

RAPID SCAN EDTECH IN LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC



INTRODUCTION

This country scan outlines the prospects of using EdTech in Lao People's Democratic Republic (hereafter Laos) as part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and UK Supporting the Advancement of Girls' Education programme (ASEAN-UK SAGE). The programme is a UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) programme for ASEAN and Timor-Leste. Other partners in the programme include EdTech Hub, the ASEAN Secretariat, the Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Office (SEAMEO), the British Council, and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).



SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

- Laos is a lower-middle-income country with an annual growth rate of 2.7%. The government aims to graduate from Least Developed Country status by 2026, and investments in digital skills are key to achieving this aim.
- Socio-linguistic and geographic diversity must be considered when implementing programmes in Laos. The population comprises around 7.5 million people from over 100 ethnic groups, and rugged terrain hinders equitable access to schooling.



THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN LAOS

A top-level summary of policy, partnerships, and challenges



POLICY

The Ministry of Education and Sports ([↑MOES 2015; 2020](#)) Sector Development Plans 2016–2020 and 2021–2025 aim to:

- 1** Support primary school teachers by providing opportunities and resources to improve content knowledge and pedagogical skills.
- 2** Make lower secondary education more affordable, while ensuring the curriculum is relevant and has real-world application.
- 3** Help MoES staff develop skills and competencies that are aligned with systemic needs.
- 4** Build institutional capacities of provincial and district level Education and Sports Bureaus, as well as that of schools and education clusters with the aim of enhancing efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability.

PARTNERSHIPS

Key development partners in education include (but are not limited to) UNICEF, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the European Union (EU), the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and USAID.

CHALLENGES

Teacher competency, absenteeism, shortages, and access to resources are primary challenges in Laos' education system and contribute to low levels of student learning. For example, multi-grade teaching was used in over 5,000 schools across Laos in 2017; such techniques require teachers to have higher levels of skills and receive adequate training and support. Additionally, these challenges are not equally felt across the country; for example, rural areas are more likely to suffer from teacher shortages.



OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN & YOUTH (OOSCY)

- Data from 2022 suggests that rates for children of primary school age who are out of school in Laos are some of the highest in the region. At the primary level, these rates are higher for girls than boys, and are worse for ethnic minority children ([↑World Bank, 2024](#)).
- Key factors contributing to high dropout rates include child marriage and child labour ([↑UNESCO, 2017](#)).
- The Department of Non-Formal Education offers educational and lifelong learning alternatives with a focus on ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups ([↑MOES Department of Non-Formal Education, 2020](#)).

GIRLS' EDUCATION

- In 2022, Laos ranked 120th in the world on the Gender Inequality Index ([↑UNDP, 2022](#)).
- Many households continue to value traditional gender roles, and women are expected to shoulder domestic and caregiving responsibilities. These attitudes influence families' low prioritisation of girls' education and the high dropout rates mentioned above. Notably, girls living in rural areas are more impacted by these trends and attitudes; these impacts become more pronounced as girls get older ([↑Philipp, 2023](#); [↑UNICEF, no date](#)).



LEARNERS WITH SEND

- The 2017 Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS) II survey indicates that approximately 2% of children aged two to four experience functional difficulties. Rates are particularly high (21.8%) in the Sekong province ([↑Lao Statistics Bureau, 2018](#)).
- The 2021–2025 Education and Sports Sector Development Plan notes reforms to align with inclusive education needs ([↑MOES, 2020](#)).

INFRASTRUCTURE

- 95% of the population has mobile network coverage, whereas 72% of households have internet access. Mobile phone ownership is moderately high, with 80.8% of men and 79.3% of women owning one by 2023 ([↑International Telecommunication Union, 2023](#)).
- Smartphone owners tend to rely on 3G networks to connect to Wi-Fi; this may affect the speed and reliability of users' smartphone experiences and should be considered when designing education programming ([↑International Telecommunication Union, 2023](#)).



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ABOUT ASEAN-UK SAGE

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