 (see also, Use of Resources below).

### **Possible 2022 case study questions**

- How have the teaching activities that you use in Lao language lessons changed since the new curriculum implementation?
- How has this affected your teaching, and student learning?

### Student-centred teaching methods

Student-centred teaching and learning is a key feature of the new curriculum. Awareness of, use and understanding of student-centred teaching and learning were investigated in the survey and case study interviews. In 2019 and 2021, teachers and principals were asked about their awareness of student-centred teaching methods in the questionnaires, and explicitly asked about their use of these methods in case study interviews.

- In 2019, 59 per cent of surveyed teachers reported that they were not aware of the student-centred learning approach. As indicated in **Error! Reference source not found.3.1** above, in 2021 only one per cent of surveyed teachers reported they were *not* aware of the student-centred learning approach, and eight per cent reported they were not confident using this approach.
- In 2021, nearly all of the case study teachers and principals reported awareness of student-centred teaching methods (two teachers and two principals were not aware).

- Figure D.4 shows how case study respondents described their understanding of student-centred teaching methods in 2019 and 2021, with the number of respondents per year tallied in the last two columns. These open responses were coded using an inductive approach. Responses suggest that there may be different interpretations, or levels of understanding, about what student-centred teaching methods entail, ranging from limited to more developed conceptions of what student-centred methods involve. Methods cited most frequently in 2021 are listed at the top of Figure D.4. These methods were involving students in group work (9 of 15 teachers; 6 of 10 principals), encouraging students to learn by doing (8 of 15 teachers; 4 of 10 principals), playing a facilitating role to support students' learning (7 of 15 teachers; 3 of 10 principals) and allowing students to participate/talk more (6 of 15 teachers; 4 of 10 principals).

I allow students to talk, to tell each other. (Teacher, School D)

The teachers give the students [tasks] to study by themselves and they ask teachers when they don't understand or sometimes teachers give an activity to the students. (Principal, School D)

I raise questions and assign them textbook. (Teacher, School F)

They usually use 'learning in group' method – putting students in group and encourage them to work together. (Principal, School J)

I use "student-centred" in explaining lesson such as demonstrate reading, then I ask them to read and they do. (Teacher/Principal, School I)

- As in 2019, respondents in Northern schools continued to describe a more nuanced understanding of student-centred teaching methods, describing the importance of teachers playing a facilitative role and encouraging students to learn by doing.

Giving learning tasks to students and let them work on their own. Letting students work on a learning task in a group then the teacher walks from table to table to support students. After that the teacher concludes the session. Letting students be the leading actor. (Teacher/Principal, School A)

- There were more examples of what student-centred teaching methods might entail provided in Central and Southern schools in 2021 when compared to 2019.
- Some responses indicate rejection of student-centred approaches as not appropriate for meeting the needs of G1 learners:

We use teacher-centred approach for teaching Grade 1. If the teacher doesn't lead or demonstrate before she lets students practice, students don't know how to do. In [some] cases, the teacher needs to make dots like letters for students to follow writing. This is how to teach students writing in Grade 1. So the teacher can't just give an exercise and leave the room or sit down. She needs to be with students to support what they learn. (Principal, School K)

I use teacher centred instead of 'student centred' approach. When a student can't write, they need supports and I have to teach them closely one by one. (Teacher, School K)

### ***Possible 2022 case study questions***

- How confident/comfortable are you in implementing student-centred teaching methods in Laos language lessons? Have you had any further training or learning opportunities related to these?

- In what ways are students progressing in their learning by using the student-centred methods in the new curriculum?

	Case study teacher														2019	2021	
	A#	B2	BN	C	DN	E	F1	F2	GN	HN	I#	J1	J2	K			LN
Group work	○●	○● ●	●				○● ○●	○● ○●		● ●		● ○●	● ○●	○● ●	● ●	10	18
Encourage students to discover and learn / learn by doing	○●	○● ○●	●	○	●	●		○●		● ●			●	●		6	13
Play facilitating role to support students learning	○●	○● ○●	●	○		●	●	●		●				●	●	5	11
Allow students to participate / talk more	●	○●	●		●	●		○●		●	●					3	11
Observe and provide advice / follow up when necessary / checks work		○			●		○	○●		●	●		●	○	●	6	8
Not aware				●					●		○	○				2	4
Asks lots of questions				●		○		○				●				3	2
Many activities								●					○●	○		2	2
Fast learners help slow learners	○									●					●	1	2
Understand local context and behaviour of students to adapt teaching				○												1	0

○ = teacher reported 2019      ● = teacher reported 2021      ○ = principal reported 2019      ● = principal reported 2021  
 # = principal is G1 teacher      N = teacher is new to the study in 2021

Figure D.4: Case study respondents’ descriptions of student-centred teaching methods in 2019 and 2021



## Localisation

The new curriculum encourages teachers to adapt or link content to students' cultural heritage, their local context and their local environment. Case study researchers in 2019 and 2021 were asked to observe whether teachers did this.

- During the lessons observed by the case study researchers in 2021, the majority of teachers made explicit references to align content with students' culture and/or local context (12 of 15 teachers). Ten teachers made explicit references to culture and/or context at different points throughout their lessons, two teachers only made reference to this at one point during one lesson, and three teachers made no references at all.
- In both the Northern and Southern provinces all teachers (10) made explicit references to this in their lessons, while only two of five teachers in the Central province made references to students' culture and/or context.
- One way teachers link the curriculum to local context is to make use of real objects and resources available in the community in their teaching.

I used tamarin seeds, wooden sticks, picture of the animals (Teacher, School B).

### ***Proposed 2022 case study questions***

- How does making links to the local context and using local resources as recommended in the new curriculum help your students understand and learn Lao language?

## A 'typical lesson'

A task that the researchers completed during the data analysis workshops in both 2019 and 2021 involved them recalling their overall impressions of a 'typical lesson' in their case study schools. In 2019, the lead researchers who led the qualitative research in each geographical region recorded their impressions of typical lessons, and in 2021 both members of the research teams (lead and support researchers) who worked in the Central and South regions recorded their impressions.

- The researchers' impressions of typical lessons signal the use of a number of the pedagogical practices suggested in the new curriculum.
- The typical lessons documented by the researchers in 2021 for the Central and South regions (refer Figure D.5) had some similar lesson components and activities to those documented in 2019. For example, lessons began with greetings, checking attendance and recalling the foci of previous lessons.
- However, three of the researchers' impressions in 2021 (Researchers A1, B1 and B2) indicate a shift in lesson structure from the predominantly teacher-led whole class instruction based on work at the board evident in 2019 lessons, towards teachers first providing some instruction, and then assigning group or individual tasks to students, with teachers observing and supporting students at work, checking for understanding or providing feedback.

Central schools (E-H): Researcher A1	Central schools (E-H): Researcher A2	South schools (I-L): Researcher B1	South schools (I-L): Researcher B2
Greeting	Check attendance	Teacher asks students about date and writes day and date on board and subject	Greeting
Check attendance			Check attendance
Teacher asks students about date	Teacher writes the day and date on the board		Teacher asks students about date and name of the subject
Teacher asks students what they learnt in the previous lesson	Teacher reviews previous lesson	Teacher asks students what they learnt in the previous lesson	Teacher asks students about the lesson number to be continued today
Teacher asks students to open their textbooks and look at the lesson	Teacher writes new lesson on the board	Teacher writes a new lesson topic and number	Teacher writes the subject name and lesson number on the board
Teacher explains the tasks	Reading practice	Teacher explains the tasks (for groups or individuals)	Teacher starts teaching the lesson content, explaining and providing instructions
Teacher leads students to do the task together [demonstrates]	Students copy the lesson	Teacher walks from table to table to support students	Teacher checks students understanding of the lesson
Teacher asks students to do the tasks individually or in pairs/groups	Teacher walks around to observe students	Teacher asks particular students to demonstrate what they are learning or students volunteer and work at the board	Teacher explains more or ends the class
Teacher moves around (from group to group) observing what students are learning		Teacher corrects their work or asks other students whether they are right/wrong	
Teacher provides feedback and comments		Teacher makes final conclusion	
Grading			

The use of the same colours/shades indicate similar activities reported by researchers

Figure D.5: A 'typical lesson' in Central and South schools as recalled by case study researchers in 2021

## Gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI)

Promoting GEDSI is a key objective of the BEQUAL program. An expectation of the new curriculum is that teachers will address students' individual learning needs by adapting their teaching and lessons.

### Gender equality

Case study researchers recorded when teachers selected a girl or a boy to demonstrate an idea or skill during classroom observations, for example by being called up to the board.

- In 2019, girls and boys were often selected to demonstrate, with 14 of 15 teachers selecting six or more times across the two lessons. The distribution between girls and boys was mostly even.
- In 2021, fewer instances were observed with 10 of the 15 teachers observed to do this, and seven teachers doing this often (six or more times across the two lessons). There were instances of teachers only selecting either boys or girls during a lesson.

### *Proposed 2022 case study questions*

- How has your approach to engaging girls and boys in Lao language lessons changed since the new curriculum implementation?

### Students with particular needs

Questionnaires collected teachers' perspectives on whether they are able to support students with particular needs when teaching Lao language. Principals and teachers were provided with examples of the kinds of particular needs students could have, including: students with physical disabilities; students with intellectual/cognitive disabilities; and students who excel and need extension activities. The case study data provides detail on how teachers work with such students when teaching Lao language. Principals' and teachers' open responses were coded using an inductive approach. During classroom observations, researchers recorded when teachers explicitly provided customised support to students with a disability.

- Surveyed teachers were asked to what extent they were able to provide extra support to students who have difficulty learning Lao language and to students who need to have extension in Lao. As shown in Figure D.6, very few teachers (2%) in 2021 reported constraints in providing either supports, compared to eight per cent in 2019. Almost all teachers reported they were able to provide support in both instances, either to a moderate or large extent.

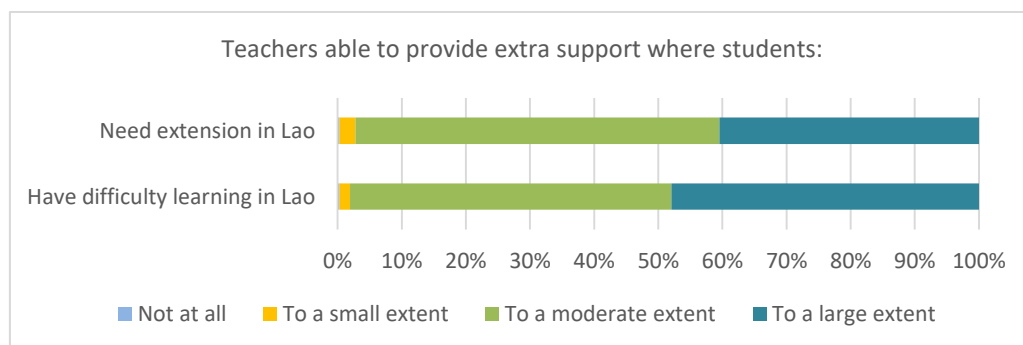


Figure D.6: Surveyed teachers' reported ability to provide extra support to students in 2021

- In 2019 and 2021 respondents identified a similar range of strategies to assist students (Figure D.7). Again, the most common strategy for supporting students needing assistance was providing targeted help in class (8 of 15 teachers and 5 of 10 principals in 2021; 6 of 15 teachers and 4 of 9 principals in 2019). In 2021, more respondents cited extra instruction than in 2019 (5 of 15 teachers and 6 of 10 principals in 2021; 4 of 15 teachers in 2019), and similar numbers of respondents reported grouping them with high achieving students (3 of 15 teachers and 1 of 10 principals in 2021; 3 of 15 teachers and 2 of 9 principals in 2019). Targeted help often involved holding students' hands to help them to write.
- For high achieving students, mostly teachers reported in 2021 they teach them as normal (4 of 15 teachers in 2021; no reports in 2019) rather than giving extra instruction or work (1 of 15 teachers in 2021; 3 of 15 teachers in 2019). Getting such students to help others was also a common strategy used to extend them (4 of 15 teachers in both years).

There are two outstanding students in my class as they get good support from their parents. At home, their parents teach them. For me, I don't have a strategy to assist them. I teach everyone similarly. For the poor performers, I help them by holding their hand to write, sometimes. (Teacher, School J).

Some Wednesday afternoons are allocated for teaching the poor performer. But, there's no particular teaching support for the good performer. To recognise their outstanding, school provides them with a prize (mostly book and pen) end of the academic year. (Principal, School L).

- During classroom observations, researchers recorded only one teacher provided customised support to a student with a disability in 2021.

#### ***Proposed 2022 case study questions***

- How has your approach to engaging with students with particular needs in Lao language lessons changed since the new curriculum implementation?
- How has this affected your teaching, and student learning?
- Have you had any further training/learning opportunities related to supporting students with particular needs?

	Case study teacher														
	A#	B2	BN	C	DN	E	F1	F2	GN	HN	I#	J1	J2	K	LN
No response or unsure															
Do nothing															
<b>Supports for students needing assistance</b>															
Targeted help in class (e.g. hold students' hand)		●	●●		●	●●	●●	●	●	●		●●	●●		●
Position at front of class		●												●	
Provide resources			●												
Extra instruction		●		●●		●	●	●	●	●			●	●●	●
Extra time for tasks															
Group with high achieving students	●	●			●						●				
Ask parents / siblings to help			●		●										
Frequent observation						●									
Students help each other									●						
<b>Extension for high achieving students</b>															
Extra instruction or work										●			●		
Help and support them						●	●								
Learn by themselves		●	●	●											
Help others			●		●			●	●						
Given gifts	●	●												●	●
'Progress' lesson					●										
Teach as normal						●		●				●●	●	●	●
Spend less time									●						

● = teacher reported ● = principal reported # = G1 teacher is principal N = Teacher is new to the study in 2021

Figure D.7: Case study respondents' reporting on strategies for working with students with particular needs in 2021

### Non-Lao speaking students

Information on student languages, whether teachers use a language other than Lao during Lao language lessons, and the purposes for this was collected through questionnaires and case study interviews. Case study researchers also observed whether teachers provided customised support to non-Lao speakers during lessons observed.

- As in 2019, the most common student language group reported in 2021 was Mon-Khmer, with about half of all teachers (48%) indicating that the majority of their students spoke Mon-Khmer or a variant at home. More than one third of teachers (37%) indicated that Lao-Tai was the majority language group in their classrooms. Other language groups were less common with ten per cent of teachers reporting that Chine-Tibet languages were spoken by a majority of their students, and other language groups such as Hmong-Lu Mien only in a majority in less than four per cent of classes.
- Most native speakers of Lao-Tai do not speak another language, whereas the majority of those who are not native Lao speakers reported that they spoke at least one other language.
- Table D.1 provides a picture of the student majority language compared to the language of the teacher who teaches them. In the case of teachers whose native language is Lao, 58 per cent are teaching students where the majority also speak Lao, and one third of native Lao language teachers (33%) are teaching classes whose majority language is Mon Khmer.
- In comparison, only 16 per cent of teachers whose native language is not Lao are teaching a class of students who are majority Lao speakers. These figures are likely to affect the extent to which a mother tongue is spoken during Lao language lessons. These results are similar to those reported in 2019.

Table D.1: Student majority language compared to language of their teacher as reported by teachers surveyed in 2021

Student majority language	Teachers Lao-Tai proficiency		Total %
	Native speaker %	Fluent speaker %	
Lao Tai	58.4	16.5	37.5
Mon Khmer	33.0	57.1	47.7
Other	8.6	26.5	14.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

#### *Extent of mother tongue instruction*

- Overall, just over half of surveyed teachers in 2021 reported that they used a language other than Lao during Lao language lessons (51%) and just over half reported that they did not (49%) (refer Table D.2). The figures differ considerably when the native languages of teachers and students are taken into account. One-third of teachers whose native language is Lao (33%) reported that they used another language when teaching Lao. The result is reversed for teachers whose native language was other than Lao, with 72 per cent indicating that they used another language while teaching Lao. These results are similar to those reported in 2019.
- The vast majority of teachers (85%) did not use another language when teaching a class of students whose majority language was Lao. For classes where most students had a mother tongue other than Lao, almost three-quarters of teachers (73%) used another language in 2021, slightly higher than 67 per cent pf teachers reported in 2019.

Table D.2: Surveyed teachers’ reported use of mother tongue during Lao language lessons in 2021

Use other language during Lao lessons	Teachers Lao-Tai proficiency			Student majority language		
	Native speaker %	Fluent speaker %	Total %	Lao Tai %	Other %	Total %
No	67.0	28.2	51.2	84.6	27.3	51.2
Yes	33.0	71.8	48.8	15.4	72.7	48.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

- As in 2019, Figure D.8 shows the most common use of mother tongue is to provide instructions, which over half of these teachers (53%) reported in 2021 they do often or always. The majority of teachers use another language for all indicated purposes at least occasionally (91%), and about one-third often or always (31%). More teachers reported in 2021 using mother tongue to provide feedback to students, to check for student understanding and to explain something, than in 2019.

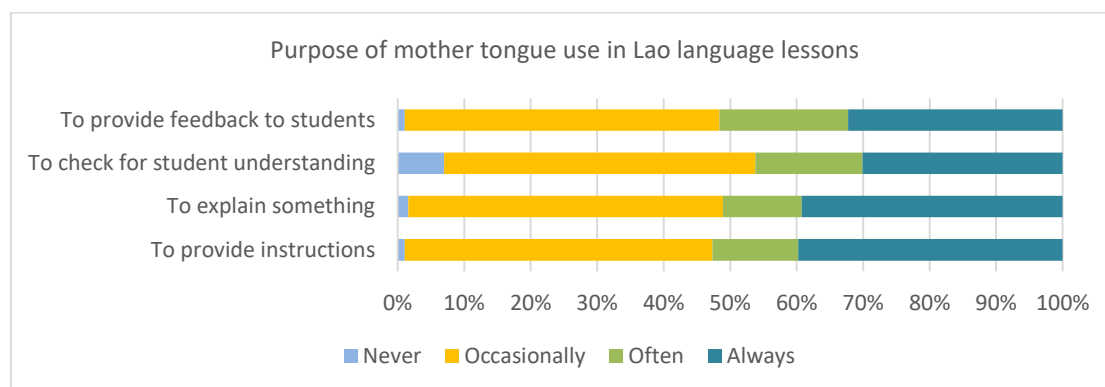


Figure D.8: Surveyed teachers’ reported purpose of mother tongue use in Lao language lessons in 2021

- As shown in Figure D.9, in 2021 11 of the case study teachers reported using a language other than Lao to teach Lao language. Fourteen of the 15 classes include ethnic students.

	Case study teachers														
	A#	B2	BN	C	DN	E	F1	F2	GN	HN	I#	J1	J2	K	LN
Teacher reported	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Principal reported		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		No	No	Yes	Yes
Ethnic students	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

# = G1 teacher is principal    N = Teacher is new to the study in 2021

Figure D.9: 2021 case study respondents’ reporting on whether a language other than Lao is used for Lao language lessons and the presence of ethnic students in G1 class

- Several teachers (9 of 15) reported that using local language during Lao language lessons to provide explanations and connections for ethnic students was encouraged at the MoES/BEQUAL training they attended.

The training covered teaching Lao language to non-Lao speakers. When students don't understand Lao, teachers have to translate into ethnic language for them. (Teacher, School C)

For teaching non-Lao speakers, they [the trainers] suggested us to use both Lao and local language. (Teacher, School H)

They [the trainers] said when teaching Lao to non-Lao speakers, if ethnic students didn't understand the lesson I had to use ethnic language. Also when they didn't understand the meaning of a word in Lao, I have to translate to their ethnic language. (Teacher, School K)

- The rationales reported by teachers and principals in 2021 for using local language during Lao language lessons were clearly aligned with the purpose promoted by MoES/BEQUAL at the new curriculum training.

I use [local language] to explain some difficult vocabularies. (Teacher, School B)

Mostly I speak Lao language but if students don't understand I speak local language to help them understand the lesson. (Teacher, School C)

I often use it because students like asking questions. I use it to explain the lessons because students did not understand. (Teacher, School H)

I use ethnic language in explaining the meaning of words. It's essential to use ethnic language here because sometimes they don't understand at all if I only speak Lao language in class. (Teacher, School K)

The ethnic language is used about 30% of the teaching time to explain the meaning of words and provide instruction. This aims to help students to be at the same page with their friends. (Principal, School L)

- One principal noted that although the teacher in their school sometimes uses local language, it is discouraged.

Sometimes the teacher uses local language to communicate but we emphasise not to use other language during Lao language lessons. (Principal, School G)

- Case study researchers reported that four teachers provided customised support to non-Lao speakers during lessons observed in 2021. This support entailed teachers providing explanations in local language to assist students to understand the meaning of Lao words, teachers assisting ethnic students with their writing of Lao words, and, a teacher assisting ethnic students with Lao pronunciation.
- Fewer teachers provided customised support to non-Lao speakers in lessons observed in 2021 (4 of 15) than in 2019 (9 of 15). A question of interest is whether the prescriptiveness of the new curriculum teaching methods enable teachers to better meet the needs of ethnic students in their classes, therefore requiring less customised support than might have been needed previously.

### ***Possible 2022 case study questions***

- How has the new curriculum impacted the way that you teach Lao language to non-Lao speakers?
- What are your observations about the ways that student-centred methods recommended in the new curriculum support the learning of Lao language for students who are non-Lao speakers?



### *Extra instruction in Lao language for G1 students*

In 2019 and 2021, data was collected through questionnaires and case study interviews on extra instruction in Lao language for G1 students whose home language is not Lao.

- Reporting on the provision of extra instruction and associated costs varies between the principals and teachers surveyed, as well as between what was reported in 2019 and 2021.
- In 2021, three-fifths of principals surveyed reported their school either provided extra instruction in Lao language at no cost for students (57%) or partially or fully funded by parents (3%). Forty per cent reported no extra instruction is provided.
- Half of the teachers surveyed reported that no extra instruction was provided for non-Lao speaking students (59% in 2019), while almost half (48%) reported that extra instruction either partially or fully funded by parents was provided (3% in 2019). Only two per cent of teachers reported that extra instruction was provided at no cost to parents (39% in 2019).
- In 2019, nine of the 15 case study teachers reported extra instruction was provided, but reporting differed between principals and teachers in a couple of instances.
- In 2021, ten of 15 case study teachers reported extra instruction was being provided, and there was greater alignment between teachers' and principals' reporting regarding this. Similar to 2019, additional instruction was reported to be provided outside of regular school hours.

I provide extra instruction to poor performers using 30 minutes or one hour in the evening. I also put good and poor performers in one class to let them learn together. (Teacher/Principal, School A)

At this school teachers provide extra classes for poor performer students and use the Lao language textbook to teach. Teachers do not prepare any special lesson to teach. (Principal, School C)

For G1, teachers normally provide extra instruction in Lao language for poor performing students but students do not understand so everyone wants to attend and we let all of them attend the extra classes. (Principal, School J)

- One principal noted that if teachers were not available to provide extra instruction they would assume that role.

Yes, when the teachers are available but if not I provide the extra class for them. (Principal, School D)

### **Possible 2022 case study questions**

- What kinds of teaching and learning activities are included in extra instruction lessons for students who are non-Lao speakers?

### **Assessment**

The new curriculum places an emphasis on formative assessment and new methods for summative assessment to shift teachers away from traditional assessment approaches and testing. Traditional approaches have included numerical scoring of students (e.g. a score out of 10) for each subject on a weekly basis, whereas the new curriculum encourages the use of rubrics. Two key strategies described in the teachers' guide for formative assessment are asking questions to check understanding and observing children when they are practicing or trying to apply what they have learnt.

Aspects covering the purpose of assessment, assessment methods and frequency, and student feedback, were explored through questionnaires, case study interviews and classroom observations.

### Purpose of assessment

Teachers and principals were asked in the questionnaires to select the purposes for which they or their school use assessment data, from four options.

- In 2019, surveyed teachers indicated they mostly use data to monitor student performance and progress (85%), followed by planning next steps for learning and student ranking (each 78%), and lastly to report student achievement (73%). Principals also reported monitoring performance and progress as the main purpose (89%), followed by planning (80%), reporting (77%) and then ranking (72%).
- In 2021, almost all teachers and principals reported that they used school assessment data for each of the purposes: planning for next learning steps (100% of both teachers and principals); reporting student achievement (100% of both teachers and principals); ranking students (99% of teachers and 100% of principals); and monitoring students (99% of both teachers and principals).

### Assessment methods and frequency

The teacher questionnaire asked how often teachers assess students during Lao language lessons, including, for example, formative assessment by observing students working on tasks and asking students to demonstrate skills. Case study data provides details on the main assessment methods reported and observed in use.

- Similar to 2019, in 2021 all surveyed teachers reported they assessed students at least monthly, with just over three-quarters conducting assessments daily (78%), close to one-fifth weekly (18%) and a further four per cent on a monthly basis.
- Case study teachers and principals reported they assessed their students by asking them to read or write words in Lao language. A number of teachers also reported using flashcards to assess students' recognition or pronunciation of words and sounds. The main assessment methods reported were students reading (10 of 15 teachers; 6 of 10 principals) and writing through copying and dictation (10 of 15 teachers; 5 of 10 principals). Compared to 2019, in 2021 a larger number of teachers and principals (6 of 15 teachers; 3 of 10 principals) reported practising pronunciation (speaking and listening) as an assessment method with students.

Listening and speaking. I read flash cards for students then tell them to read and it depends on what lesson it is. There are different ways to deliver instruction. Extra reading for students is also used every Wednesday. (Teacher, School J)

I allowed them to think and write on their own. For writing I asked them to write what I read. For reading, I wrote on the board and asked them to read. For speaking, I told them a story and asked them to tell the main points, the characters in the story. For listening, I told them a story and asked them to recall. (Teacher, School B).

- Case study researchers recorded examples of formative assessment during classroom observations. Firstly, researchers documented when teachers 'explicitly checked' for students' understanding. For example, if teachers prompted or encouraged students to

demonstrate or articulate their understandings. In 2021, eight of the 15 teachers explicitly checked for students’ understanding in both lessons compared to four teachers in 2019.

- Compared to the observations from 2019, there was a two-fold increase in the frequency that teachers explicitly checked for students’ understanding in both lessons. There were multiple instances of this across the lessons (see Figure D.10 which displays a classroom observation map from two such teachers as observed in 2019 and 2021). Five teachers checked in one lesson only. In one Southern school and one Northern school, two teachers did not do this at all, and one other teacher in the South only checked once during one lesson.

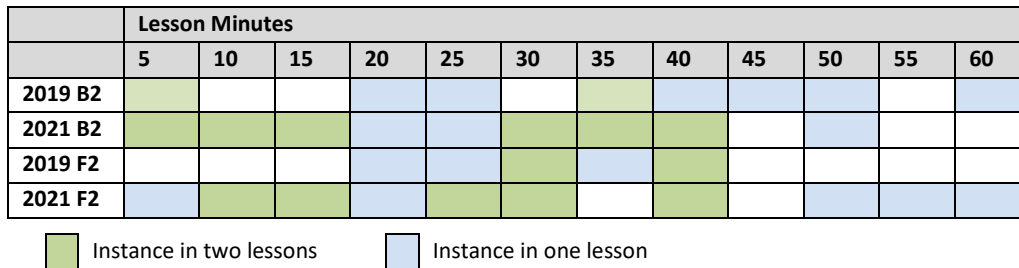


Figure D.10: Instances of explicitly checking for student understanding activity in lesson segments in two lessons observed in 2019 and 2021 for teachers in Schools B and F

- Researchers documented when teachers observed students practising or applying what they had learnt. For example, if teachers moved from group to group and provided feedback, prompted or encouraged students, or recorded notes about students as they worked.
- In 2021, the researchers documented *all* 15 teachers observing students practising or applying what they had learnt. This is a change in that three teachers from Southern schools in 2019 did not do this at all.
- Ten of the 15 teachers undertook such observations in both lessons, and five in one lesson only. See Figure D.11 which displays an example classroom observation map of a teacher undertaking these observations often.

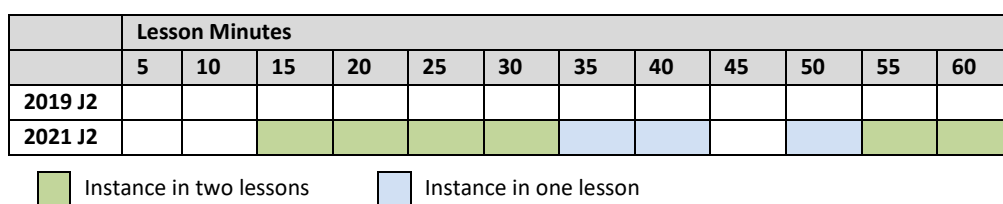


Figure D.11: Instances of observing students practising/applying what they have learnt activity in lesson segments in two lessons observed in 2019 and 2021 for teacher in Schools J

### Providing feedback on student progress

Teachers surveyed were asked how often they talk to individual students and their parents about each student’s learning progress in Lao language.

- In 2021, almost 79 per cent of teachers surveyed reported they talked to students either daily or weekly (69% in 2019). Five per cent reported they did not do this (11% in 2019).
- Thirty-nine per cent of teachers surveyed reported they have a conversation of five or more minutes with parents of their students about their Lao language learning on a monthly basis (44% in 2019), with a further 16 per cent talking to parents weekly (17% in

2019) and five per cent talking to parents daily (less than 5% in 2019). Twenty-three per cent reported that this occurs each semester (21% in 2019) and a further eight per cent each year (6% in 2019). Nine per cent reported that they never have a conversation of five or more minutes with parents about students' Lao language learning (7% in 2019).

- In case study schools, the majority of respondents (all 15 teachers; 7 of 10 principals) said they have conversations with parents about their child's Lao language learning. As in 2019, in most cases, these conversations with parents are focussed on student attendance. Some teachers report they consult with the principal about 'serious cases' or 'absenteeism.' Some teachers note they also attend village education development committee (VEDC) meetings to discuss the issue of absenteeism.

I converse with parents 2 times per semester to discuss their kids' absenteeism and learning outcomes. I also tell parents to prepare books and pen for their kids because a few students usually lose their books and pens. I visit them in the evening time as I have to wait until they come back from their farm work. (Teacher, School J)

Yes, I often visit students' parents to talk about absenteeism, how to help their children learn. (Teacher, School B).

### ***Proposed 2022 case study questions***

- How have your assessment practices changed since 2019?
- How do you use assessment to improve your teaching practice and student learning outcomes?

### **Use of resources**

As part of the new Lao language curriculum rollout, additional teaching and learning resources were provided. Surveyed teachers were asked to select from a range of resources those that they and their G1 students currently use in Lao language classes. Data on the use of resources was also collected in case study interviews and through classroom observations. Case study researchers were asked to observe against a wider range of resources than the list that was included in the questionnaire.

- In 2021, there was a marked increase in the number of teachers that reported using each resource in the questionnaire (refer Table D.3). In 2019, flashcards, pictures or posters were chosen most frequently by 87 per cent of teachers, followed by books and curriculum materials (82% and 80% respectively). Games/puzzles and songs/drama or physical actions were selected by more than half of the teachers as a resource they use.
- In 2021, all teachers reported they used curriculum materials, while almost all teachers used books (99%), flash cards, pictures or posters (98%), and songs, drama or physical actions (94%). Games or puzzles were used by around four-fifths of teachers (79%). Children's shows were least used by teachers (14%).

Table D.3: Surveyed teachers' perspectives on the Lao language resources they and their G1 students use in 2019 and 2021

<b>Lao language resources used by teachers and G1 students</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2021</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Curriculum materials (e.g. teacher guide, textbooks)	80.1	100.0
Books (e.g. decodable readers, story books, non-fiction books)	81.6	98.6
Flash cards, pictures or posters	86.5	97.8
Songs, drama or physical actions	51.6	94.5
Games or puzzles	55.3	79.3
Children's shows (TV, video, DVD)	3.5	14.0

- Figure D.12 shows that flashcards and pictures were highlighted as much used resources during case study interviews (12 of 15 teachers; 8 of 10 principals) and this was also observed to be the case (flashcards in 9 classes; pictures in 4 classes). Notably no classes were observed using decodable readers, and only two were observed using story books. Teachers relied heavily on use of the blackboard and a pointer/stick in observed classes.
- Student textbooks were used in 14 observed classes. In 2019 it was observed that in three classes in the Southern province there was only one textbook and this was used by the teacher to guide lessons. In 2021, observations indicated that sufficient textbooks were available for all students to use in the Southern schools.

	Case study teachers														
	A#	B2	BN	C	DN	E	F1	F2	GN	HN	I#	J1	J2	K	LN
LL teacher guide		●		○●	○●		○	○	○●	○	○	○●	●		
LL lesson plan	○	●			●		○	○	●	○		●	●		○
Student text books	○	○●	○		○	●○	○●	○●	○●	○●	○	○	○	○	○
Student note books	○	○	○	○	○	○	●○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Decodable readers															
Story books					○				●			●	○		
Posters	○	○			●		●	●							
Flashcards	●○	●○	○	●○●	●	●●	●	●○●	●○●	●	●	●○	●	●○●	●○●
Pictures	●	○	●○		●		●	●○	●●			●	●	●○	●
Big blackboard	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Pointer/stick	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○		○	○	○	
Games	○														
Puzzles															
Songs	○	○	○					○		○				○	○
Drama or role play															
Physical actions	○	○	○	○	○		○	○	○	○				○	○
Children's shows															
Other	○	○●	●○	○	●	●	○		●	●	●	○		○	○

● = teacher reported ○ = observed ● = principal reported # = principal is G1 teacher  
 N = teacher is new to the study in 2021

Figure D.12: Resources used in Lao language lessons as reported by case study respondents and observed in 2021

**Proposed 2022 case study questions:**

- Which resources do you and your students use often in Lao language lessons?
- What (other) resources would be helpful to your Lao language teaching?

**Classroom setup**

Case study researchers were asked to observe how classrooms were set up for Lao language learning – in particular, whether teachers had physically set up classrooms in ways that would enable them to engage students in different teaching and learning activities, and what kinds of resources were available in classrooms to support Lao language teaching and learning.

- Figure D.13 displays the ways that classrooms were physically set up in 2021, and for those teachers who were part of the case study in 2019, ways that their classrooms were set up at that time.

	Case study teachers														
	A#	B2	BN	C	DN	E	F1	F2	GN	HN	I#	J1	J2	K	LN
Space for whole class activities	oo	oo	o			o	o	o	o	o		oo	oo	o	o
Grouped tables and chairs	oo	oo		oo		o	o	o	o		o		o	o	o
Individual/single tables and chairs			o	o	o	o	o	o		o	oo	oo	oo	oo	o

o = observed in at least one lesson in 2019    o = observed in at least one lesson in 2021  
 N = teacher is new to the study in 2021

Figure D.13: Setup for Lao language learning in classrooms observed by case study researchers in 2019 and 2021

- More classrooms had space for whole class activities in 2021 (11 of 15) than in 2019 (8 of 15).
- From 2019 to 2021 the number of classrooms that had grouped tables and chairs for students almost doubled (5 in 2019; 9 in 2021).
- The number of classrooms that had individual/single lined tables and chairs, was similar (10 in 2019; 9 in 2021).
- In 2021 three teachers had space in their classrooms for both grouped tables and chairs and individual/single lined tables and chairs.
- In both 2019 and 2021, many classrooms had some Lao language displays (such as pictures and items labelled in Lao language, Lao alphabet posters etc.).
- In 2021 seven of 15 classrooms had areas to display student work and two of 15 had reading areas.

**Possible 2022 case study questions**

- What specific adjustments have you made to the physical set up of your classroom since working with the new curriculum?
- How has this affected your teaching, and student learning?
- Is there anything else you would like to do to improve the classroom setup for Lao language teaching and learning?

**Time spent teaching Lao language**

The new curriculum recommends 10 hours a week of Lao language in the G1 program, equivalent to two hours per day. In a pilot of 80 schools where most students do not speak Lao at home, it is also recommended that an extra one hour per day of spoken Lao language should be added to the timetable. Teachers and principals were asked in the questionnaire and case study interviews how many hours are spent teaching Lao language in G1 classes each

week and if this is sufficient time to teach all the required content in the Lao language curriculum.

- In 2019, on average, teachers across all provinces indicated in the survey that they taught Lao language for about 10 hours per week. About 11 per cent reported teaching Lao language for eight hours or fewer per week, and 42 per cent for 12 hours or more per week.
- In 2021, teachers across all provinces indicated in the survey that they also taught Lao language for about 10 hours per week. However, there was greater consistency with the majority of teachers reporting they teach Lao language between nine to 11 hours a week (84%). About ten per cent reported teaching Lao language for eight hours or fewer per week, and six per cent for 12 hours or more per week.
- In 2019 case study respondents reported an average teaching time of 10 hours per week, but the range reported differed (teachers reported 6-17 hours per week; principals 6-12 hours per week). In 2021 the same average teaching time, 10 hours per week, was reported consistently by teachers and principals. Only one teacher (who was also the principal) reported teaching a different number of hours (16), and one other principal reported that G1 teachers taught Lao language for 8 hours.
- In 2019, 22 per cent of surveyed teachers reported they did not have enough time to teach the Lao language curriculum in a typical week, and a further 32 per cent indicated that they only had enough time sometimes. As shown in Figure D.14, in 2021 less than one fifth of teachers surveyed (14%) said that they did not have enough time to teach the Lao language curriculum in a typical week, and a further half indicated that they only had enough time sometimes.

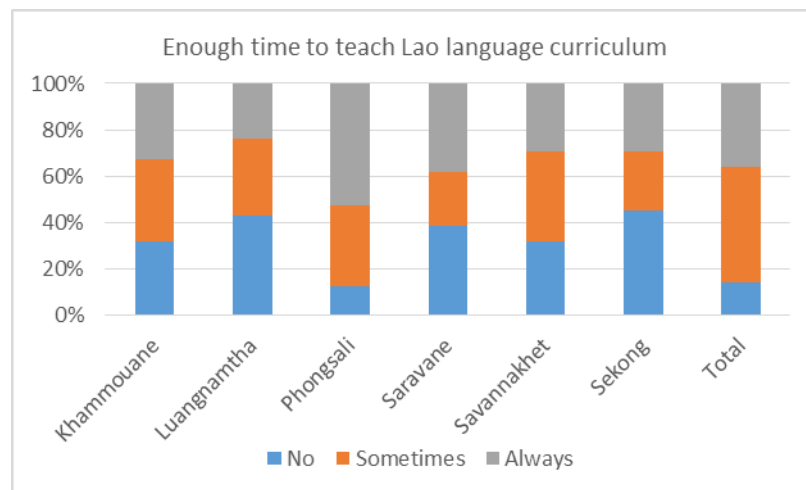


Figure D.14: Surveyed teachers' perception of whether they have enough time to teach the Lao language curriculum each week, by province in 2021

- In 2021, only four of the 15 case study teacher respondents indicated they can teach the required content each week, with the remaining responding they cannot or they can only do so on some occasions. Similar to 2019, challenges teachers reported included mixed student ability, ethnicity, multigrade classes, the number of Lao holidays and community activities, which all have implications for the ability of teachers to complete the curriculum. Many respondents emphasised the need to ensure students understand the lesson, before progressing.



Every day, if we don't have other duties we can meet the required content in the Lao language curriculum, but we focus on the quality. If the students understand the lesson, we can move on and I check the teacher's lesson plan. It is quite slow. (Principal, School B)

No, I can't teach all required content each week. If this week I don't finish a lesson, I continue next week... However, it's okay as long as my students understand the lesson. I have to assess students while teaching. (Teacher, School J)

I could not teach all the required contents because I want students to understand. I don't want just to complete the curriculum. It's difficult to teach. They are ethnic students. (Teacher, School G)

### D.3 Professional development

#### Participation in the orientation sessions about the new curriculum

In 2021, data about teachers and principals' participation in the new curriculum orientation training sessions were collected through questionnaires and case study interviews.

- The majority of surveyed teachers participated in the MoES/BEQUAL G1 new curriculum orientation sessions (87%) and this was somewhat consistent across the provinces, ranging from three-quarters of teachers in Phongsali to almost all teachers in Sekong (96%) and Khammouane (97%). Most principals had also participated (82%), although this was less likely for principals in Sekong (69%) and Phongsali (70%) compared to those in other provinces.
- Participation in orientation sessions in case study schools was also very high, with 14 of the 15 G1 teachers and 8 of the 10 principals (who are not also G1 teachers) reporting they attended. One principal attended the G2 orientation session rather than the G1 orientation due to the nature of his appointment at the time.
- Case study teachers and principals recalled the foci of the Lao language orientation sessions included: teaching techniques and methods; how to use and produce teaching aids and materials; assessing student progress; how to teach Lao language to ethnic students; teaching multigrades; teaching writing and reading; the use of games; how to attract students to come to school; how to create an attractive learning environment.
- The duration of the orientation sessions was reported to vary between one and a half days and one week, with a few teachers and principals reporting it ran for five days.
- Several case study teachers (7 of 15) reported that the training was not extensive enough, and noted they need more training related to the new Lao language curriculum.

Lao language took 5 days. I think it is not enough. I do not understand yet. It's even worse for ethnic teachers who do not understand Lao well... I want to have more time to be trained. It takes time to understand. (Teacher/Principal, School A)

There should be additional teaching and learning aid and training on teaching Lao language. The duration of the training was only three days. There were many people and they asked lots of questions. The trainers suggested to them they learn by themselves at home. (Teacher, School B)

I need additional support on preparing the lesson plan. The instructions in the teacher guide are too long and wordy. So I need an example of a lesson plan that I can look at and learn from it in order to make my own lesson plan. (Teacher/Principal, School I)

I need a longer training period. The training provided was too short compared to the content needed to teach. It wasn't enough time to master content delivered by the

trainers... I need detailed training and more teaching demonstrations from teachers who have extensive experience. On the training day I had an opportunity to see a demonstration of lesson no 1 – pronouncing the word ‘fish’. It was not enough. (Teacher, School J)

The [MoES/BEQUAL] training was too short, six days for six subjects. As you know that to become a teacher takes time but the training doesn’t prepare us how to teach. They expected us to be able to teach the new curriculum after only six days training... The new curriculum is quite difficult and complicated. Even though I received the training, I still face difficulties. (Teacher, School J)

- Some principals and PAs similarly noted that the training duration was too short.

About 10% of teachers in the district cannot do lesson plans for the new curriculum as the training was short. Teachers did not get opportunities to ask questions and trainers also did not have enough time to explain everything. So teachers lack understanding and it’s difficult for them to do lesson plans. (PA, Northern province)

It was short training and so the understanding is not complete. Our teachers are not familiar with the new curriculum. It is different from the old curriculum with little lessons but more activities. (Principal, School F)

- One teacher noted the challenge of teaching the new curriculum for those who could not attend the training.

There is a G1 teacher at a nearby school who was sick and couldn’t join the training and doesn’t know how to teach the new curriculum. (Teacher, School J)

### ***Possible 2022 case study questions***

- What further training related to the new Lao language curriculum have you participated in during the last 12 months?
- What particular areas related to Lao language teaching and learning do you need further training in?

## **Participation in other training**

In 2019 and 2021, teachers and principals were asked generally about their participation in in-service training in the last two years through questionnaires and case study interviews.

- As shown in Table D.4, in 2021, three-quarters of the G1 teachers surveyed (74%) said that they had participated in in-service training during the last two years (47% in 2019). This proportion varied by province, with 58 per cent of teachers in Luangnamtha province indicating that they had participated in training, compared with over 70 per cent of teachers in the other provinces. In 2019, the training gap by province was wider, from 17 per cent of teachers in Sekong to 59 per cent in Khammouane.
- In 2021, the majority of teachers across the provinces had undertaken in-service training focussed on Lao language teaching in the last two years, ranging from 95 per cent of teachers in Sekong to 100 per cent of teachers in Khammouane, Luangnamtha and Phongsali. Of those who had undertaken this training, about two-fifths (42%) had attended five days. This compares to much lower levels reported in 2019 where only 28 per cent of teachers had undertaken in-service training focussed on Lao language teaching in the

previous two years (ranged from 8% of teachers in Sekong, 16% in Phongsali, to 45% in Khammouane). Thirty-two per cent reported this training was for four days or more.

Table D.4: Surveyed teachers' reporting on their participation in training and the focus of that training, by province in 2021

Teachers	Khamm- ouane %	Luang- namtha %	Phongsali %	Saravane %	Savann- akhet %	Sekong %	Total %
<b>Participated in in-service training during the last 2 years</b>	<b>83.6%</b>	<b>58.3%</b>	<b>70.5%</b>	<b>77.8%</b>	<b>73.3%</b>	<b>71.4%</b>	<b>73.8%</b>
Focus on Lao Language teaching	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	98.0%	97.9%	95.0%	98.5%
Focus on Student-centred learning	96.1%	95.2%	93.5%	93.9%	90.6%	90.0%	92.9%
Focus on Inclusive education	96.1%	95.2%	93.5%	98.0%	85.4%	95.0%	92.2%
Focus on Multigrade classrooms	52.9%	57.1%	45.2%	57.1%	65.6%	35.0%	56.3%
<b>Participated in MoES/BEQUAL G1 curriculum training</b>	<b>96.7%</b>	<b>88.9%</b>	<b>75.0%</b>	<b>82.5%</b>	<b>85.5%</b>	<b>96.4%</b>	<b>86.8%</b>

- As shown in Table D.5, in 2021, almost two-thirds of principals surveyed (64%) said that they had participated in in-service training during the last two years (58% in 2019). There was more variation by province, when compared to teachers' participation, with Phongsali (35%) and Luangnamtha (46%) having lower rates of principal training and principals in Khammouane most likely to report they attended training (76%). There was less variation by province in 2019, when compared to teachers' participation.
- In 2021, almost all principals across the provinces attended training which focused on the curriculum, Lao language teaching, school management and administration and student-centred learning. Principals were least likely to have attended training focused on student welfare, with only a third reporting they attended this (33%). In 2019, one fifth of principals (20%) had undertaken in-service training focussed on Lao language teaching, and one-third (33%) on curriculum, although again the proportion differed by province. A focus on school management and administration was the focus of most training programs (47%).

Table D.5: Surveyed principals' reporting on their participation in training and the focus of that training, by province in 2021

Principals	Khamm-ouane %	Luang-namtha %	Phongsali %	Saravane %	Savanna-khet %	Sekong %	Total %
<b>Participated in in-service training during last 2 years</b>	<b>76.3%</b>	<b>45.7%</b>	<b>35.0%</b>	<b>65.5%</b>	<b>70.9%</b>	<b>65.4%</b>	<b>63.8%</b>
Focus on school leadership	77.8%	56.3%	78.6%	81.6%	77.8%	82.4%	77.3%
Focus on school management and administration	91.1%	93.8%	85.7%	92.1%	93.3%	94.1%	92.3%
Focus on staff professional development	66.7%	62.5%	64.3%	71.1%	77.8%	76.5%	72.3%
Focus on student welfare	42.2%	--	57.1%	28.9%	32.2%	29.4%	32.7%
Focus on curriculum	100.0%	93.8%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.5%
Focus on Lao language teaching	95.6%	100.0%	92.9%	92.1%	94.4%	100.0%	95.0%
Focus on student-centred learning	93.3%	93.8%	100.0%	86.8%	97.8%	82.4%	93.6%
Focus on inclusive education	88.9%	87.5%	100.0%	81.6%	94.4%	70.6%	89.1%
Focus on multigrade classrooms	68.9%	56.3%	78.6%	65.8%	72.2%	64.7%	69.1%
<b>Participated in MoES/BEQUAL G1 curriculum training</b>	<b>89.8%</b>	<b>82.9%</b>	<b>70.0%</b>	<b>74.1%</b>	<b>88.2%</b>	<b>69.2%</b>	<b>82.0%</b>

- In case study schools in 2021, only two of the 15 teachers reported they had received further in-service training on Lao language teaching during the last year, one in a Northern school and one in a Central school, both organised by DESB.
- The additional training in the Northern school was a three-day program that covered teaching Lao language and other subjects including maths and social science. The training focused on student-centred approaches, and student progress assessment.
- The additional training in the Central school focused on teaching in multigrade classes.
- Only two of the ten case study principals (who are not also G1 teachers) reported they had received Lao language in-service training in the last year.

#### **Possible 2022 case study questions**

- Have you had opportunities to participate in further training related to Lao language teaching and learning during the last year?

#### **Participation in other forms of professional development**

- In both 2019 and 2021 half the teachers reported they had participated in learning groups/clusters (54%) more than twice last school year and the majority reported having participated in self-learning (74% and 83% respectively) (refer to Table D.6). In 2021 the rates of *no* participation decreased. One-fifth of teachers in 2019 reported no participation in learning with groups/clusters compared to ten per cent in 2021. Twelve

per cent in 2019 reported no participation in self-learning compared to two per cent in 2021.

Table D.6: Surveyed teachers' reporting on their participation in learning with groups/clusters and self-learning in 2019 and 2021

	Participated in learning with groups/clusters of teachers %		Participated in self-learning %	
	2019	2021	2019	2021
No participation	18.8	10.2	11.6	2.5
Once	8.7	12.9	4.1	2.8
Twice	18.8	22.6	10.4	11.6
More than twice	53.6	54.3	73.9	83.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

- In 2021, case study teachers and principals reported being involved in various COP and SAL activities. COP activities included: exchanges with teaching colleagues, classroom observations, cluster meetings, and WhatsApp online teaching support groups. SAL activities included: watching YouTube videos, professional reading, and studying the new curriculum teacher's guide and training materials.
- Several teachers and principals reported that the COP activities teachers engaged in provided opportunities to receive (or give) support related to Lao language teaching.

There's a cluster meeting monthly for G1 teachers and principal. I can raise my concern or issues, or difficulties related to teaching Lao language in the meeting. Then, colleagues from other schools who have more experience would help me solve my difficulties. (Teacher/Principal, School A)

We have WhatsApp group in our school. If there are any problems that they don't understand they will ask each other and talk. We have teacher meetings in every month. Teachers from many schools in this district come to share and learn. (Principal, School D)

With other teachers we have exchanges and conduct classroom observations. (Teacher, School F)

The most effective support is peer-to-peer support through the WhatsApp group. (Teacher, School G)

For self-learning, the teacher reads the guidebook and if he doesn't understand any activity, he chats with teachers who clearly understand. For example, there is one teacher at a nearby village who clearly understands the lessons and our teacher often chats with him or her. (Principal, School G)

I was invited to a school cluster meeting to demonstrate Lao language teaching to G1 teachers from other schools. This kind of meeting happened 2-3 times per academic year. It's a teaching exchange meeting. (Teacher, School J)

There are five schools in our cluster, and we have a meeting once in two months to exchange new curriculum teaching experiences. In this meeting all grade teachers and I participated. The PA also organised a meeting with our school cluster to support teaching Lao language. (Principal, School K)

Importantly, we have internal pedagogical advising within our cluster. Teachers from school A visit school B to conduct classroom observations and provide feedback to teachers. We do this for all (five) schools in our cluster and so we have the opportunity to learn from each other. (Principal, School L)

- One teacher noted that while they valued the opportunity to exchange ideas with their colleague, this was insufficient when they both lacked understanding.

When I have questions or don't understand anything, I can discuss with my colleague who teaches the same grade. However, we struggle when both of us don't understand some lessons because neither of us can explain to each other. In that case, we just decide to follow our understanding because there's no additional support related to teaching the new curriculum we can get. (Teacher, School J)

- Some teachers noted that WhatsApp enabled them to access information such as official notification letters from DESB and PESS, as well as ask questions about Lao language teaching and learning.

Our PA helped to set up WhatsApp groups for G1 and G2 teachers. The WhatsApp groups are used for asking questions and sharing notification letters and other information. (Teacher, School D)

A WhatsApp group was set up. I posed questions in the group when I didn't understand. (Teacher, School G)

- Some teachers and principals reported restricted engagement in COP or SAL, with access to devices and internet, and knowledge about how to use them, presenting as issues.

I do not do any self-learning and also, I don't use smart phone to access WhatsApp group and online video. (Teacher, School C)

For using mobile phones to create a group like WhatsApp, they [teachers] don't understand this, they don't know how to use it. (Principal, School E)

For online platform, I haven't used. I don't have a smart phone... For self-learning I watch YouTube teacher development videos. I borrowed a smart phone from my brother... If I don't understand a teaching technique I search and watch. (Teacher, School H)

The teacher searches teaching methods and Lao resources on the phone. His village has internet access and when he goes back home, he can use the internet to search. He doesn't live in this village, he lives in a village nearby. (Principal, School L)

#### ***Possible 2022 case study questions***

- Have opportunities to engage in COP and SAL activities changed since the new curriculum was introduced?
- What factors support or constrain participation in COP and SAL activities?

## Annex E: Factors that support or impede existing teaching practice

Annex E provides more detailed findings about supports and impediments affecting teaching practice.

### E.1 Supports for Lao language teaching

This section reports data collected related to technical support for Lao language teaching (school level and district/provincial level) and the provision of resources (materials, financial and project).

Figure E.1 maps whether a sub-theme was reported by one or more case study respondents (principal, G1 teacher, PA) at each school in 2019 (blue) and in 2021 (purple)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
<b>Technical support – school level:</b> support provided by school principal, mentor/cluster head, colleagues, VEDC, and school exchanges												
<b>Technical support – district/provincial-level:</b> support provided by PESS and PA school visits during current school year												
<b>Resource supports – materials:</b> materials provided that support Lao language teaching e.g. supplementary teaching guides, textbooks, flashcards, etc												
<b>Resource supports – financial:</b> financial support provided												
<b>Resource supports – project:</b> resources or training provided by development partners												

Blue colour = reported in 2019 Purple colour = reported in 2021 No colour = not reported

Figure E.1: Map of key sub-themes reported by case study respondents as supports for Lao language teaching in 2019 and 2021

### Technical support – school level

This section presents questionnaire and case study data by technical support provided ‘within schools’ and ‘across schools’. Respondents in 10 of the 12 case study schools in 2019, and in all 12 schools in 2021, reported there was some form of technical support related to Lao language teaching provided internally by their principal, and/or teacher colleagues or mentors within and external to their school.

The questionnaire focused on the frequency of observation and feedback provided to teachers by their principal and teacher colleagues. Through case study interviews, supports for Lao language teaching was explored more extensively with respondents being asked to describe the kinds of support they received (teachers) or provided (principals and PAs).

*Technical support provided by principals*

- The majority of surveyed teachers in 2021 (84%) reported that their principal observed their teaching and provided them with feedback or advice at least once during this school year – higher than 77 per cent reported in 2019. Almost half the teachers (47%) indicated that they were observed more than twice by the principal, compared to 33 per cent in 2019. Responses from principals were similar, with the majority indicating that they had observed their G1 teachers teaching at least once (82%).
- In 2019 more than half of the case study teachers (7 of 12) reported receiving some technical support from their principals, and in 2021 this increased by two (9 of 12).
- The types of principal support reported by case study respondents in 2021 included: assistance with preparing materials, lesson planning, teaching methods, and monitoring teaching and learning.

My principal's advice is helpful – especially he tells me to explain lessons, write lessons on the blackboard for students and answer questions raised by students. I apply the suggestions by letting students ask more questions on the lesson and writing the lesson on the board so students can copy. (Teacher, School C)

The principal provides advice. He is sitting here [in the G1 classroom] all the time. (Teacher, School D)

We help each other. We have sharing learning meetings every Friday. For the Grade 1 teachers we focus on teaching-learning Lao language and using knowledge from trainings. (Principal, School F)

The principal gives advice sometimes on attendance, teaching and student absenteeism. (Teacher, School F)

For the support from the principal, it's like peer-to-peer support. (Teacher, School G)

The principal gives advice on the areas I did not understand. (Teacher, School H)

- One teacher in 2021 noted that their principal was not able to provide them with support for Lao language teaching, and the principal's own comments acknowledged this.

For support from the principal, I don't know what to say. He doesn't know how to help. (Teacher, School E)

I can say they understand more than me because they teach every day ... my knowledge is limited and I don't know how to support them. ... I don't know how to do it due to my knowledge is limited. I don't know how to support them. (Principal, School E)

- Case study principals were asked about their confidence in supporting G1 teachers with Lao language teaching. In 2019, seven of the nine principals (those also teaching G1 excluded) reported they were either 'very' or 'quite' confident. In 2021 six of the 10 principals (excluding those also teaching G1) reported they were 'very' or 'quite' confident. For example, three principals reported:

My confidence, after the training, it's about 80% in helping Grade 1 teachers. (Principal, School B)

I am 90% confident of my own ability in teaching Lao language because I was trained, and I understood the new curriculum very well. When training for the new curriculum, I participated in the same training with DESB officers. G1 teachers were trained separately. (Principal, School C)



I am 70% confident based on the students' progress. Last year student transition to Grade 2 was 40% and this year the rate is 80% ... I believe that the teacher applies my advice in her teaching, using teaching materials and student-centred approach. (Principal, School K)

- **Two principals reported they were not confident in 2021, with both noting they did not participate in the new curriculum training.**

Not too much [confidence] because I didn't participate in the training. Maybe I don't understand as well as those who participated in the training. (Principal, School G)

I am not quite confident. I don't know how teaching the new curriculum looks like. I think I am 50% confident. ... I am not confident providing support because I haven't received any in-service training. I only learnt when I was the TTC. (Principal, School L)

- **In 2021, similar to 2019, training was identified often by case study principals as important for helping them to more effectively support their G1 teachers with Lao language teaching:**

More training and materials are needed. (Principal, School D)

Teachers should participate in more training and each time they should take longer times, like from 1 week to 2-3 weeks. Because if we train only one week, we can't understand clearly ... If it possible I would like them to reorganize training again because I need to participate in the training. I would like to share and learn with my colleagues. (Principal, School G)

There should be training for teachers each year. Some things they will forget, and some things teachers don't understand. (Principal, School H)

I need to be trained about teaching techniques and steps of the teaching approach. When the PA visited, I raised this issue, but he responded that there's no budget. Since it takes time to understand each teaching technique, the training should be 1-2 weeks to allow participants to demonstrate their learning and get hands on feedback. First week is for training and second week for teaching practice. ... The Grade 1 teacher and I should participate in the same training activities because I can provide pedagogies, or we can exchange ideas and experiences about how to teach. (Principal, School K)

I need to be included in the Lao language training and be provided with the textbook and Teacher's Guide in order for me to help the Grade 1 teacher. If I am equipped with these, I think I can assist him in teaching Lao. (Principal, School L)

- **When asked what additional supports are needed, several teachers in 2021 identified the need for further training to improve their Lao language teaching.**

There should be additional teaching and learning aids and training on teaching Lao language. The duration of the training was only three days. There were many people, and they asked a lot of questions. The trainers suggested they learn by themselves at home. (Teacher, School B)

I want to attend additional training. The training should take a longer time. (Teacher, School G)

I want to have more training. (Teacher, School H)

I need detailed training and more teaching demonstration from teachers who have extensive experience. (Teacher, School J)

I have observed that many teachers from this district, including me, don't understand the new curriculum much. So, I want to receive more training. (Teacher, School L)

**Proposed 2022 case study questions**

- What are the most helpful types of support that your principal provides for your Lao language teaching?

*Technical support provided by teacher colleagues – within schools and across schools*

- In 2019 and 2021 G1 teachers were asked how often teacher colleagues observed them and provided feedback, as well as how often they work with other teachers on Lao language teaching. Examples of ways that teachers might work together that were provided in the questionnaire included discussing how to improve Lao language teaching, preparing lessons or materials, or observing or simulating lessons.
- Observations by teacher colleagues was more commonly reported by surveyed teachers in 2021 – 18 per cent had been observed once, 22 per cent twice, and 18 per cent more than twice (14%, 14% and 16% respectively in 2019). Compared to 56 per cent in 2019, 42 per cent of respondents in 2021 indicated *no* observation had taken place this school year. Responses from principals were also similar, with 43 per cent indicating that no observations took place (57% in 2019), 17 per cent once (12% in 2019), 21 per cent twice (17% in 2019) and 19 per cent more than twice (14% in 2019).
- Only ten per cent of teachers in 2021 reported they did not work with other teachers on Lao language teaching. More than one-quarter reported they do this weekly (27%), almost half monthly (44%), and one-tenth each semester (11%). These results are higher than those reported in 2019 where one-third of surveyed teachers (32%) reported they do not work with other teachers on Lao language teaching. One-fifth reported they do this weekly (20%), one-third monthly (33%), and one-tenth each semester (11%).
- In case study schools in 2021, the provision of support and advice from teacher colleagues was reported by 7 of the 15 case study teachers and 9 of the 10 principals (excluding those also teaching G1).
- In some cases, the support of teacher colleagues occurred informally.

There are two Grade 1 teachers, we exchange teaching techniques. (Teacher, School B)

Colleagues help in lesson plan preparation and teaching methods (Teacher, School H)

Teacher colleagues discuss with each other about teaching-learning, making a lesson plan and teaching plans also. (Principal, School F)

The two Grade 1 teachers exchange teaching experiences about producing, using and maintaining teaching materials. (Principal, School J)

When I have questions or don't understand anything, I can discuss with my colleague who teachers the same grade. However, we are struggling when both of us don't understand some lessons because neither of us can explain to one another. In that case, we just decide to follow our understanding because there's no additional support related to teaching the new curriculum. (Teacher, School J)

- In other cases, support from teacher colleagues within schools was reported to occur through arranged meetings (e.g. weekly or monthly meetings), or on a needs basis.

We help each other. We have sharing-learning meetings every Friday. For the Grade 1 teachers, we focus on teaching-learning Lao language and using knowledge from trainings. (Principal, School F)

- In some case study schools, the practise of principal and/or teacher colleagues undertaking classroom observations was reported.

I often attend classroom observations, then point out what the teacher needs to improve and provide some suggestions ... I observe in his classroom once a month ... I will try my best to assist him, and I will observe in his classroom three times per month in order to give him more suggestions. (Principal, School C)

We conduct classroom observations with other teachers. (Teacher, School F)

- Exchanging teaching knowledge and experience across schools was reported as occurring across 8 of the 15 case study schools in 2021. In some cases, this appears to be planned and institutionalised such as within school clusters.

There's a cluster meeting monthly for G1 teachers and principals. I can raise my concerns or issues, or difficulties related to teaching Lao language in the meeting. Then colleagues from other schools who have more experience would help me solve my difficulties. (Teacher/Principal, School A)

There is a big group – seven schools in one group. If there is something that teachers don't understand they can share in a group meeting. The meeting is once for a semester. (Principal, School E)

We have five schools in a group, so if the teacher doesn't understand, he can ask the teachers in the group. (Principal, School G)

School cluster organises a meeting once a month where teachers can ask questions and exchange ideas on teaching methods. (Teacher, School G)

Having conversations with colleagues or friends to exchange knowledge. For example, in monthly meetings they conduct demonstrations for exchanging knowledge. (Principal, H)

There is a cluster meeting when the PA and teachers from three schools in the cluster get together. The PA asks me which topics in the new textbook I didn't understand. They also asked if I understand how to assess students' learning. (Teacher/Principal School I)

Importantly, we have internal pedagogical advising within our cluster. In our cluster, teachers from our school A visit school B to conduct classroom observations and provide feedback to school B's teacher. We do like this for all schools in our cluster, so we have the opportunity to learn from each other. (Principal, School L)

- There was a notable increase in the number of school clusters reported in the southern province in 2021 (1 of 4 schools in 2019; 4 of 4 schools in 2021).
- Another form of structured support that was evident across the northern and central provinces involved the set-up of WhatsApp groups. Principals and teachers in schools in both of these provinces reported that these groups provided opportunities for teachers to share ideas and exchange teaching experiences, ask questions about aspects of the new curriculum they find difficult, and receive official notifications from PESS and DESB. In some locations WhatsApp groups were not set up, and some teachers did not have access to groups because they don't have, or use, smart phones.

**Proposed 2022 case study questions**

- How often, and in what ways, do you work together with teacher colleagues to improve your Lao language teaching?

**Technical support – district/provincial level**

In the questionnaires, teachers and principals were asked questions about the extent of professional support provided by district and provincial officials. Specifically, they were asked how often their PA visited their school during the 2020-21 school year. Principals were also asked the same question in relation to district officers. This was explored further through case study interviews.

- Surveyed teachers reported higher levels of PA visits in 2021. Only three per cent of teachers reported that the PA had not visited them this school year, compared to 26 per cent reported in 2019. In 2021, 14 per cent had been visited once, 40 per cent twice and 42 per cent more than twice (17%, 28% and 30% in 2019 respectively).
- About the same proportion of principals indicated that a PA had visited them twice or more – 79 per cent in 2021 compared to 58 per cent in 2019. Only four per cent of principals said that they had not received a visit from a PA (20% in 2019). The focus of these PA visits has mostly been to give support or advice about teaching (99% teachers, 100% principals), deliver resources (96% teachers, 99% principals), encourage discussions among teachers (95% teachers, 98% principals), collect data (89% teachers, 76% principals), and administrative tasks (80% teachers, 83% principals).
- Similar to 2019, the majority of principals (86%) reported district officers had visited their school at least once in the 2020-21 school year, with 14 per cent reporting no visits at all. Almost half reported district officers had visited more than twice (46%). Principals were most likely to report the focus of the district officer visit was to provide advice to teachers (99%) or the principal (99%), assess school conditions (96%), and address problems in the school (92% or collect statistical data (89%)
- In 2021, all principals and almost all teachers in case study schools reported that PAs provided support for Lao language teaching in their school (10 of the 10 principals who were not also G1 teachers, 14 of 15 teachers).
- The kinds of support PAs were reported to have provided include: classroom observations; providing advice about teaching methods; lesson planning and use of teaching materials; providing advice about classroom management; and assessing student learning to monitor progress.

The PA comes to follow up and support to find a way to solve if the teachers have difficulties. (Principal, School F)

The PA gives advice on teaching methods, teaching aid production and work attendance. (Teacher, School F)

The PA suggests about making lesson plans, producing materials from local resources and using resources from DESB. (Principal, School H)

The PA supported on how to use flash cards and teaching methods. (Teacher, School H)

When PAs visited us they observed the classroom and provided pedagogies after the observation. (Teacher, School J)

The PA demonstrated teaching in a Grade 1 class and provided advice on: teaching activities, assessing students' learning, preparing lesson plans, and using teaching materials. The purpose of their visit was to focus more on teaching rather than school management. (Principal, School K)

- **Seven G1 teachers reported the support provided by their PA to be among the most helpful support they have.**

PAs visit is the most helpful for me. I learnt several teaching methods from him, especially 5 corner teaching techniques. (Teacher/Principal, School A)

The most helpful supports are from the principal and PA. I learned additional teaching techniques. (Teacher, School B)

It's the support from the PA. They correct our mistakes. (Teacher, School F)

PAs support is the most helpful for me because I can ask them questions and they respond to my curiosity. I've received a lot of advice and I can apply it in my teaching. ... However, I still need to see their teaching demonstration. I want the PA to teach my class. I want to observe and learn from their experience. (Teacher, School J)

- **Some PAs reported that a key part of their role is working on improving teaching techniques, which they often do through observations and feedback sessions.**

In the visit, the PA attended classroom observations and then the PA and teacher sat together to talk about what had been done well and what could be improved. (PA, Northern province)

When I come to school, I observe the class and then do sharing-learning. We make an agreement between the PA and teachers about which one is good, and which one should be improved. ... We put information in a tablet that BEQUAL provided. (PA, Northern province)

When I visit the school, my methods of providing support to teachers were: asking questions to find out their difficulties understanding in the new curriculum and advising, asking to see their lesson plan to see if they have it right and are ready to teach, explaining what they don't understand according to their plan, conducting classroom observation, and providing advice after the observation. (PA, Southern province)

- **One PA noted that he had not visited one of the case study schools to provide support and he was unsure how to assist teachers with their Lao language teaching. He also reported that he understands it is important that support is provided.**

I don't pretend to tell you that after the Grade 1 training I went. I never go to that school, and I don't know how I can help them. (PA, Central province)

I think there should be more follow up to support them. For example, about how to make a lesson plan or learn-share from the guide book. It is the main [form of] supporting. (PA, Central province)

- **Some principals noted the important role the PA played in supporting G1 teachers with Lao language teaching, but also appealed for the PA to visit their schools more, or to arrange additional training.**

The PA visits monthly and participates in the G1 class. The PA demonstrates how to teach and manage the class... When the PA comes, I also take part... The PA also emphasised that he needs to prepare lesson plans... The PA should provide more training for G1 teachers on Lao language pronunciation and teaching materials production. He should

help the G1 teacher with the meaning of some Lao terms used in the textbook. He should arrange training for G1 teachers once before the new semester starts. (Principal, School C)

I need the PA to come to school for suggestions and follow up closely each semester or 1-2 months, because sometimes the teachers don't understand and they don't know how to ask or talk with other teachers. (Principal, School D)

For lesson plans and resource production, I think PAs should come over to provide assistance on this when teachers can't do it by themselves. ... Even though the PA from DESB visit us twice per semester, I need more visits from them to provide supports for me and the Grade 1 teachers generally. (Principal, School J)

- Three teachers reported that they would like PAs and DESB staff to visit their school more often to provide advice.

PA should visit the school more often, at least five times per year to conduct classroom observation and give feedback on my teaching. Previously they visited only once a year and it could not help much. (Teacher, School C)

Every support has its own significance. It would be better if DESB staff come to the school to advise. (Teacher, School E)

I need the PA to demonstrate teaching a lesson for me to see. (Teacher, School J)

### **Proposed 2022 case study questions**

- What kinds of support provided by PAs is most helpful to you for your Lao language teaching?
- Are there particular ways that PAs could further support your Lao language teaching?

## **Resource supports – materials**

Respondents across all case study schools in 2021 identified materials that support Lao language teaching.

- The questionnaires asked teachers and principals to select from a list those things they considered would support G1 teachers to improve their Lao language teaching. Almost all teachers and principals selected all supports as ways to improve Lao language teaching (refer Table E.1).

**Table E.1: Supports for Grade 1 teachers to improve Lao language teaching in 2019 and 2021**

<b>Supports for G1 teachers' Lao language teaching</b>	<b>2019</b>		<b>2021</b>	
	<b>Principals %</b>	<b>Teachers %</b>	<b>Principals %</b>	<b>Teachers %</b>
Access to teacher guides	56.0	61.1	99.7	99.4
Additional training about teaching Lao language to non-Lao speakers	56.6	62.5	91.0	93.7
Access to Lao language curriculum	60.9	63.4	100.0	99.4
Additional training about Lao language teaching methods	75.6	74.4	100.0	99.4
Additional training about Lao language curriculum	77.6	81.8	100.0	99.7
Access to Lao language resources (e.g. text books, readers, story books, etc)	85.3	85.6	100.0	99.4

- Many case study teachers (12 of 15) and principals (6 of the 10 principals who were not also G1 teachers) reported that teachers often referred to the new curriculum teacher's guide, and several stated that they regard it to be a useful support for Lao language teaching.

I suggested that the teachers consult the Teacher's Guide to understand the purpose of the lessons and prepare lesson plans focusing on students' understanding. (Principal, School B)

In most cases I learn from the Teacher's Guide and textbook. (Teacher, School B)

For self-learning I consult the Teacher's Guide and the training materials. (Teacher, School E)

All support is important. I read the Teacher's Guide and use a smart phone. If I don't understand teaching techniques, I search and watch. (Teacher, School H)

- In 2021, when asked what additional supports would help them to improve Lao language teaching, several case study principals and teachers suggested that more materials would be helpful.

I need more teaching materials such as flash cards ... because the flash cards that I have are not enough to use and now they are getting old. (Teacher/Principal, School A)

According to our sharing meeting, the materials are not enough because we don't have budget for this ... We need various materials because it is a main point of teaching to attract the students' attention. (Principal, School F)

It's about teaching aid production. I want some similar to that in the textbook. I don't have enough time to draw them. (Teacher, School F)

I need long-term materials for using many years. In the past we produced our own materials, but it is used in a short time. There should be digital devices and we should be able to access the internet so we can learn from it and also print pictures for using in the lessons. (Principal, School H)

### Other resource supports – financial and project

- The provision of financial support was only identified by respondents in three of the four case study schools in the southern province in 2021. In each of these schools, principals reported that they support teachers with school block grant allocations (for example, to buy materials to produce teaching resources, or to pay teachers for overtime teaching when working with low performing students).
- While respondents from six of the 12 case study schools in 2019 reported that other development projects provided support to their school, no respondents in 2021 reported such support.

## E.2 Impediments

The following section reports data collected related to impediments or challenges that might have an impact on Lao language teaching in schools. Surveyed teachers were asked to respond to what extent certain aspects are an issue in their G1 class, and principals were asked about issues in relation to their school. Case study respondents were asked a more focused question about the challenges for G1 teachers in relation to Lao language teaching.

Figure E.2 maps whether a sub-theme was reported by one or more case study respondents (principal, G1 teacher, PA) at each school in 2019 (blue) and in 2021 (purple).

	Case study school											
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
<b>Teacher characteristics – teacher knowledge and experience:</b> challenges related to teacher knowledge and experience of Lao language teaching	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	White	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
	White	Purple	White	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple
<b>Teacher characteristics – lack of training:</b> challenges related to a lack of training in Lao language teaching and a need for additional training support	Blue	Blue	Blue	White	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	Purple	White	White
<b>Student characteristics – absenteeism:</b> challenges related to student absenteeism	White	Blue	White	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
	Purple	Purple	White	White	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple
<b>Student characteristics – ethnicity:</b> challenges related to student ethnicity and student home language	White	Blue	Blue	White	Blue	Blue	Blue	White	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
	Purple	Purple	White	White	Purple	Purple	White	Purple	Purple	White	White	White
<b>Student characteristics – school readiness:</b> challenges related to lack of student kindergarten/pre-school experience, age, readiness for school	White	Blue	Blue	White	Blue	White	Blue	White	Blue	Blue	White	Blue
	White	White	White	White	Purple	White	Purple	White	Purple	Purple	White	Purple
<b>Student characteristics – interest and attention:</b> challenges related to lack of student interest and attention	White	White	White	White	Blue	White	Blue	Blue	White	Blue	White	White
	White	White	Purple	White	White	Purple	White	White	White	White	Purple	White
<b>Student characteristics – parental support:</b> challenges related to lack of parental support	White	White	White	White	Blue	Blue	Blue	White	White	White	White	White
	White	Purple	White	White	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	White	Purple	White	Purple
<b>School characteristics – lack of teaching materials and resources:</b> challenges related to a lack of teaching materials and resources and a need for additional materials support	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
	White	Purple	White	White	White	White	White	White	Purple	Purple	Purple	White
<b>School characteristics – multigrade / overcrowded classrooms:</b> challenges related to teaching multigrade classes and large classes	White	White	Blue	Blue	White	White	Blue	Blue	Blue	White	Blue	White
	White	White	White	Purple	White	White	White	White	Purple	Purple	White	Purple

Blue colour = reported in 2019 Purple colour = reported in 2021 No colour = not reported

Figure E.2: Map of key sub-themes reported by case study respondents as challenges to Lao language teaching in 2019 and 2021

For the purposes of reporting, the following sections are by ‘teacher’, ‘student’ and ‘school’ characteristics.



## Teacher characteristics

- Surveyed principals were asked to what extent a lack of qualified teachers, teacher absenteeism and teacher turnover were issues in their school. In 2021, 40 per cent of the principals (55% in 2019) reported that a lack of qualified teachers was to a moderate or large extent an issue in their school, followed by teacher absenteeism at 32 per cent (33% in 2019) and teacher turnover at 28 per cent (29% in 2019).
- Similar to 2019, respondents across 10 of the 12 case study schools in 2021 reported teachers' knowledge and experience of Lao language teaching as a challenge (11 out of 12 schools in 2019). While the responses noted a wide range of challenges, a majority focused on the teachers' knowledge of Lao language and understanding key elements of the new curriculum, like assessment and lesson planning.

It is very challenging to him because he is not graduate in Lao language, just training... New curriculum: it is very new for him. Like: transform vowels that are not found in the old curriculum. (Principal, School G)

All G1 teachers in this district face the same difficulty which is assessing student's progress. We don't know the right way to assess students. (PA, Southern province).

Although I have a lot of experience, I have limited knowledge as I only finished diploma level and I am teaching the new curriculum. I am not confident yet because it's only the second year of using the new curriculum. (Teacher, School J)

Making a lesson plan is the most challenge. Example for G1, one lesson takes 10 hours and the teachers will make 5 lesson plans and they respond other subjects also. (PA, Northern province)

- The need for additional training was highlighted in the questionnaire and case study data. As discussed in Section 3.2.3 (refer Table 3.6), additional training about the Lao language curriculum, Lao language teaching methods and teaching Lao to non-Lao speakers were selected by almost all surveyed principals and teachers as useful for supporting G1 teachers to improve their Lao language teaching.
- One significant area of change from 2019, however, was that 11 of 12 case study schools did *not* report challenges related to lack of training in 2021. In 2019, lack of training was reported as a challenge by 11 out of 12 case study schools. This finding could align with the timing of the BEQUAL training and materials rollout after the pre-intervention data collection in 2019.

## Student characteristics

- Teachers ranked the issues in the same way in both years. As shown in Figure E.3, similar to 2019, low Lao language skills was reported by teachers in 2021 as most problematic, reporting it as being an issue to a moderate or large extent (75% of teachers in 2021; 70% in 2019). This was followed by readiness for transition to school (64% in 2021; 53% in 2019), lack of interest or motivation (57% in 2021; 50% in 2019), and absenteeism (56% in 2021; 49% in 2019).

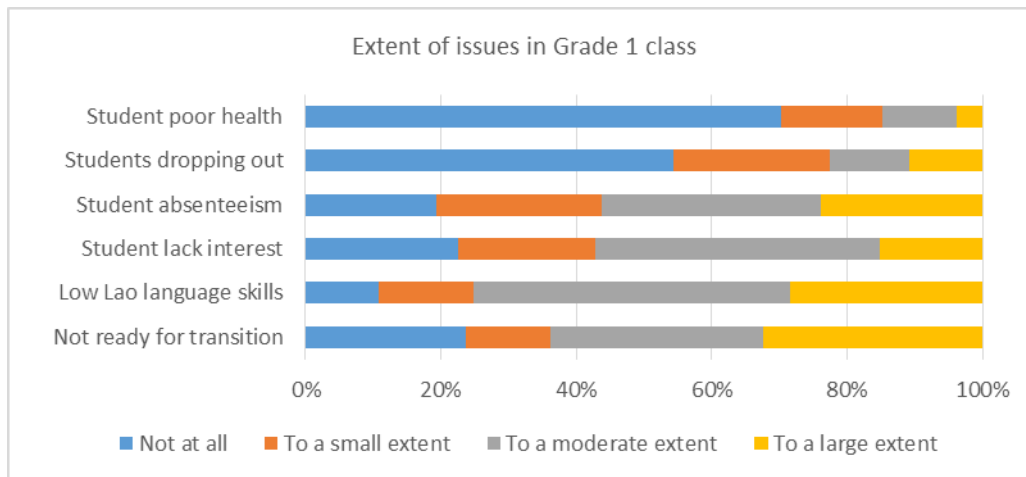


Figure E.3: Surveyed teachers' perceptions of the extent of student issues in their G1 class in 2021

- In both 2019 and 2021 the issue highlighted by respondents across most case study schools was student absenteeism (10 of 12 schools in both years). However, lack of parental support (7 schools) followed by student ethnicity (6 schools) were the second and third most reported issues in 2021. Less than half of the schools mentioned students' interest and attention or school readiness as issues. Some of the 2021 findings are in contrast to 2019, where school readiness was reported by more than half of the respondents, and lack of parental support was reported by less than a third of respondents.
- Case study respondents reported that student absenteeism was often due to children accompanying their parents to work in the field or because they do not have enough to eat at home. Respondents also reported that festivals or even the weather affects students' attendance. Students' absence affects the ability of teachers to teach the required curriculum content and impacts student outcomes.

Some families they don't have enough to eat; the students are hungry; they could not come to school. (Teacher, School G)

Students go to the field with their parents because they cannot cook for themselves at home, nobody cooks for them" (Principal, School J)

There will be many festivals in their village and students will be absent or sometimes the school needs to close to celebrate the village festival." (PA, Southern province)

Sometime, students are absent from school. I have to look for them at home. Like today, it's raining. Many students are absent" (Teacher, School B)

- Challenges related to parental support was closely linked to students accompanying their families to work in the fields, absenteeism and parents not having enough time or ability to support them.

Parents are farmers and they spend most of their time at the cassava field. So, they don't have time to follow their kids closely. (Principal, School J)

The teachers assigned homework for students but parents didn't know how to help; they've never had a look at the homework of their children. (Teacher, School B)

- Student ethnicity and their home language was reported as a challenge to Lao language teaching given the need for teachers to communicate using local language, the lower levels of foundational Lao language knowledge, and student difficulties with Lao pronunciation.

It's challenging. The new curriculum is different. I could not use Lao language a lot; they don't understand; they are ethnic students. (Teacher, School H)

Students and teacher are Khmu. It is very challenging to write correctly in Lao because they write based on sound. Students and teacher have problem in terms of tone, and in lesson, too many consonants to learn. (PA, Northern province)

### School characteristics

- Surveyed principals were asked to what extent a shortage or inadequacy of classrooms, toilets or instructional materials were issues in their school. Similar to 2019 results, as shown in Figure E.4, almost three-quarters of the principals (70%) reported that shortage or inadequacy of materials was the greatest issue, reporting it to be an issue to a moderate or large extent, followed by a shortage or inadequacy of toilets (51%) and classrooms (47%).

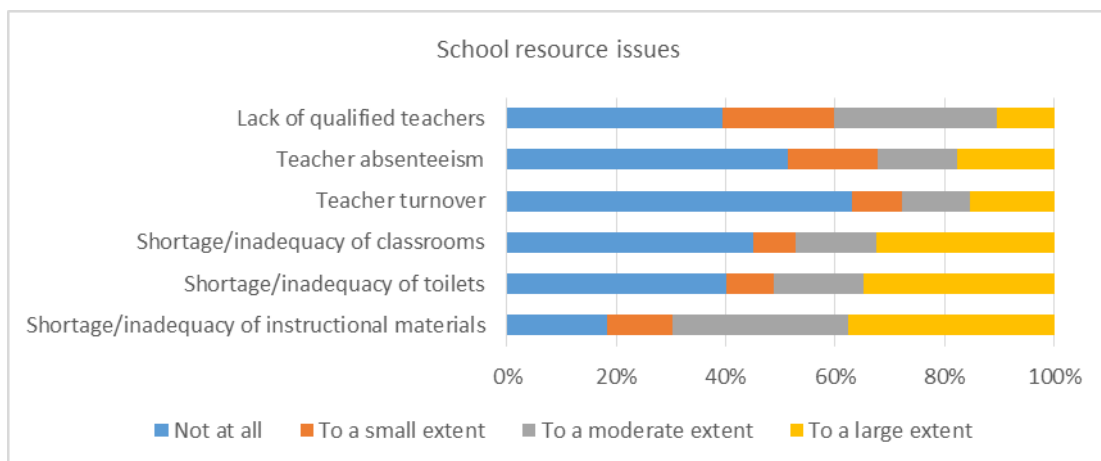


Figure E.4: Surveyed principals' perceptions of the extent of issues in their school in 2021

- Only four case study schools in 2021 reported a lack of teaching materials and resources as an impediment to Lao language teaching, compared to all case study schools in 2019. It is likely that schools would have received BEQUAL teaching materials and resources since the 2019 case study data was collected. Despite this, three of the four schools in the South reported they continue to experience issues with teaching materials and resources in 2021.

It requires more pictures and flash cards of phrases and sentences, not only consonant and alphabet cards. Even though teachers can produce these materials, they don't have enough time to do so because they are busy with responding to other 7 more subjects and have their family commitments. So, I think if the project can support it would be nice. (PA, Southern province)

Teacher needs more materials, story books, more variety books that explains alphabet and consonants. (Principal, School K)

- While many teachers produce their own teaching and learning materials to address this resource gap, these may not be sufficient or durable to last. Some respondents also noted that the time needed to prepare activities and lesson plans was difficult to manage. Schools also described damaged resources or lack of infrastructure (e.g. sufficient tables and chairs) as challenges. One respondent described how the condition of the classroom impeded teaching.

The middle of the blackboard has scratches which I could not write on it. When writing in long sentences, I can't finish the whole sentence because of the scratches. I have to enter the line, but when I enter the line, students misunderstand that I start the new sentence and they also write in the new line on their notebooks. (Teacher/Principal, School I)

- Respondents in three case study schools raised teaching multigrade classes as a challenge.

The first challenge for him is teaching in multi-grades. So, it is not as well as it should be. Due to he teaches many classes so, his lesson plan is not continuing. He doesn't have time to make a lesson plan. It is still being their problem. (PA Central province)

I teach multi-grade. It's challenging. (Teacher, School H)

#### ***Proposed 2022 case study questions***

- What additional resources and teaching materials would help you/your school in delivering your lessons?
- What are some way to address the challenges of student attendance and parent support?

### **E.3 Impacts of COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic saw worldwide disruptions to regular schooling. In Laos, school was also disrupted in 2020 with most schools across the country closed for a period with limited remote education solutions available. In 2021, new questions were added to the questionnaires and case study interviews to gather stakeholder perspectives on the impact of COVID-19 on G1 Lao language teaching and learning.

- Case study respondents were asked for how long Lao language teaching disrupted G1 classes. Responses were wide ranging, from greater than one week to four months.
- Surveyed teachers and principals were provided with statements to agree or disagree with about their Lao language teaching practices during the COVID-19 disruption (refer Figure E.5). The majority of teachers and principals either agreed or strongly agreed that they delivered content to meet curriculum requirements, followed regular Lao language lessons without change, and spent more time planning Lao language lessons than before the disruption.

Lao language teaching practices during COVID-19 disruptions

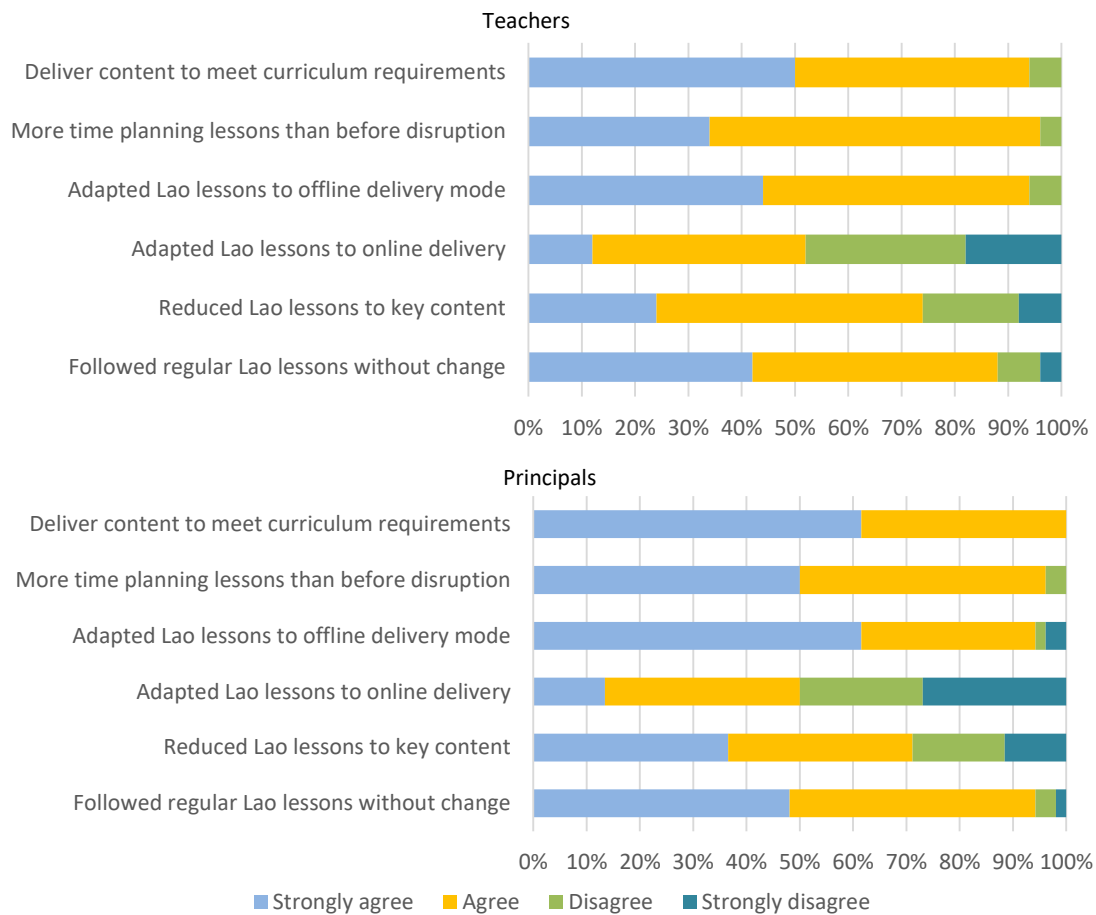


Figure E.5: Teachers’ and principals’ report in 2021 on Lao language teaching practices during the COVID-19 disruption

- Both teachers and principals were least likely to agree that Lao language lessons were adapted for online delivery, with around half disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that either they or G1 teachers at their school did this. Nearly all teachers and principals agreed or strongly agreed that lessons were adapted for offline delivery.
- Support provided to students for remote learning during lockdown was quite limited (particularly in Southern case study schools) and many case study respondents reported that remote learning was not feasible.
- Respondents in Northern schools noted that PESS and DESB recommended learning from television programs and online platforms and encouraged teachers to give students homework. Issues related to rural locations and limited access to the internet were cited as challenges.

PESS suggest the teachers to give students homework also. For online learning, they suggest to learning from television. (Principal, School D)

DESB suggest to give homework to students but only in the town. For the school in rural, do not. (PA, Northern province)

DESB recommended us to teach online using the internet but most of the students could not access the internet. (Teacher, School D)

- In central schools, many respondents reported that teachers assigned homework and suggested students take textbooks home to study. Many respondents reported they suggested students learn with their siblings or other children in their villages.

We stopped teaching and asked students, who are living closely with each other, study together. We gave them textbooks to study at home. (Teacher, School F)

We assigned homework for students. Some kids learned. We suggested parents to help. But some did not. Parents are illiterate. Some kids studies with their friends. (Teacher, School G)

- A key issue identified by most case study respondents was that students forgot the lessons upon their return to school. Many teachers repeated lessons. Two teachers also noted that they too forgot the content due to the long break from teaching.

We had to repeat the teaching. The semester was extended for one more month. (Teacher, School G)

After two months break due to COVID-19 lockdown, students forgot all lessons. When re-opened school, the teacher had to repeat some lessons that students forget. But not all lesson was repeated. (Principal, School C)

It was also a problem for me. I forget, I was not very well-prepared as the break was long and I didn't practice teaching. (Teacher, School J)

- Most respondents reported teachers could not cover all the new curriculum content for Lao language. Some respondents reported lessons were adapted so that they covered key content.

When school resumed, teachers skipped and shortened some learning exercises in Lao language and lessened the teaching hours of other less important subjects e.g. art and PE to allow more time for Lao language class as it's the priority. This was PA's and my advice for G1 teachers. However, teachers could not teach all lessons in the curriculum. (Principal, School J)

I tried to shorten the lesson activities, if any similar or same activities then I skipped and mix them. However, as the result of school shut down, I couldn't finish 4 lessons in the textbook. (Teacher, School J)

- However, some teachers resumed teaching as per their practices before the lockdown. Only three of the 15 teachers reported assessing their students when classes resumed.

Teachers did not adjust their way of teaching even though they could not teach all the content in the curriculum. Teachers resumed classes and taught as usual. (PA, Northern province)

I did not do anything special or adapt any teaching, lesson plan and teaching resources after resuming the study. (Teacher, School J)

- Case study respondents were asked how G1 teachers were supported to teach Lao language during the disruption. Teachers reported very limited or no support was provided to them. Some raised the challenge of relying on parents to provide support to student learning.

PA advised about the general issue related to COVID protection, not about teaching Lao language and no support from community and school principal. (Teacher, School J)

Parents did not know how to help their children learn from home. (Teacher, School B)

Parents did not teach their children during lockdown because the majority of the parents were illiterate. Sisters and brothers helped them to learn. DESB mostly advised on COVID prevention. (Teacher, School H)

- Surveyed teachers and principals were also asked about time spent participating on support or collaboration activities on Lao language teaching with colleagues following the COVID-19 disruption, whether time increased, decreased or stayed the same compared to before the disruption (Figure E.6). Most teachers surveyed reported that their time spent on each of the activities had decreased. Although most principals supported this, a slightly higher proportion (compared to teachers’ self-reports) reported that G1 teachers at their school increased their time on activities related to their Lao language teaching.

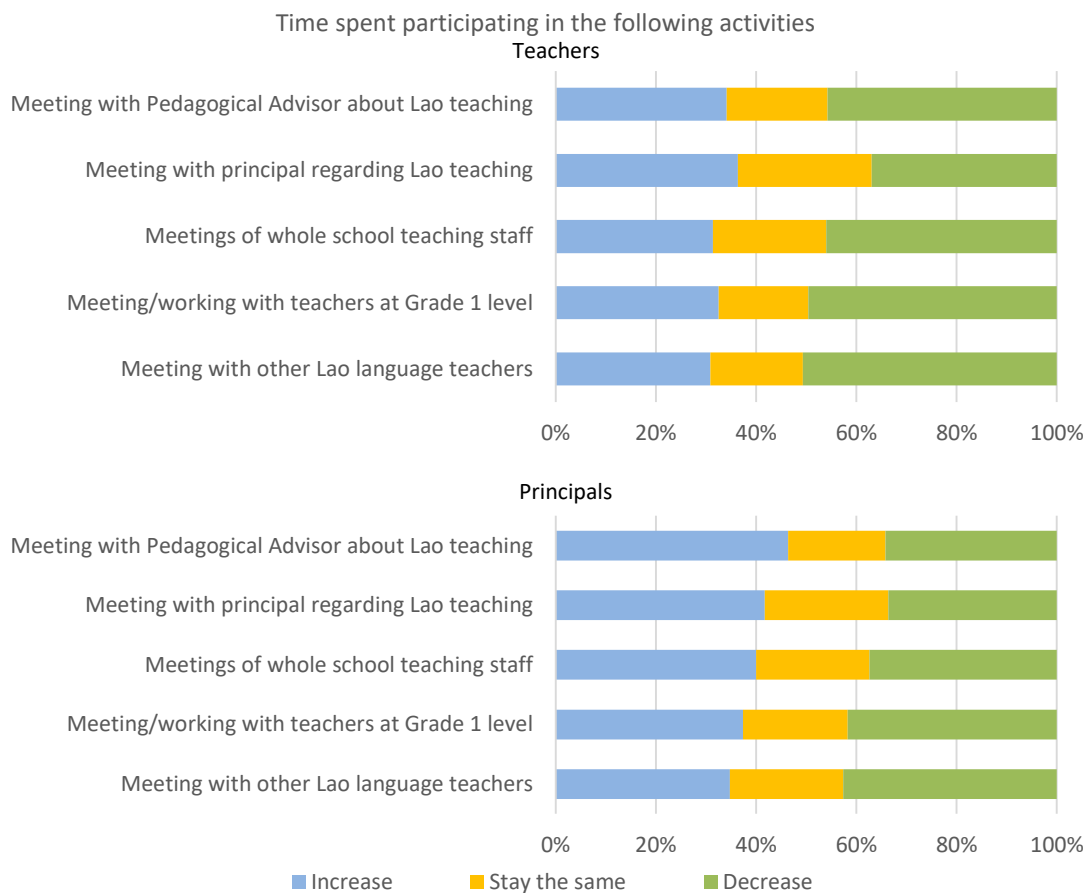


Figure E.6: Teachers’ and principals’ report in 2021 on changes to time spent on support or collaboration activities related to Lao language teaching

## E.4 Areas of significant change related to Lao language teaching and learning

### Introduction

The school case studies provide opportunity to collect detailed and nuanced information about the ways that the new curriculum is being implemented and the extent to which it is shaping and influencing Lao language teaching and learning in G1 classes. As part of the

analysis workshop following the 2021 data collection, researchers engaged in an activity to identify any statements made by case study respondents that indicated areas of significant change related to Lao language teaching and learning. Interview data for all PAs, principals, and teachers were reviewed, and statements were collated according to who reported them. This section presents a collection of those statements.

### Areas of significant change noted by PAs and principals

A PA noted that an area of significant change related to improved teaching techniques, and among areas of significant change noted by principals were: improved student learning; methods for assessing student learning; more appropriate and convenient curriculum materials; lesson clarity; student enjoyment of Lao language learning; students working in groups; and, generally “better” teaching practice.

About their knowledge and experience on the new curriculum, the teachers have better teaching techniques compare to the old curriculum. But it depends on teachers’ personal factors, if they try to develop themselves, the new curriculum is easier. (PA, Northern province)

As we see, if we compare to the old curriculum, the students can learn better [in the new curriculum] because they have a chance to talk and learn by themselves. (Principal, School B)

There’s some changes in Lao language teaching. For example, students’ progress assessment. Now, teachers assess students as a group of three or five students, they no longer assess the whole class. I think it is easier than the previous method. (Principal, School C)

I followed up their teaching when I realized that this method of teaching is better. (Principal, School D)

The new curriculum is more appropriate and convenient for teachers. The teacher’s guide is more detailed. (Principal, School E)

Most of our students are progressing [shown in] their scores after assessment in each lesson and the teachers follow them up. If we compare to the old curriculum, the new one is better because the lesson is clear. (Principal, School F)

They [students] enjoy [learning new curriculum] very much. (Principal, School J)

I think they (students) enjoy. The teacher motivates students’ learning by inserting games every 5 or 10 minutes or before and after teaching class. (Principal, School K)

They now usually use ‘learning in group’ method – putting students in groups and encourage them to work together. (Principal, School J)

### Areas of significant change noted by teachers

Teachers noted a range of areas of significant change related to Lao language teaching and learning, including: frequency of assessing student learning; using teaching and learning materials to improve teaching and learning; using student-centred approaches and encouraging student talk; increased confidence teaching Lao language; enjoyment of teaching Lao language; student enjoyment of Lao language learning; student understanding and success with Lao language; and, teacher understanding.



Student assessment is different. The training taught three steps to assess... It's different from the old curriculum where students' assessment would be done after the end of each lesson only. (Teacher/Principal, School A)

In the past, I tested students monthly. Now based on the new curriculum, I do seven times per month. I assess students learning individually and it does take time. Sometimes, I can assess five students and the time is up, then I continue assessing again the next day. It took a lot of time to do the assessment. (Teacher, School J)

For me, providing learning materials such as flash cards, pictures, visualized, and touchable materials are useful. I can show them when I explain the meaning of words. (Teacher/Principal, School A)

Using 'student-centred' methods, working in groups or working in pairs. If I use teacher-centred, I speak too much and students won't understand. (Teacher/Principal, School A)

I do many group exercises. I divide them [students] into small groups and let them work together in the group. (Teacher, School J)

I allow them [students] to think and write on their own. (Teacher, School B)

I am confident. I follow the curriculum. It's very interesting. There are many pictures and more colourful compared to the old one. (Teacher, School E)

It's [confidence] 100 per cent because I can teach. The new textbook is easier than the old one. (Teacher, School F)

I enjoy teaching Lao language. It's the new curriculum, new teaching methods. The teacher's guide is thorough. The teaching methods are attractive. (Teacher, School F)

I enjoy teaching. I know how to teach Lao language and make it more relevant to local condition and environment. (Teacher, School K)

I think they are progressing. The students understand the lessons. It seems they are keen on learning in the new curriculum. (Teacher, School E)

The students prefer the new curriculum to the old one. (Teacher, School F)

They [students] enjoy it because there are many pictures to ask each other. They [are] excited to read and to ask each other. (Teacher, School G)

They [students] enjoy because they like pictures [in the new curriculum]. They also can write all alphabet and consonants now. (Teacher, School K)

My understanding of teaching the new curriculum is better than teaching the old one because there're a lot of pictures that students can see and learn from in the new textbook. (Teacher, School K)

## Annex F: Students' literacy outcomes

Annex F provides further data about student literacy outcomes – overall and by gender and province. There is also detailed discussion of each part of the test following the format of findings and new curriculum links (links to the new G1 curriculum outcomes).

### F.1 Overview of student performance findings

Student percentage	Level	Percentage of G1 students able to complete various literacy skills
22%	L6+	1% gave sounds for 4 consonants and 3 vowels, read aloud a short written instruction and performed the actions, made a simple, familiar inference after listening to a very short story and wrote 3 or more Lao words, spelt correctly, related to the picture with well-formed letters (estimated 1% in 2019)
	L6	5% named 6/6 vowels, spelt 2/2 words correctly, wrote 1 or 2 Lao words, spelt correctly, related to the picture with well-formed letters (3% in 2019)
	L5	16% of students named 8/8 consonants and 3/6 vowels, matched 3 written words to pictures and pronounced them all, said 6 or more connected Lao words (e.g. sentence) to describe a picture including the main idea (9% in 2019).
55%	L4	29% of students named 7/8 consonants and 1/6 vowels, spelt 1/2 words correctly, matched 3 written words to pictures and pronounced one, said 3-5 connected Lao words (e.g. a phrase, sentence) to describe a picture giving details but not the main idea, recalled two pieces of literal information after listening to a very short story (31% in 2019).
	L3	26% of students named 5 consonants but no vowels, included some correct letters to spell a word, matched 2 written words to pictures but could not pronounce them, said at least 3 Lao words to describe a picture and recalled one piece of literal information after listening to a very short story (31% in 2019)
23%	L2	13% of students said 1-2 words in Lao or Mother Tongue to describe a picture (12% in 2019)
	L1	10% of students attempted many questions but scored zero for all (14% in 2019).

Figure F.1: Lao literacy described levels of student achievement in 2021 (2019 in brackets)

### Participation rates

The percentage of students who did not attempt to answer was recorded for each question. In 2021, for most questions, at least 10 per cent of students did not try. The percentage increased to approximately 20 per cent for some of the harder items. The “no attempt” rates in 2019 were slightly lower, being mainly between eight to 15 per cent.

## Gender and literacy levels

- Table F.1 shows the percentages of students at each of the levels, overall and by gender. Females tended to perform better than males, indicated by the higher proportion of female students in the high performing levels (5 to 6+) and the higher proportion of males in the low (1 and 2) and mid (3 and 4) performing levels. There were no gender differences in 2019.

Table F.1: Percentages of students at each level, overall and by gender in 2019 and 2021

		Percentage of students per level					
		1	2	3	4	5	6+
2021	Overall	10.1	13.2	26.3	29.2	15.6	5.5
	Male	10.3	14.1	27.7	28.7	14.2	5.0
	Female	9.9	12.3	25.0	29.8	17.0	6.0
2019	Overall	13.9	11.7	31.1	30.9	8.8	3.6
	Male	12.8	12.0	31.7	32.6	7.8	3.3
	Female	15.0	11.4	30.5	29.2	9.9	4.0

1 = lowest performing 6+ = highest performing

- In 2021, female students performed slightly better overall than male students, with female students answering an average of 29 per cent of test items correctly compared to 27 per cent correct for male students.
- In 2019 there were no gender differences, with both male and female students answering an average of 28 per cent of test items correctly.
- Table F.2 shows the average per cent of test items answered correctly by students at each of the seven levels, overall and by gender. There were no differences in the performance of male and female students within each level. It is noted that at each level there was a decline in the proportion of items answered correctly in 2021 compared to 2019.

Table F.2: Average percentage of test items answered correctly by students at each level, overall and by gender in 2019 and 2021

		Average percentage of items answered correctly by level and gender					
		1	2	3	4	5	6+
2021	Overall	1.7	8.5	20.8	34.7	49.2	66.8
	Male	1.7	8.3	20.9	34.7	48.9	66.7
	Female	1.7	8.7	20.7	34.7	49.4	66.9
2019	Overall	3.0	12.0	22.4	37.5	53.7	75.6
	Male	3.1	12.0	22.4	37.6	53.0	76.9
	Female	2.9	11.9	22.4	37.5	54.2	74.4

1 = lowest performing 6+ = highest performing

## Province and literacy levels

- Table F.3 shows the percentage of students at each level, by province. In 2021, Sekong had the highest proportion of students in the highest performing level (13%), and almost one-third were in the high performing levels (5 and 6+, 31%). Across five of the six provinces, more than half of students achieved in the mid performing levels (3 and 4, 53% to 66%). Phongsali had the highest proportion of students in the lowest performing level (22%), and almost half of students in Phongsali were in the low performing levels (1 and 2, 48%).

Table F.3: Percentage of students at each level, by province in 2019 and 2021

		Percentage of students per level					
		1	2	3	4	5	6+
2021	Khammouane	3.2	6.5	31.8	34.1	16.8	7.6
	Luangnamtha	2.8	20.8	32.6	30.3	11.8	1.7
	Phongsali	21.6	26.1	23.7	14.9	9.5	4.1
	Saravane	11.8	13.2	27.0	28.6	15.4	4.0
	Savannakhet	11.2	11.3	22.9	32.4	17.3	4.9
	Sekong	6.4	9.9	26.7	26.2	17.8	12.9
	Overall	10.1	13.2	26.3	29.2	15.6	5.5
2019	Khammouane	3.6	8.4	34.1	42.5	10.1	1.3
	Luangnamtha	15.0	14.6	29.1	30.5	7.5	3.3
	Phongsali	19.7	13.8	34.4	25.2	5.5	1.4
	Saravane	12.2	11.2	30.9	30.0	10.3	5.4
	Savannakhet	17.7	11.7	29.3	29.1	8.9	3.3
	Sekong	10.2	12.2	32.5	28.9	8.6	7.6
	Overall	13.9	11.7	31.1	30.9	8.8	3.6

1 = lowest performing 6+ = highest performing

- Table F.4 gives the distribution of male and female students across the levels, both by province, and overall. Consistent with the overall gender differences, in 2021 females performed better than males in three of the six provinces. In Sekong, around two-fifths of female students were in the high performing levels (40%) compared to one-fifth of males (21%), while females also outperformed males in Saravane and Savannakhet. For Saravane and Sekong, this was consistent with 2019. In Sekong, the proportion of females in the highest performing levels (5 and 6+) has increased by 21 percentage points when comparing 2019 to 2021 results.
- In 2021, males slightly outperformed females in Luangnamtha and Khammouane. There were no gender differences in Phongsali. In 2019, across most of the provinces there was a higher proportion of females in the lowest level, while there were more males in the middle levels (3 and 4).

Table F.4: Percentage of students at each level, by province and gender in 2019 and 2021

			Percentage of students per level					
			1	2	3	4	5	6+
2021	Khammouane	Male	2.4	6.0	35.7	31.5	17.9	6.5
		Female	4.1	7.0	27.9	36.6	15.7	8.7
	Luangnamtha	Male	2.2	20.9	37.4	25.3	12.1	2.2
		Female	3.4	20.7	27.6	35.6	11.5	1.1
	Phongsali	Male	24.2	23.4	23.4	15.6	9.4	3.9
		Female	18.6	29.2	23.9	14.2	9.7	4.4
	Saravane	Male	12.2	14.4	26.1	28.8	14.4	4.1
		Female	11.5	11.9	27.9	28.3	16.4	4.0
	Savannakhet	Male	10.8	13.0	23.8	32.5	15.9	4.0
		Female	11.5	9.9	22.1	32.2	18.6	5.6
	Sekong	Male	7.1	13.1	29.3	29.3	9.1	12.1
		Female	5.8	6.8	24.3	23.3	26.2	13.6
	Overall	Male	10.3	14.1	27.7	28.7	14.2	5.0
		Female	9.9	12.3	25.0	29.8	17.0	6.0
2019	Khammouane	Male	3.3	8.0	35.3	42.0	10.0	1.3
		Female	3.8	8.9	32.9	43.0	10.1	1.3
	Luangnamtha	Male	14.1	16.2	28.3	33.3	6.1	2.0
		Female	15.8	13.2	29.8	28.1	8.8	4.4
	Phongsali	Male	14.6	15.5	37.9	27.2	3.9	1.0
		Female	24.3	12.2	31.3	23.5	7.0	1.7
	Saravane	Male	10.7	12.4	32.6	31.8	8.2	4.3
		Female	13.9	9.8	28.9	27.8	12.9	6.7
	Savannakhet	Male	17.0	10.8	28.5	31.9	8.2	3.6
		Female	18.5	12.7	30.1	26.1	9.6	3.0
	Sekong	Male	10.6	13.8	34.0	27.7	7.4	6.4
		Female	9.7	10.7	31.1	30.1	9.7	8.7
	Overall	Male	12.8	12.0	31.7	32.6	7.8	3.3
		Female	15.0	11.4	30.5	29.2	9.9	4.0

1 = lowest performing 6+ = highest performing

The following sections consider each part of the test separately with discussion following the format of findings and new curriculum links (links to the new G1 curriculum outcomes).

Note the test items did not show any gender bias based on statistical analysis of the Differential Item Function. That is, there were no items that unfairly favoured girls, and similarly there were no items that unfairly favoured boys. Note this does not necessarily mean that the test was of the same difficulty for boys and girls.

## F.2 Student performance by skill

### Letter and sound recognition

The 2021 letter and sound recognition items consisted of naming 8 consonants, giving sounds for 4 consonants, naming 6 vowels and giving sounds for 3 vowels. The 14 letter naming items were also in the 2019 test. Giving sounds for letters was only in the 2021 test.

## Findings

Table F.5 compares the average percentage of correct answers from G1 students for 2019 and 2021 for letter names and sounds.

Table F.5: Average percentage of test items answered correctly by students in 2019 and 2021: Letter names and sounds

Task	2019 average	2021 average
Name consonants	65%	52%
Name vowels	17%	21%
Name compound consonants	13%	X
Sound for consonants	X	Less than 2%
Sound for vowels	X	5%

X shows not administered in this test

### Letter names

Students' average ability to name consonants was slightly lower in 2021 (52%) than 2019 (65%), but their ability to name vowels was slightly higher (21% in 2021 compared with 17% in 2019).

- Naming consonants was the easiest task in both 2021 and 2019.
- In 2019, the easiest consonant was named by 79 per cent of students, but in 2021 this dropped to 64 per cent.
- In 2019, the most difficult consonant was named by 39 per cent of students, but in 2021 this dropped to 30 per cent.
- The easiest vowel was named by 39 per cent of students in both administrations.
- The hardest vowel was named by 11 per cent of students in 2019 and 14 per cent in 2021.
- In 2019, an average of five per cent of students made no attempt to name any consonants. This increased to an average of 10 per cent in 2021.
- In 2019, an average of 13 per cent of students made no attempt to name a vowel. This increased to 18 per cent in 2021.

### Letter sounds

The new items, giving sounds, were extremely hard. On average only five per cent of students could give sounds for vowels, but less than two per cent could do this for consonants. In 2019, students were not asked to give letter sounds. Most students tried to give a sound, but they were almost all incorrect.

- Less than two per cent of students gave the correct sound for a consonant. On average, 12 per cent made no attempt.
- On average, five per cent of students gave the correct sound for a vowel and 12 per cent made no attempt.

### New curriculum links

The new Lao language curriculum draft expects that by the end of G1 students will know the names and sounds of many basic consonants and vowels.

Most of the G1 students in this study were a long way from meeting these expectations. In 2021, just over half the students named 8 basic consonants, but almost none knew their sounds. Only 20 per cent named 6 basic vowels and only five per cent also knew the sounds.

The test data suggest that Lao teachers are not yet able to effectively teach letter sounds. The 2021 test administrator training showed that highly experienced individuals undertaking the test administration were not familiar with the idea that Lao had letter sounds and required audio recordings for support. It is possible that Lao teachers may also be unfamiliar with letter sounds or lack confidence that they can pronounce them correctly or teach them effectively.

It is also possible that strict phonemic segregation may not be appropriate in Lao language. Lao is generally classified as an alphasyllabic language (Haspelmath et al., 2005). Lao is considered phonetically transparent, but it is also possible that disaggregating the phonemes for those consonants and vowels that typically appear together as syllables makes less sense than teaching the sound of the syllable. However, it is also possible that rote learning of Lao words by sight has been standard practice in reading and a phonics approach is entirely new to most educators.

## Speaking

The speaking task required students to describe a picture of a familiar scene. An outdoor scene was used in 2019 and an indoor scene in 2021. Administrators provided feedback after the 2019 administration that the outdoor scene, which featured a bus was unfamiliar to some remote rural students and may have limited what they could say. The 2021 indoor scene was set in a typical rural village house and would have been familiar to all students. This change of visual prompt may mean some caution is required in comparing the speaking items between 2019 and 2021.

The way the students were scored for speaking remained the same. Students who said little were encouraged to say more and students who used Mother Tongue were asked to speak in Lao.

### **Findings**

Students who could say at least 3 Lao words about the picture in 2021 (52%) showed slightly greater speaking skill in terms of their clarity, vocabulary, use of sentences and the quality of their descriptions compared with 2019.

A similar percentage of students (48%) showed little, or no Lao speaking skill in both administrations. These students either said nothing, or only one or two Lao words.

### **Scoring criteria**

Four criteria were applied to the scoring of speaking proficiency: participation; clarity; using sentences; vocabulary; and quality of the description. Scores varied between up to two or three points for each criterion. Tables F.6 to F.10 show the percentage of students in each score category for each criterion for 2019 and 2021.

Table F.6: Percentage of students in each score category for Speaking in 2019 and 2021: Participation

Score	Task	2019	2021
2	Say 3 or more words in Lao	52%	52%
1	Say 1-2 words in Lao	22%	28%

Students had to participate in the task by saying at least 3 words in Lao before they were scored for speaking proficiency. Just over half (52%) of the students were subsequently scored for clarity, sentences, vocabulary and quality of their description. This proportion was the same for 2019 and 2021 (refer Table F.6).

The remaining 48 per cent were scored zero on all four criteria because they had not said enough to provide sufficient evidence to judge their Lao speaking skill. Of these 28 per cent had said 1-2 words in Lao in 2021 and the rest could not be understood, used Mother Tongue only, or said nothing.

Table F.7: Percentage of students in each score category for Speaking in 2019 and 2021: Clarity

Score	Task	2019	2021
2	All Lao words very clear	34%	42%
1	Some Lao words clear, but some hard to understand	15%	9%

Most of the students who could say at least 3 Lao words spoke clearly, but not all of them. As Table F.7 shows, more students spoke Lao clearly in 2021 (42%) compared with 2019 (34%). Fewer students were hard to understand in 2021 (9%) compared with 2019 (15%).

Table F.8: Percentage of students in each score category for Speaking in 2019 and 2021: Sentences

Score	Task	2019	2021
2	At least 1 sentence of 4 or more Lao words	9%	15%
1	At least one short phrase or 2-3 word sentence in Lao	16%	29%

Using sentences was hard, but more students used at least one sentence of 4 or more words in 2021 (15%) compared with 2019 (9%) (refer Table F.8). More students also connected at least 2-3 words into a phrase, or short sentence in 2021 (29%) compared with 2019 (16%).

Table F.9: Percentage of students in each score category for Speaking in 2019 and 2021: Vocabulary

Score	Task	2019	2021
2	6 or more different, relevant Lao words	17%	29%
1	3-5 different, relevant Lao words	34%	21%

Using a varied vocabulary was also quite difficult, but as can be seen in Table F.9, more students used 6 different, relevant Lao words in 2021 (29%) compared with 2019 (17%). This meant that proportionally fewer students only said 3-5 words in 2021 (21%) compared with 2019 (34%).



Table F.10: Percentage of students in each score category for Speaking in 2019 and 2021: Quality of description

Score	Task	2019	2021
3	Details and one main idea	9%	15%
2	Details but no main idea	8%	23%
1	Single words, no details	34%	12%

Giving details and one main idea was hard, but more students could do this in 2021 (15%) compared with 2019 (9%) (refer Table F.10). More students also gave details with no main idea in 2021 (23%) compared with 2019 (8%). This meant proportionally fewer students in 2021 (12%) only used single words, whereas the majority of students in 2019 gave single word responses with no details (34%).

### ***New curriculum links***

In the new curriculum draft G1 Speaking and Listening outcomes require students to use Lao language to communicate and learn. The outcomes include students knowing basic Lao language vocabulary and grammar, actively participating in using Lao language, making their meaning clear and using simple sentences. Under Different Text Types/Factual Descriptions/Spoken Texts students are expected to describe familiar things (objects, animals, people etc) using common names and describing appearance. The previous curriculum also expected G1 students to be able to give simple spoken descriptions about familiar things.

Students with some Lao speaking proficiency (52%) improved in 2021 which was two years after the intervention as well as during COVID-19. However, some of this improvement may be due to the 2021 visual prompt being more familiar to all students compared with the visual prompt used in 2019. The rubrics used to score students were the same over both administrations. It is encouraging if students' oral language skills are getting better, but a lot more students need to score in the highest speaking proficiency categories to meet the G1 curriculum expectations.

Of considerable concern is 48 per cent of students who either could not use any Lao language or could only give two Lao language words in spite of encouragement to say more in describing an everyday scene in a picture. These students scored zero on all the speaking criteria. They fall well below the new and previous G1 curriculum speaking outcomes. It seems unlikely that these students are able to use Lao language effectively to communicate or learn.

## **Reading fluency and comprehension**

Students were asked to read three written words aloud. After they read each word, they had to select the correct picture to match that word from a set of 5 pictures. Two of the words were the same in 2019 and 2021 and one was different.

### ***Findings***

Students consistently found it easier to match a word to the correct picture than to read it aloud with correct pronunciation in both 2019 and 2021 (refer Table F.11). Between 40 and 59 per cent of students could match each of the three words to their pictures, but fewer, only 22 and 43 per cent, could pronounce each of the three words correctly.

Words B and C were used in 2021 and 2019. One was easier to pronounce and match in 2021 and the other was easier to pronounce and match in 2019.

Table F.11: Percentage of students in each task category in 2019 and 2021: Pronounce and match

Task	2019	2021
Correctly pronounce Word A	X	22%
Match Word A to a picture	X	40%
Correctly pronounce Word B	40%	43%
Match Word B to a picture	39%	59%
Correctly pronounce Word C	36%	31%
Match Word C to a picture	58%	50%

X indicates not administered in this test

In 2021, on average 14 per cent of students made no attempt to read any of the Lao words or match them to their pictures which was almost identical to 15 per cent of students in 2019.

### ***New curriculum links***

Students seem to be able to match Lao words to pictures before they can even say the word for the picture. This is a very odd finding. Typically, students should be able to say the word that describes a picture before they can read it. It is possible that some students' Lao vocabulary is very limited so that they can recognise the collection of symbols that matches a picture, but they do not know this word. It is also possible that correct Lao pronunciation is a difficult skill and students' pronunciation was not considered acceptable by administrators. Regional variations in dialect and lack of consistency in the pronunciation that teachers model to students may be the problem.

In the new Lao language curriculum draft for Reading/Words and Texts students are expected to use phonic knowledge to read simple, familiar words and sentences and also to read unfamiliar words by blending based on their knowledge of letter sounds. They are expected to recognise at least 50 simple, high-frequency words as sight words. The words in this task were simple, familiar nouns, but they were not high-frequency words such as 'is', or 'and'.

G1 students are also expected to read 'study texts' aloud quickly and accurately and read for meaning, understanding words and sentences in order to successfully complete activities such as matching a word to a picture. The familiar words in this task would be likely to be used in study texts.

The previous Lao language curriculum also required G1 students to use their knowledge of letter sounds to read familiar words. Students were expected to read a range of short texts and interpret the meaning.

In 2021, about half the students recognised the meaning of three familiar, single words, but fewer could pronounce them. This suggests at least half the G1 students in 2021, were not yet at the stage of reading aloud, or recognising a few familiar words.

Items from the items at the start of the test showed that on average, only five per cent of students in 2021 knew any vowel sounds, and less than two per cent knew any consonant

sounds. This shows that in 2021, the vast majority of G1 students did not have sufficient, basic letter-sound knowledge to recognise words by blending the letter sounds together. They are a very long way from applying phonics knowledge to decoding words.

## Sentence comprehension

Students were asked to read a short, written instruction aloud and then perform the action described in the instruction. This task was extremely hard in 2019, so a shorter, simpler written instruction was used in 2021. This means the task is not comparable between the two administrations.

### Findings

As shown in Table F.12, reading a sentence aloud was very difficult, with five per cent of students reading it all correctly and four per cent reading only some of the words correctly. This means over 90 per cent of students could not read any words with 24 per cent of students making no attempt.

Table F.12: Percentage of students in each score category in 2021: Read aloud sentence

Score	Task	2021
2	Read all words in sentence aloud correctly	5%
1	Read some words in sentence aloud correctly	4%

In 2019, with a more difficult sentence, only three per cent of students read it aloud correctly and six per cent read some words. So in both administrations nine per cent of students could read some, or all of a sentence regardless of the length of the sentence.

Table F.13: Percentage of students in each score category in 2021: Sentence comprehension

Score	Task	2021
1	Perform action in instructions	4%

Table F.13 shows that while five per cent of students could read the sentence, only four per cent understood it sufficiently to follow the simple instruction. Quite a few students tried to guess the instruction and performed an incorrect action (24%), but many (68%) made no attempt.

In 2019, with a more difficult sentence, only two per cent could partially follow the two-step instruction.

The data show that at least 95 per cent of the 2021 G1 students were a long way from being able to read and understand a sentence. Making the sentence a lot simpler in 2021, has made little difference to the percentage of students who can read and understand it.

***New curriculum links***

The new Lao language curriculum draft for G1 Reading requires students to fluently read aloud study texts of up to 10 short sentences, reading quickly and accurately enough to understand most of the meaning so they can answer related, lower order, comprehension questions. The test item of reading a short sentence aloud and then performing the simple instruction is a lower order comprehension skill.

Under Different Text Types/Instructions Procedures/Reading Instructions students are expected to read simple instruction sentences and tell the meaning.

In the previous Lao language curriculum G1 students were expected to read texts purposefully and to use the information including doing classroom activities based on the meaning given in the text.

The data shows that at least 95 per cent of students in both 2021 and 2019 fall well below this expectation. They are not yet able to read a short, simple, single sentence with comprehension.

**Listening comprehension**

Students listened to a very short, simple story and then answered three questions about the meaning. Two questions were literal and one required making a simple, familiar inference.

The same story was read in 2021 and 2019 and the same questions asked.

***Findings***

Table F.14 shows the first literal comprehension question was answered by a similar percentage of students in 2021 (41%) compared with 2019 (42%). The second question was answered by slightly more 2021 students (61%) compared with 2019 (57%). The inference question was much harder in both administrations with only five per cent correct in 2021 compared with 10 per cent in 2019.

Table F.14: Percentage of students in each task category in 2019 and 2021: Listening comprehension

Task	2019	2021
Recall a directly stated piece of information when only one answer is possible.	42%	41%
Recall one of several directly stated pieces of information about an event.	57%	61%
Make a simple inference based on prominent clues about a highly familiar event	10%	5%

In both 2021 and 2019, approximately 13 per cent did not attempt to answer the first two questions. In 2021, 20 per cent did not attempt to answer the question about making an inference compared with 18 per cent in 2019.

***New curriculum links***

The new Lao language curriculum draft Speaking and Listening expects that G1 students will usually gain a broad understanding of meaning when listening in predictable contexts about familiar topics. They also should know the meaning of Lao language words used often in lessons.

Under Different Text Types/Narratives/Stories/Spoken Narratives they are expected to retell stories they have listened to and under Factual Descriptions/Information Texts/Spoken Information Texts they are expected to listen to information texts being read to them and identify specific information in response to the teacher’s questions.

In the previous Lao language curriculum students were expected to read a short text themselves and retell it in their own words, which is considerably harder than listening to the text.

In both 2021 and 2019, approximately half the students understood some explicitly stated information in a very short, simple text that was read aloud to them, but the others did not. Almost none could make a simple inference.

## Writing

There were two writing tasks – spelling single words and writing a description.

### Findings

#### *Spelling single words*

In the first writing task, students were asked to write two short simple words; one for each image. The first word was the same in 2021 and 2019 and the second word was different. Thirty per cent of students made no attempt to write the first word and 38 per cent made no attempt to write the second word.

Table F.15: Percentage of students in each score category in 2019 and 2021: Spelling single words

Score	Task	2019	2021
2	Write Word A with correct spelling	34%	31%
1	Write Word A with some correct letters but some incorrect or in wrong order	28%	28%
2	Write Word B with correct spelling	X	16%
1	Write Word B with some correct letters but some incorrect or in wrong order	X	57%

X indicates not administered

As can be seen in Table F.15, slightly fewer students were able to spell Word A correctly in 2021 (31%) compared with 2019 (34%). The same percentage wrote some correct letters but with mistakes in both administrations (28%). Word B was only administered in 2021 and was hard with only 16 per cent of students spelling it correctly. Just over half (57%) had some correct letters indicating they are beginning to learn to spell.

#### *Writing a description*

In the second writing task, students were shown the same familiar indoor scene they had been asked to describe verbally earlier. This time they were asked to write a sentence about the picture. An outdoor scene featuring a bus had been used in 2019. The scoring rubrics were the same for both administrations.

Writing about a picture was very hard and over half the students wrote a few letters only that did not make a recognisable word, or made no attempt to write anything.

Table F.16: Percentage of students in each score category in 2019 and 2021: Spelling in a description

Score	Task	2019	2021
3	Write 5 or more recognisable Lao words spelled correctly	3%	1%
2	Write 3-4 recognisable Lao words spelled correctly	7%	2%
1	Write 1-2 recognisable Lao words spelled correctly	33%	12%

In 2021, considerably fewer students could correctly spell words in a description that they wrote compared with 2019 (refer Table F.16). In 2021 only one per cent wrote 5 or more correctly spelled words and two per cent managed 3-4 words, compared with three per cent who wrote 5 or more words in 2019 and seven per cent who wrote 3-4 words. The greatest difference was for students writing 1-2 words which was only 12 per cent in 2021 compared with 33 per cent in 2019. Writing more than two words was generally difficult for students.

Table F.17: Percentage of students in each score category in 2019 and 2021: Relevance of writing

Score	Task	2019	2021
3	5 or more relevant Lao words	3%	2%
2	3-4 relevant Lao words	7%	5%
1	1-2 relevant Lao words	28%	25%

Table F.17 shows the percentage of students writing words that were relevant to the picture was only slightly lower in 2021 with only two per cent of students able to write 5 or more relevant words, and five per cent 3-4 relevant words. One quarter wrote one or two relevant words that were recognisable, even if they were misspelled.

Table F.18: Percentage of students in each score category in 2019 and 2021: Handwriting

Score	Task	2019	2021
3	5 or more Lao words with well-formed letters	3%	3%
2	3-4 Lao words with well-formed letters	7%	5%
1	1-2 Lao words with well-formed letters	33%	39%

As can be seen in Table F.18, the percentage of students with well-formed letters in their handwriting was also very similar in both administrations and closely matched the scores for relevance as words only needed to be recognisable and could be misspelled as long as the letters were well-formed.

Having a more familiar pictorial prompt did not help the 2021 students in terms of writing about the picture. The 2019 students had generally higher scores in spite of the prompt being possibly less familiar to remote rural students.

### ***New curriculum links***

The new Lao language curriculum draft for Writing expects students to know how to form and write letters that are approximately the correct shape and size and to write simple, unfamiliar words using knowledge of letter sounds as well as writing simple, high frequency words from memory.

Under Different Text Types/Narratives/Stories/Writing Narratives students are expected to know how to write sentences that narrate a story.

The previous Lao language curriculum also required students to use knowledge of letter names and tone marks to represent known words, use approximate spelling in their own writing, write most letters correctly and neatly, and to write their own short, simple texts including at least one sentence about familiar topics.

In 2021 less than 10 per cent of students could write three or more words. Ninety per cent of the students are a long way from meeting the curriculum expectations for writing, but many are starting to learn. They are getting some letters correct, even if they cannot yet spell and they are starting to write well-formed letters.

### **F.3. Teacher and principals' perceptions of student performance**

In case study schools, teachers and principals were asked whether they thought G1 students were progressing in Lao language at the level expected for G1 in 2019 and 2021.

- In 2019, six of the 15 teachers reported their G1 students were progressing as expected, based on their observations of students' Lao speaking, reading and writing skills and pass rates for final exams. Notably all principals and teachers in southern case study schools perceived that their G1 students were *not* progressing.
- In 2021, 10 of 15 teachers indicated their students were progressing as expected. Only one teacher reported their students were not progressing as expected.

Based on MoES' suggestion, level were met. My students can read and write. (Teacher, School C)

Most of our students are progressed due to their score after assessment each lesson and the teachers follow them up. If we compare to the old curriculum, the new one is better because the lesson is clear. (Principal, School F)

I think they progress at the expected level. I checked their Lao speaking ability by showing a picture. For example, if I show a picture of a buffalo, I ask them to speak the word and if they can speak the word in the picture correctly. They can read and speak. Writing skills needs to be improved the most for my students. Writing skill is the lowest for them (Teacher, School K)

I think they are progressing. The students understand the lessons. It seems they keen on learning in the new curriculum. There are some students who could not learn well. Their families their local language too much. (Teacher, School E)

- Four teachers felt that only some students were progressing as expected. Similar challenges to learning progress were raised by respondents in 2019 and 2021. These included: student absenteeism, underage, disability, lack of interest, ethnicity, and lack of parental support for student learning.

I don't think they meet the expected level due to students are ethnic students and they rely on teacher so much. At home, parents do not teach their kids. Parents often work long hours in the farm for a living and don't have time to tech their kids. (Principal, School C)



## Annex G: Students' attitudes and disposition towards learning

The sections below provide further analysis on student attitudes and dispositions towards learning.

### Student enjoyment

In the questionnaire, teachers were asked to what extent their students enjoy or like to learn Lao language. This was also investigated through case study interviews.

- In 2019, about two thirds of teachers (65%) reported that their students enjoyed Lao language lessons to a large extent while a further one-third indicated that their students enjoyed these lessons to a moderate extent (33%). In 2021, teachers who participated in both 2019 and 2021 were slightly more likely to report that their students enjoyed Lao language lessons to a large extent (68%) compared to those who were participating for the first time (62%). A further one-third of all teachers surveyed in 2021 reported that their students enjoyed these lessons to a moderate extent (33%).
- Similar data was collected in case study schools in 2019, where the majority of teachers and principals also responded their G1 students do enjoy Lao language lessons (11 of 15 teachers; 8 of 10 principals). The reasons given were that students enjoyed the activities and looking at materials, such as singing, movement, stories, flashcards and pictures. Some teachers noted that those students who are able to undertake tasks enjoy the lessons.
- In 2021, *all* case study respondents reported their G1 students do enjoy Lao language lessons (12 of 15 teachers; 8 of 10 principals) or sometimes enjoy them (3 of 15 teachers; 2 of 10 principals). Respondents noted students enjoyed the pictures, stories and games. As in 2019, some respondents reflected that students that perform well are more likely to enjoy classes.

Yes, they enjoy. They like the pictures. If I could draw better than this they would be more joyful but I can't draw well. I rely on pictures in the textbook. Students also like poetry at the end of each lesson. I also lead them to play games at the end of the lesson.  
(Teacher/Principal, School A)

Yes, they did. Because there are many activities attracting them. There are some funny stories. The teacher told them. It's about daily life. (Teacher, School B)

Yes, they do. They love it, especially listening to stories. There are many things, games for example. (Teacher, School D)

Yes, they do. The first semester was easy. The second one was difficult. The students prefer the new curriculum to the old one. (Teacher, School F)

Students enjoy learning. There are pictures in the textbook. I teach through playing games – using flash cards for students to select words. The textbook is colourful and full of pictures. (Teacher, School L)

## Classroom environment

- Figure G.1 displays the researchers’ assessment of the classroom environment for each lesson in 2021, and for those teachers who were part of the case study in 2019 how their classroom environment was assessed in 2019.
- In 2021 the majority of classroom environments were ‘compliant’ with 11 teachers (of 15) classified as having a ‘compliant’ class for both observations.

During the lesson he tried hard to attract the attention of the students as some of them were naughty, which disturbed other students during the lesson. (Teacher, School F)

Every single time, when held flash cards, she got attention from students by saying “turn your faces to me”. (Teacher, School J)

- Three out of 15 teachers had ‘cooperative and supportive’ classroom environments for both observations – all in Southern schools.

When teacher asked for volunteer to write on the blackboard, many students were active and volunteered. Overall observation, this class was participatory, active and lively. (Teacher, School K)

- One teacher had one ‘unruly’ and one ‘compliant’ lesson.

Students do not have a textbook. When the teacher showed pictures from his textbook, students hardly see it. When they lost their focus on lesson, play with their friends, a student sits next to our table even sing a song. He hits a boy with a stick but many times threatening them when they don’t listen to him. He rarely encourages students to study, be focus and listen to him. (Teacher, School C)

- In 2019, researchers observed greater range in classroom environments. Five teachers had ‘cooperative and supportive’ environments for both observations, one teacher had a ‘compliant’ class for both observations, and two teachers an ‘unruly’ class. The remaining teachers had mixed environments, with five a mix of ‘compliant’ and ‘unruly’.
- When comparing observations between years for teachers who participated in both administrations, most teachers who had ‘cooperative and ‘supportive’ or ‘unruly’ environments in 2019, were assessed to have ‘compliant’ classes in 2021.

	Case study teachers														
	A#	B2	BN	C	DN	E	F1	F2	GN	HN	I#	J1	J2	K	LN
<b>Cooperative &amp; supportive</b>	oo	oo						oo					oo	o	oo
<b>Compliant</b>	oo	oo	oo	o	oo	oo	o	oo	oo	oo	o	o		o	
<b>Unruly</b>				oo			o				o	o			

o = observed in a lesson in 2019 oo = observed in a lesson in 2021

Figure G.1: Classroom environment assessment made by researchers during classroom observations in 2019 and 2021

## Annex H: Factors associated with different levels of student performance

Annex H provides more data and analysis about the factors associated with student performance. There are extra data tables for some student factors that are in addition to what has been reported in the main report. The Annex also includes further analysis related to teacher and school factors.

### Students' language at home

Table H.1: Average percentage correct scores of students with different home languages, overall and by gender in 2019 and 2021

		Test items answered correctly (%)					
		2019			2021		
		Overall	Male	Female	Overall	Male	Female
Language spoken at home	Lao – Tai	33.6	32.8	34.6	35.7	34.8	36.5
	Mon – Khmer	25.0	25.1	24.7	24.3	23.3	25.3
	Hmong – Lu						
	Mien	14.0	13.2	14.7	10.1	10.8	9.1
	Chine – Tibet	19.4	20.1	18.8	16.8	16.9	16.6
	Other (specify)	27.1	28.3	25.8	20.2	22.7	17.8

### Students' family wealth

Table H.2: Average percentage of test items answered correctly by province and family wealth in 2021

	Test items answered correctly (%)			
	1	2	3	4
Khammouane	26.1	30.5	34.4	36.1
Luangnamtha	21.9	25.1	31.7	28.4
Phongsali	10.3	16.8	28.0	32.6
Saravene	22.1	24.4	27.8	36.0
Savannakhet	20.6	28.7	32.9	36.4
Sekong	26.9	34.7	36.9	36.2
Overall	21.0	27.5	32.2	35.0

1 = lowest family wealth 4 = highest family wealth

### Students' absenteeism level

Table H.3: Average percentage correct scores of students grouped by days absent from school in March 2019 and March 2021

		Test items answered correctly (%)	
		2019	2021
Days absent from school in March	Not absent	30.1	30.6
	Absent 1-5 days	26.8	27.5
	Absent 6-10 days	22.9	22.9
	Absent 11 days or more	19.3	24.4

## Students' disability

Table H.4: Average percentage of test items answered correctly by student difficulties

	Average percentage of items answered correctly	
	No difficulty	Any difficulty
See or wear glasses	28.33	21.40
Hear or wear hearing aid	28.52	19.24
Walk or climb steps	28.29	25.73
Remember or concentrate	28.71	26.55
Do things independently	28.33	23.01
Speak using their usual language	28.85	21.11
<b>Physical difficulties</b>	<b>28.54</b>	<b>20.70</b>
<b>Cognitive difficulties</b>	<b>28.88</b>	<b>26.18</b>

## Teachers' gender

- On average, in 2019, students of female teachers answered more test items correctly (31%) than students of male teachers (25%).
- In 2021, this was consistent for students whose teacher either participated in both 2019 and 2021 or who was participating for the first time in 2021, with students of female teachers performing better (32% and 31% respectively) than those with male teachers (24% and 23% respectively).

## Teachers' age

- In 2019, students of teachers aged 30-49 years answered, on average, 29 percent of test items correctly. This is slightly more than students of both older teachers (50 years and over – 27%) and younger teachers (under 30 – 25%), however differences were small.
- In 2021, where the teacher had participated in 2019 as well as 2021 students whose teacher was aged under 30 answered less items correctly (24%) compared to those whose teacher was aged 30-49 (31%) or 50 and over (31%). For those teachers who were participating for the first time in 2021, students answered more items correctly if their teacher was aged 50 or over (42%) compared to those whose teacher was under 30 (25%) or aged 30 to 39 years (26%).

## Teachers' teaching experience

- The baseline study in 2019, showed small differences in test items answered correctly across teaching experience, with students of more experienced teachers tending to answer more items correctly on average. The relationship between student test performance and teachers' experience was the same regardless of whether teachers were considering their experience overall, for G1, or within the current school.
- Table H.5 shows the percentage of correct scores by teachers' experience for the 2021 students, including those whose teacher participated in both 2019 and 2021 (retained) and those whose teacher was participating for the first time in 2021 (additional). Generally, results were consistent with 2019, showing students whose teacher was more experienced tended to answer more items correctly. This was true for both groups of

teachers in 2021. There were some anomalies, however. Students whose teachers had 21 years or more experience at the G1 level tended to perform worse than other students.

Table H.5: Average percentage correct scores of students grouped by teachers' experience in total, teaching G1 and within their current school in 2021

		Test items answered correctly (%) by teachers' experience					
		Retained			Additional		
		In total	G1	This school	In total	G1	This school
Number of years teaching	Up to 5 years	22.8	27.0	24.9	27.1	26.1	25.3
	6-10 years	27.3	30.2	28.0	24.5	27.0	28.9
	11-15 years	29.7	30.4	36.3	26.6	31.3	26.2
	16-20 years	32.3	31.5	38.9	23.7	36.4	21.3
	21+ years	31.5	21.3	32.8	36.4	24.4	49.4

### Teachers' highest education level and qualifications

In 2021, questions relating to teachers' education and qualifications were only asked of those teachers who hadn't participated in 2019. For teachers who had participated in 2019, their responses from that time were used with the student outcomes collected in 2021.

- Table H.6 shows that in 2019 students of teachers with a Bachelor degree or higher tended to answer more test items correctly (33%) than students of teachers with a diploma (27%). They also appeared to answer more test items correctly than students of teachers with vocational education (29%), however the difference was small.
- Where the teacher participated in both 2019 and 2021 (retained), students whose teacher had vocational education answered 27 per cent of questions correctly, while those whose teacher had a Bachelor degree or higher or a Diploma performed better (32% and 33% correct respectively). However, teachers who were participating for the first time in 2021 (additional), students whose teacher had a Bachelor degree or higher performed less well, with, on average, only 13 per cent of items answered correctly. There was no difference in the performance of students whose teachers has vocational or Diploma level education.

Table H.6: Average percentage correct scores of students grouped by teachers' highest level of education in 2019 and 2021

		Test items answered correctly (%)		
		2019	2021	
Highest level of education			Retained	Additional
	Vocational education	28.5	27.4	27.9
	Diploma	26.8	33.1	26.0
	Bachelor degree or higher	33.4	31.6	12.6

- While in 2019 there was no difference between student test performance and the type of training their teacher received (refer Table H.7), in 2021, those students whose teachers had basic teacher training outperformed those whose teachers had mid or high level training. Where teachers had basic training, students whose teacher participated in both 2019 and 2021 or was participating for the first time in 2021 around one-third of questions correctly (34% and 33% respectively), outperforming students whose teacher had mid-

level training (27% and 28% respectively). Students whose teacher was participating for the first time in 2021 and had high-level teacher training performed least well, with only 25 per cent of items answered correctly on average.

Table H.7: Average percentage correct scores of students grouped by type of training teachers received at Teacher Training College in 2019 and 2021

		Test items answered correctly (%)		
		2019	2021	
			Retained	Additional
<b>Type of training received at Teacher Training College</b>	Basic Teacher training system 5+3, 8+1, 8+2	28.7	34.3	33.0
	Mid-level Teacher training system 8+3,11+1	28.4	27.4	28.0
	High-level Teacher training system 11+3, 11+4	27.8	32.5	24.8

### Teachers' professional status

- Table H.8 shows that, in 2019, students of government (permanent) teachers, and students of volunteer teachers both answered, on average, more test items correctly (29% and 27%, respectively) than students of contract teachers (15%).
- There were similar findings for students whose teachers were participating for the first time in 2021, with students of government (permanent) teachers answering more items correctly (28%) compared to students of contract teachers (25%), although there was a considerable improvement in the performance of students of contract teachers. Students of volunteer teachers performed least well in 2021 (23%).
- Teachers who participated in both 2019 and 2021 were not asked this question in 2021. Based on the 2019 responses for these teachers, students whose teachers had government (permanent) positions answered more questions correctly than any other group with, on average, 30 per cent of items answered correctly.

Table H.8: Average percentage correct scores of students grouped by teachers' professional status in 2019 and 2021

		Test items answered correctly (%)		
		2019	2021	
			Retained	Additional
<b>Teacher professional status</b>	Government permanent	28.6	30.4	27.6
	Contract	14.9	6.0	25.2
	Volunteer	27.3	23.3	23.4

### Teachers' participation in in-service training

- In 2021, teachers were asked if they had participated in the training program related to the G1 curriculum. Almost all teachers who participated in both 2019 and 2021 data collections (97%) and three-quarters of those who were participating for the first time in the study in 2021 (74%) had completed the training. Students whose teacher had

completed the training answered more questions correctly, on average, (29%) compared to those whose teacher had not completed the training (25%).

- There were very small differences in the test performance of students of teachers who attended Lao language in-service training in the last two years. Table H.9 shows students in both 2019 and 2021 whose teachers attended more training (four or more days) answered fewer test items correctly compared to students of teachers who attended no training.

Table H.9: Average percentage correct scores of students grouped by teachers' participation in Lao language teacher training in 2019 and 2021

		Test items answered correctly (%)		
		2019	2021	
			Retained	Additional
<b>Attended in-service Lao language teaching training in the last two years</b>	0 days	31.1	31.0	29.9
	1-3 days	28.0	29.3	26.9
	4 or more days	27.4	28.4	26.7

### Teacher and student's language at home

- In 2019, students who did not speak the same mother tongue as their teacher answered, on average, 25 per cent of test items correctly (see Table H.10). Students who shared the same mother tongue as their teacher answered more test items correctly than their counterparts, if the mother tongue was Lao-Tai (34%).
- In 2021, those teachers who were participating for the first time were asked this question. For those teachers who participated in both 2019 and 2021, their responses in 2019 were compared to their students' language as reported in 2021. Results were consistent with the baseline study results, regardless of whether or not the teacher participated in both 2019 and 2021 or just in 2021.

Table H.10: Average percentage correct scores of students grouped by shared mother tongue between student and teacher in 2019 and 2021

		Test items answered correctly (%)		
		2019	2021	
			Retained	Additional
<b>Student and teacher share the same mother tongue</b>	Do not share same mother tongue	24.9	25.8	21.9
	Lao - Tai	33.9	35.8	36.0
	Mon - Khmer	25.4	23.7	24.3
	Hmong - Lu Mien	11.2	11.6	-
	Chine - Tibet	22.3	16.6	13.2

### Hours spent teaching Lao language

- As shown in Table H.11, in 2019, there were only minor differences between student test performance and the number of hours spent per week by teachers teaching Lao language.
- In 2021, for teachers who participated in 2019 and 2021 and those who participated for the first time in 2021, students whose teacher spent one to five hours per week teaching the Lao language answered less test items correctly (15% and 11% respectively) compared

to those who had six to ten hours (29% and 27% respectively) and those who had ten or more hours (28% and 30% respectively).

Table H.11: Average percentage correct scores of students grouped by hours teacher spends teaching Lao language per week in 2019 and 2021

		Test items answered correctly (%)		
		2019	2021	
			Retained	Additional
<b>Hours spent per week teaching Lao language</b>	1-5 hours	26.1	14.9	10.8
	6-10 hours	28.4	29.2	27.1
	10 or more hours	27.6	28.4	29.6

### Teachers' use of Lao language resources

Surveyed teachers were asked to select from a list of Lao language resources all resources that they and their G1 students use. Listed was: curriculum materials; books; flashcards, pictures or posters; games or puzzles; songs, drama or physical actions; children's shows; and other.

- The total number of Lao language resources used by teachers and G1 students was computed by adding up the number of responses selected. In 2021, there is a weak but significant positive correlation ( $r=0.12$ ) between student test performance and the number of Lao language resources used by teachers and G1 students in class, indicating that students whose achievement is higher also have more Lao language resources used in their class. This is supported by average per cent of test items answered correctly (see Table H.12) and was consistent in both 2019 and 2021.

Table H.12: Average percentage correct scores of students grouped by total number of Lao language resources used by teachers and G1 students in 2019 and 2021

		2019		2021	
		Cases (n)	Test items correct (%)	Cases (n)	Test items correct (%)
<b>Total number of Lao language resources used</b>	0	12	9.3	0	0.0
	1	184	19.1	6	18.9
	2	454	26.6	19	25.4
	3	651	28.0	65	17.9
	4	1035	29.9	605	25.0
	5	756	29.1	1929	29.1
	6	22	35.6	409	31.1
	7	0	0.0	13	20.7

### Teachers' perception of challenges in their G1 class

Surveyed teachers were asked about perceived hindrances to teaching in their G1 class (student readiness, low level Lao language skills, lack of interest or motivation, absenteeism, drop out, poor health).

- In both 2019 and 2021, there was a small, but significant negative correlation ( $r=-0.18$  and  $-0.11$  respectively) indicating that teachers who perceived their class to have greater hindrances to teaching also had students with poorer test performance. Students whose



teachers perceived greater hindrances tended to also have principals who perceived hindrances to teaching ( $r=0.3$ ).

### Teaching confidence and teaching practices

- In the questionnaire, teachers were asked about perceived difficulty in teaching different aspects of Lao language (speaking, reading, writing). There was a very weak negative correlation in both 2019 and 2021 ( $r=-0.09$  and  $-0.06$  respectively) indicating that teachers who reported greater difficulty in teaching these aspects also had students with poorer test performance. In 2019, these teachers were also more likely to report greater hindrances to teaching in their class ( $r=0.24$ ), however in 2021 there was a weak negative correlation ( $r=-0.10$ ) indicating that teachers who reported greater difficulties reported less hindrances.
- Teachers also responded to questions asked about confidence in using different Lao language teaching methods. In 2021, a weak positive relationship was found between teacher confidence in these methods and student test performance ( $r=0.11$ ), while more confident teachers also experienced less difficulties in teaching the different aspects of Lao language ( $r=0.26$ ).
- Teachers were also asked about frequency undertaking different Lao language teaching activities (refer to curriculum materials, lesson planning, talk with students about their learning, assess students, work with other teachers). In 2021, teachers who indicated that they undertook a greater range of related teaching activities were also more confident in teaching the Lao language ( $r=0.25$ ). In both 2019 and 2021, no relationship with student test performance was observed.
- Teachers reported on frequency engaging a mother tongue language for certain activities. In 2021, students in classes where these activities were undertaken more frequently, tended to have poorer test performance ( $r=-0.12$ ). Increased frequency of these activities was positively associated with perceived hindrances to teaching from the principal's perspective ( $r=0.15$ ), and the teacher's perspective ( $r=0.14$ ).

### Principals' gender

- As in 2019, there was a very slight difference in 2021 in the test performance of students attending schools with male principals (28% of test items answered correctly) compared to students attending schools with female principals (30% correct).

### Multi-grade G1 classes

- In 2021, students at schools with more than one single-grade G1 classes tended to answer more test items correctly (30%) than students at schools with no single-grade G1 class (26%). Students at school with only one multi-grade G1 class appeared to answer fewer test items correctly (26%) than students at schools with either no multi-grade G1 classes (29%) or two multi-grade G1 classes (34%).

## School facilities

Principals were asked to select from a list of 11 facilities which of these were available in their school<sup>9</sup>. An index of the total number of school facilities available at school was created by adding the number of responses selected.

- Table H.13 shows students attending schools with more facilities available tended to answer more test items correctly. For example, 39 per cent correct for the 168 students at schools with nine out of the 11 facilities. This is compared to students at schools with fewer facilities. For example, 16 per cent correct for the 120 students with none of the 11 facilities.
- In 2021, there is a weak but significant positive correlation ( $r=0.19$ ) between student test performance and the number of facilities available at school.

Table H.13: Average percentage correct scores of students grouped by total count of school facilities in 2019 and 2021

		2019		2021	
		Cases (n)	Test items correct (%)	Cases (n)	Test items correct (%)
Total count of school facilities (max 11)	0	120	19.3	45	16.0
	1	311	23.4	152	23.5
	2	442	26.1	194	25.5
	3	593	25.9	289	24.9
	4	567	26.2	395	26.4
	5	370	30.7	348	24.5
	6	421	33.0	567	30.8
	7	267	25.2	618	30.6
	8	140	37.8	272	29.9
	9	96	33.9	168	39.0
	10	40	30.3	3	28.1

## Principals' perception of issues in schools

- Principals were asked to report on issues in their school (lack of qualified teachers, absenteeism, teacher turnover, and a shortage/inadequacy of classrooms, toilets and instructional materials). There was no relationship between principals' perceived hindrances to teaching and student achievement.

<sup>9</sup> These school facilities were: principal/staff office; library; canteen; school or community hall; sports area/playground; electricity; enough water accessible all year round; wheelchair access to bathroom and classroom and school ground; landline telephone; audio-visual facilities; and photocopier.

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