

# Strengthening Higher Education and Research in Laos

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and research in Laos

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# Executive summary

This report presents a descriptive and analytical overview of the development and structure of the higher education and research system in Laos. In doing so it also examines the various structural and institutional constraints faced by the development of higher education and research, and explores how Swedish assistance can contribute to relaxing these constraints and strengthening research potential and activities in the country.

The achievements of Laos in terms of higher education and research are poor in a regional perspective. Some progress can, however, be noticed following the regrouping of various institutions of higher education into a single structure, the National University of Laos (NUOL) in 1995. The critical shortage of qualified staff and the weak academic qualifications of the teaching staff are the main constraints faced by the development of research activities at NUOL. Other contributory factors are the fragmentation of teaching and research activities, the lack of adequate financial and technical resources, and an incentive structure that alas does not encourage research activities. Swedish assistance can mitigate these constraints by focusing on capacity-building projects related to ongoing assistance projects, like Sida support to teacher education, but also by initiating and monitoring long-term co-operation between Swedish universities (and faculties) and selected faculties at NUOL.

# 1. Introduction\*

The opening up of the Lao economy in the late 1980s and eventually the acceleration of economic growth, concentrated in the sectors of industry and services, have unveiled serious shortages of skilled labour in Laos. The Lao government launched a reform of higher education in the mid-1990s in order to improve the skill levels of the population and to better match the skill-mix demanded on the labour market. Sustained economic development in Laos is greatly dependent upon the development of higher education and a significant expansion of the number of tertiary educated in Laos. But long-term development also requires the building up of research capacity in the country because this is necessary to better absorb new technologies, to increase labour productivity and to secure a steady growth of real wages.

The purpose of this report is threefold. The first purpose is to provide an insight into the policy of the Lao government regarding higher education and research and to describe the current structure of higher education and research with particular emphasis on the National University of Laos. The second purpose is to examine the various structural and institutional constraints faced by the development of higher education and research in Laos. The third purpose is to explore how Swedish assistance can strengthen higher education and research in the country.

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## 2. Higher Education and Research: Lagging Behind

Laos is poorly and geographically unevenly endowed with tertiary educated people. According to the 1995 Population Census only two percent of the population (6 years and above) had a higher education (not always completed). This is illustrated in Table A1. There is a gender bias with the percentage of higher educated being somewhat higher for males than for females. The situation varies enormously across space with less than one percent of the population having a higher education in the northern provinces and more than seven percent in Vientiane Municipality (see Table A2).<sup>1</sup> The distribution of individuals with higher educational attainments across the country mirrors the very poor achievement of some provinces in terms of literacy and primary education attainment. One historic reason for the very small proportion of the population equipped with higher education is the departure of many educated from Laos following the change of political regime in 1975. Another reason is the low priority given to higher education by the Lao government after 1975.

The small share of the Lao population with higher education reflects the relatively limited number of students attending institutes of higher education in the country. This is best illustrated by comparing Laos with neighbouring countries (Table A3). The number of students enrolled in tertiary education is significantly lower in Laos than in neighbouring countries, with the exception of Cambodia. The number of students enrolled in higher education (per 100,000 inhabitants) is less than half that for Vietnam, which has a similar level of income per capita. Gross enrolment ratios provide further evidence of the poor achievements of Laos (Table A3) in a regional perspective. These are still poorer if one takes into account the fact that no less than 59 percent of the Lao students belong to the first stage of tertiary education not leading to a first university degree (see Table A3). In Laos the first level of tertiary education (ISCED 5 in Table A3) corresponds to the School of Foundation Studies, which is a form of remedial training whose main purpose is to bring students up to the minimum entry standards for higher education. Also note, in the case of Laos, the absence of students belonging to ISCED 7, which is the educational level that opens the door to advanced academic research.

Another striking difference between Laos and neighbouring countries concerns the distribution of students by field of study. Higher education systems in the world tend to converge towards the same distribution: one third studying in the science fields (natural sciences, engineering and medical sciences) and two thirds in education, arts, social sciences and law.<sup>2</sup> Laos differs substantially from this common pattern with half of the students enrolled in the science fields (Table A4). Note, however, that some neighbouring countries such as Singapore and the Philippines show similar patterns. Another difference, worth noting, between Laos and neighbouring countries concerns the relatively small percentage of students in humanities, law and social sciences (20 percent all together). The reason for the pattern observed in Laos is not that clear, but it probably reflects the priorities of the government and the fact that the legal and regulatory system is rather underdeveloped in Laos.

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<sup>1</sup> For more detailed information at the district level, see Sisouphanthong and Taillard (2000), p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. UNESCO (2000), pp. 71–72.

The limited number of students in tertiary education reflects the meagre resources devoted to the educational sector and the preferences of the Lao government. Public expenditure on education accounted for 2.5 percent of GNP and some 10 percent of government expenditure in 1996. This was significantly less than in the great majority of neighbouring countries (see Table A5). The Asian crisis and changed government preferences (lower priority given to the education sector) led to a significant contraction of the resources devoted to education in the late 1990s, with public expenditure on education dropping to less than 2 percent of GNP and 8-9 percent of government expenditure. A look at the distribution of spending across levels of education reveals that Laos devotes but a minor share of its public, current expenditure on education to higher education, some 8 percent (Table A5). This is significantly less than in other countries with similar income per capita and reflects the priority given by the government to providing broad access to primary education.



### 3. Government Strategy and Policy

The government that took over in 1975 gave priority to primary education. Higher education was less of a priority and it remained strictly limited until the early 1990s. A factor that contributed greatly to the lack of attention to tertiary education was the opportunity given to many students to study in the Soviet Bloc countries. During the first one and a half decades of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, more than 10,000 Lao students were sent for training in Vietnam, the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe. In the late 1980s the Lao government launched an ambitious policy of reforms named the New Economic Mechanism. The implementation of reform policy unveiled serious shortages of skilled and trained labour and contributed to an awakening of the government's interest in tertiary education. Another factor that played a significant role was dissatisfaction with the performance of the students returning from the Soviet Bloc countries. The main criticism was that these students were equipped with skills and competence with little relevance to conditions in Laos.<sup>3</sup> Note that this applies particularly, but not exclusively, to fields of study like the social sciences and law where the opening up of the Lao economy and society has made the skills acquired in socialist countries largely outmoded and outdated.

The collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the end of their aid to Laos put the development of higher education on the political agenda of the Lao government. Another critical factor was the very low enrolment ratio in higher education, one of the lowest in the region, and the integration of the Lao economy into the ASEAN, which exacerbated the constraints put on the economic development of the country by the lack of skilled manpower. This led the government to create a Steering Committee on Human Resource Development in 1994 with the objective of planning and strengthening higher education in Laos. The Committee benefited from technical assistance from the Asian Development Bank in formulating a long-term strategy for higher education.

A pivotal role in the government strategy was the regrouping in 1995 of various institutions of higher education under the supervision of several ministries into a single structure, the National University of Laos (NUOL).<sup>4</sup> Government officials call the 1995–2001 period the consolidation phase. The role of NUOL, as defined by Decree 87/PM, is “to provide quality higher education and scientific research”.<sup>5</sup> As yet NUOL only offers programmes leading to Higher Diplomas and Bachelor Degrees. But the medium-term objective of the government is to introduce Master Degrees at NUOL. Officials of the Ministry of Education mention

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<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Thant and Vokes (1997), pp. 166–167.

<sup>4</sup> One higher education institution, the National Organisation for the Study of Political Science and Administration (NOSPSA) (formerly the School of Administration and Management), remained outside the new institutional framework. This institution was created in 1991 with the assistance of France and was placed under the supervision of the Prime Minister's Office. In 1999 it was integrated into a common institutional structure with the two Administrative and Political Schools that were under the supervision of the Central Committee of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party. Since 1995 a one-year formation, a pre-Masters in Business Administration leading to a Bachelors Degree, has been developed and the best students are eventually sent to Hanoi and Bangkok for two years to achieve a Master's degree in Business Administration. NOSPSA benefits from financial and technical assistance from France and Germany.

<sup>5</sup> Lao People's Democratic Republic (2000a).

the year 2003 as a possible introduction date for those faculties considered to be equipped with the necessary skills to offer master programmes. Research policy is mentioned only briefly and broadly in Decree 87/PM: NUOL's role is "to perform scientific research and develop technology in various subjects and to spread the results of scientific research and analysis for the benefit of the socio-economic development of the nation".

A main objective of the government's reform plan has been to increase the number of students in higher education by means of a more efficient use of the (given) scarce human resources. Prior to the establishment of NUOL the cost per pupil in higher education was relatively high in Laos (see e.g. Table A5, column 4) partly because of the multiplication of institutions and redundant personnel. The government expected that a regrouping of several institutions into a single university framework would make it possible not only to save on overhead costs and to achieve economies of scale but also to improve the quality of teaching. For example, the creation of one single campus would contribute to the development of networks of competence, with the faculties supporting each other and would also encourage various forms of positive spin-offs from more advanced to lagging faculties.

In addition to efficiency considerations, the strategy of the government has given high priority to equity considerations. In the case of Laos, this means that the University reserves about half of its places for secondary school graduates from the provinces other than Vientiane Municipality (the so-called quota students). In order to increase the access of students from remote provinces to higher education, the Lao government envisages the creation of regional colleges in selected provinces (four to five are planned). These colleges will provide the first two years of university studies (the so-called foundation studies) as well as shorter technical programmes designed to match the particular needs of the regions.

The evolution of education expenditures after the mid-1990s does not reflect the ambition of the Lao government regarding education, in particular higher education. As a percentage of GDP, public expenditure on education decreased from 3 percent of GDP in the 1994/1995 fiscal year (October–September) to 1.8 percent in 1999/2000. During the same period, public expenditure on education decreased from 11.7 to 9 percent of total government expenditure.<sup>6</sup> According to the commitment taken by the Lao government at the Seventh Round Table Meeting in November 2000, the share of education in the overall state budget will be increased from the fiscal year 2000/2001 and onwards.<sup>7</sup>

Higher education has been less affected by the recent budget cuts because of the large role of the donor community in the financing of NUOL. The initial development costs for NUOL (the University Consolidation Project) amounted to US\$ 25 million, of which US\$ 16.94 million were covered by a loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the remaining US\$ 8.06 million financed by the Lao government.<sup>8</sup> The University Consolidation Project was initiated in 1995 and should be completed in December 2001. About half of the funds devoted to the project have been used for staff development, payment of

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<sup>6</sup> For a more complete description of the public financing of education, see Lao People's Democratic Republic (2000b), p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> Lao People's Democratic Republic (2000c), p. 61.

<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the costs of the project, see ADB (1999), pp. 191–194.

specialists and consultants, project implementation and recurrent costs. An implication of this is that NUOL probably will face difficulties in meeting the recurrent costs of NUOL after 2001. NUOL was granted a certain budgetary, academic and administrative autonomy in 2000. The government expects that this autonomy will permit NUOL to be more active in raising funds and financing university operations. The Asian Development Bank is assisting NUOL in the development, implementation and consolidation of university autonomy.

## 4. The National University of Laos and Beyond

The National University of Laos was formed in 1995 by merging higher education institutions, which were previously under the supervision of various ministries. NUOL consisted of nine faculties in 1995. It now consists of ten faculties, following the split of the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry into two independent faculties in spring 2000. The spatial distribution of the faculties reflects history and the location of higher education institutions before the creation of NUOL, rather than a strategy striving to regroup the faculties so as to maximise the positive spillovers and the exchange of competence. Six of the faculties are located on the Dongdok Campus some 8 kilometres outside Vientiane. Most of these faculties are concerned with humanities and social sciences. Three faculties (Law and Political Science, Medical Sciences, and Engineering and Architecture) have their own campuses, located in or close to Vientiane Municipality. The Faculty of Agriculture is located on Nabong Campus some 35 kilometres away from Vientiane.

Studies at NUOL are divided into two main parts: first a two-year programme, whose main purpose is to prepare the students for specialised university studies, and then eventually a three-year programme that leads to a bachelor degree (for a list of the Bachelor Degrees, see Table 1). Five years (on top of the two basic years) are required in the Faculty of Medical Sciences to obtain a bachelor degree. The first programme, the foundation studies, is divided into two lines, natural sciences and social sciences, and involves the teaching of core subjects. The number of students entering the School of Foundation Studies varies from year to year and is decided by the government (the Ministry of Education). In 1999/2000, for example, some 1,500 students were admitted to the School of Foundation Studies, 55 percent in the natural sciences and the rest in the social sciences. Of the total stock of higher education students in spring 2000 no less than 27 percent (or 3,123, of which 36 percent were females) attended the School of Foundation Studies.<sup>9</sup> Students applying for NUOL register at a particular faculty but final acceptance depends on their performance during the two years of foundation studies. Only the students with very good performance are admitted into the Faculty of Medical Sciences and the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture. The School of Foundation Studies works as a screening device to match the distribution of student choices to the distribution of places across faculties as decided by the government.

The students entering the various bachelor programmes are distributed rather unevenly across the different faculties (see Table 1). Three faculties (Engineering and Architecture, Philology, and Law and Political Science) account for 75 percent of the total number in post-foundation studies (and the first two of these for 63 percent). In contrast, the three smallest faculties (Social Sciences, Natural Sciences and Education) account for only 5 percent of the total number of students. There is a clear gender dimension in the distribution of students across fields of study, with female students being clearly underrepresented in the Faculties of Engineering and Architecture, Agriculture, Forestry, Law and Political Science, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences. Note that there is almost no gender gap in Economics and Management, Medical Sciences and Philology (mostly foreign languages).

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<sup>9</sup> This figure differs substantially from the figure in Table 3 in Appendix. The main reason is that the figure in Table 3 refers to 1996, that is one year after the establishment of NUOL.

**Table 1: Distribution of Students and Teaching Staff between Programmes, 2000.<sup>a)</sup>**

Faculties	Bachelor Degree	No. of students (% females)	Teaching staff				Student- teacher ratios <sup>b)</sup>
			No. of teachers	Master Degree	Ph.D. Degree		
Natural Sciences	Mathematics & Physics Biology & Chemistry	133 (27%)	79	30	3	2	4
Education	Education	192 (42%)	24	3	0	8	64
Philology	English language	2,249 (46%)	144	33	2	16	64
	French language						
Social Sciences	Social Sciences	100 (25%)	39	5	2	3	14
Economics/ Management	Economics Management	291 (56%)	15	3	0	19	97
Engineering/ Architecture	Mechanical Engineer	3,180 (14%)	197	33 <sup>c)</sup>	3 <sup>c)</sup>	16	88
	Electrical Engineer						
	Civil Engineer						
	Architecture & Building						
Forestry	Forestry	537 (19%)	41	10	2	13	45
Agriculture	Agriculture	345 (18%)	23	8	1	15	38
Medical Sciences	Medicine	542 (46%)	85	13 <sup>c)</sup>	1 <sup>c)</sup>	6	39
	Pharmacy						
	Dentistry						
Law/ Political Science	Law Political Science	1,048 (22%)	31	1	0	34	1048
Total		8,617 (28%)	678	139	14	13	56

Notes: a) Students of the School of Foundation Studies are not included. In spring 2000 their number amounted to 3,123 of which 36 percent were females. b) The first column gives the standard student-teacher ratios. The second column gives student-qualified teacher ratios that only include Ph.D. and MA holders. c) The figures provided by the Faculties of Engineering & Architecture and Medical Sciences are somewhat different with 5 and 3 Ph.D. holders and 24 and 6 MA holders, respectively.

Source: Computed from data from National University of Laos (2000).

Admission to NUOL is regulated through two different procedures. Some 50 percent of the places are reserved for students from the provinces other than Vientiane Municipality. The provincial departments of education and the local authorities select candidates on the basis of their performance in upper secondary school.<sup>10</sup> It is not always possible for the provincial authorities to fill the assigned quota, which explains why quota students only represent some 40 percent of the total number of students at NUOL. The places that are not filled under the quota system are filled on the basis of a national entrance examination, which is the second admission procedure. Most of the students entering NUOL through this second procedure are from the Vientiane area.

A third way to attend NUOL is offered through special courses outside the normal university curriculum. For these courses NUOL charges a tuition fee of 70,000 kip per month. On an academic-year basis, tuition fees for special programme students amount to 560,000 kip (70,000 x 8 months) or some US\$ 70. This should be compared with tuition fees of 40,000

<sup>10</sup> It is often suggested that considerations other than pure academic merits influence the selection of quota students (see e.g. ADB (1999), p. 202).

kip (US\$ 5) per academic year for non-quota students and an estimated average income per capita of US\$ 350 in Laos in 2000.<sup>11</sup> The number of students attending special courses has increased very rapidly over the past few years. Today more than two thousand students are attending special courses in English, Engineering, and Economics and Management. Strong economic incentives for NUOL explain the rapid growth of the special courses. Some 20 percent of the tuition fee are retained by the university and used to finance university operations. The remaining 80 percent go to the teachers in charge of special courses, whose salaries in this way may be doubled or trebled.

## Low teacher qualifications

NUOL employs some 678 full-time teachers, about half of them in the Faculties of Philology (mostly to teach foreign languages) and Engineering & Architecture. The average number of students per teacher for the whole university is 13, which is relatively high by international standards, but the number varies considerably across faculties. Table 1 shows that the student-teacher ratio varies from 2 and 3 for the social and natural sciences to no less than 34 in law (and administration) with most faculties in the 13–19 range. Part of the explanation for the low ratios for the natural and social sciences is that much of their teaching is carried out at the School of Foundation Studies and foundation study students are not included in Table 1. On the other hand, the very high student-teacher ratio for the Faculty of Law and Political Science reflects the large number of external lecturers from the Ministry of Justice, the Prosecutor Office, the Supreme Court and the Courts in Vientiane.

Quality, more than quantity of the teaching staff, seems to be the dominant problem at NUOL. Poor quality standards reflect mainly the shortages of qualified staff and the weak academic skills of senior instructors. For the whole university there are only 13 teachers with Ph.D. degrees, most often obtained from Vietnamese and Soviet Block universities. This tiny group corresponds to two percent of the current stock of teachers at NUOL. The number of teachers holding a Master's Degree is significantly higher, 139 or some 20 percent of the teachers. The objective of the Lao government is to bring the percentages of university teachers with Ph.D. and Master's Degrees up to 10 and 30–40 percent respectively. This corresponds to an increase of the number of Ph.D. holders from 13 to 68 and MA holders from 139 to 203–271. The figure for MA holders does not seem that unrealistic in a medium-term perspective. But the objective for the number of Ph.D. holders is unlikely to be achieved in the next decade, given the long lead time necessary to produce a Ph.D. holder and the small pool of NUOL students from which to draw such candidates.

The situation as indicated by the student-qualified teacher ratio varies markedly between faculties (see Table 1) but there is no clear concentration of qualified staff in a few of the faculties. Here again, the natural and social sciences exhibit the best ratios but this is essentially due to the fact that students of the School of Foundation Studies are not included in Table 1. The worst situation is to be found in the Faculty of Law and Political Science with no Ph.D. teacher and only one with a Master's Degree. The situation may improve somewhat in the medium term since several law students are preparing Master Degrees in Law in

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<sup>11</sup> Quota students are exempted from tuition fees and, in addition, receive a scholarship of 70,000 kip per month (some US\$ 70 on an academic-year basis).

Thailand and Japan. The situation is also worrying in the Faculties of Economics & Management and Engineering & Architecture with student-qualified teacher ratios amounting to 97 and 88 in 2000. Here, also, the situation can improve in the medium term because several of these two faculties' teachers are engaged in Master's and Ph.D. programmes abroad. Agriculture, medicine and forestry are in an intermediate situation with a student-qualified teacher ratio ranging between 38 and 45.

### Slowly emerging research policy

Research is considered an integral part of the activities of NUOL and therefore should be encouraged.<sup>12</sup> This is the Lao government's official policy that is, however, not reflected in the distribution of higher education expenditures where there is no separate budgetary entry for research. But there is an indirect financing of research because academic teachers are expected to devote between 20 and 30 percent of their working time to research activities. This means that public research expenditures can be approximated to about a quarter of wage expenditure for academic teachers. Expenditures devoted to research *stricto sensu* are, however, much less sizeable because NUOL applies a very broad definition of research, which includes, in addition to theoretical and applied research, consultancy work and the study and translation of scientific works and materials. The teaching load for the academic staff can be increased by up to 15 percent for those teachers who do not conduct any research. The very broad definition of research activities applied by NUOL makes, however, the implementation of this principle very difficult.

A new grade system for teaching staff was introduced at NUOL in the late 1990s, one of its purposes being to improve research incentives by giving research performance and activities a larger role in the promotion of academic teachers. The new grade system comprises four categories of university teachers: Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Associate Professor and Professor. A close examination of the criteria used for gaining promotion suggests, however, that the role given to research in the new grade system is rather limited and much less important than teaching experience measured in number of years.<sup>13</sup> Both Ph.D. and MA holders can become full-time Professors, but less teaching experience is required for Ph.D. than MA holders.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, research merits concern almost exclusively Ph.D. and MA dissertations but only marginally post-Ph.D. research. This asymmetry is detrimental to the development of a research environment at NUOL because research work related to Ph.D. dissertations is in most cases located abroad, while post-Ph.D. research is to a larger extent located in Laos and therefore most likely to result in local research spillovers.

In order to better co-ordinate and develop research policy, institutional changes have been introduced at NUOL. Worth noting is that these changes have been advocated and driven by the donor community, in particular the Asian Development Bank.<sup>15</sup> A new structure, the

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<sup>12</sup> National University of Laos (1999).

<sup>13</sup> Lao People's Democratic Republic (2000d), Annex 7.

<sup>14</sup> A minimum of 17 years of teaching experience is required for MA holders to be promoted to Professor while "only" 9 years is required for PhD holders (5 years to become Associate Professor plus four years as Associate Professor).

<sup>15</sup> See the various reports by the SODETEG/TEAMS, Lao People's Democratic Republic (1997), (1998), (1999a) and (2000d).



Committee for Research Development was created at NUOL, as a sub-committee of the Academic Board with the objective of monitoring and overseeing research and consultancy undertaken by university staff. A main conclusion of the examination of institutional development since 1997 by SODETEG/TEAMS (for the ADB) is that some progress has been made but that the building up of institutional arrangements to promote research management and research activities is going very slowly.<sup>16</sup> Research management at NUOL is still embryonic. There is actually a research and development section but its administrative capacity and activities are very limited. Further, the post of head of the section has been vacant from time to time. The SODETEG/TEAMS Project of technical assistance has played a critical role in the creation and nascent activities of this section, but the planned cessation of the project in mid-2001 is likely to jeopardize the very existence of the section itself.

A main reason for the weak research management and administrative capacity is that the institutional changes are driven by donor agencies and thus not owned by the council (and Rector) of NUOL and the Ministry of Education. Bilateral donors have only played a minor role in the improvement of research management at NUOL and have so far concentrated their assistance on individual faculties.

### Limited research activities

The critical shortage of qualified staff and the weak academic qualifications of the teaching staff put severe restrictions on the development of research activities at NUOL. Another contributory factor is that the few research institutions that exist in Laos remain under the supervision of various ministries (see below). This institutional structure tends to crowd out research activities at NUOL with the consequence that the positive effects of research on academic teaching do not materialise. There are, however, some areas where research activities are taking place within the NUOL framework. Most often these research activities are part of international projects where Lao nationals in co-operation with foreign universities are in charge of an applied part of the project. This is the case, for instance, for research projects in medicine, biology, geography, and for research in the fields covered by the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture.<sup>17</sup>

But there is also a non-negligible amount of research activity related to the preparation of Ph.D. dissertations by NUOL teachers engaged in various forms of sandwich programmes between NUOL and overseas universities. Sandwich programmes alternate study and research periods between NUOL and foreign universities, most of them located in Western Europe. For instance, the deans of the Faculties of Social Sciences, Natural Sciences and Economics & Management are all taking part in such programmes between NUOL and universities in Belgium and France. Similar arrangements exist for some teachers from the Faculties of Agriculture, Forestry, Economics & Management, and Philology with universities in France, Germany, Japan and Australia. Once graduated, these new Ph.D. holders will also contribute to changing the composition of qualified teaching staff at NUOL away from Soviet Bloc countries' standards towards more common international standards.

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<sup>16</sup> See e.g. Lao People's Democratic Republic (2000d), p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> A short but representative sample of research and cooperation projects between NUOL and universities in Western Europe and Japan is available in Lao People's Democratic Republic (2000d), Annex 10.



## 5. Structural and Institutional Constraints

Some progress has been achieved in the five and a half years that have passed since the establishment of NUOL in 1995. The number of higher education students has increased substantially. The quality of the teaching staff has improved somewhat, albeit less rapidly than expected five years ago. Curricula for the Bachelor Degrees in the different disciplines have been developed. A new faculty, the Faculty of Economics and Management, has been developed from scratch. Besides anecdotal evidence suggests that the professional and technical skills of the students have improved during the period. But these five years have also unveiled a certain number of constraints of more institutional and structural character that negatively affect the prospects for quality university teaching and research in Laos.

A first constraint concerns the fragile financial situation. NUOL has been developed with the assistance of the donor community, in particular the Asian Development Bank, and is still highly dependent on external funding. The cuts in public education expenditures since the mid-1990s have had a limited impact on NUOL activities and operations, since most of the budgetary cuts have been concentrated on primary and secondary education. The end of the project assistance from the Asian Development Bank is scheduled for December 2001. It is therefore important for NUOL to secure future funding during the current year so as to achieve a form of financial sustainability. The main sources of revenue for NUOL are subventions from the government, fees and tuition fees, and funds from the donor community.<sup>18</sup> Fiscal policy has been tightened in Laos recently and there is little room for a significant increase of the subventions allocated to NUOL in the short and medium-term. It is likely therefore that NUOL will turn to the two other sources of revenue. The financial autonomy granted NUOL in 2000 will probably lead to a further increase in the number of special courses so as to provide additional sources of revenue. Whether this will be sufficient to secure the long-term financial sustainability of NUOL is uncertain, however.

Related to the fragile financial situation are the relatively low teachers' emoluments and the weak incentives for teachers to upgrade their skills and, still more, to conduct research. In an economy where the private sector is expanding rapidly, as is actually the case in the Vientiane and other urban areas, weak pecuniary incentives make it difficult for NUOL to retain the most talented teachers and/or to recruit new qualified ones. Teachers' salaries in higher education are only marginally higher than teachers' salaries in secondary education (on average less than 10 percent higher in 1997).<sup>19</sup> Teachers' monthly salaries range from 130,000 kip (some US\$ 16) for a teacher with a bachelor degree to 300,000 kip (some US\$ 37) for a faculty dean. Teachers' salaries are often insufficient to permit family subsistence under conditions of full-time employment. Consequently, many teachers (and potential teachers), and often the most talented ones, rather prefer non-university to university employment. Others (the majority) prefer to keep their university employment but pursue income-generating activities outside NUOL at the same time. The result is poor preparation

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<sup>18</sup> Decree 87/PM mentions other minor sources of revenue like funds from state organisations and enterprises, revenue from scientific research and consultancy work or revenue from charity organisations.

<sup>19</sup> Mingat (1998), p. 6.

of regular classroom teaching, scarce student contact, minimal participation in the administration and policymaking of the faculty, and a neglect of staff development opportunities and research activities. The development of special courses and the greater university autonomy in financial and personnel administration have presumably permitted NUOL to retain some qualified teachers, whose salaries have more than doubled through special programme teaching.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, special courses are limited to a few academic disciplines and the negative effects on the quality of regular teaching and on staff development and research can turn out to be a serious problem in the future.

## Teaching-research fragmentation

Whilst many problems afflicting higher education (and research) can be attributed to insufficient resources, others are more deeply imbedded in the institutional structure and history of higher education and research in Laos. NUOL was established in 1995 by merging different teaching institutions previously under the supervision of different ministries. Research structures have remained and/or have been developed under the responsibility of the different ministries. The National Economic Research Institute (NERI) was formally established in 1993 but did not begin its work until 1996–1997. NERI is under the supervision of the State Planning Committee and functions as a think-tank for the Lao government. Research capacity in Economics at NERI is weak even if the skills of the staff have improved over the past few years. There is not much cooperation between NERI staff and the Department of Economics at NUOL.<sup>21</sup> The National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) was established in 1999 under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Its main objective is to undertake “integrated agriculture, forestry and fisheries adaptive research in order to provide technical information, technical norms and results for agriculture, forestry, and fisheries development strategy formulation in accordance with the government policy”. NAFRI aims at coordinating research and is expected to collaborate with several NUOL faculties, in particular the Faculty of Agriculture, the Faculty of Forestry and the Department of Biology of the Faculty of Natural Sciences.<sup>22</sup> A recent assessment of existing capacity at NAFRI shows that internal capacity is limited and the number of staff with relevant skills insufficient in most of the components of the research programme (farming systems, forestry, land management and socioeconomics).<sup>23</sup> A third research institute is the Technology Research Institute that was also established in 1999 under the Prime Minister’s Office. The Institute has a staff of 20 and its function is to promote the dissemination of renewable energy technologies adapted to local conditions. A fourth research institute, the Institute for Cultural Research was redesigned in the 1990s and is under the super-

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<sup>20</sup> There is no principle and a lack of transparency in the allocation of the incomes generated by the special courses. But it is admitted that research has not benefited from these extra incomes. A suggestion advanced by the SODETEG/TEAMS is to give the representative of research interests at NUOL, the Research Development Committee, a representation on the board in charge of the allocation of funds (Lao People’s Democratic Republic (2000d), p. 11).

<sup>21</sup> For an analysis of the research capacity at NERI, see Bourdet (1998).

<sup>22</sup> National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (2000), pp. 4–6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37–39.

vision of the Ministry of Information and Culture. It is mostly concerned with ethnological and anthropological research.<sup>24</sup>

Most of the research institutes were created or redesigned during the course of the 1990s parallel to the creation of NUOL. The question that arises is, of course, why these institutes and the institutions of higher education have not been integrated into the same structure. Officials put forward two reasons for keeping research institutes under the supervision of the various ministries. The first is the reluctance expressed by the staff of the research institutes and the different ministries to merging NUOL with research institutes. The second is the uncertain academic qualifications of the staff now working in these research institutes. Whatever the reasons advanced, the non-transfer of the research institutes to merge with the university structure afflicts the development of NUOL and the prospects for quality university teaching and research in Laos. Research activities are best housed within universities, allowing such activities to contribute to new knowledge, to enrich classroom teaching and to improve the technical skills of students. In turn, improved teaching makes it easier to recruit future generations of researchers. In a country like Laos with a very limited pool of qualified people, the regrouping of higher education and research within the same institutional framework is the best way to circumvent the smallness constraint and make efficient use of the scarce qualified human resources. It is crucial for the building up of a critical mass, for the maintenance of research capacity and for the quality of research output.

Three other arguments can be advanced to justify the integration of teaching and research activities in Laos. Firstly, a productive research environment requires critical independent thinking and this is better secured in an academic environment than under the supervision of ministries, where research tends to be instrumental. Secondly, the development of problem-oriented research projects encourages co-operation between the various faculties and maximises spin-offs and exchange of competence. Thirdly, the development of research activities at NUOL could contribute to improving the incentive structure and working conditions for qualified staff. Pecuniary and professional incentives related to research activities and research performance (such as office space, equipment and furniture, participation in professional meetings, etc.) could actually lead to significant gains in recruitment and retention of talented, qualified teachers.

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<sup>24</sup> On the history and activities of the Institute for Cultural Research, see Rattanavong (1994) and Ketavong (1994). The Institute for Cultural Research publishes the only academic journal that exists in Laos, *Lanxang Heritage Journal*. The journal is devoted to humanities with focus on Laos and Southeast Asia. It is published on a semi-annual basis with contributions in Lao, English and French. Well known experts on Laos, such as Grant Evans, James R. Chamberlain, Yves Goudineau and Patrick Gay, belong to the editorial board.

## 6. Strengthening Higher Education and Research

The design of assistance projects for higher education and research should take into consideration these structural and institutional constraints. Other aspects that should be kept in mind are the nature of development problems and, also, the problems specific to higher education in Laos. A major constraint to balanced economic development in Laos concerns the very weak and unevenly distributed (geographically and by gender) human resource base. This means that it is critical for expenditure on higher education and research not to crowd out expenditure on primary and secondary education. When it comes to the specific problems of higher education, priority should be given to assistance projects that focus on those disciplines that are most lagging, and whose skills are most demanded on the labour market. This is particularly crucial now when the country has embarked on market-oriented reforms whose objective is to integrate the Lao economy into the Southeast Asian region.

In what follows our purpose is not so much to offer definitive prescriptions or recommendations regarding Swedish assistance projects. Rather, it is to help pinpoint some key areas and indicate how Swedish assistance could be part of capacity-building projects. Worth adding is that the various areas pinpointed below concern both higher education and research and that they are not ranked by order of importance.

A first assistance area concerns library facilities, including information technology. The library at NUOL is under-stocked and most of the books and materials are outdated. This puts severe constraints on the quality of higher education and still more on research initiatives. The improvement and upgrading of the library and the installation of IT facilities (setting up of an operating system with databases, web sites, networks, etc.) could work as a catalyst for the whole university and partly compensate for under-qualified staff, a critical shortage of textbooks and insufficient instructional materials. There is a Finnish assistance project that aims at improving the “services of the central library” and that amounts to some 1.2 million SEK (Lao People’s Democratic Republic (1999b)). The Finnish project, which has been delayed, could be made more ambitious through Nordic co-operation. Another advantage of a Swedish involvement is easier monitoring and implementation of the project because Sweden, in contrast to Finland, is present in Vientiane through Sida.

A second assistance area could be the financing of a scholarship programme that gives particularly promising NUOL students the opportunity to spend a year abroad (preferably in Thailand or in other ASEAN countries), and to achieve a Master’s degree. The first cohort of students, who started their university studies in 1995 when NUOL was first established, will graduate from NUOL in spring 2001. Therefore, a scholarship assistance project would not only permit them to improve their qualifications further, but also build up research potential in Laos. It is, however, very important for the success of such a project to ensure that the Lao students sent abroad in fact meet the required entrance standards. This could, for example, be assessed by externally appointed examiners. The norms and standards set for entry into foreign universities may eventually also have positive feedback effects on the content and quality of undergraduate teaching at NUOL.

A third related project could be the financing of a Ph.D. fellowship programme for the best MA students (for example, for those returning from successful studies abroad). This can best be organised through the provision of a Staff Development Fund in which both Swedish and other contributions (both local and foreign) can be pooled in support of NUOL priority training and research needs. It is generally admitted that sandwich programmes, with doctoral students alternating study and research at home and abroad, are the best guarantee for the efficiency of such projects, in particular for the Ph.D. holders to return home after graduation in order to participate actively in teaching and research. But such a Staff Development Fund can also provide seed money for NUOL teachers to initiate post-Ph.D. research projects and to attend international research conferences.

A fourth assistance area could be to support selected faculties. Several of the NUOL faculties already benefit from targeted donor support. The Faculties of Engineering & Architecture, Agriculture, Forestry, and Law and Political Science are involved in co-operation agreements with overseas universities in Japan, Thailand, France, Germany and Sweden. A similar agreement is under way at the Faculty of Economics and Management. The agreements usually focus on staff development, upgraded curricula and improved working conditions. By and large these agreements fulfil the necessary conditions for success: long-term arrangements between similar faculties, clear targets for the transfer of skills and competence, adaptation to local conditions and local priorities, and rather effective monitoring. Support for these faculties should therefore be avoided unless it is co-ordinated with the “established” donor. Sweden is planning substantial assistance to the development of the newly created National Agricultural and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI). If it is to be materialised it is important to involve the Faculty of Agriculture, the Faculty of Forestry and some of the Dongdok Faculties and/or Departments in the emerging framework. This is the best way for research to contribute to new knowledge and to improve the technical skills of university students. It is also necessary to improve the research capacity at NAFRI, especially in the research areas where NAFRI staff is not equipped with the relevant skills (like socioeconomics). The Faculty of Agriculture at Nabong already co-operates with INAPG (*Institut National Agronomique Paris-Grignon*). This project has been going on for a long time and was renewed for a three-year period in early 2001 (with financing from the *Agence Française de Développement*). It includes targets for the upgrading of skills and competence, fellowships for Lao students preparing for a Master’s degree in Thailand, and a sandwich programme component with currently one Ph.D. under preparation at INAPG. It is therefore important for Swedish assistance to this faculty to be co-ordinated with that of INAGP in order to maximise the positive effects of foreign assistance on higher education and research at the Faculty of Agriculture.

Of the remaining faculties, two of them, Medical Sciences and Education, are potential candidates for assistance but for different reasons. Support for the Faculty of Medical Sciences (or one of the three departments, Medicine, Pharmacy, Dentistry) is much needed. The faculty has several international linkages with foreign academic institutions but they are often limited in scope and do not seem to guarantee a sustained upgrading of competence, teaching programmes and research capacities. Moreover, providing assistance to the faculty of Medical Sciences is well in line with the overall goals of Swedish assistance policy. Assisting

the second, the Faculty of Education, might at the same time contribute to improving the monitoring, implementation and evaluation of the ongoing Sida support to teacher education in Laos. The Faculty of Education is in charge of teacher education for upper secondary schools for the whole of Laos. An upgrading of teaching programmes, an improvement of staff competence and qualifications, and an amelioration of working conditions are necessary ingredients that can be best achieved through a long-term co-operation agreement with a Swedish university.

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**Table A1: Population 6 years and above by educational attainment, 1995**

Educational level	Total	Females	Males
None	43	52	33
Primary			
Not completed	31	27	35
Completed	11	9	13
Lower secondary			
Not completed	5	4	6
Completed	4	3	5
Upper secondary			
Not completed	1	1	2
Completed	2	2	3
Higher education	2	2	3
Total	100	100	100

Source: 1995 Population Census (1997), National Statistical Centre.

**Table A2: Educational attainment (percentage) by province, 1995**

Province	Literacy rates 15 years old and above		Highest level of education (6 years and above)		
	Males	Females	None or primary not completed	Primary completed	Tertiary education
North					
Phongsaly	44.8	25.0	87.2	4.9	1.0
Luangnamtha	46.6	19.6	87.9	5.1	1.2
Oudomxay	59.8	24.3	88.4	5.4	0.7
Bokeo	56.8	27.3	85.9	6.7	0.7
Luangprabang	68.3	38.5	81.8	8.1	1.7
Huaphanh	71.0	40.8	80.4	9.8	0.9
Xayabury	75.2	54.8	71.3	15.8	1.9
Centre					
Vientiane M.	92.2	78.9	46.1	15.7	7.2
Vientiane	83.6	60.7	63.1	15.1	2.9
Xaysomboon S.R.	69.5	30.9	80.3	8.8	2.5
Borikhamxay	77.6	52.6	73.6	12.8	1.8
Khammuane	70.7	43.1	77.9	9.3	1.4
Savannakhet	70.2	43.6	76.0	9.7	1.8
Xiengkhuang	73.7	47.1	74.4	11.2	1.8
South					
Saravane	65.7	35.2	83.4	8.1	0.9
Sekong	55.9	24.0	89.1	4.0	1.8
Champasack	84.7	59.4	69.4	14.4	1.9
Attapeu	69.2	37.2	84.8	5.9	1.1
Total	73.5	47.9	73.4	10.9	2.3

Source: 1995 Population Census (1997), National Statistical Centre.

**Table A3: Tertiary education: enrolment and breakdown by level, 1996**

	GNP per capita 1997 (US\$)	(1)	(2)	(3)	ISCED 5	(4) ISCED 6	ISCED 7
Laos	400	260	2.8	1.7	59	41	..
Cambodia	300	85	1.2	0.5	..	100	..
China	860	473	5.6	3.9	44	52	4
Indonesia	1 110	1 157	11.3	8.0	29	71 (levels 6+7)	
Malaysia	4 530	1 048	11.7	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Myanmar	300*	590	5.4	6.7	96 (levels 5+6)		4
Philippines	1 200	2 958	29.0	32.7	95 (levels 5+6)		5
Singapore	32 810	2 730	38.5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Thailand	2 740	2 252	22.1	n.a.	23	73	4
Vietnam	310	678	6.9	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

1) Number of students per 100,000 inhabitants

2) Gross enrolment ratio (%)

3) Female gross enrolment ratio (%)

4) % of students by ISCED level (International Standard Classification of Education)

Level 5: first stage of tertiary education, of the type that leads to an award not equivalent to a first university degree

Level 6: first stage of tertiary education, of the type that leads to a first university level or equivalent

Level 7: second stage of tertiary education, of the type that leads to a postgraduate degree or equivalent

\* IMF estimate for 1998/1999.

Source: World Education Report 2000, UNESCO Publishing, Paris.

**Table A4: Distribution of graduates by field of study (percentage), 1996**

	Education	Percentage of graduates by field of study			
		Humanities	Law and social sciences	Natural sciences engin. & agric.	Medical sciences
Laos	28	7	13	38	11
China	28	8	22	35	6
Indonesia	14	7	50	27	2
Myanmar	-	61	9	30	-
Philippines	15	6	31	28	19
Singapore	7	33	(hum. + law and soc. sc.)	58	3
Thailand	7	7	56	18	11

Source: World Education Report 2000, UNESCO Publishing, Paris.

**Table A5: Public expenditure on education, 1996**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)		
					primary	secondary	tertiary
Laos	2.5	10.3	84.7	63	54.9	26.4	7.9
Cambodia	2.9	n.a.	63.5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
China	2.3	n.a.	87.5	67	37.4	32.2	15.6
Malaysia	5.2	15.4	81.2	85	37.3	35.5	20.2
Myanmar	1.2	14.4	78.0	19	47.7	40.3	11.7
Philippines	3.2	17.6	86.4	14	54.7	23.5	17.8
Singapore	3.0	23.4	76.0	31	25.7	34.6	34.8
Thailand	4.8	n.a.	75.2	26	50.4	20.0	16.4
Vietnam	2.9	n.a.	93.4	89	43.0	26.0	22.0

1) As percentage of GNP.

2) As percentage of government expenditure.

3) Current expenditure as percentage of total public expenditure on education.

4) Current expenditure per pupil in tertiary education as percentage of GNP per capita.

5) Percentage distribution of current expenditure (primary and pre-primary; secondary; tertiary). The total may not add to 100 due to expenditure on other types of education and/or expenditure not distributed by type of education.

Source: World Education Report 2000, UNESCO Publishing, Paris.

Figure A1: The Lao Provinces



## List of persons interviewed (in alphabetic order)

- Bouppha Phonephet, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Education, Department Higher, Technical and Vocational Education.
- Bostrand Lisbeth, First Secretary, Embassy of Sweden.
- Chanthala Khamthanh, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Education.
- Keorodom Bounpong, Director, Academic Affairs Office, National University of Laos.
- Khouanvichit Souphab, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, National University of Laos.
- Khounsavath Phetsamone, Dean, Faculty of Philology, National University of Laos.
- Kouonsavath Thongphanh, Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, National University of Laos.
- Insisienmay Bounthavy, Director of Cabinet, Ministry of Education.
- Mangnomek Somkot, Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, National University of Laos.
- Mellet Dominique, Advisor in Economics, Department of Economics and Business Administration, National University of Laos.
- Mitaray Sikhamtah, Director, Department of Planning and Cooperation, Ministry of Education.
- Nouansavanh Khamlusa, Dean, Faculty of Economics and Management, National University of Laos.
- Pathammavong Souksamone, Head of International Relations, Faculty of Law and Political Science, National University of Laos.
- Paphatsalang Boun Oum, Dean, Faculty of Law & Political Science, National University of Laos.
- Rattanaavong Houmphanh, Head, Institute for Cultural Research, Ministry of Information and Culture.
- Saignaleuth Soukkongseng, Dean, Faculty of Forestry, National University of Laos.
- Sayasone Kham Ane, Dean, Faculty of Education, National University of Laos.
- Sengmany Kongsy, Director of Cabinet, National University of Laos.
- Svengsuksa Bouakhaykhone, Dean, Faculty of Science, National University of Laos.
- Thiraphouth Khambone, Vice Director, Institute for Cultural Research, Ministry of Information and Culture.
- Thovisouk Bounsai, Dean, Faculty of Medical Sciences, National University of Laos.
- Vongdara Bosengkham, Rector, National University of Laos.

# Appendix A

## Terms of reference for a preliminary survey on research and higher education in Laos

### 1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

One of the fundamental tasks of Sida's Department for Research Cooperation, SAREC, is to provide assistance for strengthening of national research capacity. Sida recognises the national responsibility for development of higher education and research.

The Sida research co-operation aims to support the build up of sustainable conditions for research and research administration, involving research of high relevance for the development of the country in question. In this context research universities and national research councils are considered by Sida as key institutions.

The system of higher education and research vary from country to country. Sida's support for research development is therefore flexible and is tailored to match the local institutional conditions. For instance, support of national research councils may imply strengthening of planning functions and research administration. At universities it may imply staff development by training of lecturers and researchers to the level of PhD, contribution to faculty funds for research, equipment of laboratories and transferring of modern methodologies. The support may also imply the establishment of structures for evaluation of research and strengthening of financial administration systems. Improvement of library facilities also form part of the research support.

#### *1.1 Surveys on research higher education*

In order to plan for and shape bilateral research co-operation as a strategic contribution, Sida needs access to relevant information on research systems in co-operating countries. In some cases, special surveys are conducted, compiling available data into overviews and analysis.

The purpose of such surveys is to provide an orientation about functions and finances of the national research systems and serve as a background for discussions on support to universities and research councils.

#### *1.2 Sida supported co-operation with Laos*

Sida co-operation with Laos involves support to the forestry, the road, the health and the legal sectors, statistics and environmental management. Support to the newly established National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) is under preparation as well as support to the Faculty of Law and Administration at the National University of Laos. Several studies of the education sector have been undertaken, which however have not included higher education and research. Emphasis has so far been given to the teacher's education but other areas may be considered.

## 2 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE SURVEY

The purpose of this study is to (i) present a comprehensive summary of the structure of higher education and research in Laos, with a description of the mandate and activities carried out; (ii) list current research capacity and various sources of financing from within Laos as well as external sources of funding; (iii) present major constraints in the system, and (iv) comment on strategies and plans for complementing and developing the sector of higher education and research.

The report from this study is expected to serve as background information for Sida in a dialogue concerning possible support for research co-operation in Laos. The report should cover the following items:

### *2.1 Description and assessment of the system of higher education and research in Laos*

- The organisation of higher education and research in Laos.
- The mandate and the role of the National University of Laos and other institutions of higher education such as NAFRI (National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute). The role of each of the organisations and how they interact should be described.
- The academic level and capacity for research at the university.
- Description of other research institutions and their capacity.
- An overview of internal sources of research funding in Laos with details of the type of research funded and an estimation of the levels of funding.
- An overview of external interest in higher education and research and the activities carried out. Are these separate undertakings or part of development programmes and projects? Details of the type of research funded and an estimation of the levels of funding should be outlined.
- Description of research management at NUOL, administrative capacity and funding resources.
- Description of the main international research bodies and programmes operating in Laos and their relationship with local research structures.
- Description of training offered outside Laos and their organisation and financing.
- Description of plans and priorities set by the government.
- Description of ongoing competitive strategies that may affect the development of research capacity in Laos, especially the development of NUOL.
- Description of plans and priorities set by external donors, their strategies for training including training abroad and long-term strategies for development of higher education and research.

## 2.2 Needs and potential interest in support for research and research training

In the light of findings from the study, the criteria indicated in the “General background” and in view of the present situation in NUOL, the consultant should:

- Comment on the direction of current initiatives and plans for research development.
- Comment on the potential for development of a research university.
- Comment on the interest for external support in this development process.
- Identify major constraints in the system of higher education and research in Laos.
- Make recommendations for the optimal use of external sources for the sustained development of higher education and research in Laos.
- Identify possible strategic areas of co-operation and, within these areas, look at the prerequisites for and interest in co-operating with Sweden.
- Consider collaboration with other Sida supported programmes, both regional and national, and look at the prerequisites for close co-operation in a strategic and long-term perspective.

The consultant is free to add and comment upon issues of relevance to the higher education and research in Laos apart from that which has been described in the Terms of Reference.

## 3 METHODOLOGY AND TIME TABLE

The study will be carried out by a consultant.

In order to perform the study the consultant shall:

- Review existing data at Sida and NUOL and complement this with the appropriate investigations.
- The consultant shall present and discuss findings and tentative conclusions with the representatives of the main institutions before presentation of the final report.
- The consultant shall discuss the findings of the evaluation with Sida before the report is finalised.

It is expected that the consultant will complete the evaluation within 21 days out of which 14 should be spent in Laos and 7 in Sweden.

## 4 REPORTING

The overview shall be written in English and should not exceed 15 pages, excluding annexes. Format and outline of the report shall follow the guidelines in *Sida Evaluation Report – a Standardized Format* (see Annex 1). 5 copies of the draft report shall be submitted to Sida no later than 2000-12-15. Within 4 weeks after receiving Sida’s comments on the draft report, a final version in 5 copies and on diskette shall be submitted to Sida. Subject to decision by Sida, the report will be published and distributed as a publication within the Sida Evaluations series. The survey report shall be written in Word 97 for Windows (or in a compatible format) and should be presented in a way that enables publication without further editing.

The survey should begin with an executive summary and close with a section of conclusions and recommendations.







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