Plan International Laos
LEARN PROJECT REPORT

CONSULTATIONS ON EDUCATION WITH CHILDREN AND ADULTS IN ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES IN OUROMXAY PROVINCE, LAO PDR

Claire O’Kane
February 2016
Consultations on Education with Children and Adults in Ethnic Minority Communities in Oudomxay Province, Lao PDR

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Claire O’Kane, International Consultant
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Executive Summary

Introduction: Education has been recognized in poverty reduction plans as a cornerstone for promoting economic development and establishing the human resource base required for economic transformation and exit from the Least Developed Country status by 2020. Yet, troubling education patterns are often the norm in rural and remote ethnic minority communities in Lao PDR, particularly for girls. This includes failure to enrol or late enrolment in primary school, high rates of temporary dropout and repetition in the early grades, and poor early grades learning outcomes in core subjects like Lao language and mathematics. Analysis of recent household surveys has revealed that demand-side factors such as children’s lack of interest in schooling (as stated by their parents) may be driving these patterns more than supply-side constraints (World Bank, 2016). In addition, consultations with DESB staff by Plan have shown that seasonal agricultural patterns are a key driver of problematic participation patterns in these communities, but while general information exists on this phenomenon, there is a dearth of information from the perspective of ethnic minority children and women in particular.

As part of the LEARN project, Plan International and Save the Children International undertook consultations with children, parents, and other community and education sector stakeholders in Oudomxay Province of Lao PDR in November and December 2015 to learn more about children’s interest in and demand for education, the value that different groups place on children’s education, their goals and aspirations for children’s education. The consultations also explored how supply factors such as the quality of education interact with demand for education, and how factors such as gender, ethnicity and disability are at play. In addition to filling a gap in knowledge about value and demand for education at the community level, the consultations broke significant new ground in Lao PDR by seeking the views and experiences of very young children, ages four and up, through the use of innovative, play-based data collection methodologies.

Methodology: Consultations were organised with children and adults in five communities in Namor district (Oudomxay province) representing a mix of rural and remote locations: 2 Khmu communities, 2 Hmong communities, and 1 community with mixed ethnicity (Khmu, Hmong and Lao-Tai). Local research team members included: Plan staff, DESB staff (Khmu and Hmong), Hmong and Khmu graduates from the teacher training college, and an international consultant. Qualitative research using child and user-friendly consultation tools (such as body map, fishing game, child-led tours, draw and write, problem tree, seasonal map, interviews, etc.) were used with girls and boys of different ages, as well as with mothers, fathers, caregivers, VEDC members, teachers, school directors and other key stakeholders.

During the consultations more than 45 Focus Group Discussions were organised using participatory tools with different groups of: girls or boys aged 4-10 years and 11-13 years; mothers and female caregivers; fathers and male caregivers; VEDC members; and teachers. In addition, interviews were undertaken with school directors, village heads, mothers, fathers, and caregivers, and DESB officials (16 men, 9 women). 334 people were consulted including 107 boys and 105 girls, 70 men and 52 women. 128 of the children consulted were aged 4-10 years (63 boys, 65 girls) and 84 children (44 boys, 40 girls) were aged 11-13 years.\(^1\)

Key findings and themes from the consultations are presented in 5 sections:

1. Value for children’s education among parents and other stakeholders, including children’s own interest in education
2. Key barriers contributing to non-enrolment, school dropout, repetition and poor learning outcomes; and factors that enable enrolment and children’s education opportunities
3. Key positive and negative aspects of schools, learning and teaching practices
4. Impact of non-school enrolment, repetition, or school dropout on children, families, communities and society

\(^1\) Although one out of school boy who was consulted was 15 years old. The remaining 43 boys were aged 11-13 years.
5. Key recommendations to improve opportunities for all girls and boys to regularly go to school and to improve schools for better learning outcomes

The first section reveals findings concerning the value for children’s education among parents and other stakeholders, including children’s own interest in education with attention to age, gender, disability and other factors. Parent and caregiver’s value for education is one of the most significant variables influencing opportunities for girls and boys to enrol in school and attend school regularly. Parents and caregivers who recognise the importance of education make efforts to save money for school uniforms and materials at the start of the school year; they encourage their sons and daughters to attend school regularly, and they show interest in their child’s learning. However, a number of factors including poverty, gender beliefs, seasonal work, distance to and quality of schooling available, and other factors interact and impact on parents and caregiver’s choices and opportunities to support their sons and daughters’ education in preschool, primary school and secondary school.

The majority of parents and caregivers who were consulted described the importance of education for their sons and daughters, especially in relation to primary school education. Primary education is identified as important for both girls and boys to be literate, to gain knowledge, and to have better jobs and improved opportunities in the future.

Value for pre-primary school is mixed due to different attitudes regarding the age at which girls and boys should start school. Some parents prefer to take young children to the plantations with them, or to leave them at home with grandparents. Some children, especially girls who are kept at home to help look after younger siblings, may be enrolled in primary school at a later age, and are not sent to pre-school. However, some parents, caregivers, VEDC members and DESB officials place particular value on pre-school education as it creates an important opportunity for children in ethnic minority communities to learn Lao language before starting grade 1 primary school, thus enhancing school readiness and learning outcomes.

Value for and enrolment in junior secondary school is lower in rural and remote communities, particularly for girls. School directors, teachers, fathers, mothers, and VEDC members in both Khmu and Hmong communities described how some parents and caregivers question the returns of education investments, as even more-educated children find it hard to compete with children from better off families to secure good jobs, and thus do not earn more than less-educated children. Gender beliefs and attitudes also contribute to less value for girls’ education. Mothers, fathers and other community stakeholders tend to believe that boys have more potential to get better jobs, to earn more and they are more likely to support their extended family members in the future, compared with girls who may be expected to marry and move to their in-laws’ families.

Parents have limited value for the education of children with disabilities and disability is a barrier to children’s education. While some children with disabilities are going to primary school, children with disabilities are less likely to attend secondary school. Furthermore, parents, caregivers and VEDC members mentioned that no additional support is provided to families of children with disabilities, nor to teachers to support inclusive education. In addition, a few children, a mother and a father revealed how children with disabilities face teasing and discrimination from other children; and some teachers are also insensitive to their psychological and physical needs.

The majority of girls and boys value education. Girls and boys of different ages and ethnic groups (Khmu, Hmong, Lao-Thai) expressed their interest to study, to be literate and to gain knowledge. Boys and girls have aspirations to get good and stable jobs in future. Girls and boys are also motivated to go to school in order to: Play with their friends; wear the school uniform and have school materials and pocket money for snacks in school; and eat the school meals. Some girls and boys also mentioned that school provides a welcome alternative to working in the plantations or doing housework. However, some young children expressed hesitation to go to pre-school as they had fears about how other children and the teacher will treat them in the school, and concern about having to stay in a classroom, as they prefer to play outside. Furthermore, in each community (A-D) some adults (mothers, fathers and teachers) and boys described how some boys are less interested in study as they prefer to play and they do not like the rules in school.
Furthermore, in one Hmong community (D), a few 12-year-old girls also described how some girls prefer to watch TV, and how adolescent girls become interested in boys which distracts them from their studies.

The second section of findings focuses on key barriers contributing to non-enrolment, school dropout, repetition and poor learning outcomes with attention to age, gender, sibling order, family income, seasons, disability, school infrastructure, quality of teaching, and other factors. There is a strong interplay among these different factors, thus multiple strategies and practical actions are required to strengthen learning opportunities for all girls and boys to go to school regularly and have good learning outcomes.

Family poverty creates significant barriers to school enrolment and regular attendance in school, especially in families with a lot of children. Some families delay enrolling their children in pre-school or primary school when they do not have sufficient funds available. Other families manage to enrol their children, but face challenges in sending their children to school throughout the school year due to limited resources. In poor families with a lot of children, parents often make choices and decisions about which children to invest in for their education, and such decisions are influenced by gender beliefs contributing to increased risks of girls being withdrawn from school. Children’s expressions also illustrated how living with poverty negatively affects children’s confidence, particularly in communities where there is more ethnic or income diversity.

The majority of children juggle school, household chores and work in the plantations during different seasons. Some children, especially girls who are the elder siblings, are requested to miss or drop out of school to take care of their younger siblings while their parents go out to work on the plantations. Being an older sibling increases the risks of temporary or permanent school dropout.

Gender beliefs and practices in Khmu, Hmong and multi-ethnic communities contribute to less value placed on education for girls. There are however interesting interactions between gender, age, children’s agency, socialisation of girls and boys, and poverty. Girls are less likely than boys to be supported by their families to attend secondary school due to traditional beliefs and practices relating to marriage, as well as the role of girls to help with housework and siblings. However, the consultations also revealed that in primary schools, boys are more likely to choose to attend school irregularly than girls, due to boys’ increased independence and interests in playing. In contrast, teachers and a father in Khmu communities A and B described their observation that girls are more obedient and do what their parents and teachers tell them to do. Disability, poor health or death of a family member affects children’s care and education opportunities. Furthermore, children living with relatives as caregivers face increased risks of non-school enrolment, irregular school attendance or dropout if their caregivers do not value their educational needs, especially if the caregivers are poor and/or if they prioritise their own children’s education.

Seasons and seasonal work affect girls and boys’ attendance at schools. Parents, teachers and school directors described how children are more likely to attend school regularly at the start of the school year as parents have made efforts to save and put aside money to purchase the school uniform cloth and stationary for their sons and daughters. During certain seasons, such as during plantation time (March to May) and harvesting time (October to December), parents have too much work to do by themselves, thus they temporarily withdraw their sons and daughters from school either to help them with the plantation work or with the household work. Cold, wet, and hot weather seasons also affect children’s attendance at school. During the winter season a few adults (parents and a village head) mentioned that children from poor families, particularly younger children, may not go to school if they do not have warm coats. Some children from community C also drew and wrote about their preference to stay at home by a fire during the cold season in order to keep warm. Girls, boys, mothers, fathers, and a village head also described how children find it hard to reach school during the rainy season if the pathways are too muddy, or if they have to cross a river to reach school. Such challenges are particularly hard for younger children. Furthermore, mothers and fathers mentioned that there are increased risks of ill-health, including malaria, during the rainy season. A teacher from Hmong community C and a father from Khmu community B also mentioned that during the hot seasons children may miss school in order to swim in the river.

Some children (especially girls and boys from Hmong community C and D), and adults (mothers, fathers, teachers and VEDC members, especially in Khmu community A and Hmong community C) described how some parents do not show much interest in their children’s learning and homework, which can de-motivate
children to study and can contribute to indiscipline, poor learning or school dropout. Some parents are too busy with their work to find time to show interest in children’s study. Some parents do not feel confident to monitor or help their children with their study, as they themselves are not literate and do not write in Lao language. Furthermore, some teachers and parents mentioned how it is difficult for children from ethnic minorities to understand the lessons when they first join pre-school or primary school, as the lessons are explained in the national language, Lao. In addition, teachers and DESB officials mentioned that children who do not have the chance to attend pre-primary school, especially girls or boys who start school at a later age, face increased risks of poor learning and repetition.

Limited education budgets, poor school infrastructure and challenges in school management contribute to poor learning outcomes. Most of the schools visited had insufficient numbers of teachers; classrooms; tables and benches for the students; textbooks and learning materials (including games for pre-school age children); water and sanitation systems; and fences surrounding the school. Limited budget allocations to DESBs also negatively affect monitoring and provision of pedagogical and management support to schools. While Village Education Development Committees (VEDCs) are functioning, they are relatively weak in making substantial contributions to school management and monitoring of teaching practices.

Weaknesses in teaching practices affect the quality of education, children’s motivation to learn, and children’s learning outcomes. Adults (parents, VEDC members, village heads, DESB officials, school directors and some teachers themselves) acknowledged that some teachers have poor subject knowledge on at least some of the subjects that they were teaching for varied reasons including having insufficient opportunities for training in new teaching methodologies; having to teach many subjects and age groups; having too many students in one class; and no pay or low pay of recent graduate teachers during the first four years of internships.

Girls and boys of all ages described how they did not like it when teachers were angry, when they scolded them, complained, or treated children unfairly. Boys also described their dislike of physical and humiliating forms of punishment from the teacher. Both children and mothers provide examples about how negative treatment by teachers lowers children’s interest in attending school and studying, and contributes to temporary and permanent school dropout.

The third section of findings reveals positive and negative aspects of schools, learning and teaching practices from children, parents and caregivers, VEDC members, teachers and local government officials’ perspectives. Many of the positive and negative aspects of schools are mirrored opposites of one another, for example that children like kind teachers, and they dislike unkind teachers who scold, complain and express their anger. Furthermore, in many of the communities both positive and negative aspects were revealed by different stakeholders. Key headings relating to positive and negative aspects included ease of access to school; school budgets; number of teachers and quality of teaching practices; teaching and learning materials; school infrastructure; water, sanitation and hygiene in schools; sports and play areas and trees for shade; teacher’s behaviour and ways of disciplining children; children’s motivation and interest in learning; friendships and negative behaviour among children; and stakeholder engagement in education policy and practice decision-making and school management.

The fourth section reveals the perceived impact of non-school enrolment, repetition, or school dropout on children, families, communities and society. One positive impact of not going to school is that children are more available to help their families with household, agricultural and income generation work. However, wider negative impacts of poor education and school dropout were shared by children and adults. Poor education leads to continued cycles of illiteracy and poverty in the poorest families; increased risks of unemployment and difficulties in finding stable jobs; social difficulties among uneducated children, which contributes to frustration, alcohol use among boys and men, violence, and crime; increased risks of crime and insecurity in communities and society as more people are unaware of the laws of the country; and slow community development.

In the fifth section, recommendations to increase opportunities for all girls and boys to go to school regularly and to improve schools for better learning outcomes are shared. 12 key recommendations have
been identified and for each recommendation some specific tasks for the LEARN project are described. The 12 recommendations include:

1. Advocacy with the Ministry of Education and Sports to:
   a) increase district and school education budgets;
   b) adapt existing education practices to help children who do not speak Lao at home to learn Lao more effectively in pre-school and grade 1; and
   c) consider flexible policies which would enable DESBs in each district to adapt the school calendar to fit the most intensive seasonal work periods

2. Advocacy with relevant Ministries, international and local agencies to provide social protection schemes, educational scholarships and grants to the most vulnerable families

3. Increased technical and financial support from international organisations for pre-primary and primary education

4. Support the establishment of a pre-primary classes in every community

5. Build permanent schools with good infrastructure, including adequate water and sanitation services

6. Ensure that teachers and students have access to sufficient teaching and learning materials, including games, reading books, music and sports materials

7. Improve teacher training both in the teacher training colleges in the provinces and through in-service training; and integrate training on positive discipline, gender sensitivity and inclusive education into teacher training curricula and in-service training

8. Increase awareness, support and services to support attendance and improved learning opportunities for children with disabilities

9. Increase awareness-raising among parents and caregivers on child development, gender equality, inclusive education and positive discipline to increase the importance of pre-school education, primary education and secondary education for all girls and boys

10. Provide practical guidance to mothers, fathers, and caregivers to demonstrate their interest in their daughter's and son's study; and support non-formal education of mothers, fathers and caregivers in rural and remote communities

11. Develop a “Best VEDC Award Scheme” and strengthen capacity of VEDC members to enhance their active role in school management including improved monitoring and support to teachers and students to improve learning outcomes

12. Increase opportunities for community and child participation in school governance processes and opportunities to create safe and inclusive child friendly schools.
Conclusions: The consultations have clearly identified that the majority of children from Khmu, Hmong and mixed ethnic communities are indeed interested in education. Girls and boys of different ages and ethnic groups expressed their interest to study, to be literate and to gain knowledge. Boys and girls have aspirations to get good and stable jobs in future, and they appreciated their teachers for sharing knowledge with them. In Hmong communities, children particularly appreciated opportunities to learn Lao language. However, across different ethnic groups, boys aged 6-13 years old are more likely to report missing school out of their own choice, as some boys prefer to play with their friends and do not like the rules in school. Efforts to increase boys (and even girls') interest in school could include increased efforts by parents and caregivers to monitor and encourage children’s study and regular attendance at school; increasing opportunities for children to be involved in school governance, including opportunities to develop and monitor implementation of the school rules; and increased efforts by teachers to use interactive teaching methods and positive discipline approaches. Furthermore, ongoing awareness raising is required with mothers, fathers, caregivers and VEDC members regarding the value of girls’ education, to support girls’ timely enrolment in pre-school and primary school, and to reduce risks of girls being withdrawn from school in order to help with household work or care of younger siblings.

Parents’ and caregivers’ beliefs and attitudes regarding the value of education are critical to their motivation and efforts to save the necessary resources to enrol and support their children’s school attendance, and to show interest in and support for children’s study during and after school. Poverty; socio-cultural attitudes towards children; gender; sibling order; children’s interests and experiences in school; disability; ill health or death of a family members; seasonal labour; as well as limitations in education budgets, school infrastructure and teachers’ behaviour create barriers for school enrolment, regular attendance and good learning outcomes. There is a strong interplay among these different factors, thus the LEARN project will need multiple strategies and practical actions to strengthen learning opportunities for all girls and boys to go to school regularly and to have strong learning outcomes.
Introduction and Methodology

Introduction to the background and purpose of the consultations

Education has been recognized in poverty reduction plans as a cornerstone for promoting economic development and establishing the human resource base required for economic transformation and exit from Least Developed Country status by 2020. The major trends in education sector policies and strategic plans over the past decade have included concerted efforts to achieve full enrolment in basic education and increase primary school survival and completion rates through enhanced quality of education provision (St. George, 2015). Lao PDR has made impressive strides towards improved educational access and participation for children in recent years. Five years of basic education became free and compulsory in 1996. The Gross Enrolment Rate in pre-primary education has steadily risen over the past decade, from 8% in 20014 to 26% in 2013 (MOES, 2012). At a national level, Lao PDR has achieved a 98.6% Primary Net Enrolment Rate, slightly above the Millennium Development Goal target for 2015. Furthermore, Early Childhood Development is a nascent but increasingly important sector in Lao PDR. MOES has made it a policy priority to establish a one-year, nationwide school readiness program for pre-primary children ages 5-6 before they enter primary school.

However, a primary Gross Enrolment Rate of 123% indicates that significant numbers of students are not the correct age for their grade (MOES, 2012). Troubling education patterns are often the norm in rural and remote ethnic minority communities in Lao PDR, particularly for girls. This includes failure to enrol or late enrolment in primary school, high rates of temporary dropout and repetition in the early grades, and poor early grades learning outcomes in core subjects like Lao language and mathematics. Analysis of recent household surveys has revealed that demand-side factors such as children’s lack of interest in schooling (as stated by their parents) may be driving these patterns more than supply-side constraints (World Bank, 2014). In addition, consultations with DESB staff by Plan have shown that seasonal agricultural patterns are a key driver of problematic participation patterns in these communities, but while general information exists on this phenomenon, there is a dearth of information from the perspective of ethnic minority children and women in particular.

Plan International Laos and Save the Children International in Laos are collaborating with education authorities in Lao PDR to implement the LEARN Project, an action research project funded by Dubai Cares to reduce dropout and repetition and improve children’s learning outcomes in the early years of primary school through school readiness and teacher training interventions. As part of the LEARN project, Plan International and Save the Children International undertook consultations with children, parents, and other community and education sector stakeholders in Oudomxay Province of Lao PDR in November and December 2015. The purpose of the consultations was to investigate demand issues related to education from the perspectives of local stakeholders. In particular, Plan and Save the Children sought to learn more about children’s interest in and demand for education, the value that different groups place on children’s education, their goals and aspirations for children’s education. The consultations also explored how supply factors such as the quality of education interact with demand for education, and how different groups are engaged in education decision-making. In addition, the consultations explored how factors such as gender, ethnicity and disability are at play in these issues.

See Annex A: Terms of Reference
The information gathered through the consultations is being used to inform and refine Plan and Save the Children’s education and child development programming in the target areas to ensure that the organisations are effectively addressing supply and demand factors from local points of view. The broad questions that drove the consultations included the following, which were triangulated from various perspectives:

- Are children “interested” in education and are they active participants in their education experiences? Why or why not? How does this differ for different ages, genders, locations and ethnicities of children?
- How does children’s participation in education vary according to the season, and how does this differ for different ages, genders, locations and ethnicities of children?

Child and user friendly consultation tools were developed to explore these broad questions, as well as more specific questions concerning different stakeholders’ views about education for girls and boys of different ages; and the positive and negative aspects of schools, teaching and learning practices. Furthermore, child and adult stakeholders were consulted about their ideas and recommendations to improve education opportunities for all girls and boys in their communities.3

**Methodology**

The consultation methodology was influenced by the consultation purpose and research questions; perceptions of children and adults; as well as by more pragmatic issues including availability of time, budget and resources to access and organise consultations with children and adults in remote ethnic minority communities, with particular attention to forming and building the capacity of local research teams including women and men with the right balance of local language skills and experience of working with children.

Adults and children of different ages were perceived as social actors with knowledge and insights into their own situation and needs. Attention to gender sensitivity and the different perspectives of males and females led to the formation of local research teams involving male and female facilitators, and organisation of separate consultation activities with girls, boys, mothers and female caregivers, fathers and male caregivers. Moreover, in recognition that children and adults from ethnic minority communities (Khmu, Hmong, and/or mixed Lao-Tai, Khmu and Hmong ethnic groups) would be able to communicate more effectively in their own language, sincere efforts were made to form local research teams with male and female facilitators who could speak Khmu, Hmong and/or Lao. The local research teams included Plan staff members; government staff from the Namor and Nga Department of Education and Sports Bureaus (DESBs) who were from either Khmu or Hmong ethnic groups; graduates from the local teacher training college (TTC) who were from either Khmu or Hmong ethnic groups; and the international consultant.

Initially, plans were underway to organise consultations with children and adults in different ethnic minority communities in both Oudomxay Province and in Luang Prabang province. However, primarily due to restrictions in budget and staff time, the consultations were restricted to Oudomxay Province. Consultations were conducted in Namor District, Oudomxay Province. The field work was organised over a three-week period in late November and early December, and a total of five communities were reached,

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3 See Annex B: Facilitator’s Guide
representing a mix of rural and remote locations, some with and some without a pre-primary class, and covering at least three different ethnic groups (Khmu, Hmong and Lao-Tai). The local research team spent 1.5 days in communities A, B and C; and 1 day in communities D & E.

The local research team consisted of women and men with different skills and languages including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team member</th>
<th>Male/ Female</th>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>Week 1 (Preparation, training, and piloting in mixed ethnic community E)</th>
<th>Week 2 (Consultations in Khmu communities A &amp; B)</th>
<th>Week 3 (Consultations in Hmong communities C &amp; D)</th>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Khmu, Lao Tai</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARN Project District Coordinator (Namor)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Lao-Tai</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARN Project District Coordinator (Nga)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Lao-Tai, English</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher training college graduate</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Khmu, Lao-Tai</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher training college graduate</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Khmu, Lao-Tai</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher training college graduate</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Hmong, Lao-Tai</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher training college graduate</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hmong, Lao-Tai</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Facilitator’s Guide (see Annex B) was developed in English and translated into Lao for use by the local research team members. A Documentation Guide was also developed to support systematic documentation of the consultation findings, and to gather key information concerning each community visited (see Annex C). The Facilitators Guide included:

- Guidance to apply the nine basic requirements to ensure effective and ethical participation of children, namely that participation is 1) transparent and informative; 2) voluntary; 3) respectful; 4) relevant; 5) child-friendly; 6) inclusive; 7) supported by training for adults; 8) safe and sensitive to risk; and 9) accountable.
- An overview of proposed consultation tools and how they link to the key consultation questions and stakeholder groups;
- An overview of the schedule indicating which consultation tools may be used with which groups;
- Step-by-step details of each proposed consultation tool: Body Map (likes/dislikes of school), School Map, Fishing Game, Fish swimming with/against the current, Draw and Write or Puppets, Child Led Tour, Body Map (likes/dislikes out of school children), Seasonal Map, Problem Tree, Interviews, and focus group discussions.
Application of the basic requirements for effective and ethical participation included attention to adherence to child safeguarding policies by the local research team members; transparent information sharing about the purpose of the consultations with communities (adults and children); and use of informed consent forms for each child and adult.

**Overview of consultation tools and their links to more specific consultation questions for different stakeholders**

The tools were used to seek answers to various consultation questions with different groups of stakeholders, as described in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultation Questions</th>
<th>Consultation Tool</th>
<th>Key Stakeholders organizing separate discussions with males and females wherever possible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are girls’ and boys’ school experiences?</td>
<td>Fishing Game exploring children’s experiences,</td>
<td>Younger children (5-7 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent are girls and boys interested in school?</td>
<td>likes and dislikes at school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do girls and boys like and dislike about school?</td>
<td>Body Map exploring likes/ dislikes at school</td>
<td>Primary school and Junior secondary school (JSS) students in separate girls and boys groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are parents/ caregivers views about the strengths and weaknesses of the local schools?</td>
<td>School Map exploring likes and dislikes at school, and suggestions to improve</td>
<td>JSS students (separate girls and boys)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are their suggestions to improve children’s learning?</td>
<td>Child Led Tour to explore strengths and weaknesses of schools</td>
<td>Girls and boys (in or out of school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why are some girls and boys not enrolled in pre-school or primary school?</td>
<td>Interviews &amp;/or Focus Group Discussions</td>
<td>School Directors; teachers; Village Heads; mothers and female caregivers; fathers and male caregivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do some girls or boy not attend school regularly or have to repeat classes?</td>
<td>Problem tree exploring immediate and root causes of non-enrolment, poor learning and repetition; and the impact of poor learning on children, families and communities.</td>
<td>VEDC members; Mothers and female caregivers; fathers and male caregivers; Primary school and JSS children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do they think are the top reasons why children are not enrolled in school, drop out, or repeat classes</td>
<td>Draw (&amp; write) or Puppets to explore children’s positive and negative experiences of school</td>
<td>Younger children 5-7 (in school, and out of school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which girls and boys are more likely to go to school and to continue with an education? Why?</td>
<td>Fish swimming with or against the current exploring factors that make it easier or harder for children to go to school</td>
<td>Mothers and female caregivers; fathers and male caregivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which girls and boys find it difficult to enrol in school or to regularly go to school</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the barriers to going to school? What makes it harder to go to school for girls and for boys?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Junior Secondary School students (if time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does gender influence children’s access to and attendance in schools?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Out of school 8-12 year old children (if time)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Consultation Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Consultation Tool</th>
<th>Key Stakeholders organizing separate discussions with males and females wherever possible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does disability influence children’s access to and attendance in schools?</td>
<td></td>
<td>VEDC members, Mothers and female caregivers, fathers and male caregivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any seasons which make it easier or more difficult for girls and boys to regularly go to school? Why? How is it different for girls and boys? Are girls and boys of different ages affected by seasonal work in different ways? Why?</td>
<td>Seasonal Map exploring the roles and responsibilities of girls and boys of different ages during different seasons, and how this impacts on their study</td>
<td>JSS children or 8-12 year-old out-of-school children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do out of school girls and boys like and dislike about their lives?</td>
<td>Body Map likes/ dislikes of out of school children &amp; Child Led Tour</td>
<td>Out of school 8-12 year old girls &amp; boys (in separate groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happens to boys and girls who do not enrol in school or regularly attend school? What is the impact on children/ families/ communities/ society?</td>
<td>Problem Tree (see above)</td>
<td>VEDC members; Mothers and female caregivers; fathers and male caregivers; Primary school and JSS children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are children/ adults’ recommendations to increase opportunities for all girls and boys to regularly go to school, to improve schools, and children’s learning outcomes?</td>
<td>Interviews and FGD</td>
<td>School director; teachers; Village head; mothers and female caregivers; fathers and male caregivers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the first week of the field work all of the local research team members (Plan, DESBs and TTC graduates) were part of a 2.5 day training workshop⁴ that was facilitated by the international consultant to increase their knowledge, skills and confidence to facilitate and document the findings from consultations with children and adults in ethnic minority communities. The training also allowed an opportunity to pilot and refine some of the core consultation tools. Ongoing mentoring was provided to the local research team members by the consultant during the field work. Furthermore, each team member shared their key highlight and reflections on both the process and findings of the consultations at the end of field work in each community. This feedback was used to refine and adjust the field work plans to maximize effective and efficient use of the most relevant consultation tools with different stakeholder groups. Furthermore, due to the complexities of translating from local languages to Lao-Thai to English, these highlights also enabled the international consultant and the LEARN Project Director to gain more insight into some of the emerging findings during the field work.

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⁴ See Annex D Training Workshop Plan
An overview of the five communities where the consultations were organized

The target communities were selected to provide perspectives from a range of locations and ethnicities in the consultations, as described in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic groups in the community</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Pre-primary class</th>
<th>Primary School</th>
<th>Junior Secondary School</th>
<th>Main livelihood &amp; other relevant information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Khmu</td>
<td>Rural &amp; remote</td>
<td>Pre-primary class</td>
<td>Primary school was established in the village in 1976. It is a complete primary school grades 1-5.</td>
<td>Secondary school was also established in the village in 2013.</td>
<td>Rice plantations, corn fields, and animal husbandry. Travel was 1 hour from district town, accessible only by poor roads and needed to cross a river to reach the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Khmu</td>
<td>Rural &amp; remote</td>
<td>Pre-primary class</td>
<td>Primary school was established in the village in 2002. It is a complete primary school grades 1-5.</td>
<td>Secondary school is also in the village. It was supported by ADB and opened in 2009.</td>
<td>Rice plantations, corn fields, and animal husbandry. Travel was 1.5 hours from district town, accessible only by poor roads and needed to cross two rivers to reach the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Hmong</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>It has a pre-primary class and kindergarten in school grounds</td>
<td>Primary school was established within 1km of the village in 2003. It is a complete</td>
<td>Secondary school is also within 1km of the village</td>
<td>Rice plantations, corn fields, rubber trees, and animal husbandry. The community is rural, but only half an hour by a reasonable road from the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An overview of focus group discussions and interviews undertaken

During the consultations more than 45 Focus Group Discussions using participatory tools, plus 25 interviews, were undertaken. 334 people were consulted including 107 boys and 105 girls (aged 4 – 13 years), 70 men and 52 women. 128 of the children consulted were aged 4-10 years (63 boys, 65 girls) and 84 children (44 boys, 40 girls) were aged 11-13 years. The table below shows the number of times different consultations tools were used with groups of stakeholders, as well as the breakdown of interviews. More detailed information regarding the consultations with women, men, girls and boys of different ages and backgrounds from each of the communities (A – E) is available in Annex E.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool Used</th>
<th>Number of Focus Groups using this tool</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Only Male group</td>
<td>Only Female group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Map</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Map</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing Game</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-led tour</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw &amp; write</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish swimming with and against the current</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Tree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal Map</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Although just one out of school boy who was consulted was 15 years old. The remaining 43 boys were aged 11-13 years.
Transcription, Analysis and Reporting:
Findings from each of the consultations was transcribed in Lao, and later translated into English. An analytical framework was used to identify key emerging themes, sub-themes and disaggregated findings in relation to gender, age, ethnicity or other diversity factors. Local research team members were actively involved in a group analysis day at the end of week 2 field work in order to identify emerging themes, sub-themes and differences in findings. The team members also updated the analysis after week 3 data collection in Hmong communities.

Once all the transcripts were available in English, the international consultant reviewed all the detailed findings to update key findings in the analytical framework. The report was then drafted by the consultant, and opportunities were provided for staff from Plan, Save the Children and DESBs to review the report and to share comments informing the final version of the report.

Key limitations of the consultations
Primarily due to limited time and budget availability, the consultations were only carried out in rural and remote communities in one district in Oudomxay Province. Furthermore, 4 out of 5 of the communities visited had both pre-primary classes and a junior secondary school in the same community as the primary school. This was primarily due to an earlier intended design of the research methodology. The team anticipated that it would be challenging to consult with young children in the pre-primary age range (5-6 years old) and obtain meaningful information from them, given the language and socio-cultural barriers to children’s expression in rural communities in Laos. The original intent to help address this challenge was to engage junior secondary school students from the same community as the group facilitators with young children, with the expectation that young people would have more ability to engage on the same level as younger children from their community, and that the experience would be less intimidating to the younger children. This would also help with interpretation between Lao-speaking adult team members and Hmong or Khmu-speaking children, since the junior secondary students would speak the same language as the children. This approach required the team to select communities for inclusion in the study with a nearby junior secondary school where students could be identified to participate.

However, feedback from Save the Children regarding recent consultations with female youth for a separate project in Laos indicated that junior secondary students often did not have the ability to speak Lao well enough to be able to interpret effectively between Lao and children’s local language, nor to handle the advanced concepts and participatory methodologies required in the study (particularly due to the limited time available for training children as facilitators). Thus, the team made the decision to hire Hmong and Khmu-speaking recent Teacher Training College graduates as facilitators instead, as they are by nature educators who are trained to interact with children and are usually only in their early 20s themselves. Yet, due to the time pressures on the study, and the long processes required to obtain advance approval from the government to visit school and community sites for the study, it was not possible at that point to change the targeting to include more communities that did not have a junior secondary school. Although the sites with secondary schools were still remote and disadvantaged, the fact that they had a junior secondary school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Number of individuals interviewed</th>
<th>Interviews with i) head teachers, ii) village heads, iii) mothers and grandmothers, iv) fathers and grandfathers, v) VEDC members, vi) teachers, vii) DESB official.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
usually also meant that they had more extensive education infrastructure in general, typically including a pre-primary class. Despite the disadvantages of the situation, there were also some clear advantages to the targeting of communities that included junior secondary schools, because students from those schools were able to provide additional “insider” information on education patterns for girls and boys, and education challenges in their communities.

The involvement of TTC graduates and DESB staff from Khmu and Hmong communities as facilitators was extremely helpful. However, there were no team members who could directly translate from Khmu or Hmong language to English, and there was only one team member available to translate from Lao to English who was also actively engaged in undertaking interviews during the field work. Thus, during the consultations there were very limited opportunities for the international consultant to obtain translations about the details shared by girls, boys, women and men stakeholders in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Each team member shared key highlights at the end of the consultations in each community, and the consultant accessed the detailed findings after the field work once all the transcriptions had been translated into English. This caused limitations in terms of probing questions on emerging findings during the field work phase.

Furthermore, during these consultations it was relatively difficult to identify and organise consultations with out-of-school girls and boys, as community members (adults and children) indicated that the majority of children were attending school, particularly as it was relatively near to the start of the school year. Thus, it would be useful to conduct additional consultations in the middle or end of the school year to review if there are increased numbers of out of school children, and to seek the views of out of school children and their families. Whenever feasible it will also be helpful to conduct the consultations in communities in Luang Prabang to see if similar or different findings emerge, and to increase efforts to conduct additional consultations with children and adults in urban, rural and remote communities which do not have either pre-primary classes or secondary schools in the same community.
Key Findings

Key findings and themes from the consultations are presented in the following key sections:

1) **Value for children’s education among parents and other stakeholders, including children’s own interest in education** with attention to age, gender, disability and other factors.

2) **Key barriers contributing to non-enrolment, school dropout, repetition and poor learning outcomes; and factors that enhance enrolment and children’s education opportunities** with attention to age, gender, sibling order, family income, seasons, disability, school infrastructure, quality of teaching, and other factors.

3) **Key positive and negative aspects of schools, learning and teaching practices** from children, parents/caregivers, VEDC members, teachers and local government official perspectives.

4) **Impact of non-school enrolment, repetition, or school dropout on children, families, communities and society**

5) **Recommendations to increase opportunities for all girls and boys to regularly go to school, to improve schools for better learning outcomes.**

Consultation with girls in Hmong community D
Value for children’s education among parents and other stakeholders, including children’s own interest in education

Parent and caregiver value for education is one of the most significant variables influencing opportunities for girls and boys to enrol in school (pre-school, primary school and junior secondary school), and to attend school regularly. Even when challenged by family poverty, parents who recognise the importance of primary education make efforts to save money for school uniform and materials at the start of the school year; they encourage their sons and daughters to attend school regularly; and they show interest in their child’s learning in school and after school.

“All of the parents try to support their children’s education even though they are poor.”
(Mother, Hmong community C)

However, as will be described in later sections of the report, a number of factors interact with and impact on parent and caregivers choices and opportunities to support their sons and daughters’ education in pre-school, primary school and secondary school. There is interplay between factors such as poverty, socio-cultural attitudes relating to the roles and responsibilities of children, gender, seasonal work, ill-health, disability, care status, parental education levels, and poor quality education practices that create barriers to children’s education and learning outcomes. There is also a strong interplay among these different factors; thus multiple strategies and practical actions are required to strengthen learning opportunities for all girls and boys to go to school regularly and have good learning outcomes.

Key sub-themes relating to the value for education that are explored in this section of the report include:

- Active efforts by local authorities and school authorities to enrol children in primary school
- Majority of parents and caregivers value education for their sons and daughters, especially in relation to primary school education
- Value for pre-primary school is mixed due to different attitudes regarding the age at which girls and boys should start school
- Value for and enrolment in junior secondary school is lower in rural and remote communities, particularly for girls
- Gender beliefs and attitudes result in less value for girls’ education
- Parents have limited value for the education of children with disabilities
- Girls’ and boys’ value education and the majority are very interested in studying
- Some young children have fears about going to school
- Some children, particularly boys are less interested in study as they prefer to play

Consultation with boys, Hmong community D

Barriers to education and the complex interplay between various factors which impact upon parents, caregivers and children’s choices to study regularly are explored in later sections of the report.
Active efforts by local authorities to enrol children in primary school

There are active efforts by the local authorities and by teachers to encourage parents and caregivers to enrol their children in primary school. For example, prior to the start of the school year VEDC members, school directors and teachers organise community meetings to actively encourage parents to enrol their sons and daughters in school. In all five of the communities visited for the consultations, school directors and village heads explained that between 85% – 99% of girls and boys were enrolled in, and were attending, primary school, particularly near the start of the school year. The District Education and Sports Bureau (DESB) has high targets to meet in terms of school enrolment, and parents’ value for education is identified by school directors and village heads as critical to enable the school authorities to meet their targets.

"Nearly 100% of the children are enrolled in the primary school. This is because the parents understand the importance of education and the teachers also encourage the children to enrol in the school."
(School director, Khmu community A)

"Nearly 100% of children at the age of 8-9 years enrol in the primary school – only children with disabilities do not enrol in the school. The average number of children enrolling in the primary school from grade 1-5 is about 80%-90%. The reasons why children enrol in the school is because the school is near the village, the children do not pay any fees to the school and the parents know and understand the importance of education."
(School director, Hmong community C)

"About 85% of children in the village enrol in the primary school.... some parents do not support their children’s education and they do not know or understand the policy of Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) on the education development plan." (Village head, Hmong community C)

Majority of parents and caregivers value education for their sons and daughters, especially in relation to primary school education

The majority of male and female parents and caregivers expressed the importance about the value of primary education for their sons and daughters. Primary school education was identified as important for both girls and boys for them to be literate, to gain knowledge, to have better jobs and improved opportunities in the future. Although mothers and fathers placed more emphasis on future opportunities for their sons to get jobs, rather than their daughters, due to cultural expectations that their daughters would marry and move to their in-laws’ house.

"Going to school is important because education will make children have easier lives and better jobs in the future."
(Mother, Khmu community A)

"Parents support boys more – boys get better jobs and stay with and take care of their parents after graduation or getting married." (Mother, Hmong community C)

As part of ongoing programme monitoring it would be helpful for LEARN staff to verify this with the data collected by the DESB and to identify any differences in enrolment and attendance for girls and boys.
Some parents directly mentioned, and some teachers also described, how parents want their children to have better chances than they did, as some parents didn't have the chance to be educated themselves. Educated children were considered to have brighter futures and to be able to better support their families.

"There are no difficulties for children to enrol in school and to regularly go to school if their parents know the importance of education. If they are poor they will find a way how to earn money for their children's education. Going to school is important because education will help children get jobs easier and when the children get jobs, they can help support their families." (Mothers, Hmong community C)

"Going to school is important to children because education will help children get good jobs in the future."  
(Father, Khmu community B)

“Children of families who know the importance of education — these parents try to support their children’s education even though they are not very rich. They need their children to become educated adults in the future... They do not want their children to be farmers like them; they would like their children to have permanent jobs.”  
(Teacher, Hmong community D)

One father described how attending schools and studying also helps children to become good citizens:

"The school produces children who have honest to and believe in the party and state and know political theory of the party."  
(Father, Khmu community A)

VEDC members, village heads, teachers, school directors, and a few children emphasised how parent and caregiver value for education was a critical factor enabling or hindering children’s access to education. Parents and caregivers who see the importance of education for their sons and daughters are more likely to enrol their children in school on time; save up for school materials; encourage their children to attend school regularly; and show interest in their children’s study at school and their homework after school. In contrast, these stakeholders also described how parents and caregivers who do not think that education is important are less inclined to show interest in their children’s study during and after school, and they are more likely to withdraw their children from school to help with plantation or household work.

“[Some] parents have never [themselves been] enrolled in school in their lives and they have found that it is difficult to live in modern societies without education. Therefore, they try hard to support their children's education even though they are poor. They believe that their children will have better and easier lives if they get education.”  
(Teacher, Khmu community B)

“I have an elder sister studying at the school at secondary level, she wants to leave school to help our parents but my parents won’t allow her to leave.”  
(10 year-old-boy, Hmong community C)

[There is poor education] because parents fail to recognise the importance of education”  
(12-year-old girl, Hmong community C & 10 year old boy, Hmong community D)

Value for pre-primary school is mixed due to different attitudes regarding the age at which girls and boys should start school

Some mothers, fathers, caregivers and other stakeholders (VEDC members, DESB officials) are enthusiastic about the value of pre-school education, as it is seen to provide an important foundation for primary school enabling better learning outcomes, especially in terms of having opportunities to learn Lao language prior to starting primary school (see also Pearce, 2011; Palme, Hojlund, Singdara, and Thammavongsen, 2012).
“Going to school is very important. For example, if children have a chance to go to pre-primary class, they will gain necessary skills such as Lao language for primary school.”
(Mother, Hmong community D)

“If children enrol in pre-primary class, they will have good learning outcomes in primary, secondary and vocational schools. Education will help them have better lives in the future.”
(Mother, Hmong community C)

However, school directors and some mothers described how some parents do not think that children are old enough to attend pre-school when they are five years old. At this age, some parents prefer to take their children (sons and daughters) with them to the plantations, or to leave them at home with grandparents or with the children’s elder siblings. As children are expected to return home for lunch break, some parents find it easier to take their young children to the plantations with them, rather than to risk young children (girls or boys) spending time at home on their own.

"The school has a pre-primary class and most of the students enrol in the pre-primary school. However, some children do not enrol in the school. This is because they are poor and their parents do not understand the importance of education at this level.” (School director, Khmu community A)

"The school has a pre-primary class, but only about 60%-70% of the children enrol in the pre-primary class. This is because the villagers take their children to plantations with them – they think their children are not safe to stay at home without parents.” (School Director, Hmong community C)

"I have to be absent at school... because my parents encourage me to go the upland rice field.”
(6 year-old-girl, Khmu community B)

Similarly, some children are not enrolled in primary school when they are six years old, as per the government policies, as mothers and fathers think their son or daughter is too young for primary school or is better off staying at home or with their parents in the plantations. Children are more likely to be enrolled in primary school late if there is no pre-primary school nearby, or if their parents do not see the value of pre-primary education. Furthermore, some children, especially girls who are sometimes kept at home to help look are after younger siblings, may be enrolled in primary school at a later age, such as age 8 or 9 years old. Similar findings were found in earlier research in Northern Laos by Pearce (2011). In Lahu rural communities in Bokco province research teams found that many girls did not start attending primary school until they were 10 or 11 years old because they were helping their parents care for younger children (Pearce, 2011). As will be further described below, boys and girls often have different responsibilities when they are helping their parents with household and plantation work, and the burden of looking after younger siblings and helping with household work are often greater for girls, particularly if they are the eldest sibling. Such demands can adversely affect the time and energy that girls have to focus on their studies.

“I had to stay at home to look after my younger sibling. This prevented me from studying. I started going to school when I was eight years old. I am pleased to be able to go to school even though I am behind and I am older than the standard age for studying at Primary Grade 1.” (10 year-old-girl, Hmong community C)

"There are still some children who go to school irregularly and who dropped out of school during the school year, especially in grade 1-2. Some children drop out of school permanently and some drop out of school temporarily. This is because the parents think that their children are too young to go to school... In the primary school, from 10%-20% of the children repeat a class, especially in grade 1 and 2.” (School director, Hmong community C)
Some parents may enrol their children in pre-school or primary school due to encouragement or pressure from VEDC members and school directors at the start of the school year. However, if they are not convinced about the value of education for young children their children face increased risks of dropout of pre-school or grade 1 primary school.

“Some children are enrolled for grade 1 or 2, but then drop out as their parents think they are not old enough for school.” (DESB official, Oudomxay district)

If the pre-school and primary school are in the village, a short walk from their homes, mothers and fathers are more likely to be inclined to send their sons and daughters to pre-school, particularly at the start of the school year and during seasons when the weather is warm. However, if pre-school and primary school are more than 2 km from children’s homes and/or if the weather is very cold or wet, young children age 5-7 years may not be regularly sent to school. Such irregular attendance contributes to poor learning outcomes in the early grades, and to class repetition.

"The school is in the village. This gives all of the children a chance to access education from kindergarten to secondary school.” (Father, Khmu community B)

Value for and enrolment in junior secondary school is lower in rural and remote communities, particularly for girls

Despite increasing value for primary school education in urban, rural and remote communities there continues to be less value for secondary education, especially in remote communities where many families have limited income (see Pearce, 2011; Palme et al, 2012). The consultation findings indicated that there are significantly lower proportions of children enrolled in secondary schools, especially for girls.

"About 50% of the primary school graduates continue to junior secondary school. Many of the children do not enrol in a junior secondary school after primary school education because they are poor – their parent cannot continue to support them to go to higher education level." (School director, Khmu community A)

"Mostly boys are being supported to go to school with girls mostly only studying at primary level.”
(11 year old girl, Hmong community C)

“A small number of the primary school graduates continue to junior secondary school because they are poor – their parents cannot continue to support them to go to higher education level, and they want to get married instead of going to school. (School director, Hmong community D)

Many of the children’s parents are farmers and some question the value of children’s secondary education, as they think it is better for children to help them with the plantation work, housework, and with other income generation activities.

"Children who find it hard to go to school are children of parents who do not know and understand the importance of education. These parents think that going to school makes no difference, so they do not want to invest in their children’s education. They want their children to help them with house work, plantations and other business instead of going to school or going to school regularly.” (Teacher, Khmu community A)

In rural and remote areas school directors, teachers, fathers, mothers and VEDC members in both Khmu and Hmong communities described how some parents and caregivers question the returns of
investing significant time and resources in children’s secondary education (for boys or girls), as even better-educated children find it hard to compete with children from better-off families to secure good jobs, and thus do not earn more than less educated children. Even if children graduate from a university their life may not be better. A group of boys in Hmong community C also mentioned that their parents had low expectations about what children could achieve through their study in their rural community. Such beliefs can have an adverse impact on children’s motivation and interest to study.

“[Poor education] because of a lack of awareness among adults, who tell their children that studying will not put them into managerial positions so the children believe what the adults say.”
(12 year-old boy, Hmong community C)

“Many parents and children think that they do not have a chance to go to training schools, colleges and universities even though they have good grades after secondary graduation. Even if they have a chance to go to colleges, they will not get good jobs. This is because they do not have good backups or money.”
(VEDC member, Hmong community C)

"Some parents think that education investment for their children cannot give good returns, so they prefer their children to do other work that they can earn more money." (Teacher, Khmu community B)

“Some parents still have traditional thinking [that] going to school and not going to school are the same. They think that education investment for their children cannot give good returns.”
(School director, Hmong community D)

Similar queries concerning the value of investments in education were identified in other research concerning perceptions and attitudes towards primary education in Bokeo province (see Palme et al, 2012). Furthermore, parents from the poorest families sometimes think that their children have less aptitude for studies, and may be more inclined to pull their children out of school if they do not think they are studying well (Palme et al, 2012).

“Girls do not want to continue to go to secondary school after primary school because they enrol in school late and they think they are too old to study at this level”. (Mother, Hmong community D)

Despite such beliefs, approximately 50% of parents in the rural and remote communities that were visited are making efforts to support their children’s ongoing secondary education. As with primary school education, if parents do value the importance and benefits of investing in secondary education they make more efforts to overcome financial barriers and they show interest in their children’s education, monitoring and encouraging them to study which contributes to regular attendance in school.

"[Some] primary school graduates continue to junior secondary school because of their parents’ support. The parents try to send their children to school even though they face many difficulties.”
(School director, Khmu community B)

**Gender beliefs and attitudes result in less value for girls’ education**

In Khmu, Hmong, and mixed ethnic communities, families tend to have less value for girl’s education; and make increased investments in boy’s education. Village heads, school directors, teachers, and mothers in Khmu and Hmong communities, and girls and boys (especially in Hmong communities) described how parents and caregivers believe that boys have more potential to get better jobs, to earn more and they are more likely to support their extended family members in the future, compared with girls who are expected to marry and move to their in-laws’ families. Increased barriers to education for girls have also been identified in other research with children, adolescents and adults in Northern Laos (Peace, 2011; Palme et al, 2012).

“Gender affects children’s access and attendance to school a lot. The parents tend to support boys more.”
"For families who are poor if they do not have enough money to support their son and daughter’s education, they just support the son and not the daughter. They prefer to support the boys, as for girls when they get married they have to move to live with their husband’s family. The boys will stay with their parents and will look after them when they are older." (Teacher, Khmu community A)

“Girls have much less chance to access junior secondary because their parents do not support them as the school is far away, girls move to live with their husbands after getting married, girls have to do house work and take care of younger siblings, and girls have less chance to get better jobs after graduation" (School director, Khmu community B)

“After getting married, girls have to live with their husbands and do not stay to take care of their parents.” (12 year old boy, Hmong community D)

As will be further described in the next section, in poor families where there are a lot of children and/or in families where a parent has died or has ill-health, girls are more likely than boys to be withdrawn from school, or not to be enrolled in school, in order to help look after younger siblings and to help with housework and other tasks. Such findings are reinforced in other research and consultations on education in Northern Laos (Pearce, 2011).

"Girls have less chance to access and attendance to school because girls have more work – house work, taking care of younger brothers or sisters and they help their parents in their plantations as well.” (School director, Khmu community)

Parents have limited value for the education of children with disabilities

Some children with physical and/or learning disabilities are being sent to school, particularly to primary school. If children are able to travel to and reach school on their own despite their disability, their parents are more inclined to allow or encourage them to attend primary school in order for them to have the chance to become literate and to gain some knowledge.

"If the disabled child would like to go to the school the parent will support and will pay attention as required.” (Mother, Khmu community B)

However, village heads and school directors from both Khmu and Hmong communities described how some parents have less value for education for children with disabilities, and they are less inclined to invest in secondary education for children with disabilities. Furthermore, some parents did not enrol their children in primary school or pre-school if they had a disability.

"Children with disabilities normally get primary education level only. They cannot go to junior secondary school because it is far from their village. Children with disabilities cannot go to a far-away school.” (School director, Khmu community B)

Parents, caregivers and VEDC members mentioned that no additional support is provided to families of children with disabilities, nor to teachers to support inclusive education. Furthermore, parents and other stakeholders do not think that children with disabilities will be able to successfully compete with
others to get jobs. Thus, it is not worth investing in too much education. These factors all limit parent and caregiver value of education for children with disabilities.

“In the village, very few children with disabilities attend and stay in school. The school should provide special facilities to the children and parents should support the children’s education. Parents and children with disabilities think that they have less chance to get jobs after graduation, so they do not want to continue to secondary school or higher education.” (School director, Hmong community D)

**Girls and boys value education and the majority are very interested in studying**

The majority of girls and boys in each of the communities expressed their interest in, and the importance of education. **Girls and boys of different ages and ethnic groups expressed their interest to study, to be literate and to gain knowledge.** They appreciated their teachers for sharing knowledge with them.

"I want to know literacy." (9-year-old girl, Khmu community A)

"I like going to school because I want to bring knowledge to myself." (12-year-old boy, Khmu community A)

"I like the teacher because the teacher sends the knowledge to the student.” (12-year-old boy, Khmu community B)

“I like holding a pen and writing.” (6-year-old girl, Hmong community D)

“I like to go to school. I want to study and to get knowledge. I do not like to be absent from school. I want to go to school because when the examination comes I want to get the book for study.”

(7 year old boy, Lao-Thi, community E)

Children want to be clever. Some children expressed their interest not to be farmers like their parents. Both boys and girls have aspirations to get good and stable jobs in future, including an aspiration by one young girl to study abroad. Girls and boys want to contribute to opportunities to improve their own development, as well as the development of their families, communities and their nation. Similar enthusiasm among children for education and sincere efforts to study, often despite poor learning environments have also been identified in other research in Northern Laos (see Palme et al, 2012).

![Consultation with boys, Khmu community A](image)
“I want to complete my education. I want to go on to vocational education and get a job. I don’t want to farm rice like my parents and elders in the village.” (11-year-old boy, Hmong community C)

"I like to go to school because I want to study to have knowledge and I want to continue my studies abroad." (7-year-old girl, Khmu community B)

“Education is extremely important to our lives because it will change our community for the better, it will allow us to have jobs, and to improve our lives”. (11-year-old girl, Hmong community C)

"I want to get knowledge; I want to study in order to develop myself, my village, district and country.” (13-year-old girl, Khmu community B)

The importance of learning Lao language was particularly emphasised by 10–12-year-old girls and boys in Hmong communities.

“Gain knowledge and get to study, especially Lao language.” (12-year-old girl, Hmong community C)

“I like to study Lao language because I am of Hmong ethnicity, so studying Lao is new and exciting.” (10-year-old boy, Hmong community C)

As will be described in the later section on the strengths of schools, girls and boys are also motivated to go to school as it provides important opportunities to play with their friends; to play and watch sports and other cultural programmes; and to have snacks (provided by World Food Programme); and because for a number of girls and boys it provides a welcome alternative to working in the plantations or doing housework.

"I like going to school because I am lazy to go to the rice fields with my parents.” (12-year-old boy, Khmu community A)

"I want to study, I want to know the letters and I do not want to go to the rice field plantations." (8-year-old boy, Khmu community B)

“Like coming to school because there are trees to provide shade and I get out of doing housework.” (10 year old girl, Hmong community D)

Some young children have fears about going to school

While the majority of school going children expressed their interest in and motivation to study, some younger children who were not yet enrolled in pre-school shared a preference to go to the plantations with their parents or to stay at home with their grandparents where they had some opportunities to play with their friends.

“I stay at home and I do not attend the school, I play with friends in the village." (4-year-old girl, Khmu community A)

Some young children expressed their fears about how other children and the teacher will treat them in the school, and concern about having to stay in a classroom, as they prefer to move around and to play outside. One child also expressed fear about being illiterate. Furthermore, one girl who had an extra sixth finger was scared to go to school as she thought the other children would tease her. Such fears were enhanced for children who considered themselves shy.
"I do not want to go to the school because I like to go to the field. I do not want to go to the school because my friend may hit me, the teacher is angry and I often lose my book and pen." (4-year-old boy, Khmu community A)

“I want to go to the school but I dislike to sit on the mat and I want to go to the rice field with my parents.” (5-year-old boy, Khmu community A)

“I do not want to go [to school] because I am illiterate; I just want to go the field with my parents and for my mother to take care of me” (4-year-old boy, Khmu community A).

"I do not want to go to the school because I am shy,... I like to play outside, not to stay inside." (4-year-old girl, Khmu community A)

Some children, particularly boys, are less interested in study as prefer to play

Despite interest in education that was emphasised by the majority of girls and boys consulted, some children and adults in each community described how there are some children, particularly primary school age boys and lower junior school age boys who are less motivated to study, as they prefer to play. Disobeying their teachers and parents, a minority of boys miss school in order to play, to watch TV, or to swim in the river. For example, 8-12 year old boys in one of the Hmong communities described how some boys attend school irregularly as they are more interested in watching television, videos, or internet games on the mobile phone. Some boys in Khmu and Hmong communities described how they disliked the rules in school, and they preferred to play with their friends outside of school. Adults indicated that boys who miss school to play may be from either better off or poor families. Increased attention to monitoring of classroom attendance disaggregated by gender and reasons for absence will help to identify the magnitude of this concern, and would help to identify if there are common characteristics among children who regularly miss school.

"I dislike the school because it has rules." (11-year-old boy, Khmu community B)

While some adults (mothers, fathers, VEDC members, and teachers) considered these boys to be disobedient, lazy and too independent, they described girls as being more obedient and hardworking. Parents and teachers described how primary school age girls were more likely to attend school regularly and to study more than the boys.

"Some children (boys) do not want to attend school, they like to be independent. They are lazy." (Father, Khmu community A)
“Girls go to school easier than boys, especially at primary school level. This is because girls pay more attention to learning, keep school regulations and obey teachers and parents. In contrast boys pay less attention to learning, do not keep school rules, and disobey their parents and teachers (Teacher, Khmu community A)

"Boys are more likely to go to school irregularly and to repeat classes because they like to play instead of going to school." (Teacher, Khmu community B)

“Some children themselves do not want to study or go to school, as they prefer to play at home as they please, because when they go to school the teachers prevent them from playing as they please.... Some children prefer to play or watch television.” (8-12-year-old boys, Hmong community C)

“Poverty makes it harder for some children to enrol in school or regularly go to school. This affects boys more because boys have less patience, and disobey parents and teachers.” (Mother, Hmong community D)

A few adolescent girls in one of the Hmong communities also mentioned less interest in study, as they were more interested in boys and watching television. Adolescent girls’ focus on boys and opportunities to marry has also been identified as a barrier to education in other research in Northern Laos (Pearce, 2011).

“Children like to watch TV, do not assert themselves in their studies, and become interested in boys, which distracts them from their studies.”
(12-year-old girl, Hmong community D)

Observations and reflections from the research team members touched on how socialisation of girls and boys influences their behaviour and indicated that boys’ lack of interest in school may be linked to “supply-side” issues relating to the quality and relevance of the education provided:

“Would boys be so de-motivated if the education were more suited to the way children like to learn? (e.g. play-based, interactive). If girls were not socialized to be obedient in general, would they be acting out just the same way the boys are when the education quality is low?”
(LEARN staff member and research team member)

As will be described in a later section of the report weaknesses in school infrastructure, poor teaching practices, and use of physical and humiliating forms of punishment by teachers can indeed negatively impact upon children’s interest in education.
Key barriers contributing to non-enrolment, school dropout, repetition and poor learning outcomes; and factors that enable enrolment and children’s education opportunities

In this section of the report key barriers contributing to non-school enrolment, temporary or permanent school dropout, repetition and poor learning are described. In addition, in the latter part of this section, an overview of factors that enable children to enrol, regularly attend school and have better learning outcomes are also outlined.

As described above, consultations with adults and children indicated that one of the most significant factors contributing to school enrolment and regular attendance at school (or lack of school enrolment or irregular attendance) is parent and caregiver's value for education. If parents and caregivers attach significant value to education, increased efforts are made to overcome other barriers to ensure children’s enrolment, and regular attendance and to encourage children’s active learning. However, as will be described in this section of the report, a number of factors interact and impact on parents and caregivers choices and opportunities to support their sons and daughters education in pre-school, primary school and secondary school.

Family poverty is a significant factor creating barriers to school enrolment and regular attendance in school. Furthermore, there is interplay between factors such as poverty, socio-cultural attitudes relating to the roles and responsibilities of children, gender, seasonal work, ill-health, disability, care status, parental education levels, and poor quality education practices which compound the challenges faced by some children and families.

"Children who are more likely to attend school irregularly, face repetition, or drop out from school are children who come from poor families and families who do not understand the importance of education, especially farmers."
(Village head, Hmong community C)

In addition to family poverty, key factors influencing non-enrolment, temporary or permanent school dropout, repetition and poor learning outcomes which will be presented in this part of the report include:

- Socio-cultural attitudes towards children’s roles and responsibilities particularly expectations that girls and boys help families with plantation work, household work and care of siblings;
- Gender beliefs, practices, and differing patterns of school attendance of girls and boys
- Disability
- Poor health or death of a family members affects children’s care and education opportunities
- Seasons and seasonal work
- Lack of monitoring and encouragement of children’s study by their parents, which is affected by some parent's low confidence in their own educational status
- Difficulties in understanding Lao language in ethnic minority communities

Consultation with teachers, Khmu community A
- Children’s lack of attention to study and challenges associated with starting school at a later age increases risks of repetition
- Weaknesses in school budget, poor school infrastructure and challenges in school management
- Poor teaching practices
- Negative treatment from the teacher, including scolding, beating and other forms of humiliating punishment

**Family poverty creates a significant barrier to school enrolment and regular attendance in school**

In the communities where the consultations were undertaken the majority of families were subsistence farmers and had limited income. Despite being affected by poverty, due to their value for education (particularly primary school education), many families made significant efforts to put aside money for the start of the school year to enrol children in school, and to provide their sons and daughters with a new school uniform, as well as basic educational materials. Children really appreciated such efforts, and were motivated to attend school with their new uniform and materials.

“I like wearing new clothes to school and having books, pens, pencils, and a bag.” (8-year-old girl, Hmong community D)

However, in every community mothers, fathers, girls, boys, VEDC members, teachers and other stakeholders emphasised how poverty is a significant barrier to children’s education. Families who are struggling with poverty find it difficult to put aside enough money for children’s school uniforms, books, pens and other costs associated with school, such as pocket money for snacks or other unofficial fees. Some families delay enrolling their children in pre-school or primary school when they do not have sufficient funds available. Other families manage to enrol their children, but face challenges in sending their children to school throughout the school year due to limited resources. Other research with children and adults in Northern Laos has also emphasised how family poverty leads to significant barriers to girls’ and boys’ continued education (Palme et al, 2012; Pearce, 2011).

“My child does not want to go to school because we have no money for him to go to school. Any day that we have money he will go to school.” (Mother of a 4-year-old boy, Khmu community A)

“Children of poor families find it harder to go to school. These parents do not have enough money to support their children’s education and needs such as uniforms, learning materials, pocket money, etc. Moreover, the children have to do house work, take care of younger siblings and work in their plantations instead of going to school or going to school regularly.” (Teacher, Hmong community C)

Mothers particularly emphasised the challenges faced when they have lots of children. In poor families with a lot of children, parents often make choices and decisions about which children to invest in for their education. As indicated earlier, gender discrimination contributes to increased investments in boys, rather than girls, despite parents’ acknowledgement that girls were more likely to attend primary school regularly as they were socialised and perceived to be more obedient.

"There no money to support education, because I have a lot of kids, so I could not give support for everyone, thus some get to study and some cannot study.” (Mother, Khmu community B)
Living with poverty negatively affects children’s confidence, particularly in communities where there is more ethnic or income diversity. Some girls and boys mentioned their reluctance to go to school when they did not have the school uniform or necessary school materials as it made them feel shy or inferior. Furthermore, in one Khmu community a VEDC member revealed discriminatory attitudes towards children from the poorest families suggesting that they were less intelligent. Discriminatory treatment of the poorest families and children in schools has also been identified in other research in Northern Laos (Palme et al, 2012).

"I want to go to school to wear nice clothes, but I am afraid to go. I am shy with my friends because I have no school uniform." (10-year-old boy, Khmu community A)

“I do not like to wear the old school cloth.” (10-year-old girl, mixed ethnic community E)

“I do not like to see the people look down on me.” (11-year-old boy, mixed ethnic community E)

“Poor children usually have low quality brains – not clever, not intelligent, and not good at learning.”

(VEDC member, Khmu community A)

Underlying causes of family poverty were discussed by adults and children. Key factors identified included families not having sufficient land for planting; not having sufficient money or support from the government for seeds, plantations or animal rearing; not having enough agricultural knowledge which contributes to poor yields; not having good access to markets to sell their crops; low prices for selling crops; having a lot of children; being uneducated; and not having permanent jobs. Despite intensive hard work by the majority of parents, most families continue to struggle to earn sufficient income to meet all their needs. Similar challenges associated with family poverty and their influences on children’s education have been identified in other research in Bokeo province (Palme et al, 2012).

“Children do not go to school because of being poor... There are not areas to do production and there is no fund. We do not get any support from the government.” (Father, mixed ethnic community E)

"The parents are poor because they have many children, they do not have permanent jobs and they are uneducated. These poor parents do not have money to support their children’s education."

(VEDC member, Hmong community C)

“Small production yields are received, resulting in small incomes, so parents are unable to send all of their children to school.” (12-year-old girl, Hmong community D)

“Poverty is also a main factor. We need to give more support to poor families if we want to support school enrolment and attendance at school of poor children.... There are some government anti-poverty schemes to provide water and school buildings in communities, but there are not grants given to individual families”.

(DESF official, Oudomxay district)

“[There is poor education] because of poverty, a lack of farmland, a lack of knowledge among parents and a lack of income.” (10-year-old girl, Hmong community C)

Social cultural attitudes towards children’s roles and responsibilities, particularly that girls and boys help families with plantation work, household work and care of siblings

In traditional rural Lao communities, girls and boys aged 5-17 years are expected to help their families with housework, plantation work, food foraging and income generation activities (see also Palme et al, 2012). The majority of girls and boys juggle school, household chores and work in the plantations during different seasons. Some primary school age children who are not enrolled in school, and increased
numbers of adolescent children help their parents with plantation, household and income generation work instead of going to school (Pearce, 2011; Palme et al, 2012).

Children’s roles and responsibilities are influenced by their age, gender, sibling order, rural/urban setting and other factors. Common roles and responsibilities of girls and boys identified in four of the communities where the consultations were undertaken are shown in a table below. Many girls and boys undertake these responsibilities, while also going to school and studying.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age and gender of the children</th>
<th>Common work responsibilities undertaken by children in different seasons (listed in order of how often they were mentioned; and if there were specific differences in work undertaken by girls or boys in Kmuon on Hmong communities they are underlined)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **13-18 year old boys** | All seasons: Helping parents, especially fathers; income generation for the household; finding food in the forest, fishing and hunting; and a small amount of help with housework.  
Sept-Feb: Helping to harvest paddy rice & upland rice; digging and raking for irrigation; harvesting and carrying corn; help with production and cultivation;  
Dec-Feb: Slash rice fields; plant rice; harvest; In Hmong communities there is increased work to finish the harvesting prior to celebrating the Hmong New Year in December. Mar-May: rice and corn planting and cultivation; shifting cultivation; slash the corn field; harvest the rice; break the irrigation;  
June - Aug: Shifting and cultivation on paddy plantations; wet rice farming; ploughing; gardening; |
| **13-18 year old girls** | All seasons: Helping parents, especially mothers; housework; including food preparation for the family and looking after younger siblings; income generation for the household; finding food in the forest  
Sept-Nov: Helping to harvest paddy rice & upland rice; harvesting and carrying corn; help with production and cultivation; gardening;  
Dec-Feb: Weaving fishing net and handbag; Bringing wood; helping with rice plantations; taking produce for sale; In Hmong communities there is increased work to finish the harvesting prior to celebrating the Hmong New Year in December.  
Mar-May: rice and corn planting and cultivation; shifting cultivation; slash the corn field; harvest the rice; break the irrigation;  
June - Aug: Shifting and cultivation on paddy plantations; wet rice farming; gardening; |
| **8-12 year old boys** | All seasons: Helping parents; finding food in the forest, fishing and hunting; help with housework; income generation for the household;  
Sept-Nov: Helping to harvest paddy rice & upland rice; harvesting and carrying corn; help with production and cultivation;  
Dec-Feb: Slash rice fields; plant rice; harvest; In Hmong communities there is increased work to finish the harvesting prior to celebrating the Hmong New Year in December.  
Mar-May: rice and corn planting and cultivation;  
June - Aug: Shifting and cultivation on paddy plantations; wet rice farming; gardening; |
| **8-12 year old girls** | All seasons: Helping parents; housework including carrying water, food preparation for the family, and looking after younger siblings; finding food in the forest (in Hmong communities); income generation for the household.  
Sept-Nov: Helping to harvest paddy rice & upland rice; harvesting and carrying corn; help with production and cultivation; Looking for wood;  
Dec-Feb: Slash rice fields; plant rice; harvest; In Hmong communities there is increased work to finish the harvesting prior to celebrating the Hmong New Year in December.  
Mar-May: rice and corn planting and cultivation;  
June - Aug: Shifting and cultivation on paddy plantations; wet rice farming; gardening; |
| **5-7 year old boys** | All seasons: Helping parents; carrying water; feeding ducks, chickens and pigs; help with housework; help look after younger siblings;  
June - Aug: Go to rice fields; help with wet rice farming; gardening; |
| **5-7 year old girls** | All seasons: Helping parents; carrying water; help with housework (e.g. wash dishes, help prepare food); help look after younger siblings; feeding ducks, chickens and pigs;  
June - Aug: Go to rice fields; help with wet rice farming; gardening; |
| **Under 5s** | Go with parents to fields or stay with grandfather or grandmother or with an elder sibling. |

Some children, especially girls who are the elder siblings, are requested to miss or dropout of school to take care of their younger siblings while the parents go out to work on the plantations (see also Pearce, 2011; Palme et al, 2012). Thus, being an older sibling can increase the risks of temporary or permanent school dropout.
"I go to the rice paddy fields and I do housework to help my family." (13-year-old out of school girl, Khmu community A)

"Children who come from poor families and farmer families, especially girls [find it harder to go to school], because the children have to help their parents work for a living instead of staying in school, going to school regularly and studying hard." (Father, Khmu community B)

"Many of the children go to school irregularly because their parents take them to plantations or older children have to take care of younger ones when their parents go to plantations." (School Director, Hmong community D)

"I chose the picture of children going to school and of the child looking after their younger sibling at home because my life is similar to these pictures, as sometimes I was unable to go to school because I had to stay at home to look after my younger sibling." (8 year old boy, Hmong community C)

Adults (school directors, VEDC members, mothers, fathers and some children) described how children, both girls and boys, are sometimes asked by their parents or caregivers to miss school to help with work during the most labour intensive seasons, such as during planting and harvesting seasons (see also Pearce, 2011; Palme et al, 2012).

"The parents have work overload, so they need their children’s labour such as helping them work in their plantations, do housework and take care of younger siblings when the parents go to work. This affects girls more when they go to higher level of education." (VEDC member, Hmong community C)

"Children have to do housework; be absent from school to take care of younger siblings when their parents are in their plantations and help their parents in their plantations during planting seasons.” (School director, Hmong community D)
support from the children’s grandparents or children’s elder siblings to take care of younger children at lunch times.

“[Some] girls and boys are not affected by seasonal work because their parents do not like to take their children to plantations with them and the children do not want to go to plantations either because they are afraid of repetition.” (Mother, Hmong community C)

“There are many grandparents who can take care of young children when their parents go to plantations.” (Mother, Hmong community C)

**Gender beliefs, practices, and differing patterns of school attendance of girls and boys**

As described above, value for education is influenced by gender beliefs and practices in Khmu, Hmong and multi-ethnic communities contributing to less value for education for girls. This finding has also been evidenced in other research in Northern Laos (see Pearce, 2011; Palme et al, 2012). However, the consultation findings also reveal interesting interactions between gender, age, children’s agency, socialisation of girls and boys, and poverty, such that there are different patterns for girls and boys attendance in school at different ages and in different circumstances.

“Children from poor families are more likely to drop out, as their parents cannot support their needs such as uniforms/clothes, learning materials; and the children have to help their parents work for their livings as well. Girls drop out of school more in secondary school – they get married instead of going to school.”

(Village head, Khmu community A)

“Parents do not want to support the daughter ... because she will stay with the husband and will not be feeding the parents.” (Mother, Khmu community B)

Adults (mothers, fathers, VEDC members, village heads, teachers in both Khmu and Hmong communities) and children (girls and boys especially in Hmong communities) described how girls are less likely than boys to be supported by their families to attend secondary school due to traditional beliefs and practices relating to marriage, as well as the role of girls to help with housework and siblings. However, in primary schools, boys are more likely to choose to attend school irregularly than girls, due to boys increased independence and interests to play. In contrast, mothers, fathers, teachers and VEDC members socialise and perceive girls to be more obedient, doing what their parents and teachers tell them to – whether this be to attend school, or to stay at home to help with the household work and younger siblings. As mentioned earlier, some girls face increased risks of late school enrolment or being asked to temporarily or permanently drop out of school to look after younger siblings and to do housework.

“Boys tend to irregularly go to school and face repetition because they go to somewhere else instead of going to school, while girls tend to drop out from school because of getting married.”

(Mother, Hmong Community C)

“Girls have less chance to go to secondary school and have more chance to drop out from secondary school because their parents do not support them, they tend to get married early and the school is far from their villages.” (VEDC members, Hmong community D)
In each of the ethnic communities visited (Khmu, Hmong, Lao-Tai) some girls are not enrolled in, or drop out of secondary school in order to get married. Evidence for early marriage of girls aged 13-16 years being a barrier to education has also been described in other research with adolescents in Northern Laos (Pearce, 2011). The practice of newly married couples living with the boy’s family and non-acceptance of married girls in schools create significant barriers to the continuation of girls’ education (Pearce, 2011). Furthermore, in Hmong communities girls also mentioned that some boys also dropout of secondary school in order to get married.

"Some girls stop going to school so that they can get married. Some girls get married from the age of 13 years. Some girls stop school to help with housework, as they have to do the housework for the whole family."

(Teacher, Khmu community A)

“[Some girls] are leaving school to build a family" [implying that they are getting married]

(10 year old girl, Hmong community C)

“Both boys and girls have dropped out of school to get married.” (13 year old girl, Hmong community D)

Boys have more freedom of movement than girls. In contrast, parents and caregivers have increased concerns about the security of girls to travel long distances. Thus, when secondary schools are far from children's homes this also affects parents and caregivers decisions about whether their son and daughters are sent to school. If the school is far away, there are increased risks of non-enrolment or drop out of girls.

"Girls find it more difficult to go to secondary school because the school is far away from their village – it is not safe or convenient for girls. The parents want to support boys only – after graduation or getting married, boys still stay with parents and take care of parents when they get old, but girls move to their husbands’ families."

(Village head, Khmu community A)

"Boys have more chance than girls because it is easier for boys to go to a school which is far away, boys get better jobs after graduation, boys take care of parents after getting married and boys have less house work."

(Father, Khmu community B)

"Boys are more likely to go to school and to continue with an education because it is easier for boys to study in a school that is far from their villages; and parents support boys more – boys get better jobs and still stay with or take care of parents after graduation or getting married." (Mother, Hmong community C)

“Girls have less chance to go to school, especially secondary school, because girls do not take care of parents after getting married; girls get less chance to get good jobs after graduation; and it is difficult for girls to go to school which is far from their villages.” (School director, Hmong community D)

As described above both girls and boys of different ages are expected to help their families with plantation and harvesting work, and older siblings, both boys and girls are expected to help take care of younger siblings. However, there are increased expectations on girls to help with housework and to take care of younger siblings (see also Pearce, 2011; Palme et al, 2012). 8-10-year-old Hmong girls in community C shared their experiences how many girls helped their families with the household work and looked after younger siblings, while most of the boys went to school. They shared a saying that “Girls and women are sent by the gods to do housework, find food to eat, and prepare food for men”.

Furthermore, one boy in a Hmong community described how parents think that boys are more intelligent than girls, and thus they give more encouragement to their sons and to study. Although such views were not directly shared by mothers or fathers during focus group discussions or interviews, it is still possible that such perceptions are being communicated to sons and daughters, thus undermining girl’s perception
of their own abilities. During the consultations young girls shared dislikes of their own poor educational abilities more frequently than young boys.

“It is usually girls who drop out of school because their parents believe that women are not as intelligent as men.”
(13-year-old boy, Hmong community D)

“I dislike that my brain is not good at study.” (10-year-old girl, Khmu community A)

“I don’t like having a poor memory.” (7-year-old girl, Hmong community C)

**Disability**

During the consultations the research team observed and consulted with girls and boys with disabilities who are currently attending primary school, and the team were able to consult parents who had a child with a disability. In general, disability negatively impacts on opportunities for children to enrol in school, to attend school and to get good learning outcomes.

**Some children with physical and learning disabilities are going to school, especially to primary school.** However, mothers, fathers, VEDC members and teachers described how **no extra support is provided to teachers to support inclusive education**, and children with different disabilities (hearing, sight, physical mobility disability or learning disability) **face increased challenges to learn in school**.

"There are some children with disabilities in the village. The children have problems with eyes and lips. They find it hard to go to school because they are shy and there aren’t any tools or facilities for the children.”
(Teacher, Khmu community A)

“Four children with disabilities go to school in the village. There aren’t any special tools or facilities for children with disabilities in the school. Special tools/facilities can help children with disabilities go to school.”
(Father, Khmu community B)

"There are some children with disabilities. The children can help themselves for going to school.”
(Teacher, Hmong community C)

As mentioned earlier, **children with disabilities are less likely to be enrolled in secondary school, and some children with disabilities are not enrolled in pre-primary or primary school.**

"Children with disabilities have a chance to study in primary school, they do not have a chance to study in secondary school.... There aren’t any special tools or facilities for children with disabilities. However, the children go to school regularly.” (Village head, Khmu community A)

Furthermore, school directors and teachers mentioned that **children with physical disabilities face increased hardships to reach school** if their disability affects their physical mobility, particularly if the children have to travel on muddy roads or cross rivers to reach the school. Such hardships are compounded if the school is faraway, thus increasing the likelihood that they may not attend school.

"Children with disabilities normally get primary education level only. They cannot go to junior secondary school because it is far from their village.” (School director, Hmong community C)

A girl and a boy with disabilities, and a mother and father of children with disabilities described how **children with disabilities face teasing and discrimination** from other children; and some teachers are also insensitive to their psychological and physical needs. This makes children shy and it contributes to non-school enrolment and school dropout.
"A child did not attend school because he did not like his friend to laugh at him because he is a disabled person. His health is not good as he has down syndrome." (Father, Khmu community A)

"I want to go to school, but I did not go because my friends like to laugh at my hand because I have 6 fingers." (4-year-old girl, Khmu community A)

"I would be shy with my friends because of my disabled ear. Since birth I did not attend school, but now I am thinking that I would like to study." (15-year-old out of school boy with disability, Khmu community A)

“There are some children with disabilities in the village. The children have problems with eyes and hands. They find it hard to go to school because they are shy.” (School director, Hmong community D)

**Poor health or death of a family member affects children’s care and education opportunities**

Family poverty increases risk of children’s ill health as children may need to work for longer hours to help with the plantation work during different cold, wet and hot seasons; and they may not have sufficient warm clothes while at school or when in the plantations. In addition, families affected by poverty may be unable to pay for the costs of medicine. When children are ill they are absent from school. Both children and adults (parents, teachers, and village heads) shared examples of how ill health affects education. If children are ill and miss school over prolonged or regular periods it negatively affects their learning outcomes. Furthermore, some children have not returned to school after a period of ill-health.

"I did not attend school because I got a serious sickness. After I got treatment and was well, but I stopped going to school." (10-year-old boy, out of school, Khmu community A)

"Seasons affect children’s access and attendance to school, especially from April to June. This is because children go to plantations with parents and get sick a lot." (Village head, Khmu community B)

"Children with poor health are often absent from school and have poor learning outcomes.” (Teacher, Khmu community B)

Ill health or death of a family member affects children’s care and education opportunities. If a parent gets sick or dies it increases risks that one or more of the children (girls or boys) may have to temporarily or permanently drop out of school to help take care of housework, to look after siblings, to help with plantation work, or to help earn family income. Risks of school dropout in this scenario are increased for girls (Pearce, 2011).

“Illnesses and parents who do not have money to support their children’ education and needs may lead to children missing school.” (Mother, Hmong community C)

“Because of injury or sickness resulting in a lack of labour to carry out plantation work, people may pull their children out of school [to help].” (Father, Hmong community C)

“When my mum passed away, my elder sister who was studying in Secondary Grade 1 had to leave school to look after our younger siblings and to help our father with the work.” (8-year-old boy, Hmong community C)

Some children who have been orphaned are living with relative caregivers (grandparents, aunts or uncles). Furthermore, some children have been sent with relatives in order to live nearer to the secondary school. Some children living with relatives are able to continue their studies if their relative caregivers value their education.
"The child who is an orphan who lives with the brother, sister, grandfather or grandmother go to school easily because they want them to study, but for the disabled child it is more difficult for the child to go to school."
(Father, Khmu community B)

However, adults (parents, caregivers, teachers, school directors and VEDC members) shared how children living with relative caregivers face increased risks of non-school enrolment, irregular school attendance or dropout if their caregivers do not value their educational needs, especially if the caregivers are poor and/or if they prioritise their own children’s education.

"The children who live with relatives find it much harder to go to school because the relatives already struggle for supporting their own children’s education. They have no money left for supporting the children’s education."
(Teacher, Khmu community B)

"Orphans who live with their relatives [find it harder to go to school], as relatives support their own children’s education only, they do not support the orphan’s education because they do not have enough money."
(VEDC member, Hmong community C)

"If children are orphans, their study is not complete if there is nobody supporting them."
(School director, mixed ethnic community E)

Seasons and seasonal work

Seasons and seasonal work affect girls and boys attendance at schools (see also Palme et al, 2012). In each of the communities visited, different stakeholders (school directors, teachers, mothers and fathers) reported that children are more likely to attend school regularly at the start of the school year, and are less likely to attend school regularly in the latter part of the school year. At the start of the school year, the majority of parents have made efforts to save and put aside money to purchase the school uniform cloth and stationary for their sons and daughters. As the school year proceeds families affected by poverty may struggle to fulfil any costs associated with their children’s study, and they may temporarily take their children out of school to help with labour in the plantations.

"Children go to school easier from September to December because the parents usually save money for many months for a new school year, they have enough money for their children’s new student uniforms, learning materials, pocket money, etc. It is harder for children go to school harder from January to August, especially children from poor families. This is because the parents have no money left for supporting their children’s education and poor children have to help their parents to earn money for next school year, for example, they do house work and take their younger family members when their parents go to their plantations or they have to go to their plantations with their parents instead of going to school."
(School director, Khmu community A)

"Children go to school more easily at the beginning of new school year (September to January) because their parents still have enough money to support their education and needs, children are still interested in school, and they don’t need to go to plantations. Children find it harder to go to school during the second semester. This is because the parents do not have money left for the children’s needs and the children have to help their parents work in their plantations... Also children may be affected by rice harvesting season (October to November) because children have to help their parents harvest the plants on time." (Father, Khmu community B)

Young girls and boys also described how at the start of the school year children are proud to have their new school uniform and materials and they are often excited to return to school, to study and play with their friends after the long summer holiday period.
“I like it when we have new clothes because each year, when the new semester opens, my parents buy new clothes for me, which makes me happy and enjoy going to school... and I feel happy when I get new equipment like books, pens, and pencils.” (8-year-old boy, Hmong community C)

“I like new clothes. I like new learning equipment and new shoes because it makes me feel good to wear my new shoes to school. (6-year-old girl, Hmong community D)

As described above, in rural communities girls and boys help their parents and caregivers with plantation work, as well as with household work and other tasks. During certain seasons, such as during plantation time (March to May) and harvesting time (October to December), parents have too much work to do by themselves; thus they temporarily withdraw their sons and daughters from school either to help them in the plantations, or to take care of younger siblings, household tasks and/or income generation activities while they labour in the plantations. In Hmong communities girls and boys have to help their parents with harvesting before the Hmong New Year (in early December).

"Seasons affect children's access and attendance to school, especially April to May. The children have to go to their plantations with their parents during these months." (School director, Klmu community B)

Children are affected by seasonal work from November to December (harvest season period) and from April and May (corn planting season). The children have to help their parents do the work. (Mother, Hmong community D)

"During harvest seasons (October-November), children have to be absent from school to help their parents harvest their crops on time." (Village head, Klmu community A)

"During planting seasons, parents take the children to plantations with them or older siblings take care of them at home." (VEDC members, Klmu community B)

"Seasons affect children’s access and attendance to school, especially from November to December. The children have to help their parents harvest their corps on time or before Hmong New Year.” (School director, Hmong community C)

Cold, wet, and hot weather seasons also affect children’s attendance at school. During the winter season (November to February) a few adults (parents, village head) described how some children from poor families, particularly younger children may not go to school if they do not have warm coats. Some children also drew and wrote about their preference to stay at home with their parents or grandparents by a fire, instead of going to school during cold periods. Children also face increased risks of getting sick when they are cold, which may then impact on their school attendance. Furthermore, during the rainy season some girls, boys, mothers, fathers and a village head described how children, particularly young children may find it hard to reach school if the pathways are too muddy, or if they have to cross a river to reach school. During rainy season there are increased risks of ill-health including malaria.

"Children go to school irregularly during rainy season and winter – it is difficult to go to school in bad road conditions and children have no warm clothes to wear, they have to sit around a fireplace instead of going to school.” (Father, Klmu community A)

"Rainy season and winter affect children’s access and attendance to school. Poor parents do not have money to buy umbrellas, coats, warm clothes/coats to wear during the seasons; so they have to sit around a fireplace at home instead of going to school." (Village Head, Hmong community C)

"Children go to school irregularly during rainy season – they get sick, especially malaria.” (Father, Klmu community B)
“I like being dry, staying close to the fire when the cold weather comes... I do not want to have class because of the cold weather and it is difficult to write the letters. I want to stay by the fire.”
(10 year old boy, Hmong communality C)

During the hot weather season (April – May), in addition to helping their parents with planting work, a father and a teacher in two different communities also mentioned that some children may miss school in order to swim in the river.

"Children are affected by warm climate (April to May) because the children prefer to play near or in rivers.”
(Father, Khmu community B)

“Children find it harder to go to school from March to April because the climate is warm – children feel sleepy and play in rivers and they go to forests to find natural forest plants, they make money from selling these plants.”
(Teacher, Hmong community C)

Lack of monitoring and encouragement for children’s study by their parents, which is affected by some parent’s low confidence in their own educational status

Some children (especially girls and boys from Hmong communities C and D), and adults (fathers, mothers, teachers and VEDC members, especially in Khmu community A and Hmong community C) described how some parents do not show much interest in their children’s learning which can de-motivate children to study and can contribute to indiscipline, poor learning or school dropout. Some mothers, fathers, and caregivers do not encourage or give enough time for their sons or daughters to study as they have less value for education. Others do not have time to show interest as they are so busy with their work in the plantations and their efforts to find food or earn an income. Furthermore, some mothers and fathers, particularly mothers do not feel confident to monitor or help their children with their study, as they themselves are not literate and do not write in Lao language. One of the mothers in Hmong community C suggested that non-formal education should be provided to illiterate mothers in order to increase support for their children’s education.
"The child left school because the parents don’t understand... Parents do not have knowledge and they do not know how to teach their child." (Father, Khmu community A)

"Some parents do not pay attention to their children’s learning... The parents work hard for their living such as working in plantations and finding food. So they do not have time to check their children’s learning outcomes or to help their children learn after school, and some parents are illiterate as well."
(VEDC member, Khmu community A)

“Guardians fail to recognize the importance of education.” (13 year old girl, Hmong community D)

“Children are not looking over their lessons because their parents are illiterate and unable to teach them.”
(10 year old girl, Hmong community C)

“We should encourage more awareness raising with parents so that they give more support to their children’s learning. But it is hard for some parents as they can’t read and some of them also can’t speak Lao.”
(DESB official, Oudomxay province)

Difficulties in understanding Lao language in ethnic minority communities

As children speak their own ethnic language (such as Hmong or Khmu) in their homes it can be difficult for children to understand the lessons when they first join pre-school or primary school, as all the lessons are explained in the national language Lao. Other research concerning socio-cultural barriers to girls’ education in Northern Laos also identified that teaching in Lao language makes school daunting and difficult for students (Pearce, 2011). In some of the schools in the Hmong and Khmu communities that were visited for these consultations the pre-primary and/or the grade 1 primary teacher were Lao-Tai, and some were not able to speak the local language. Thus, the teachers also found it harder to explain things to children when they started school as the children didn’t speak Lao. In contrast, some school directors also explained that it was harder to teach good Lao language if the teachers were from the ethnic minority community and used Lao as a second language, rather than as a first language.

“[In the pre-school] the children have problems with Lao language..... In our school both teachers and children are Hmong, so the Lao language of the children is not good enough.” (School director, Hmong community C)

Children’s lack of attention to study and challenges associated with starting school at a later age increases risks of repetition

Children’s own interest in study and their efforts to study hard and to learn influences their learning outcomes. As discussed earlier, while the majority of girls and boys express their motivation to study and the importance of education to improve their knowledge and future opportunities; a minority of children, particularly boys aged 8-13 years old are less interested in study and sometimes miss school in order to play. If children do not pay attention to their studies or regularly miss school, this negatively affects their learning and increases risks of poor learning and repetition.

"Repetition rate is about 10% in the school. The repetition causes are the children do not pay enough attention to their learning and do not obey their teachers or do not follow the school regulations, and the parents do not pay enough attention to their children’s learning”. (School director, Khmu community A)

“Boys are more likely to go to school irregularly and to repeat classes because they like to play instead of going to school. (School director, Hmong community D)

“[Some children have poor education] because children themselves do not wish to study.”
(12 year old boy, Hmong community D)
Furthermore, children who do not have the chance to attend pre-primary school, especially girls or boys who start school at a later age face increased risks of poor learning and repetition (see also Pearce, 2011). School directors, teachers and some parents particularly emphasised the benefits of pre-primary school to help young children get familiar with Lao language prior to starting primary school. In contrast school directors and teachers indicated that children who start primary school without any prior exposure to Lao language were more likely “not to be ready for school”.

"The main repetition cause is that the children are not ready for school – they do not have a chance to attend pre-primary school before going to primary school." (School director, Khmu community B)

"Children are not ready for school if they go to primary school without enrolling in pre-primary classes... Some children go to primary school directly [when others have been to pre-primary]. This is difficult for the children to follow their classmates and they are finally left behind." (Teacher, Khmu community B)

"There are still some children go to school irregularly and dropped out of school during the school year, especially grade 1-2. ... In the primary school, from 10%-20% of the children repeat a class, especially in grade 1 and 2." (School director, Hmong community C)

Moreover, if a child was attending school, but struggled to keep up in classes, and they were asked to repeat the same class more than one time, they were more likely to dropout.

"When the children repeat a class many years, they finally drop out of school." (Teacher, Khmu community B)

Interestingly, children may also face repetition of grade 1 if they enrol in school when they are too young.

“We can see that there are different reasons for dropout and repetition. Some children are enrolled to primary school either when they are too young or when they are too old. For example, grade 1 is meant to be for children age 6, but in some villages where there is no pre-primary school the parents think age 6 is too young to send their children to school, and some do not send children to grade 1 till they are 8 years old. Other families push to send their children to primary school when they are too young, when they are only 6 years old if there is not a pre-primary school in the village. These children are not allowed to sit the exam so they have to repeat this year in school.” (DESB official, Oudomaxy district)

**Limited education budgets, poor school infrastructure and challenges in school management**

Limited education budgets, poor school infrastructure and challenges in school management contribute to poor learning outcomes. As will be described in the next section on the key positive and negative aspects of schools, in each of the communities visited the school budget and school infrastructure
was limited. Most of the schools visited had insufficient: classrooms, tables and benches for the students; textbooks and learning materials (including games for pre-school age children); water and sanitation systems; fences surrounding the school. Furthermore, school directors, village heads, VEDC members and parents described how some schools did not have sufficient numbers of teachers and many of the teachers were not provided with sufficient training to provide quality teaching practices. In addition, although there is a need for more pre-primary and primary school teachers and there are locally trained teacher graduates who speak the local languages who are currently unemployed, DESBs do not have budget or quota to employ them.

“"In a poor and remote village it is impossible for them to provide enough materials, classroom furniture and classes to the children."  (VEDC member, Khmu community A)

“There are not textbooks and activity books.”  
(School director, Hmong community C)

Limited budget allocations to DESBs also negatively affect monitoring and provision of pedagogical and management support to School Directors and teachers from DESB staff, as the DESB officials and advisers do not have sufficient budget for fuel to undertake regular monitoring visits, particularly to remote communities. DESB staff have identified the need to increase advisory support to remote and rural schools, particularly to schools that have the highest rates of class repetition and school dropout, but such support has not been provided due to limited budgets.

“"Pedagogical advisers cannot support all schools because they do not have enough budget.”  
(DESB officials, Oudomxay Province)

While Village Education Development Committees (VEDCs) are established and are functioning in each of the communities that were visited during the consultations, they are relatively weak as most of the members have been appointed due to their position, rather than necessarily because of their interest in and commitment to support children’s education. Furthermore, due to being appointed based on position, the majority of VEDC members are male, with the female representative of the Women’s Union often being the only female member of the committee. Moreover, the VEDC members are busy with other responsibilities and commitments, and have limited time to contribute to VEDC meetings and activities. Particularly, as financial incentives are not provided to VEDC members, some members are not very active.

""The VEDC is not very active to their roles because they do not get any incentives if they work hard for the community."  (Village head, Khmu community A)

""The VEDC is not very responsible... because they do not get any payments... Thus they tend to do their own business... The VEDC meets every two month and they normally discuss monitoring and evaluating, school planning and problems the school faces. Head teachers, teachers, VEDCs, parents or children are responsible for repairing the school fence."  (Village head, Hmong community C)

In theory the VEDC has a critical role in participating in school level financial management, and developing the school development plan so that the school block grant can be effectively used. In practice, it was reported that the VEDC members meet fairly regularly and that some efforts are made to monitor teacher’s and children’s performances, and to improve the school infrastructure for example by encouraging villagers to help repair the school building and to mend the fence. However, high levels of engagement in school
development planning and teacher monitoring and follow up were not evident in the communities that were visited during the consultations.

"The VEDC meet every three months and they normally discuss monitoring and evaluating teachers’ performances, quotas of new teacher volunteers, and building volunteer teachers’ dormitories... Head teachers, teachers, VEDCs, parents or students are responsible for the community development such as building/providing enough classes for children, school fencing.” (Village head, Khmu community A)

"Before a new school year opened, VEDCs and parents or children have meetings and discuss responsibilities, for example, the community is responsible for building and repairing work. (School director, Hmong community C)

"The VEDC is very active and they strongly support the children’s education. The VEDC meets every three months and they normally discuss the school fencing, school furniture repairing, school kitchen repairing, WFP warehouse, and monitoring and evaluating teachers and children’s performances. The VEDC and parents support the school with supplies and money for the school events such as opening and closing a school year, National Teacher Day, school repairing, etc. (Village head, Hmong community D)

Poor teaching practices

Different adult stakeholders including village heads, VEDC members, fathers, mothers, children, teachers, school directors, and DESB officials acknowledged weaknesses in teaching practices affecting the quality of education, children’s motivation to learn, and children’s learning outcomes (see also Palme et al, 2012).

“Teachers are lacking in teaching techniques, making children not want to study.”
(Father, Hmong community A)

“Children’s learning outcomes are not good enough because the teachers do not get trainings on new teaching techniques regularly. Some of the children do not pay enough attention to their learning and the school lacks learning-teaching materials.” (School director, Khmu community A)

Some parents, school directors, village heads, VEDC members and DESB officials described how some of the teachers had poor subject knowledge on at least some of the subjects that they were teaching. Varied reasons were identified which contribute to this including:

- Graduates with lower grades entering into the teaching profession (as those with better grades train to become engineers, doctors, or bankers).

"Normally, high school graduates who go to a teacher training college have worse learning outcomes than the graduates who go to other fields such as banking, finance, medicine, engineering, economics; qualities of teacher training colleges in Laos are not very high the students." (VEDC member, Hmong community C)

- Teachers are being trained at low quality teacher training colleges in the provinces; and they attempt to teach too many subjects, which negatively affect the content and quality of their understanding of any one topic.

“The teacher does not have enough knowledge because the teacher training college has low quality” (Parents, mixed ethnic community E)

"The [teacher training] students learn too many subjects at the colleges; and in-service teachers do not get training regularly.” (VEDC member, Hmong community A)
Teachers having insufficient opportunities for training in new teaching methodology including using child friendly teaching methodologies, applying group learning and creative learning methodologies to learn through activities, games, music and sports.

“There is a lack of teacher training. Teachers can teach, but many have no chance to get training in new teaching methods, so they are still teaching using old style methods.” (DESB official, Oudamxay province)

Teachers being expected to teach many subjects, and in remote schools teachers are also expected to teach many grades. Thus, although a graduate may have majored in Lao language, they are also expected to teach maths and chemistry. Similarly, they may have been trained to teach grade 1 or 2 students, but they may be asked to also teach grade 3 or 4 students. Furthermore, earlier consultations with DESB staff identified that there is too much content in Lao language textbooks for grade 1 students that makes it challenging for the teachers to teach all the expected content.

"Because of limited numbers of teachers provided to the community, one teacher teaches too many subjects and grades. This makes the quality of teaching and children’s learning outcomes low.”
(male VEDC member, Khmu community A)

Teachers have too many students in one class (for example in community A where there were 81 children (40 boys, 41 girls) were enrolled in grade 1, and grade 2 and grade 3 had 30 – 40 pupils in a class. When there are more than 30 pupils in a class it makes it harder for teacher to teach and may increase the risk that children skip class. In community B there 30- 88 pupils enrolled in each class (grade 1 to 5). In the schools in community C, D and E the class sizes were relatively smaller (usually less than 25), but in Hmong community D all the classes were in one shared classroom.

"There are too many children in one class, so this means that the teacher cannot give good quality of learning to all children, so this makes the children have poor learning outcomes.”
(Village head, Khmu community B)

“The community lacks teachers and pre-primary classes – a primary class is being used as a pre-primary class; there are too many children in the pre-primary class and in the primary school there are too many children per class – teachers cannot control or take care of all children and this make some children skip a class and their parents do not pay enough attention to their children’s learning .” (School director, Hmong community C)

De-motivation of new graduate teachers as they are expected to work voluntarily for up to 4 years before they can get a permanent position. Thus, it is hard for them to maintain motivation for their teaching profession.

“I worked for four years and I just started getting my salary recently. Two of the primary school teachers and two of the secondary school teachers don’t get their salary.... The people in the village help them, they give them food.”
(Teacher, Khmu community B)

Low pay of teachers even when they have permanent position, so they often do other jobs at the same time as teaching to earn more money which sometimes causes them to be absent from the classroom.

"Teachers are sometimes absent – the teachers have other jobs to earn money for their living because their salaries are very small.” (Mother, Hmong community C)

When the teacher does not run classes regularly it negatively affects students’ learning. Some teachers are irregular due to doing other tasks. Furthermore, if teachers do not live in the community where the school is, some teachers may be late or face difficulties in reaching the school during the rainy season.
“Children's study is low because students lack study material, and because they are not studying regularly as the teacher does not have regular classes.” (Parents, mixed ethnic community E)

"Other reasons [for poor learning]... the child himself does not pay attention to the study because the teacher does not pay attention to teaching, or is not regular." (Father, Khmu community B)

“The teacher lives in another village, so sometimes it is difficult for the teacher to travel to the school.”
(Village head, Hmong community D)

**Negative treatment from the teacher, including scolding, beating and other forms of humiliating punishment**

As will be further described in the next section on positive and negative aspects of schools, children appreciate kind teachers, and girls and boys of all ages described how they did not like it when teachers were angry, when they scolded them, complained, treated children unfairly, and used physical and humiliating forms of punishment from the teacher. Boys mentioned their dislike of teacher’s beating children more often than girls; however there was not sufficient opportunity for classroom observation to identify if boys faced more physical punishment than girls. Nevertheless, it was clear that girls and boys disliked negative treatment from their teachers; and a few mothers also described how negative treatment by teachers lowers children’s interest in attending school and studying, and contributes to temporary and permanent school dropout.

"Among the students in the class there were some who were naughty and some who were not naughty. However the teacher likes to complain to everyone.” (12-year-old boy, Khmu community A)

"I don’t like it when the teacher hits the hand” (11-year-old boy, Khmu community B)

“I don’t like the teachers scolding, beating and imposing their rules on me.”
(11 and 12-year-old girls, Hmong community C)

“I don’t like studying when the teacher teases us violently or forces us to stand on one leg with our arms out and canes us when we can’t do our sums.” (12-year-old boy, Hmong community D)

“I do not like to hear the teacher be angry ... and I do not like the teacher to hit.”
(10-12-year-old boys, Mixed ethnic community E)

Furthermore, girls and boys do not like it when the teacher gives critical feedback and/or embarrasses them. Discriminatory attitudes towards poor children and families and towards children with disabilities can also harm children’s motivation to learn. A couple of parents and children also mentioned incidences where children had been fined or where children had paid the teacher to give them good results, but the details of such practices were not shared. Such treatment increases risks of poor quality learning or school dropout.

"The child does not like the critical comment from teacher and the teacher like to share his story with other teacher so that the child s shy then does not like to come to the school.” (Mother of a non-school going child, Khmu community B)
“Children study poorly, repeat their grades, and think of paying off the teacher to allow them to move up to the next grade, meaning that when they complete school, their education lacks quality.”
(12 and 13-year-old girls, Hmong community D)

"The teacher likes to complain, to fine them, thus [some children] quit from school because they dislike the teacher" (Mother, Khmu community B)

There was no explicit mention of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse of girls or boys in school from girls, boys, mothers or fathers or from other stakeholders who were consulted. However, concerns about girls’ security while travelling to and from school was highlighted by one of the village heads in community A. In addition, some parents and teachers described how boys had more freedom of movement and thus found it easier to travel longer distances to reach school. Increased efforts are needed to raise awareness, prevention and response to different forms of violence in and around schools among school directors, teachers, VEDC members, mothers, fathers, girls and boys. The fact that school directors, teachers and VEDC members did not mention concerns regarding corporal punishment of children in schools indicates that the seriousness of such concerns raised by girls and boys are not yet being identified or addressed by concerned adults.

Factors that enable enrolment and children’s education opportunities

Key factors that enable enrolment, regular attendance at school, and learning opportunities include:

- **Parents and caregivers’ value for education.** As described above in the first section of the key findings, value for education is one of the most, if not the most critical factor. Attitudes towards gender also influence parents’ value of education for their sons and daughters. When mothers, fathers and other caregivers have increased value for gender equality they are more inclined to send both their daughters and sons to school. However, unexpected shocks like a family members’ ill-health or death can negatively impact on opportunities for children to study.

  "Because parents understand the importance of education they encourage and support their children to go to school." (Father, Khmu community B)

  “All of the parents try to support their children’s education even though they are poor. Girls regularly go to school and pay more attention on their learning” (Mother, Hmong community C).

- **Families having enough money.** When parents and caregivers have enough money to buy the school uniform, text books and other learning materials, and to give pocket money it is easier for them to send their children to school.

  "Children of rich families [find it easier to go to school]. These parents have enough money to support their children’s education and needs such as uniforms, learning materials, pocket money, etc.”
  (Teacher, Khmu community A)

  "The child that can go to school easily is the child of parents who has money to give, to buy the cloth and to follow the rules that the school announces.” (Father, Khmu community B)

  “Families with money for buying children’s uniforms, clothes and learning materials makes it easier for some children to enrol in school and to regularly go to school.” (Mother, Hmong community C)

- **Children of village officials or teachers find it easier to go to school, and children of parents who have good education** as these families value education, they tend to be richer and they have
enough money to support their children. Furthermore, children of village officials, particularly village officials’ daughters, are considered by adults to be obedient and more able to follow the school regulations.

"Children who come from official families, especially girls [find it easier to go to school regularly], this is because the girls keep the school regulations and obey their parents and teachers." (Father, Khmu community A)

"Children of official families are more likely to go to school and to continue with an education" (Father, Khmu community B)

"Children of teachers [find it easier to go to school], as teachers support their children’s education and pay more attention to their children’s learning. Teachers go to school every day and when they go to school they take their children with them" (Teacher, Hmong community C)

- When pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools are close to the village it is easier to send children, particularly young children and girls to school. Furthermore, as described in an earlier section of the report, particularly in the ethnic minority communities’ access to pre-primary school provides important opportunities for children to learn Lao language before starting primary school and enhances school readiness and learning outcomes.

“It is easy for children to go to school because the school is near the village.” (Mother, Hmong community D)

"Teachers should teach Lao language effectively to children before they go to primary school.” (Teacher, Khmu community B)

- Children themselves are interested in and like studying, and are willing to be obedient in school. When girls and boys are interested in and are motivated to study and learn they try to attend school regularly and they pay more attention in class thus improving opportunities for better learning outcomes. Girls were particularly socialised to be obedient to their parents and were perceived by teachers as being more obedient in schools. Increased classroom observation is needed to observe whether girls are more or less encouraged to speak up and actively participate in schools or whether they are appreciated for their obedience and submissive behaviour.

"Girls go to school easier than boys, especially at primary school level. This is because girls pay more attention to learning, keep school regulations, and obey their teachers and parents. In contrast, [some] boys pay less attention to learning, they do not keep school rules, and they disobey their parents and teachers.” (Primary teacher, Khmu community A)

"The child who studies regularly and does not drop out of the class is the child who listens to their parents, and who pays attention to their study.” (Fathers, Khmu community B)

- Having good, kind teachers who use a variety of teaching methods. Girls and boys emphasised the importance of having kind and are creative teachers. This motivates children to study and enhances learning outcomes. In pre-primary school and grade 1 it also helps that the teacher speaks the local language as well as Lao so that they can more easily explain the meaning of words and sentences to effectively teach Lao.

"Good teachers – they have good skills in teaching, they are kind. They use a variety of teaching activities – games, storytelling, and extra activities. This can attract children for going to school.” (Teacher, Hmong community C)

7 However, the study was not able to identify if there were any significant differences for children (girls and boys) who had more educated mothers compared with those who had more educated fathers.
“All of the children in the community are given equal opportunities to access school and the teacher can speak Hmong language, so this makes the children understand lessons easily.” (School director, Hmong community D)

- Community involvement in school matters and when the VEDC is actively involved in monitoring teacher’s performance and helping address the challenges faced concerning children’s education it can support efforts to enable girls and boys to go to school and have improved learning.

- Provision of snacks or meals to children at schools can motivate children (and parents). The schools receive food from the World Food Programme to provide to school going children.

  "The children go to school because of the snacks provided by WFP." (School director, Khmu community B)

  “Many of the children go to school because the school provides snacks and the government support the children’s education.” (Father, Khmu community B)

- Children’s good health improves their opportunities to regularly attend school, to concentrate and do well in their studies.

  "Children with good health have better learning outcomes." (Teacher, Khmu community B)

- Being the youngest child and when children have less siblings/ smaller families can enhance opportunities to go to school, and to not be withdrawn from school (temporarily or permanently) to help look after younger siblings.

  “I had to stay at home to look after my younger sibling. This prevented me from studying.”
  
  (10 year old girl, Hmong community C)

  “We do not have any younger siblings. This allows us to go to school regularly unlike children who have siblings who are still very young.” (10 year old boy, Hmong community C)

  “I don’t have to look after a younger sibling because I’m the youngest child. Also, my parents allow me to go to school because they recognize that education is of great importance to me.” (10 year old boy, Hmong community C)
**Key positive and negative aspects of schools, learning and teaching practices**

This section of the reports present the key positive and negative aspects of schools, learning and teaching practices bringing together the perspectives of girls, boys, mothers, fathers, grandparent and other caregivers, VEDC members, teachers, School Directors, and local government officials. Many of the positive and negative aspects of schools are mirrored opposites of one another, for example children like kind teachers, and they dislike unkind teachers who scold, complain and express their anger. Furthermore, in many of the communities both positive and negative aspects were revealed by different stakeholders.

An overview of the key strengths and weaknesses are presented in relation to key characteristics are shown in the table below:

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Ease of access to school

Four out of five of the communities \((A, B, C, D & E)\) that were visited had a pre-school, primary school and a junior secondary school close together near the heart of the community. This was considered by girls, boys, mothers, fathers and other stakeholders to be a huge strength, as girls and boys of different ages who lived in the community could more easily walk to the school in a relatively short time. For junior secondary school children from neighbouring villages who lived further away also had opportunities to stay in girls and boys dormitories near to the school. Girls and boys of different ages explained how they liked it when their school is near to their village, as it is easier to get to and from school. In particular, it is easier for younger children to go to pre-school and to grade 1 and 2 primary school when it is close to their home. Some children also mentioned that they liked the school being close to their home, as it is easier for them to go back to their home to help their parents.

"I like to walk a short distance to school" (10-year-old girl, Khmu community A)

As described earlier in the report, opportunities to attend pre-primary school helps children to be ready for primary school, and it helps reduce class repetition in primary school as children are more likely to start school at the right age. The establishment of pre-primary and primary schools in villages in remote areas helps to reduce illiteracy rates, and increase opportunities for education for all.

However, even when the pre-school and primary school are relatively near to the community, if there are bad roads to reach school, or rivers to cross it can still be challenging for younger children to reach school, particularly during the rainy season when there is a lot of mud and the rivers get full. Challenges to travel to and from school are compounded when children affected by poverty do not have shoes, or insufficient clothing.

"I dislike it when I have no shoes and I have to walk a long distance" (8-year-old girl, Khmu community A)

"I dislike that the school is a long way away from our houses.” (12-year-old girl, Hmong community C)

"I am lazy to cross the river to go to the school when the river gets big [during the rainy season].”  
(11-year-old boy, Khmu community B)

"I don't like the rain because it makes it difficult to get to school and results in mud, which makes the school dirty, and a build up of water in the area surrounding the school.” (10-year-old boy, Hmong community C)

In one community \((D)\) visited there was only an incomplete primary school in the village (up to grade 2) and there was no pre-primary school. The school was run by one school director who taught girls and boys in multi-grades in on classroom. Children had to travel 2km to attend the higher grades of primary school and 6km to attend junior secondary school. When the pre-primary, primary or secondary school is far away from children's homes it is a disadvantage as mothers and fathers are more reluctant to send children to school, particularly younger children to pre-school, and adolescent girls to secondary school. Barriers faced by girls include parents and other community stakeholders concerns about safety and security risks that girls may face on route to or from school.
“Girls find it more difficult to go to secondary school because the school is far away from their village – it is not safe or convenient for girls.” (Village head, Khmu community A)

“I want to have a big school... with grade 1 to grade 5... and a sports field, a place for playing. I would like to have toilets, flowers, trees to provide shelter, and to have a good fence. I want it to be like this, because now at the school we only have grade 1 - grade 2, but for grade 3 we have to go to another place. Our school is narrow, we have no sport field for playing, and the rest room is dirty.” (8 year old boy, Hmong community D)

School budgets

A weakness of all the schools visited, and of the district education authorities is that they have insufficient budgets to ensure well-built permanent schools with sufficient numbers of qualified and trained teachers; classrooms; and teaching and learning materials. At the district level DESBs have insufficient budget and quote to employ qualified pre-primary teachers from the local area who speak the local languages as well as Lao.

“There is a problem that there are new graduates from the teacher training school for pre-primary schools, but in the government we do not have a quota to employ them even though they are available and they are needed.”

(DESB official, Oudomxay Province)

Furthermore, despite some efforts to decentralise budgets to VEDC for developing and implementing school development plans, the VEDCs and School Directors do not have sufficient budget for all the necessary infrastructure.

"The tables and benches are not enough, classes are not enough, no water supplies in school, not enough trainings for low quality teachers. This is because the local government and the community do not have budgets.”

(School director, Khmu community B)

In contrast a strength of existing education policies and budget allocations in Lao PDR, is that they enable teachers in remote locations to receive increased payment as an incentive to secure and maintain teachers in remote locations.

Number of teachers and quality of teaching practice

As has been described in the section concerning barriers to education, many of the schools visited do not having enough teachers, and some poor quality teaching practices have been identified by some children, parents, VEDC members, and school directors, particularly due to poor quality or lack of follow up training that is provided to teachers and due to weaknesses in school infrastructure and having insufficient teaching-learning materials. There were some differences in perspectives shared by children and adults. For example, while girls and boys emphasised their dislike for teachers scolding them, complaining and beating; concerns regarding scolding or corporal punishment were rarely mentioned by mothers, fathers or VEDC members. However, both children and adults identified concerns about having insufficient teachers, insufficient text books and learning materials, and situations where the teacher had insufficient knowledge about the subjects they were teaching. Furthermore, some of the schools visited had
pre-primary school teachers who were Lao-Tai, rather than from the local ethnic group. If pre-primary teachers do not speak the local language, this can make it more difficult for them to teach young children Lao.

"There are not enough teachers and many of them are volunteer teachers." (Father, Khmu community B)

A strength of some of the schools visited is when they have teachers who speak the local language and teachers who speak Lao. For pre-primary and primary school teachers it was beneficial if teachers could speak both the local language and Lao. However, for teaching children in older grades, it was also important to have some teachers whose first language was Lao, in order to ensure good teaching in Lao.

**Teaching and learning materials**

Most of the schools visited had insufficient teaching and learning materials for pre-primary, primary and secondary school. The school in Khmu community B and the school in Hmong community C had some story books, particularly in community C due to the establishment of library by Room to Read. However, the other pre-schools visited lacked sufficient child friendly story books, games, dolls, and guidance for learning through play with young children. The primary schools also had insufficient reading books and activity books in schools A, D & E. It was observed that children had made designs out of clay in one school (Hmong community C), and there was evidence of children being able to draw in each of the schools, but in general there was a lack of drawing materials, and other creative learning materials in other schools.⁸

“Some schools still lack teaching-learning materials for the classroom, especially pre-primary schools. You can observe in a village where there is a pre-primary school that they lack materials like toys and dolls.”

(DESB official, Oudomxay province)

In each of the primary and junior secondary schools that were visited there were not enough text books for students. It was observed that children often shared a text book in a group with 3-5 other students. Lack of access to student text books contributes to poor learning outcomes.

"[The] child’s study is very low because they do not read the book, because they do not have the textbook.”

(Mother, Khmu community B)

A strength of the school in community C was that the school had a library with story books, reading materials and activities for children of different ages. However, as there were not sufficient classrooms, pre-school classes were organised in the library which limited the time older children could use the library.

“I like the library because there are such a variety of books for us to look at and read.”

(11 and 12-year-old boys, Hmong community C)

“I don’t like kindergarten classes being held in the library because we can’t go in to read whenever we please.”

(11 and 12-year-old girls, Hmong community C)

**School infrastructure**

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⁸ Teaching and learning materials was not assessed for gender responsiveness and inclusion issues during this study.
Poor school infrastructure (non-permanent structures, insufficient classrooms, broken benches and tables, poor water sanitation and hygiene) was observed in each of the schools visited. In two of the communities visited (A & E) the school was not a permanent structure. Furthermore, in each of the schools (A – E) there were insufficient classrooms.

“The weaknesses of our local school is that it is a temporary and dirty school, there are not enough tables and benches, there are dirty latrines, and there is no water supplies in school.” (Mother, Khmu community A)

"I dislike it that the classroom is not permanent" (13-year-old girl, Khmu community A)

“There are not enough school buildings or classes.” (Mother, Hmong community C)

Insufficient or broken tables and benches were also a feature in each of the schools visited. Insufficient or broken fences also led to dirty school grounds, as animals entered and defecated in the school grounds.

“There are not enough pre-primary classes, tables and benches, and teachers. This is because the school lack budgets.”

(Father, Khmu community A)

“I dislike the broken table and chairs.”

(12 year old girl, Khmu community B)

“I do not like the pig to come to poo in the school and in the kitchen.” (7 year old boy, Hmong community D)

Water, sanitation and hygiene in schools

Access to clean drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in the school is necessary to ensure a safe, healthy and good learning environment for girls and boys. Girls, boys, mothers and fathers did not explicitly mention whether WASH facilities affect girls and boys attendance in pre-school, primary school or secondary school, apart from mentioning that poor water and sanitation services can increase risks of illness and injury that may result in absence from school. However, girls and boys did emphasise how access to WASH facilities in schools was a key component of establishing a good school environment. Inadequate WASH facilities were clearly identified as a concern by girls and boys in each school.

Children, particularly adolescent girls, appreciated it when they could access a toilet at school. Some girls and boys had more access to a toilet in school, than in their homes. Clean and green school environments were also appreciated by girls and boys.

“I like the toilet because it is convenient (13-year-old girl, Khmu community A)

“I like the school because it has rest room.” (13-year-old girl, Khmu community B)

“The school is attractive, there is a wide variety of flowers, there is a football playing field, there is water to use at the school, there are toilets, there is a flag post, and there beautiful flowers and trees behind the school.”

(10-year-old boy, Hmong community C)
Although some efforts had been made to establish toilets and drinking water in each of the schools that we visited, four of the schools (A, B, D, E) had insufficient toilets and/or insufficient water supply at the school, thus making it difficult for children to use the toilets. Insufficient water supply and toilets also created barriers for maintaining separate toilets for girls and boys. Furthermore, despite having sufficient numbers of toilets, poor drainage systems and dirty compounds also created sanitation problems in school C.

"I dislike that the school does not have a regular water supply." (8-year-old girl, Khmu community A)

"I dislike the rest room in the school because it is not clean, as no have water.”
(11-year-old boy, Khmu community B)

“I don’t like the toilets getting dirty because there is no water to clean them and there is litter.”
(10-year-old girl, Hmong community D)

“I don’t like smelly toilets, smelly animal dung, and the bad smell of urine behind the school.”
(7-year-old boys, Hmong community C)

Rubbish, animal waste and mud (in the rainy season) were also a weakness of each of the schools visited. Dirty grounds made children dirty and increased risks of illness and injury.

“I don’t like treading on dirty things and I don’t like stubbing my foot on sharp tree stumps because it hurts and makes me unable to go to school.” (8-year-old boy, mixed ethnic community E)

"I dislike it whenever I step in dirt, mud or chicken's poo."
(8-year-old girl, Khmu community A)

“I don’t like seeing litter and dirty things in the surrounds of the school [and the] dirty toilets.”
(7-year-old boys, Hmong community C)

“I don’t like the drains and muddy puddles in front of the school because they smell bad... and there are mosquitoes in the classroom.” (10-12-year-old girls and boys, Hmong community D)

Sports and play area and trees for shade

A strength of four out of five of the schools (A, B, C, E) visited was that there were sufficient school grounds for children to play, and there were some trees for shade. Children felt that the trees made the school more beautiful, and they provided shade for children to play outside with their friends, particularly during the hot season. The lack of play areas and trees for shade was a weakness in school D.

“The school is small, it is very close a main road, it gets dirty in the rainy season, and the school has no playground for the children.” (School director, Hmong community D)

“I don’t like the school grounds because they are small and there is nowhere to play.”
(12-year-old girl, Hmong community D)
“I like the school; it has flowers and a big tree around it; it provides shelter and is nice.” (8-year-old boy, Hmong community C)

Furthermore, community B had established a small garden growing vegetables and flowers, with vegetables that could be used by the teachers, and by secondary school children who were staying in the dormitory. This was appreciated by the students.

Teacher’s behaviour and ways of disciplining children

In each school, girls and boys described how they liked teachers who are kind and who praise children, and they disliked teachers who scolded or hit them. Teachers’ behaviour with children, and their approaches to disciplining children have impact on children’s motivation to learn, children’s learning outcomes, and as indicated earlier, mistreatment of children by their teachers can lead to temporary or permanent school dropout.

Girls and boys school experiences are more positive when teachers are kind, when they speak politely to children and when they try to explain things slowly and clearly. Particularly in ethnic minority communities where children are learning through a second language, it is necessary to teach slowly and clearly in order to ensure a better understanding of the topic being taught.

“I like the teacher speaking nicely and being kind.” (7-year-old girl, Hmong community C)

“I like it when the teacher is teaching slowly.” (14-year-old girl, Khmu community A)

"I like generous people, like the teacher who is teaching well.” (10-year-old girl, Khmu community B)

“I like kind teachers who give me [good] grades and results.” (6 and 7-year-old boys, Hmong community D)

Children, particularly boys described how they liked it when they are praised by their teachers. This encourages them to learn and study.

"I want to hear the teacher’s compliment.” (8-year-old boy, Khmu community A)

“I like teacher’s compliment that my study was excellent.” (11-year-old boy, Khmu community B)

“I like it when the teacher gives the gift to me when I get a good score.” (11-year-old boy, Hmong community C)

“I like the teacher saying good things; I like the teacher to say compliments.”
“I like the kind teacher and the teacher giving me praise.” (11-year-old boy, Hmong community D)

Children also liked to hear their teachers reading stories and using creative forms of teaching, including song and dance.

“I like it when the teacher reads to us and tells us stories.” (12-year-old girl, Hmong community C)

“I like the kind teacher; the teacher who teaches well, the teacher who teaches songs and dance.” (10-year-old girl, Hmong community D)

Children, particularly children from the Hmong community C indicated how they like it when they are able to exercise some choice about the medium of study in school, to be able to write letters, to sing and/or to talk. Though talking in school was only explicitly mentioned by the 6-7 year old Hmong boys in community C (who were particularly vocal during the consultation).

“I like reading and singing.” (12-year-old girl, Hmong community C)

“I get to draw pictures however I please.” (12-year-old boy, Hmong community C)

“I like doing a lot of talking.” (7-year-old boys, Hmong community C)

As described above in each community girls and boys of different ages emphasised it that they did not like it when the teachers were unkind, when they scolded, complained, beat children, or if they embarrassed them. The fact that such behaviours were reported by girls and boys in each community indicates that teachers are using discipline approaches that are not in the best interests of children, rather than positive discipline methods which are more respectful of children.

“I do not want to hear the teacher shouting... And I do not like the teacher who hits” (8-year-old boy, Khmu community A)

“I don’t want to hear the teacher’s scolding.” (9-year-old girl, Hmong community D)

Children also described it how they do not like it when teachers speak too fast or when classes go on for too long, as this makes it harder to understand the lessons. As it is harder to understand (This was mentioned by girls and boys of different ages, particularly in Khmu communities).

"I don’t like it when the teacher teaches too fast” (13-year-old girl, Khmu community A)

“Dislike it when the teacher teaches so long, especially natural science and basic subjects.” (12-year-old boy, Khmu community A)

Children’s motivation and interest in learning

As described earlier the majority of girls and boys of different ages and ethnic groups expressed their interest to study, to gain knowledge and to get stable and good jobs in the future. They value
education as they see that it will improve the current and future lives if they are literate, clever and have good knowledge. However, as described earlier some children, particularly boys are less interested in attending school regularly as they do not appreciate the school rules, and they prefer to play.

"I want to go to the school, to study, and to do all my studies to have knowledge and to be clever." (5-year-old girl, Khmu community B)

"I like looking at writing and being able to draw the letters the teacher writes up on the board." (7-year-old boy, Hmong community D)

Girls and boys are also motivated to go to school in order to be able to play with their friends; to wear school uniform, have school materials and pocket money for snacks in school; and to eat the school meals.

"I like going to school as I have a lot of friends and have fun." (12-year-old boy, Khmu community A)

"I like to come to school because it is fun, we can sign a song, we can play sport, and we have a lot of friends," (12-year-old girl, Khmu community B)

"I like wearing new clothes to school and having books, pens, pencils, and a bag." (8-year-old girl, Hmong community D)

"I like it when I come to school as the parents give money for buying candy." (10-year-old girl, mixed ethnic community E)

"[I like it that] we get school meals." (11-year-old boy, Hmong community C)

As described earlier some children, particularly girls described how they thought they were not very good at study and they didn’t like this. Children need increased support if they are struggling with their learning, and they need encouragement to motivate them. However, the lack of support provided to children with physical or learning disabilities indicates a general lack of additional support for children who are struggling in school.

**Friendships and negative behaviour among children**

**Having time to play with their friends** and being able to play and watch sports in school is one of children’s key motivations for regularly attending school. This was emphasised by boys and girls, especially by primary school age children. School provides an important space to establish, strengthen and experience friendships, and to play games and sports. Furthermore, physical education (PE) is included as part of the school curricula.

"I like going to school because I like playing sport especially football" (12-year-old boy, Khmu community B)
“I like coming to school, I like playing string dance with friends, kidding, chatting, and we can sing a song.”
(10-year-old girl, mixed ethnic community E)

“I like playing volleyball and pétanque.” (7 and 8-year-old boys, Hmong community C)

“I like to play games. I like PE.” (12-year-old girl, Hmong community C)

“I like having good friends and that people help one another” (12-year-old boy, Hmong community D)

Fighting and arguments among children was also identified as a significant dislike among girls and boys in each of the schools visited. Furthermore, some girls and boys described it when they do not like it when some children are naughty in class and disturb other children. Furthermore, in two communities (A & D) boys mentioned that they did not like it when their friends or the teachers smoked.

"I do not like it in school because there is a friend who disturbs me.” (12-year-old boy, Khmu community A)

"I don't like it when the student is naughty, and when friends hit each other in the school.”
(12-year-old girls, Khmu community B)

“I don't like fighting, or being beaten up by my friends.” (12-year-old girl, Hmong community C)

“I don't like the teacher and my friends smoking because it smells bad and causes disease”.
(11-year-old boy, Hmong community D)

“I do not like the friend to hit, and I do not like to see the friends hit each other.”
(10-year-old girl, mixed ethnic community E)

Local stakeholder engagement in education policy and practice decision making and school management

School directors, teachers and VEDC members have limited say to influence the design of educational policies or school curricula, but the school can adapt policies a bit to the local context. Furthermore, weaknesses in some school director's skills and knowledge in school management and administration have also been identified by DESB officials.

"School directors and teachers slightly influence the design of education policies or the school curricula. In contrast, the Ministry of Education and Sports strongly influence the design.” (School director, Khmu community A)

“The Ministry of Education and Sports strongly influences the design of education policies or the school curricula, but the school adapts the policies and curricula to the local contexts.” (School director, Hmong community C)

In each community, a good relationship between the school and the community had been established, and efforts were made by VEDC members, parents and caregivers to build and repair the school. However, when parents were requested to undertake repeated repairs to the school buildings or fence it created a sense of frustration as such tasks kept them away from their plantation work

"The school has a good relationship with the community and it has a large playground.”
(School Director, Khmu community B)

"Some school buildings are temporary, so the villagers have to repair them again and again”.
(Father, Khmu community B)
The community has to help the school with school fence and class room repairing. This make the villagers waste time for going to their plantations.... The school fence is temporary, so the community have to repair it again and again.” (Mothers, Hmong community C)

The VEDCs bring together key stakeholders to support school management. However, as described earlier in most communities the VEDCs tend to be more involved in coordinating school repairs, than in making substantial contributions to developing and implementing school development plans, monitoring teachers or students performances. In most communities the VEDCs are not active enough to support effective school management. As described earlier VEDC members are busy with other responsibilities and are not provided any financial incentives for their role in the VEDC.

“VEDC support the school with the school fence, school repairing, and the WFP warehouse”
(School director, Hmong community D)
Impact of non-school enrolment, repetition, or school dropout on children, families, communities and society

Adults and children shared their views about the impact of non-school enrolment, repetition, temporary and permanent school dropout on children, families, communities and society. One positive impact of not going to school is that children are more available to help their families with household, agricultural and income generation work.

"Children who do not go to school help their parents work in plantations, take care of younger siblings and do house work." (Mother, Hmong community C)

"I take care of younger children, I bring the water and feed the ducks and chickens." (15-year-old out-of-school boy with disabilities, Khmu community A)

However, across each of the communities consulted consistent feedback was shared by women, men, girls and boys about the negative impact of poor education and school dropout on children and families current and future lives was also shared. Adults tended to emphasise the negative impact of poor education for boys. Poor education opportunities contributed to:

- **Continued cycles of illiteracy and poverty in the poorest families**

  "Poor education leads to more people being illiterate... and it leads to more poor families.” (15-year-old boy, Hmong community D)

  “Children are illiterate and there is unemployment.” (VEDC member, Hmong community C)

- **Increased risks of unemployment and difficulties in finding stable jobs**

  “It makes it difficult to live and forces people to rely on agricultural production, meaning that they have no stable incomes. (12-year-old girl, Hmong community D)

  "It is not easy for children to find jobs when they grow up.” (VEDC member, Khmu community A)

- **Social difficulties among uneducated children which contributes to frustration, alcohol use, violence, and crime particularly among boys and men**

  “Impact is more illiteracy. Poor education can make the young people go to the bad way such as drinking, drug, and thief (Parent, mixed ethnic community E)

  “[If children] quit from school and there is no work to do they then become a thief, stealing the ducks and chickens... They may open the speaker and sing a song, drink the alcohol to disturb family and villagers.” (Mothers, Khmu community B)

  “It makes people steal, drink alcohol, get addicted to drugs, and socialize with bad people because they are unaware of the country’s laws and this brings trouble to their communities and society as a whole... [This mostly applies to the men].” (12-year-old boy, Hmong community C)

- **Increased risks of crime and insecurity in communities and society** as more people are unaware of the laws of the country.

  “More people are illiterate and unable to develop themselves or the country and theft and drug addiction arises. This brings trouble to the community and society as a whole.” (Father, Hmong community C)
“There are more people who do not know the laws of the country.” (VEDC members, Hmong community D)

- Slow community development

"Community development is slow and faces difficulties when children are poorly educated."  
(VEDC member, Khmu community A)

Furthermore, when children do not enrol or attend irregularly the school is weaker and has poorer results which make it harder for the local school authorities to reach the targets and goals set by the Ministry of Education and Sports. As a result local officials may receive negative feedback from their seniors.

“Children who never enrol in school or dropout out of school are illiterate, become bad children of the community and make the school weak because the school cannot reach the goals of the Ministry of Education and Sports.”  
(School Director, Khmu community B)

“If children do not attend school the rate of illiteracy is increased, the school cannot reach the goals of the Ministry of Education and Sports, and the children do not have good future.” (School Director, Hmong community C)
Key recommendations to improve opportunities for all girls and boys to regularly go to school and to improve schools for better learning outcomes

This final section of the report shares key recommendations to improve opportunities for all girls and boys to regularly go to school and to improve schools for better learning outcomes. The recommendations have been informed by children and different adult stakeholders who were consulted; and they have been further elaborated drawing upon other relevant reports concerning education in Northern Lao, and through discussions and inputs from staff working for Save the Children and Plan International in Lao PDR.

12 key recommendations have been identified, each of which is elaborated in this final section or the report, including attention to the way the design, implementation and monitoring of the LEARN project can contribute to realisation of the recommendations. The key recommendations include:

1. Advocacy with the Ministry of Education and Sports to:
   a) increase district and school education budgets;
   b) adapt existing education practices to help children who do not speak Lao at home
   c) consider flexible policies which would enable DESB in each district to adapt the school calendar to fit the most intensive seasonal work periods

2. Advocacy with relevant Ministries, international and local agencies to provide social protection schemes, educational scholarships and grants to the most vulnerable families.

3. Increase technical and financial support from international organisations for pre-primary and primary education

4. Support the establishment of a pre-primary classes in every community

5. Build permanent schools with good infrastructure, including adequate water and sanitation services

6. Ensure that teachers and students have access to sufficient teaching and learning materials, including games, reading books, music and sports materials

7. Improve teacher training both in the teacher training colleges in the provinces and through in-service training; and integrate training on positive discipline, gender sensitivity and inclusive education into teacher training curricula and in-service training

8. Increase awareness, support and services to support attendance and improved learning opportunities for children with disabilities

9. Increase awareness raising among parents and caregivers on child development, gender equality, inclusive education and positive discipline to increase the importance of pre-school education, primary education and secondary education for all girls and boys

10. Provide practical guidance to mothers, fathers and caregivers to demonstrate their interest in their daughter’s and son’s study; and support non-formal education of mothers, fathers and caregivers in rural and remote communities

11. Develop a “Best VEDC Award Scheme” and strengthen capacity of VEDC members to enhance their active role in school management including improved monitoring and support to teachers and students to improve learning outcomes

12. Increase opportunities for community and child participation in school governance processes and opportunities to create safe and inclusive child friendly schools.

1a) Advocacy with the Ministry of Education and Sports to increase district and school education budgets

Limited budgets for education services at the district and community level negatively impact on allocation of sufficient teachers, including pre-school teachers from the local area who speak local languages; school infrastructure; and monitoring and pedagogical follow up support to School directors and teachers by technical advisers from DESBs. Thus, advocacy with the Ministry of Education and Sports is required to increase DESB and school education budgets. Successful advocacy may necessitate prior advocacy with the
Ministry of Finance to increase education budget allocations. Evidence-based advocacy demonstrating the long term benefits of education investments for girls and boys development and on the national economy and growth could be used as a tool to advocate for increased education budget allocations in the Lao PDR context (see UNESCO, 2008; The World Bank, 2008; UNGEI, 2010).

1b) Advocacy with the Ministry of Education and Sports to adapt existing education practices to help children who do not speak Lao at home to learn Lao more effectively in pre-school and grade 1.

The official language for teaching in pre-school and in primary is Lao. Children from ethnic minorities including Hmong and Khmu ethnic groups often struggle to understand what is being taught when the teaching is only taught in Lao, particularly when they start pre-school, or Grade 1 of primary school. Difficulties in understanding Lao contribute to poor outcomes and repetition in Grades 1 and 2. If pre-school teachers and grade 1 primary school teachers were allowed to teach Lao with support from the local language (such as Hmong or Khmu) this would be likely to enhance learning of Lao and thus would improve learning outcomes in other subjects. Experience and research indicate that formal pre-primary and primary teachers in ethnic minority communities tend to use the local language to help students understand lessons, and that this can be helpful (World Vision International, 2015).

For example, an ASLO study in Bokeo supported by Plan found that somewhat less than half of the teachers reported using the local language in their everyday teaching. The study findings also suggest that teachers using the local ethnic language to support teaching and learning activities in the early grades can have a positive effect on learning outcomes for ethnic minority students, but that more research and analysis is required to establish this link definitively (MOES, 2011). In addition, the 2015 learning outcomes situational analysis conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) with UNICEF and RIES widely publicized the importance of teachers using mother tongue to build understanding among non-Lao speaking children in the early grades (ACER, 2015). Evidence from neighbouring countries such as Vietnam also indicate the benefits of learning a national language through the medium of a local language (Global Partnership for Education 2016). Thus, as part of advocacy to the Ministry of Education and Sports to adapt existing education policies to enable children to learn Lao through support from their local language in pre-school and grade 1, study visits of Ministry of Education and Sports and other relevant ministries officials to Vietnam could be arranged.

1c) Advocacy with the Ministry of Education and Sports to consider flexible policies which would enable DESB in each district to adapt the school calendars to fit the most intensive seasonal work periods

The consultation findings reveal how seasons impact on children’s regular attendance at school, with increased risks of girls and boys being withdrawn from school during the most intensive periods of plantation and harvesting work. The intensive periods of seasonal work do not align with the current two month school holiday period. Undertaking research on attitudes to primary school in Bokeo province, Palme et al (2012) also identified how bad coordination of school activities with the agricultural cycle increases risks of temporary school dropout. Thus, in order to enhance opportunities for girls and boys to regularly attend school, while also acknowledging the socio-cultural and economic needs for children to support their families during the most intensive agricultural periods, advocacy with the Ministry of Education and Sports should be undertaken to advocate for more flexible education policies to enable the DESBs in each district to adapt the school holidays to fit the most intensive seasonal work periods. This will require working with DESBs on practical solutions that allow them to deal with the challenges of implementing flexible calendars – including how to adjust the curriculum to fit with the adjusted calendar in each area, how to deal with end-of-year exam times, etc.

Furthermore, school directors and VEDC members should be encouraged to increase efforts to monitor, document, discuss and act upon irregularities in school attendance during different seasons. Furthermore,
increased communication and engagement of parents, caregivers and children in such monitoring processes would enhance dialogue and action planning to find locally effective solutions, without needing to resort to fining or punishing parents or children.

2) **Advocacy with relevant Ministries, international and local agencies to provide social protection schemes, educational scholarships and grants to the most vulnerable families.**

Poverty adversely affects families’ capacity to enrol and regularly send all their sons and daughters to school with sufficient footwear, clothing and school materials. The poorest and most vulnerable families, including single headed families, elderly headed families, families who are affected by disability or chronic illness, orphans and other vulnerable children who are living with alternative caregivers face particular economic hardships. Thus, social protection schemes and/or education scholarships or grants should be provided to the poorest and most vulnerable families to enable them to regularly send their daughters and sons to school. The scholarship or grant should be provided to cover the costs of school uniform, winter coat, school materials and any “unofficial fees” that are incurred when children attend school. The importance of scholarships, grants, and provision of warm clothes to the poorest students was emphasised by mothers, fathers, VEDC members and school directors during the consultations. Ongoing provision of school meals through the World Food Programme scheme to all children in school was also encouraged by community stakeholders.

"Learning-teaching materials should meet the needs of the school, educational scholarships should be provided to poor families and the teachers should have high responsibilities to their roles."

(School director, Khmu community A)

"We need scholarships for orphans and children with disabilities and poor children."

(Father, Khmu community B)

"[We need to] support families who have many children and provide more snacks to the children."

(Mother, Hmong community C)

"I would like there to be regular meals."

(10-12-year-old boys, Hmong community D)

The LEARN project in collaboration with DESBs, school directors and village authorities could pilot and undertake baseline and follow up research to identify the impact of providing educational scholarships to the poorest and most vulnerable families in selected target villages. School directors, village heads and VEDC members could support the administration and distribution of such educational scholarships working in transparent and collaborative ways with children, parents and caregivers in the community to ensure targeting and reach of the most vulnerable families. Ongoing advocacy with relevant Ministries, UN and other international donors and agencies will be required to support more accessible and sustainable social protection schemes.

3) **Increase technical and financial support from international organisations for pre-primary and primary education**

International agencies with technical expertise in early childhood development and primary school education should provide technical and financial support to enable the establishment and functioning of quality pre-school and primary schools for children, especially in the poorest and most remote communities. The LEARN programme focus on pre-school education and school readiness for grade 1 was especially welcomed by the Department of Education and Sports Bureau in Oudomxay Province, as few agencies are focused on pre-school education. The LEARN project staff working in collaboration with DESB staff should provide technical advice and mentoring to school directors and VEDC members in school management and administration including opportunities to engage and support community and child participation in school governance processes. LEARN staff should also collaborate with DESB pedagogical
advisers to provide pedagogical support to pre-primary and grade 1 teachers to experiment with child-friendly modern teaching practices in their classrooms (see recommendation 7).

"All stakeholders should help each other to increase the number of children in school and international organizations should support the school." (School Director, Khmu community A)

“In Namor district LEARN will focus on pre-primary. It is the first programme to help us with pre-primary. Other projects focus on primary education.” (DESB official, Oudomxay Province)

In addition to supporting pre-school classes, accelerated school learning classes should be organised in school holidays to enhance school readiness of children (particularly girls) who have been had opportunities to attend pre-school, or who have been enrolled in primary school at a later age. Such classes would enhance opportunities for girls and boys to be equipped with basic skills and some preliminary Lao language to be more ready for learning when the school open.

“[to improve children’s learning] the school should open extra classes during vacation.”
(School Director, Hmong community C)

4) Support the establishment of pre-primary classes in every community

The establishment and functioning of pre-primary classes enhances opportunities for child development and provides an important foundation for improved learning in primary school, especially in ethnic minority communities. When girls and boys attend pre-primary school they have increased opportunities to socialise and play with peers their age, to learn Lao prior to starting primary school, and to start primary school at the right age. However, in order to make pre-primary classes accessible it is recommended to establish a pre-primary schools in each community, as it is not possible for very young children to walk too far to go to the pre-primary school, especially in the rainy season.

“A pre-primary class should be provided to the community in order to increase the number of children in school.”
(Mother, Hmong community D)

The LEARN project provides an important opportunity to support the expansion and development of quality pre-school classes in remote, rural and urban ethnic minority communities in Oudomxay and Luang Prabang provinces. Research and evidence gathered during the project implementation should be used to inform evidenced based advocacy with donors and with the government to increase budget allocations to expand the establishment of pre-primary classes in Lao PDR.

5) Build permanent schools with good infrastructure, including adequate water and sanitation services

Agencies (government, UN, INGO, NGO, private) supporting children’s education should support investments to construct permanent schools with good infrastructure including: the establishment of pre-schools; sufficient number of classrooms for pre-, primary, and junior schools; enough benches and tables built with quality to last; sufficient numbers of separate toilets for use by female and male students and teachers; good water supply; and adequate sanitation systems. School grounds should also be large enough to provide sufficient areas for playing sports and games, and the grounds should be protected by strong fences to protect the grounds from animals and outsiders. The importance of increased support for improved school infrastructure was emphasised by child and adult stakeholders during the consultations. Efforts to improve the road and pathways to improve children’s access to schools are also needed.

“I want to have a good school, a school that is made of cement and bricks for the primary and school.... We want to have good tables and chairs made by furniture makers, not the ones we have made ourselves.”
(12-year-old boy, Khmu community A)
"Water supplies in the village and in school, electricity, supplies for constructing latrines, school buildings, and more teachers should be provided to the communities." (Father, Khmu community A)

“The community needs a pre-primary class and a complete primary school, and the school needs a playground for children and water supplies.” (Village Head, Hmong community D)

"I would like to have clean toilets and I would like to have clean drinking water at the school.”
(11-year-old boy, Hmong community C)

As part of the LEARN project interventions, school grants for improvements to the school infrastructure should be provided. Furthermore, participatory planning and monitoring processes and mechanisms engaging school directors, teachers, village heads, VEDC members, children’s representatives (boys and girls), and parent’s representatives should be piloted, so that girls, boys, mothers, fathers and other community stakeholders can influence prioritisation, planning and monitoring of the proposed school improvement grant expenditure.

6) Ensure that teachers and students have access to sufficient teaching and learning materials, including games, reading books, music and sports materials

Teaching practices and learning opportunities are hindered when teachers do not have sufficient teaching-learning materials, and when students do not have easy access to student text books. Furthermore, for preschool age children it is essential that children have access to learning materials that are appropriate to their age and capacity, including games, dolls, story books, drawing materials and other creative learning materials. Teaching learning materials should also respect and promote gender equality. Access to creative learning materials including story books, musical instruments, art and sport materials would also enhance children’s motivation for learning, and learning outcomes of children in primary school. Thus, increased investments and support to schools are required to ensure that teachers and students have access to sufficient teaching and learning materials, including games, reading books, music and sports materials.

"We would like there to be enough textbooks for each student, as every day we share one textbook among 5-6 students." (11-year-old boy, Khmu community A)

"Toys and other learning materials should be provided to the pre-primary class.” (Teacher, Khmu community B)

“Practice books for drawing, alphabet writing, maths, games and other necessary materials should be provided to the pre-primary class... and learning materials, games, teaching aid, tools for extra activities, sports equipment, and equipment for art and music subjects should be provided to the school.” (Teacher, Hmong community C)

“Sports equipment and musical instruments should be provided to the school because the children like sports and music and the teacher should get trainings on new teaching techniques.” (School Director, Hmong community D)

The LEARN project can provide important opportunities to support pre-schools in obtaining creative learning materials that are relevant to younger children and which respect and promote gender equality. If budgets allow, the LEARN project should also support the purchase and use of story books, musical instruments, art and sport materials in primary schools.

7) Improve teacher training both in the teacher training colleges in the provinces and through in-service training; and integrate training on positive discipline, gender sensitivity and inclusive education into teacher training curricula and in-service training

Weaknesses in teacher training colleges in the provinces, and inadequate in-service training for teachers in the schools contribute to poor teaching practices and lower learning outcomes, especially in rural and remote schools. Thus, strategies and approaches to improve both teacher training in the provincial teacher training colleges, and in-service training are required. Teachers should be provided with regular training to
ensure that they have improved skills and opportunities to apply newer teaching methodologies, including skills and knowledge to use child friendly teaching methodologies, applying group learning and creative learning methodologies to learn through activities, games, music and sports. Furthermore, special training for pre-primary teachers should be provided to ensure that these teachers have adequate understanding of child development and child friendly teaching methods that are appropriate to children’s age and capacity

“Teacher should get trainings regularly on new teaching techniques/approaches, and art and music subject.”
(Teacher, Hmong community C)

“Big group learning should be changed to small group learning, children with good learning outcomes should help children with poor learning outcomes.” (School Director, Hmong community D)

”Enough teachers should be provided to the school. The teachers should get trainings regularly. If teachers have effective teaching skills, children will get good learning outcomes as well.” (Village Head, Hong community C)

Children’s experiences at school are negatively affected by teachers’ use of physical and humiliating forms of punishment. In every community girls and boys of different ages described how they did not like it when teachers scolded children, complained, or when children were hit by a teacher. Corporal and humiliating forms of punishment are considered unlawful under article 47 of the Education Law 2007 in Lao PDR. In addition, article 27 of the Act on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children 2006 confirms the state’s policy to create “child friendly” schools in which students are protected from corporal punishment.

Despite such prohibitions and policies encouraging child friendly schools, some teachers still resort to corporal punishment of children. Negative treatment of children by their teachers contributes to demotivation of children to learn and can lead to temporary or permanent school dropout. Thus, it is imperative that LEARN project staff advocate for and mentor efforts to integrate training on positive discipline into teacher training and in-service training courses. Teachers need to be equipped with skills, knowledge and confidence to communicate effectively with children and to discipline children in a manner that is respectful and conducive to children’s development and well-being. Moreover, training on gender sensitivity and inclusive education are needed, so that teachers have improved awareness, knowledge and skills to motivate and support both girls and boys in their classes, including children with different abilities.

Other research in Northern Laos has revealed that in-service training based only on workshops do not have much impact on teaching (Palme et al, 2012). The researchers described how: “Most of the observed teachers had participated in various workshops on what is commonly called “modern teaching”, but their teaching has not changed. Some of these teachers also openly declared that ideas of a more communicative teaching process for many reasons do not work. The problem seems to be that, in order to be convinced that teaching can be structured differently; teachers need to see how such teaching can be organised in other ways and made to function in concrete, real teaching-situations and under real classroom conditions.” (p.37) Thus, building upon an earlier recommendation from Palme et al (2012), as part of the LEARN project Plan and Save the Children, in collaboration with DESBs, are encouraged to provide technical and pedagogical input to support efforts to establish the conditions for creating experimental model classes in pre-school and primary classes where alternative ways of teaching are tried out. The LEARN project could also consider using the gender-responsive teaching pedagogy being developed for AMOR and SUCCESS, which focuses on providing real skills for child-centered teaching methods, with a focus on gender sensitivity, rights and positive discipline. Furthermore, existing efforts to experiment with “cluster approaches” to mentoring and training among teachers should be reviewed, so that good practices can be built upon, and weaknesses can be addressed.

8) Increase awareness, support and services to support attendance and improved learning opportunities for children with disabilities

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10 http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/assets/pdfs/states-reports/LaoPDR.pdf
Services to support inclusive quality education of children with disabilities in community pre-schools, primary schools and junior secondary schools are lacking. Children with disabilities face barriers, discrimination, and a lack of support which prevents them from accessing good learning opportunities that are appropriate to their needs. Thus, increased awareness, support and services to support attendance and improved learning opportunities for children with disabilities within the community pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools are needed.

The LEARN project should pro-actively support efforts by DESBs, school directors, teachers, VEDC members and community stakeholders to implement the inclusive education training manual that has been developed by the Ministry of Education and Sports in collaboration with Catholic Relief Services. The training manual supports practical and strategic efforts to support effective implementation of the National Policy on Inclusive Education (2010), and the National Strategy and Plan of Action on Inclusive Education (2011 – 2015) which encourage enrolment of all children in school. The training manual consists of two parts: the first part provides guidance and capacity building materials to strengthen the capacity of provincial, district, school administrator and VEDC members to provide the opportunities, facilities and support for children with different needs to attend school. The second part, provides guidance to enhance the capacity of teachers to support inclusive education and to more effectively teach all children in schools, including girls and boys with disabilities.

9) Increase awareness raising among parents and caregivers on child development, gender equality, inclusive education and positive discipline to increase the importance of pre-school education, primary education and secondary education for all girls and boys

Parents’ and caregivers’ beliefs and attitudes regarding the value of education are critical to their motivation and efforts to save the necessary resources to enrol and support their children’s school attendance. Furthermore, beliefs and attitudes towards gender, children’s capacities at different ages, and disability interact resulting in different choices and decisions regarding which children have more and less chances to be enrolled in school and to study regularly. For example, older siblings, especially girls from poor families face increased risks of late enrolment or being temporarily or permanently withdrawn from school in order to help care for younger siblings and to assist with housework. Furthermore, some parents are reluctant to enrol their children in pre-school or grade 1 at the right age as they think their children are too young to go to school. Thus, increased awareness raising initiatives are needed among parents and caregivers to increase the value of education and the importance of sending all girls and boys regularly to school.

"There should be talks with parents to send their children to school, instead of taking them to the plantation/ forest... [People should] educate and encourage parents to support their children’s education."

(Teacher, Khmu community A)

“Parents and the community should try to make the children know the importance of education – education increases chances to get jobs and to have easier lives, while illiterate people have less chances.”

(Mother, Hmong community C)

The LEARN project should support the development and implementation of regular awareness raising sessions for mothers, fathers and other caregivers. Regular parent sessions at times that suit women and men would enable coverage of different relevant topics including: child development; gender equality; inclusive education; positive discipline; nutrition, health and hygiene. Such awareness raising could complement teacher training on positive discipline so that both parents and teachers reinforce messages regarding the value of non-violent communication with and among children.

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10) **Provide practical guidance to mothers, fathers and caregivers to demonstrate their interest in their daughter’s and son’s study; and support non-formal education of mothers, fathers and caregivers in rural and remote communities.**

Children’s interest and motivation to study, children’s regular attendance at school is influenced by the degree to which their mothers, fathers and caregivers monitor and show interest in their children’s study. Thus, it would be helpful to develop and provide practical guidance to parents and caregivers to improve the ways they can show interest in their daughter’s and son’s study and provide positive support and feedback when children study and attend school regularly. Such efforts can help to increase girls and boys motivation to study regularly, it can enhance their self confidence in their ability to study, and it can lead to improved learning outcomes. Guidance and communication materials for mothers, fathers and caregivers should focus on girls’ and boys’ enrolment and active participation in pre-school, primary schools and secondary schools. If parents and caregivers are more supportive and enthusiastic about children’s enrolment in pre-school classes, they will be more capable to communicate effectively with young children to help them to be prepared for schools, and to overcome any fears they may have about starting school.

“Parents should monitor and check their children’s learning and help their children’s learning after school.”
(Teacher, Khmu community A)

In recognition that some mothers and fathers lack confidence to monitor and support their children’s learning, as they themselves lacked opportunities to go to school, it can be beneficial for agencies supporting children’s education, including the LEARN project to pilot initiatives to support non-formal education of mothers, fathers and caregivers in rural and remote communities. If parents and caregivers have opportunities to become literate in Lao they may have more confidence to support their children’s learning, and they may have increased value for education.

“The project should give illiterate mothers more chances to have non-formal education.”
(Mother, Hmong community C)

Any provision of non-formal education will be subject to the same seasonal patterns that affect children, and scheduling should therefore be flexible and adjusted to the different needs and free time of men and women.

11) **Develop a “Best VEDC Award Scheme” and strengthen the capacity of VEDC members to enhance their active role in school management including improved monitoring and support to teachers and students to improve learning outcomes**

Good school management including systematic efforts to monitor teachers’ performance, and students’ performance is important in order to be able to identify and address challenges faced, and to be able to build upon good practices so that learning outcomes can be improved. Increased efforts to identify and respond to real challenges associated with children’s education from the perspectives of children, parents, teachers, and VEDC members are needed.

"We need to emphasize more on monitoring and supporting the children’s learning, increasing the number of children in school, improving children’s learning outcomes" (Village head, Khmu community A)

“Teachers should understand the children’s real problems and try to help them deal with the problems.”
(Teacher, Khmu community B)

The consultations revealed that the VEDCs are not very active, and are more focused on school repairs than on substantial efforts to improve regular school attendance and learning outcomes. Moreover, challenges associated with a lack of incentive for VEDC members to be actively involved in education matters were highlighted. Thus, increased efforts are needed both to strengthen the capacity of VEDC members to be actively involved in school management, including improved efforts to monitor and support
to teachers and to students. Furthermore, some kind of incentive is needed to motivate individual VEDC members to be actively engaged and to motivate VEDCs to work efficiently and effectively to improve their local schools.

As financial incentives to VEDC members are likely to be considered costly and unsustainable by the concerned education authorities, an alternative scheme that could be piloted through the LEARN project is to develop and implement a “Best VEDC Award Scheme” so that VEDCs that are most active and doing good work can be publically valued and appreciated by the district authorities and by community stakeholders. A participatory process engaging VEDC members, school directors, as well as representatives from DESB, teachers, parents, and children could be facilitated in order to develop and agree the criteria and mechanism for identifying and selecting “the best VEDC”. Nominations, selection and award ceremonies could be organised every 6 months, providing a trophy to the best VEDC and publishing their “good practice story” in the newspaper.

12) Increase opportunities for community and child participation in school governance processes and opportunities to create safe and inclusive child friendly schools

Parents and community members are contributing labour to build and repair the schools, and parents and other community members are often mobilised at the start of the school year to encourage enrolment of all children in the primary school. Furthermore, limited numbers of village representatives are involved in the VEDCs. However, aside from these roles and tasks, there were limited opportunities for community participation in school governance processes in the communities visited. There are no active parent-teacher associations and there are few opportunities for parents to influence the school development plan and budgeting process. Furthermore, there are extremely limited opportunities for child participation in school governance processes.

The LEARN project can pilot and document lessons learned in supporting community participation and child participation in school governance processes, and opportunities to create safe and inclusive child friendly schools. Such participatory mechanisms should enhance accessible schools which are more responsive to girls and boys needs and interests. For example, children can be supported to engage in activities which prevent and address different forms of violence in schools, including fighting and arguments among peers, as well as scolding and violence from teachers. As part of its global campaign “Learn without Fear”, Plan International has emphasised the importance of preventing and addressing different forms of violence in and around schools.12 Thus, existing communication materials, and practical strategies and approaches from “Learn without Fear” could be adapted and integrated into the LEARN project. Furthermore, engaging children in establishing and monitoring school rules and establishing codes of conduct for schools may reduce the tendency for some boys to miss school because they do not appreciate the existing school rules.

Existing pilots to engage children in school development planning and budgeting processes are already underway by Save the Children in collaboration with DESBs in Luang Prabang province, and thus there are important opportunities to build upon the lessons learned and to take forward good practices through the LEARN project in Oudomxay and Luang Prabang provinces. Furthermore, creating and supporting meaningful opportunities for children and community participation in monitoring and evaluating processes and outcomes of the LEARN project would also enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the result. For example, photovoice and wall magazines could be developed and used by children as creative opportunities to monitor and report on strengths, weaknesses and ideas to improve educational opportunities for all girls and boys in their community.

Conclusions

The consultations have clearly identified that the majority of children from Khmu, Hmong and mixed ethnic communities are indeed interested in education. Girls and boys of different ages and ethnic groups expressed their interest to study, to be literate and to gain knowledge. Boys and girls have aspirations to get good and stable jobs in future, and they appreciated their teachers for sharing knowledge with them. In Hmong communities, children particularly appreciated opportunities to learn Lao language. However, across different ethnic groups, boys aged 6-14 years old are more likely to miss school out of their own choice, as some boys prefer to play with their friends and do not like the rules in school. Girls are socialised to be more obedient than boys, and are more likely to attend primary school regularly if their parents and caregivers encourage them to attend school. Efforts to increase boys interest in school include: increased efforts by parents and caregivers to monitor and encourage children’s study and regular attendance at school; increasing opportunities for children to be involved in school governance, including opportunities to develop and monitor implementation of the school rules; and increased efforts by teachers to use interactive teaching methods and positive discipline approaches. Furthermore, ongoing awareness raising is required with mothers, fathers, caregivers and VEDC members regarding the value of girls’ education, to support girls timely enrolment in pre-school and primary school, and to reduce risks of girls being withdrawn from school in order to help with household work or care of younger siblings.

Parents’ and caregivers’ beliefs and attitudes regarding the value of education are critical to their motivation and efforts to save the necessary resources to enrol and support their children’s school attendance. Furthermore, beliefs and attitudes towards gender, children’s capacities at different ages, and disability interact resulting in different choices and decisions regarding which children have more and less chances to be enrolled in school and to study regularly. For example, older siblings, especially girls from poor families face increased risks of late enrolment or being temporarily or permanently withdrawn from school in order to help for younger siblings and to assist with housework. Furthermore, some parents are reluctant to enrol their children in pre-school or grade 1 at the right age as they think their children are too young to go to school. Thus, increased awareness raising initiatives are needed among parents and caregivers to increase the value of education and the importance of sending all girls and boys regularly to school.

Poverty is also a significant barrier to children’s education. Families who are struggling with poverty find it difficult to put aside enough money for children’s school uniforms, books, pens and other costs associated with school, such as pocket money for snacks or other unofficial fees. Some families delay enrolling their children in pre-school or primary school when they do not have sufficient funds available. Other families manage to enrol their children, but face challenges in sending their children to school throughout the school year due to limited resources. In rural and remote areas some parents and caregivers question the returns of investing significant time and resources in children’s secondary education, as even more educated children find it hard to compete with children from better off families to secure good jobs, and thus do not earn more than less educated children.

Seasons and seasonal work affect girls and boys attendance at schools. In rural communities girls and boys help their parents and caregivers with plantation work, as well as with household work and other tasks. During certain seasons, such as during plantation time (March to May) and harvesting time (October to December), parents have too much work to do by themselves, thus they temporarily withdraw their sons and daughters from school either to help them in the plantations, or to take care of younger siblings, household tasks and/or income generation activities while they labour in the plantations. Girls face increased risks of being withdrawn from school to take care of younger siblings and to support with housework; while both girls and boys of different ages are withdraw from school to help with busy agricultural seasonal work. In Hmong communities girls and boys have to help their parents with harvesting before the Hmong New Year (in early December). Weather seasons also contribute to irregularities in school attendance, as children, particularly younger children may miss school if the weather is too cold or too wet, especially if they are from poor families who cannot afford warm coats, shoes or umbrellas.
Poverty; socio-cultural attitudes towards children; gender; sibling order; children’s interests and experiences in school; disability; ill health or death of a family members; seasons; as well as, limitations in education budgets, school infrastructure, and teachers’ behaviour; create barriers for school enrolment, regular attendance and good learning outcomes. There is a strong interplay among these different factors, thus the LEARN project will need multiple strategies and practical actions to strengthen learning opportunities for all girls and boys to go to school regularly and to have good learning outcomes. Some key areas for strategic piloting and learning to improve learning outcomes for all girls and boys in remote, rural and urban communities are identified in the recommendations section. In addition, future research for LEARN to consider to further inform evidence based programming to improve the education of girls and boys in remote, rural and urban ethnic minority communities include:

i. An ethnographic positive deviance approach study to better understand how some of the poorest families support their daughters and sons to regularly attend pre-school, primary school and secondary school in remote Hmong and Khmu communities.

ii. Undertaking a household costing study linked to seasonality to explore the household income and expenditure and different family member’s roles and responsibilities during different seasons and implications for girls and boy’s regular attendance and/or temporary dropout in school.
References


Ministry of Education and Sports Inclusive Training Centre, Department of Preschool and Primary education supported by Catholic Relief Services (2014) Inclusive Education Training Manual. Vientiane, Lao PDR.


Annexes

Annex A: Terms of Reference
Annex B: Facilitator's Guide
Annex C: Documenter's Guide
Annex D: Training Workshop Plan
Annex E: Stakeholders Consulted
Annex A: Terms of Reference

Consultations with Children and Communities
November 2015

1. Objectives

Troubling education patterns are often the norm in rural and remote ethnic minority communities in Lao PDR, particularly for girls. This includes failure to enroll or late enrollment in primary school, high rates of temporary dropout and repetition in the early grades, and poor early grades learning outcomes in core subjects like Lao language and mathematics. Analysis of recent household surveys has revealed that demand-side factors such as children’s lack of interest in schooling (as stated by their parents) may be driving these patterns more than supply-side constraints. In addition, consultations with DESB staff have shown that seasonal agricultural patterns are a key driver of problematic participation patterns in these communities, but while general information exists on this phenomenon, there is a dearth of information from the perspective of ethnic minority children and women in particular.

2. Consultation Questions

Plan International and Save the Children International plan to undertake consultations with children, parents, communities and education sector staff in Oudomxay Province of Lao PDR in November and December 2015. The purpose of the consultations will be to investigate demand issues related to education from the perspectives of local stakeholders. In particular, Plan and Save the Children would like to learn more about children’s interest in and demand for education, the value that different groups place on children’s education, their goals and aspirations for children’s education, how supply factors such as the quality of education interact with demand for education, and how different groups are engaged in education decision-making. We are especially interested in how factors such as gender, ethnicity and disability are at play in these issues. The information gathered through the consultations will be used to inform and refine our education and child development programming in the target areas and ensure we are effectively addressing supply and demand factors from local points of view.

The broad questions that will drive the consultations include the following, which will be triangulated from various perspectives:

- Are children “interested” in education and are they active participants in their education experiences? Why or why not? How does this differ for different ages, genders, locations and ethnicities of children?
- How does children’s participation in education vary according to the season, and how does this differ for different ages, genders, locations and ethnicities of children?

3. Proposed Approach

The consultations will be conducted in Namo District, Oudomxay Province. A total of four communities will be reached, representing a mix of urban, rural and remote locations, some with and some without a pre-primary class, and covering at least three different ethnic groups (Lao-Tai, Hmong and Khmu). The field work will take approximately three weeks as explained below.

- Week 1: Initial preparation, training, piloting in a Lao-Tai community, revision and then final preparation
- Week 2: Field work in Khmu communities
- Week 3: Field work in Hmong communities

The data collection team will consist of members with different skills and backgrounds, as follows:

- Week 1: All team members (Plan, DESB and interpreters) participate in training and piloting
- **Week 2:** Claire, Jodie, Kittisack, Phetvisone, Boun, 2 DESB staff, 2 Khmu interpreters/facilitators (recent Teacher Training College graduates). This week, rental of 2 4WD vehicles will be required to reach the Khmu communities which have relatively poor roads.

- **Week 3:** Claire, Kittisack, Latthana, 2 DESB representatives and 2 Hmong interpreters/facilitators (recent Teacher Training College graduates). This week, rental of 1 minivan will be sufficient to reach the Hmong communities which have relatively better roads.

- The following activities will be conducted in each community:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Core Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 1 (full day)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Core Team</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8- 8.30am</td>
<td>Introductions at the school, organizing interviews and focus groups for the day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.30 – 10am</td>
<td>FGD and participatory activities with lower secondary students: <strong>Body Map</strong> or <strong>School Map</strong> &amp; Draw and Write: Separate groups of 8 girls and 8 boys age 11-12 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10am – 10.30</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30– 12pm</td>
<td>Participatory activities with younger children aged 6-7 years (enrolled in pre-primary or primary school): <strong>Fishing game</strong> or <strong>Body Map</strong> &amp;/or <strong>Child Led Tour</strong>: 8 girls and 8 boys in separate groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 -1 pm</td>
<td>Lunch break (Ensure consent forms are collected) – travel to another community setting if needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2.30 pm</td>
<td>Participatory activities with younger children (not enrolled in pre-primary or primary school): <strong>Fishing game</strong> &amp; <strong>Child Led Tour</strong> or <strong>Fish swimming with or against the current.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.30 – 4pm</td>
<td>Participatory activities with 5-8 mothers &amp; female caregivers of younger children (mix with children in school and out of school): <strong>School Map</strong> or <strong>Fish swimming with or against the current activity</strong> or <strong>Seasonal Map.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – 4.30</td>
<td><strong>Core team meet to reflect on day (process &amp; key findings)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 2 (half day)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Core Team</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 am</td>
<td>Participatory activities with 5-8 fathers &amp; female caregivers of younger children (mix with children in school and out of school): <strong>School Map</strong> or <strong>Fish swimming with or against the current activity</strong> or <strong>Seasonal Map.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 10.30</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30 – 12.00</td>
<td>Participatory activities with out of school children aged 8-12 years: <strong>Problem Tree</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interview** with mothers and female caregivers (especially of younger children, children who are not enrolled or who do not go to school regularly) **If possible do village tour and do informal interview with school age children who are not in school to find out what they are doing if not at school.**

**FGD** with classroom teachers (of pre-primary and primary grades 1-2)

**Interview** with village head

**FGD and participatory activity with VEDC (4-6 members): **Seasonal Map** or **Problem Tree** &/or **Solution Tree**

**Interviews with fathers & male caregivers** (e.g. parents of children with disabilities, parents of children who are not enrolled in pre-primary or primary school, or grandparents who take care of children)

**Interview with head teacher**
3. Consultancy Activities

1. Conduct an initial meeting with Plan Laos and SC Laos staff to clarify and agree on the scope and methodology of activities for the consultancy, and document those points in a 1-page summary document.
2. Develop the detailed methodology and tools for the consultations with different stakeholders.
3. Develop a logistical and data capture plan for collecting information in the field (with Plan and Save the Children support).
4. Identify a specific and feasible strategy for addressing language issues (e.g. different languages spoken by children than by team members) and gender dynamics in the consultations.
5. Develop and deliver training to a team of Plan and Save the Children staff and government counterparts to ensure they have the appropriate knowledge and skills to conduct consultations with communities as well as with children on the ground, including pilot testing in a real-world environment.
6. Lead the team in conducting the consultations on the ground, make real-time adjustments as needed to the methodology, and ensure overall quality of the process and information gathered.
7. Conduct group-based analysis of the findings with the team and identify concrete recommendations for Plan and Save the Children’s programs.
8. Develop a first draft report documenting the findings and recommendations of the consultations and share the report with Plan Laos and Save the Children Laos for feedback.
9. Finalize the draft based on Plan Laos and Save the Children Laos feedback and submit it for approval. The report should include the final drafts of the data collection tools.
10. Conduct a debriefing with a PowerPoint presentation to Plan and Save the Children staff and government counterparts to discuss the findings and recommendations.

5. Deliverables (with approximate levels of effort = 38 days total)

1. 1-page document to define the scope and methodology (0.5 days)
2. First draft of the detailed methodology, training plan, logistics plan, tools and strategy for addressing language issues and gender dynamics (5 days)
3. Final draft of the detailed methodology, training plan, logistics plan, tools and strategy for addressing language issues and gender dynamics (2 days)
4. International travel day (1 day)
5. Training and field testing successfully delivered (5 days)
6. Field work and initial analysis successfully conducted and documented (13 days)
7. International travel day (1 day)
8. Further analysis of findings (2 days)
9. First draft of consultancy report (5 days)
10. Final draft of consultancy report taking into account Plan’s feedback on the first draft (2.5 days)
11. PowerPoint presentation summarizing findings and recommendations and text for a child friendly summary report (1 day)

6. Time Frame and Locations

To conduct preparatory work in November 2015; training, piloting and field work in Oudomxay between 30 November and 18 December; and complete reporting by 30 January 2016. Refer to the detailed agenda below for specifics.

7. Detailed Agenda
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nov 29</strong></td>
<td>Consultant arrives in VTE</td>
<td><strong>Dec 1</strong> Training</td>
<td>Dec 2 National Holiday – no training today</td>
<td>Dec 3 Training and preparation for piloting</td>
<td>Dec 4 Piloting in village E, Namo District and preparation for field work</td>
<td>Dec 5 Half-day to finish training and finalize preparations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consultant arrives in VTE</td>
<td>Claire and Jodie flights from VTE to ODY</td>
<td>Accommodation in Xay</td>
<td>Accommodation in Xay</td>
<td>Accommodation in Xay</td>
<td>Accommodation in Xay</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consultant arrives in VTE</td>
<td>Training in Xay office starting at 1:30 pm</td>
<td>Accommodation in Xay</td>
<td>Accommodation in Xay</td>
<td>Accommodation in Xay</td>
<td>Accommodation in Xay</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consultant arrives in VTE</td>
<td>Latthana, Phertvisone, DESB staff and TTCs arrive in Xay</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consultant arrives in VTE</td>
<td>Accommodation in Xay</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dec 6</strong></td>
<td>Travel to Namo</td>
<td><strong>Dec 7</strong> Khmu community A</td>
<td>Dec 8 Khmu community A</td>
<td>Dec 9 Khmu community B</td>
<td>Dec 10 Khmu community B</td>
<td>Dec 11 Group-based Analysis with core team</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accommodation in Namo District Capital</td>
<td>Overnight in Namo District Capital</td>
<td>Travel to Khmu community B for overnight stay</td>
<td>Overnight stay</td>
<td>Overnight in Namo District Capital</td>
<td>Overnight in Namo</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Accommodation in Namo District Capital</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 13</td>
<td>Accommodation in Namo</td>
<td><strong>Dec 14</strong> Hmong community C</td>
<td>Dec 15 Hmong Community C</td>
<td>Dec 16 Consultant travel back to VTE</td>
<td>Dec 18 Debriefing meetings with Plan and Save the Children in VTE</td>
<td>Dec 19 Claire departs VTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accommodation in Namo</td>
<td>Overnight in Namo</td>
<td>Group-based analysis at Namo in afternoon</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Accommodation in Namo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 16</td>
<td>Hmong Community D</td>
<td><strong>Dec 17</strong> Consultant travel back to VTE</td>
<td>Dec 18 Debriefing meetings with Plan and Save the Children in VTE</td>
<td>Dec 19 Claire departs VTE</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hmong Community D</td>
<td>Group-based analysis at Namo in afternoon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 19</td>
<td>Hmong Community D</td>
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Annex B: Facilitators Guide
LEARN Project
Consultations with Children and Communities
FACILITATOR’S GUIDE

This guide for facilitators includes:

- Guidance to apply the nine basic requirements to ensure effective and ethical participation of children;
- An overview of proposed consultation tools and how they link to the key consultation questions and stakeholder groups;
- An overview of the schedule indicating which consultation tools may be used with which groups;
- Details of each proposed consultation tool: Body Map (likes/dislikes of school), School Map, Fishing Game, Fish swimming with or against the current, Draw and Write or Puppets, Child Led Tour, Body Map (likes/dislikes out of school children), Seasonal Map, Problem Tree, Village Tour (during school time), Solution Tree, Interviews, focus group discussions, and other optional tools
Applying the nine basic requirements to ensure effective and ethical participation of children:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Requirements for effective and ethical participation</th>
<th>Action needed to apply the requirement during the “Time to Talk” consultation process:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Participation is transparent and informative**       | **In preparation for the consultations:**  
|                                                           |   ● Identify and select suitable core team members and provide orientation and training so that they are prepared to share information with children and community members in transparent ways.  
|                                                           |   ● Adapt and disseminate child friendly information (in local languages) for children and adults participating in the consultations – explaining the purpose of the consultation, what is expected of them, where the consultation will be held  
|                                                           |   ● Ensure informed consent from children and from parents/guardians  
|                                                           | **During the consultation:**  
|                                                           |   ● Facilitators should reach the consultation venue ahead of time and ensure that you are prepared.  
|                                                           |   ● At the start of the consultation workshop with children (and adults) use an icebreaker game and ensure clear introductions (objectives, time), respect for privacy.  
|                                                           |   ● Inform children and adults about next steps about how the consultation findings will be used. |
| **2. Participation is voluntary**                         | **In preparation for the consultations:**  
|                                                           |   ● Ensure that children and their parents/guardians have provided informed consent forms – identify and implement creative ways to share information and get consent with children and caregivers who cannot read and write.  
|                                                           | **During the consultation:**  
|                                                           |   ● Inform children and community members about the option to withdraw from the process any time.  
|                                                           |   ● Make sure that children are not forced to speak if they do not want to |
| **3. Participation is respectful**                        | **In preparation for the consultations:**  
|                                                           |   ● Inform national, provincial, district and local authorities and head teachers about the consultation so that they support the consultation process.  
|                                                           |   ● Where-ever possible organise the consultations on non school days or during holidays when children may have more free time; alternatively seek permission from head teachers and parents to organise the consultation during school hours (recognising that the results can be applied to improve children’s education opportunities and learning outcomes).  
|                                                           |   ● Treat children, youth, parents, teachers, VEDC members as partners.  
|                                                           |   ● Involve and train Teacher Training College graduates from the local areas as facilitators, interpreters and documenters recognising their local knowledge, local language and existing skills to work with children.  
|                                                           |   ● Ensure that children/youth do not need to contribute any of their own money to participate in the consultations.  
|                                                           |   ● Organise refreshment, and/or lunch for those involved in the consultations (depending on the timing of the consultations).  
|                                                           | **During the consultation:**  
|                                                           |   ● Encourage consultation team members to wear appropriate dress which is respectful of children and community members’ local culture. |

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1Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No.12, The Right of the Child to be Heard, CRC/C/GC/12, July 2009. These basic requirements are, in large part, based on the Save the Children practice standards which were published in 2005.
4. **Participation is relevant**

**In preparation for the consultations:**
- Organise consultation activities at times that suit girls and boys, and at times that do not interfere with other key responsibilities.
- Identify and use appropriate child friendly tools that enable children to identify and discuss issues and concerns that are relevant to them.
- Wherever possible, organise focus group discussion and consultation activities with girls and boys of similar age range.

**During the consultation:**
- Enable children to speak about issues and concerns that are most relevant to them relating to their education, non-enrolment, school dropout or repetition.
- Encourage children to analyse and identify recommendations to improve their situation.

**After the consultation:**
- Ensure that all key results are used to inform concrete action and advocacy initiatives to reduce barriers to education and to improve children’s educational experiences.

5. **Participation is child-friendly**

**In preparation for the consultations:**
- Consider the time availability, age and evolving capacity of children, and interest of children when designing consultation activities and the length of time of the consultation.
- Consider the sex of the participants and of the facilitator, and ensure that appropriate groups have been pre-arranged and that the sex of the facilitator will ensure comfortable participation.
- Ensure careful choice of consultation tools for use with the youngest children (e.g. age 5-7 years) e.g. use games, drawing.
- Make sure necessary materials are available (flipchart paper, colour pens, tape etc).
- Arrange use of a suitable and accessible venue for the children’s consultations – a room which is accessible to children with disabilities, has enough space for participatory activities with groups of children. Ideally the room should have enough light, and provide privacy for discussions.
- Have large mats that can be placed on the floor for group activities.

**During the consultation:**
- Provide children with a snack at the start of the consultation.
- Use child friendly tools (body mapping, fishing game, drawing, etc).
- Always be aware of group energy; be flexible and listen carefully.
- Give children time to process and consider the questions.
- Use games and energizers.

6. **Participation is inclusive**

**In preparation for the consultations:**
- Design the field work to: consult children in communities with different ethnic groups; to reach and consult girls and boys equally of different age groups (5-7 years, 8-12 years etc); including some consultations with out of school children, and some consultations with school-going children.
- Make special efforts to involve children with disabilities and/or to interview parents of children with disabilities.
- Ensure a fair selection process of children to be part of the consultations while ensuring informed participation (with choice to participate or not participate).
- Wherever possible organise separate groups of girls and boys for consultations, as well as separate consultations with mothers and fathers.
- Organise the consultations in a non-discriminatory way, with particular efforts to allow the voices of the most discriminated-against groups to be heard. Actively encourage children with disabilities, out of school working children, children from minority ethnic groups, children who are not living with their parents to be included in the consultations.

**During the consultation:**
- Encourage all children to speak and give their views, but do not force any child to express themselves
- Encourage children to respect one another
- If different languages are used, ensure that individual children are not excluded due to language. Consider opportunities to organise some small group discussions in language groups if this enables communication and expression among children.
- In plenary ensure all views are shared.

### 7. Participation is supported by training for adults

**In preparation for the consultations:**
- When designing the consultation, consider the number of adult/youth facilitators who are available to support facilitation and documentation of the Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and identify and appoint a child protection focal point.
- Identify core facilitation team members who have existing commitment and skills in participatory work with children.
- Ensure that a child protection focal point is appointed as part of the consultation team, who has existing experience, knowledge and skills in child protection and psychosocial support to children.
- Ensure training for facilitators, documenters and child protection focal point so that each team member has clear roles and responsibilities.

**During the consultation:**
- Ensure that there is designated facilitator and a designated documenter for each consultation activity, and that these people are supported by other team members.

**After the consultation:**
- After each consultation reflect with the team members to find out what went well and what did not go well, so that lessons learned can be identified and built upon.

### 8. Safe and sensitive to risk

**In preparation for the consultations:**
- Identify risks that might be faced when organising and conducting consultations with children. Identify strategies to deal with or minimise any identified risks.
- Wherever possible, ask parents/guardians, and children, in advance about any risks, and find ways to reduce them.
- Ensure that all participants have given their informed consent to their involvement and that they can withdraw this consent at any point.
- In addition, seek necessary permission from other key stakeholders such as local officials, village elders, head teachers, teachers etc.
- Ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure that any significant protection concerns identified during the consultations are followed up sensitively and seriously.
- Identify and appoint a child protection focal point to the consultation team to provide psychosocial support to children and to ensure access and referrals to local services in case of a disclosure of abuse or significant risk.
- Ensure that all consultation facilitators understand and have signed the organization’s Child Protection Policy
- Organise safe transport to the consultation venue and/or ask adult
guardian/parents/or project staff to accompany children to travel to and return back from the consultation venue.

- When planning consider the most appropriate and safest venue, travel, food and security, privacy that enable safe participation of girls and boys of different ages and backgrounds.

**During the consultation:**

- At the start of the consultations use icebreaker games and child friendly consultation activities to create a safe and inclusive space for girls and boys to express themselves.
- Respect the privacy and anonymity of the children during the consultation – while being prepared to deal with any disclosures of significant harm/abuse.
- Be prepared to make referrals to other social/health services if children need immediate support or protection, especially in relation to distress or disclosure of sensitive information.
- Ensure consent from children and their guardians for any photos or drawings (this is part of the Informed Participant and Consent Form).

**After the consultation:**

- Ensure that children and community members’ views and experiences remain anonymous and confidential in written documents – particularly if negative experiences are being shared. This includes photographs and captions of those children and community members. For example, if sharing a quote or story provide key background information to indicate where the information comes from but not enough to identify the child/children – e.g. *views of a 7 year old girl from X ethnic group.*
- Ensure that any sensitive information is kept in a secure (locked) cupboard and that any uploaded information is in password protected computer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation is accountable</th>
<th>During the consultation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At the end of the consultations in any specific community share key feedback from the consultations with community, school and children’s representatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the consultation:</td>
<td>Follow the documentation guidelines to systematically transcribe and share all the consultation findings in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure that a child friendly summary report of the key findings and recommendations are shared back with community and school members who participate in the consultations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure that the consultation findings are used to inform advocacy and programming to improve children’s education and other relevant outcomes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overview of proposed consultation tools and how they link to the key consultation questions and stakeholder groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consultation Questions</th>
<th>Consultation Tool</th>
<th>Key Stakeholders organizing separate discussions with males and females where-ever possible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are girls’ and boys’ school experiences? To what extent are girls and boys interested in school? What do girls and boys like and dislike about school? To what extent do parents and caregivers value education for girls and boys? What are parents/caregivers views about the strengths and weaknesses of the local schools? What are their suggestions to improve children’s learning?</td>
<td>Fishing Game</td>
<td>Younger children (5-7 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why are some girls and boys not enrolled in pre-school or primary school? Why do some girls and boys not attend school regularly or have to repeat classes? What do they think are the top 3 reasons why children are not enrolled in school, drop out, or repeat classes?</td>
<td>Body Map (likes/dislikes of school)</td>
<td>Primary school and Junior secondary school (JSS) students = separate girls and boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which girls and boys are more likely to go to school and to continue with an education? Why?</td>
<td>School Map</td>
<td>JSS students (separate girls and boys)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which girls and boys find it difficult to enroll in school or to regularly go to school? What are the barriers to going to school? What makes it harder to go to school for girls and for boys? How does gender influence children’s access to and attendance in schools? How does disability influence children’s access to and attendance in schools? Are there any seasons which make it more easy or more difficult for girls and boys to regularly go to school? Why? How is it different for girls and boys? Are girls and boys of different ages affected by seasonal work in different ways? Why?</td>
<td>Interviews&amp;/or FGDs</td>
<td>School directors; teachers; Village Heads; mothers &amp; female caregivers; fathers and male caregivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do out of school girls and boys like and dislike about school?</td>
<td>Problem tree</td>
<td>VEDC members; Mothers &amp; female caregivers; fathers &amp; male caregivers; Primary school and JSS children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Draw (&amp; write) or Puppets</td>
<td>Younger children 5-7 (in school, and out of school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fish swimming with or against the current: exploring factors that make it easier or harder for children to go to school</td>
<td>Primary and JSS students (optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seasonal Map</td>
<td>Mothers &amp; female caregivers; fathers &amp; male caregivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Junior Secondary School students (if time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Out of school 8-12 year old children (if time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>VEDC members (if time) JSS children or o/s 8-12 year old children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Out of school 8-12 year old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Body Map (general)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Tree</th>
<th>Solution Tree</th>
<th>Interviews and FGD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What happens to boys and girls who do not enroll in school or regularly attend school? What is the impact on children/families/communities/society?</td>
<td>What is your vision of a future where all children go to school?</td>
<td>What are children/adults’ recommendations to increase opportunities for all girls and boys to regularly go to school, to improve schools, and children’s learning outcomes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEDC members; Mothers &amp; female caregivers; fathers &amp; male caregivers; Primary school and JSS children</td>
<td>VEDC members</td>
<td>School director; teachers; Village head; mothers &amp; female caregivers; fathers and male caregivers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overview of schedule indicating which consultation tools may be used with which stakeholder groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Core Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 1 (full day)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-8.30 am</td>
<td>Introductions at the school, organizing interviews and focus groups for the day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.30 – 10 am</td>
<td>FGD and participatory activities with lower secondary students: <strong>Body Map</strong> or <strong>School Map</strong> &amp; Draw and Write: Separate groups of 8 girls and 8 boys age 11-12 years <strong>Interview</strong> with mothers and female caregivers (especially of younger children, children who are not enrolled or who do not go to school regularly) <em>If possible do village tour and do informal interview with school age children who are not in school to find out what they are doing if not at school.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10am – 10.30</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30– 12 pm</td>
<td>Participatory activities with younger children aged 6-7 years (enrolled in pre-primary or primary school): <strong>Fishing game</strong> or <strong>Body Map</strong> &amp;/or <strong>Child Led Tour</strong>: 8 girls and 8 boys in separate groups <strong>FGD</strong> with classroom teachers (of pre-primary and primary grades 1-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 -1 pm</td>
<td>Lunch break (Ensure consent forms are collected) – travel to another community setting if needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2.30 pm</td>
<td>Participatory activities with younger children (not enrolled in pre-primary or primary school): <strong>Fishing game</strong> &amp; <strong>Child Led Tour</strong> or Fish swimming with or against the current. <strong>Interview</strong> with village head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.30 – 4 pm</td>
<td>Participatory activities with 5-8 mothers &amp; female caregivers of younger children (mix with children in school and out of school): <strong>School Map</strong> or <strong>Fish swimming with or against the current activity</strong> or <strong>Seasonal Map</strong>. <strong>FGD</strong> and participatory activity with VEDC (4-6 members): <strong>Seasonal Map</strong> or <strong>Problem Tree</strong> &amp;/or <strong>Solution Tree</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – 4.30</td>
<td><strong>Core team meet to reflect on day (process &amp; key findings)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 2 (half day)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10 am</td>
<td>Participatory activities with 5-8 fathers &amp; female caregivers of younger children (mix with children in school and out of school): <strong>School Map</strong> or <strong>Fish swimming with or against the current activity</strong> or <strong>Seasonal Map</strong>. <strong>Interviews with fathers &amp; male caregivers</strong> (e.g. parents of children with disabilities, parents of children who are not enrolled in pre-primary or primary school, or grandparents who take care of children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 10.30</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30 – 12.00</td>
<td>Participatory activities with out of school children aged 8-12 years: <strong>Problem Tree</strong> or <strong>Body Map</strong> &amp;/or <strong>Child Led Tour</strong> – separate groups with girls and boys <strong>Interview with head teacher</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noon-1 pm</td>
<td>Lunch break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 pm</td>
<td><strong>Wrap-up and feedback</strong> to school and community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Details of each proposed consultation tool:

**Body Map (likes/ dislikes of school)**

**Purpose:** To explore children’s likes and dislikes about school

**Time:** 60 - 90 minutes (including time for introductions, consent form, and child led tour during the body map)

**Which age groups:** Age 5+. This tool is best facilitated with small groups of girls or boys of similar age groups and similar background experiences (e.g. school going or non-school going aged 5-7, 8-12, 13-17 years). Where-ever possible, and especially for children aged 12+ it is important that this activity is facilitated in separated gender groups, and by a facilitator matched in sex (female facilitator with girls group and male facilitator with boys group). When working with 5-7 year old a puppet with a happy & sad face may also be used as a facilitation aid.

**Materials needed:** Flipchart paper, tape, or A3 paper with a body map shape, flipchart pens (two colours), if available a puppet with a happy & sad face. [Note, this activity is often carried out on flipchart to make a full size body map. However, due to potential cultural barriers, space available, and the amount of flipchart needed, in some contexts we may want to consider use of an A3 paper version of the body map activity].

**Practical Steps:**

1. Divide the children into separate gender groups. For example, a group of eight girls in one group, and a group of eight boys in another group.

2. For each group either stick a few flipchart sheets together and place them on the floor. Ask for a volunteer child to lie on the sheets so that the shape of their body may be drawn around OR give each group an A3 paper with a body map shape on it.

3. In each group encourage the children to sit around the ‘body map’ and explain that this child represents girls or boys like them. Draw a vertical line down the middle of the body map, so that one side represents ☺ a happy child = things they like about their school or about the journey to and from school; and the other side represents a ☹ sad child, showing things they do not like about their school or their journey to and from school.

4. Use the body parts to share and record their likes and dislikes about school or about the journey to and from school. Depending on their age and writing skills, either the activity can be facilitated with one facilitator noting down children’s responses, or children can directly write their responses on the big body. For example:
   - The head what knowledge or thoughts they have when they are at school that makes them ☺ happy, or ☹ sad?
   - The eyes what they see when they are at school (or on the way to / from school) that makes them ☺ happy; or ☹ sad?
   - The ears what do they hear when they are at school (or on the way to / from school) that makes them ☺ happy; or ☹ sad?
   - The mouth: how do people communicate with them when they are at school (or on the way to / from school) that makes them ☺ happy; or ☹ sad?
   - The shoulders: what responsibilities do they have when they are at school (or on the way to / from school) that makes them ☺ happy; or ☹ sad?
- The heart: what do they feel when they are at school (or on the way to / from school) that makes them ☺ happy; or ☹ sad?
- The hands and arms: what do they do with their hands or arms when they are at school (or on the way to / from school) that makes them ☺ happy; or ☹ sad?
- The stomach: what do they eat / drink when they are at school (or on the way to / from school) that makes them ☺ happy; or ☹ sad?
- The feet and legs: where do they go when they are at school (or on the way to / from school) that makes them ☺ happy; or ☹ sad?
- Any other body parts: that they would like to discuss that share experiences of what they like or do not like when they are at school.

5. (if time) After about 45 minutes of the activity see if children want to take you on a child led tour of their school to show the places they like/ feel most safe, and the places they do not like/ or do not feel safe (see the activity details below). Note down what children share and on return from the child led tour you can add it to the body.

6. (if time) See if children have any recommendations to improve their school and/or to improve opportunities for all girls and boys to have a good education.

7. (if time) In Plenary compare key similarities and differences between the body map findings from girls and boys. Are there any gender differences in what girls and boys like / dislike in school or on the way to school? Why?

**School Map**

*Purpose:* To explore the value of education and people’s likes and dislikes about the school environment and key suggestions to improve the school environment and children’s learning.

*Time:* 60 – 90 minutes (including Child Led Tour)

*Which age groups:* Age 8+ This activity can be used with in FGDs with i) groups of boys and girls in separate groups, ii) groups of parents and caregivers (where-ever possible in separate male/ female groups), and iii) other relevant stakeholder groups.

*Materials needed:* School map image, Flipchart paper, flipchart pens, coloured stars/ stickers.

*Practical Steps:*

1. Explain to participants that this group activity encourages them to express their views and experiences about the value of education, what they like and dislike about the school environment, and their key suggestions to improve the school environment.

2. Introduce the visual image – first we will focus on the school image. This shows a girl and boy going to school.

3. First we will focus on the happy face to discuss and record what you like about the school environment. What do you like about the school? *If needed you can ask follow up questions e.g., What do you like about the teachers and their teaching methods?*
Do you have any comments about the safety and security of the school or the way teachers discipline children?
Do you have any comments about any other aspects of the school environment (e.g. access to water, toilets, lunch etc)?

4. Now let us look at the sad face to discuss and record what you do not like about the school environment. What do you not like or find challenging about the school? If needed you can ask follow up questions e.g.
Is there anything you don’t like about the teachers or their teaching methods?
Do you have any comments about the safety and security of the school or the way teachers discipline children?
Do you have any comments about any other aspects of the school environment (e.g. access to water, toilets, lunch etc)?

5. Take a break from this activity to encourage the girls/ boys to take you on a child led tour of their school to show the places they like/ feel most safe, and the places they do not like/ or do not feel safe (see the activity details below). Note down what children share and on return from the child led tour you can add it to the School Map.

6. Now we will focus on the bottom part which has a light-bulb to symbolise good ideas. Please can you discuss and record suggestions to improve the school environment and children’s learning. What ideas do you have to improve the access and quality of schools so that children have good learning?

7. Now we will consider how important you think it is for girls or boys in your community to go to pre-primary, primary and junior secondary school? Please discuss and give 1-5 stars/stickers. The girls complete the rating for the girls, and the boys complete the rating for the boys. Encourage each child to share their individual score and reason, and encourage children to come up with an agreed collective score (1-5) or to provide the average score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>It is not very important for boys to go to school.</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>It is not very important for girls to go to school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>**</td>
<td>It is quite important for boys to go to school for at least 1 or 2 years</td>
<td>oo</td>
<td>It is quite important for girls to go to school for at least 1 or 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>***</td>
<td>It is quite important for boys to go to school for 2-5 years</td>
<td>ooo</td>
<td>It is quite important for girls to go to school for 2-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>****</td>
<td>It is important for all children to go to school</td>
<td>oooo</td>
<td>It is important for all children to go to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*****</td>
<td>It is really important for all children to go to pre-primary, primary and secondary school.</td>
<td>ooooo</td>
<td>It is really important for all children to go to pre-primary, primary and secondary school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. (If time) can give 3 red stickers to ask participants to rank what they think are the top 3 most important suggestions.

**Fishing Game**

__Purpose:_ A fun way to explore children’s experiences of education - whether they have opportunities to go to school and what they like or do not like about school.

__Time:_ 30 - 45 minutes

__Which age groups:_ Age 5+ in small groups of children.

__Materials needed:_ Fish (at least 16) with images of young children studying in school and images of girls and boys being left out of school, metal paper clips, magnets (with a hole in the middle), ball of string to use as fishing rod.
**Practical Steps:**

1. Explain to children that they are going to have the chance to catch fish and then to share their views and experiences about what they see on the fish.

2. Introduce each of the 6 fish images to ensure common understanding of the images. Image one and two shows a girl and a boy at school, image 3 shows an out of school girl wishing she went to school but she is busy looking after her younger sister, image 4 shows some boys on their way to school, but some girls are at home, image 5 shows a boy working but thinking about school, and image 6 shows a girl and boy playing (instead of going to school).

3. Spread out all the fish (with education images) on the floor. Give each child a magnetic fishing rod and encourage them to try to catch as many fish as they want, and to especially try to catch a fish with an image that represents them.

4. Once all the fish have been caught, ask the girls to sit down in one circle with their fish, and the boys to sit in another circle with their fish.

5. One at a time encourage girls and boys to share their views and experiences about “these images” and their experiences of going or not-going to school:
   - Do they get the chance to go to school or not? Why?
   - Do girls and boys have the same or different chances to go to school and to study in school? Why?
   - What do girls and boys like or not like about school? Why?
   - If they are not going to school what do girls do? And what about boys?
   - Would girls and boys like to go to school? Why?
   - What would help all children, girls and boys, to regularly go to school? How is it different for girls and boys?

6. At the same time that you start interviewing one children about their fish image, provide all the other girls and boys with plain paper and crayons and encourage them to draw something about their experiences of going to school, or not going to school (see Draw & Write for more details below).

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**Fish swimming with or against the current: exploring factors that make it easier or harder for children to go to school**

**Purpose:** A child / adult friendly activity to explore factors which enable children to go to school, and factors which create barriers for children to go to school

**Time:** 60 minutes
**Which age groups:** Age 8+. This activity can be used with in FGDs with i) small groups of children (separated into groups of girls and boys), ii) groups of parents and caregivers separated into male and female parents/caregivers), iii) teachers; and iv) other relevant stakeholder groups.

**Materials needed:** An image of a school, blue paper or drawing to represent the river with a strong current; fish (in at least 2 colours); large pieces of coloured paper (3 colours), flipchart pen.

**Practical Steps:**

1. Explain that this is a game with fish to explore what makes it easier or harder for some children to go to school. As children can see in the visual image there are some yellow fish with happy faces because they are swimming with the flow of the river and they find it easy to enrol in school and to go to school. However, there are also some red fish with sad faces because they have to swim against the flow, against the current of the river, so this makes it very difficult for them to enrol in school and to go to school.

2. Ask children / parents to think about their community. Which boys and which girls are like the yellow fish and find it easier to go to school? Or which parents/caregivers find it easier to enrol and send their children to school? What makes it easier for these children to go to school? These things that make it easier to go to school could be written down on yellow post-it notes and added to the river by the yellow fish.

3. Now ask children / parents to think about the red fish – are there any boys or any girls that find it difficult to go to school? Which children? What makes it harder for girls to go to school? What makes it harder for boys to go to school? Or what makes it hard for some parents/caregivers to enrol or send their children to school? These things that make it harder could be written down on pink post-it notes and added to the river by the red fish.
4. Which children are more likely to go to school irregularly, to repeat classes, or to drop out from school? How is it different for girls and boys? Why? These things that increase risks of attending school irregularly, repeating classes or dropping out from school could also be written down on pink post-it notes and added to the river by the red fish.

5. Are there any seasons of the year which make it easier or harder for some girls or boys to regularly go to school? If so, which children? And why? Any seasonal factors could be written down on yellow post its if they make it easier for children to go to school, or on pink post-it notes if they make it harder for children to go to school.

6. Are there any other reasons why a child may drop out of school or have to repeat a class in school? Which reasons? How are the reasons different for boys and girls? These reasons can also be noted on pink post-it notes.

7. Are there any children living without their parents, for example living with grandparents, aunties or uncles? Do these children find it easy or hard to go to school?

8. Are there any children with disabilities in their village? For example children who cannot hear, who cannot see, or who have difficulties walking or talking? Do these children find it easy or hard to go to school?

9. Is there anything else that would like to share about what makes it harder to easier for girls or boys to go to school?

10. Do you have any ideas or suggestions about what would help more children to regularly go to school and to study well?

**Draw and Write and/or Puppets**

**Purpose:** A child friendly way for young children to express their views, feelings and experiences about school, and/or about why they do not go to school.

**Time:** 15 – 40 minutes

**Which age groups:** Age 5+ individual activity; or a small group of children could prepare and share a puppet show.
**Materials needed:** Paper, pencils, erasers, coloured crayons, *if available puppets or visual images of children in and out of school.*

**Practical steps:**

1. Provide individual children with access to paper, pencils and crayons *(or to puppets)* and encourage them to draw picture/s *(or make a puppet show)* to show:
   - reasons why they do not go to school
   - any ideas about how to improve the situation for all children to go to school &/or to do well in school
   - or if they go to school to show what they most like or dislike about school

2. Give children time to prepare their drawing/s or their puppet show.

3. Either encourage children to share their stories (drawing or puppet shown) with one of adult researchers, so that they can write the meaning and make a record of the child’s drawing or puppet show.

**Child led tour**

**Purpose:** To explore children’s likes and dislikes out of school, on the way to and from school, or in school.

**Time:** 10 - 45 minutes

**Which age groups:** Age 5+ in separate gender groups of children of similar ages and backgrounds.

1. Explain to the girls / boys that they will have the chance to take you on a tour or transect walk of their village, their school, or to and from their village to school to show you:
   - places where they regularly spend time in a normal day
   - to show you places where they feel happy or safe, or things they like doing in these places? And encourage them to share the reasons why they like this place or the activity they do in this place?
   - places where they feel unhappy or unsafe, or things they do not like doing in this place? And encourage them to share the reasons why they don’t like this place or the activity they do in this place?

2. Encourage girls/ boys to take you to any other places or things they like or dislike in their community, on the way to or from school, or at school.

**Body Map (likes/ dislikes out of school children)**

**Purpose:** To explore children’s likes and dislikes in their general lives when they are not going to school.

**Time:** 45 - 60 minutes
**Which age groups:** Age 5+ in separate gender groups of children of similar ages and backgrounds.

**Materials needed:** Flipchart paper or A3 paper with a body map shape, flipchart pens **(Note, this activity is often carried out on flipchart to make a full size body map. However, due to potential cultural barriers, space available, and the amount of flipchart needed, we may want to consider use of an A3 paper version of the body map activity).**

**Practical Steps:**

1. Work with small groups of out of school girls and separately with out of school boys.

2. For each group either stick a few flipchart sheets together and place them on the floor. Ask for a volunteer child to lie on the sheets so that the shape of their body may be drawn around OR give each group an A3 paper with a body map shape on it.

3. In each group encourage the girls/ boys to sit around the ‘body map’ and explain that this child represents girls or boys like them who are not going to school. Draw a vertical line down the middle of the body map, so that one side represents ☺ a happy child = things they like about their lives; and the other side represents a ☹ sad child, showing things they do not like about their lives.

4. Use the body parts to share and record their likes and dislikes about their general lives. **Depending on their age and writing skills, either the activity can be facilitated with one facilitator noting down children’s responses, or children can write their responses on the big body.** For example:
   - The **head** what knowledge or thoughts they do they have that makes them ☺ happy, or ☹ sad?
   - The **eyes** what they see that makes them ☺ happy; or ☹ sad?
   - The **ears** what do they hear that makes them ☺ happy; or ☹ sad?
   - The **mouth** how do people communicate with them ☺ happy; or ☹ sad?
   - The **shoulders** what responsibilities do they have that makes them ☺ happy; or ☹ sad?
   - The **heart** what feelings do they have and how do others care/ not care for them that makes them ☺ happy; or ☹ sad?
   - The **hands and arms** what do they do with their hands or arms that makes them ☺ happy; or ☹ sad?
   - The **stomach** what do they eat / drink that makes them ☺ happy; or ☹ sad?
   - The **feet and legs** where do they go that makes them ☺ happy; or ☹ sad?
   - Any other body parts that they would like to discuss about what that like or do not like....

5. Either facilitate the activity about **“Fish swimming with or against the current: exploring factors that make it easier or harder for children to go to school”** or ask them why they do not go to school and their views about whether they would or would not like to study.

6. (if time) in Plenary compare key similarities and differences between the body map findings from out of school girls and boys. What are the similarities and differences in their experiences? Why?

**Seasonal Map**

**Purpose:** To explore how different seasons and seasonal work of family members (adults and children) impacts on girls and boys access to schools and study at different ages.

**Time:** 45 – 90 minutes
**Which age groups:** This activity has been designed for use with i) groups of parents and caregivers (if possible separately with women and men), ii) the VEDC members. It could also be used in FGDs with iii) groups of girls and boys aged 8+, iv) other relevant stakeholder groups.

**Materials needed:** Flipchart paper, flipchart pens, stickers or colour crayons (of 3 colours e.g. green, yellow, red) - in advance the side of the charts can be prepared with symbols for girls and boys of different ages etc.

**Practical Steps**

1. Explain to participants that a seasonal map will be used to explore how different seasons and seasonal work of family members (adults and children) impacts on girls and boys access to schools and study at different ages.

2. Introduce the chart to the participants and encourage them to identify and develop symbols to show the main seasons in the bottom part of the chart. Also add the months for each season.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a) Work</th>
<th>b) School</th>
<th>a) Work</th>
<th>b) School</th>
<th>a) Work</th>
<th>b) School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys age 13-17</td>
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<td>Children under 5 years</td>
<td>Childcare:</td>
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<td>Seasonal work of women</td>
<td>Work:</td>
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<td>Main Seasons</td>
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<td><img src="thunder_icon.png" alt="Thunder" /></td>
<td><img src="rain_icon.png" alt="Rain" /></td>
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3. Briefly discuss and note the main types of work (in words or images) undertaken by men and women during each of the seasons.

4. Now consider the impact of the seasons and seasonal work on girls and boys lives and their education. We will consider girls and boys of different ages to identify what work they are doing during different seasons and whether most (green)/ some (yellow)/ few (green) girls / boys are going to school in different seasons.
5. During different seasons how are young children (under the age of 5 years) taken care of. Please make a note of key results on the chart.

6. For girls age 5-7 years old a) what work are they doing during different seasons? note the main types of work (in words or images) and b) are most (green)/ some (yellow)/ few (red) girls going to school in different seasons? Use colour stickers or pens to show green/ yellow/ red

7. For boys age 5-7 years old a) what work are they doing during different seasons? and b) are most (green)/ some (yellow)/ few (red) boys going to school in different seasons?

8. Repeat the process for questions relating to girls/ boys age 8-12 years, and 13-17 years and record the answers.

9. In Plenary discuss and map if any other non-agricultural events such social/cultural events, market days, diseases, natural hazards -flood, drought affect schooling.

10. In Plenary discuss the overall findings and see if participants have any ideas about how girls and boys education can be better supported in different seasons? And would those ideas be different for girls and for boys? If so, how?
   - for example would it better if the school calendar was changed in any way to better adjust to seasonal work? If so, how?
   - would it be better if school enrolment or exams were organized at different times?
   - are there any other considerations to ensure that children with disabilities are also able to access schools during different seasons?
   - any other ideas?

**Problem Tree**

**Purpose:** To explore participant’s views on the causes and root causes of girls and boys non-enrolment, drop out from school, or repetition in school, as well as their views on the impact of no or limited education on children, families, communities, and society.

**Time:** 45 – 60 minutes

**Which age groups:** This activity has been designed for use with i) the VEDC members, ii) male and female parents or caregivers; iii) girls and boys and iv) other relevant stakeholder groups.

**Materials needed:** Flipchart paper, flipchart pens, two different colour stickers

**Practical Steps:**

1. Introduce the problem tree to the group members. The problem tree will be used to explore the causes and root causes of girls and boys non-enrolment, drop out, repetition and poor learning in primary school (and secondary school), as well as their views on the impact of no or limited education on children, families, communities, and society.

2. Draw the shape of a large tree on a large piece of flipchart paper.

3. In the trunk of the tree *write the problem:*
children’s non-enrolment, drop out from or repetition in primary school

4. By the roots of the tree encourage the group members to discuss and record reasons why girls and boys are not enrolled in primary school, as well as reasons why girls and boys are dropping out of or repeating grades in primary school, and not learning effectively. Once the immediate causes of the problem are identified, also think about and record some of the deeper root causes of the problem, add these to the roots of the tree. Where-ever feasible divide participants into two groups. Ask one group to complete a problem tree for boys and the other for girls (the groups don’t need to be separated by sex). Then ask them to come back in plenary and present their trees.

5. Discuss and place a star by the top 3 most important reasons that cause children’s non-enrolment, drop out or repetition for girls and boys (different colour stickers can be used for girls and boys)

6. By the branches and shoots of the tree encourage the group members to discuss and record the impact of this problem on children’s lives, on families, communities and society. What is the impact of no or limited education on children, families, communities, and society.

**Village tour during school time**

*Purpose:* To walk through the village during school time and to informally interview any pre-primary, primary or secondary age girls and boys who are not in school to find out whether they attend school, and the reasons for not being at school.

*Time:* 30 - 60 minutes

*Which age groups:* Informal interview with children of any age and/or with parents of pre-school age children.

1. Walk through the village during school time. If you see any pre-primary, primary or secondary age girls and boys who are not in school see if you can chat with them to find out:
   - their age and whether they usually attend school
   - the reasons for not being at school
   - what they usually do
   - what they like about their daily lives and what they do not like

2. Encourage girls/boys to take you to any other places or things they like or dislike in their community.

**Solution Tree**

*Purpose:* To explore VDEC members’ vision of a future where all girls and boys regularly go to school, and their views about the solutions and suggestions to increase opportunities for all girls and boys to go to school, and to improve children’s learning.

*Time:* 45 – 60 minutes

*Which age groups:* This activity has been designed for use with i) the VDEC members. However, it could also be used in FGDs with ii) groups of children aged 8+, iii) groups of parents and caregivers, and iv) other relevant stakeholder groups.
Materials needed: Flipchart paper, flipchart pens, tape, glue.

Practical Steps:

1. Explain to the participants that they will have the chance to develop a solution tree to help identify practical ideas on what can be done to increase opportunities for all girls and boys to regularly go to school, and to improve schools so that there are good learning outcomes.

2. First of all encourage participants to develop the “fruit” of the tree which will represent a vision of a school and a community where all girls and boys regularly go to school and have good learning outcomes. Encourage them to close their eyes for 1 minute and to dream about what the schools, what the community, and what children and families would look like if all girls and boys regularly went to school and had access to a good education. After 1 minute of dreaming encourage people to share 1 or 2 things about what they saw in their vision. Record this feedback as fruit on the tree.

3. Now we want to look to explore their solutions and suggestions to increase opportunities for all girls and boys to regularly go to school, and to improve schools so that there are good learning outcomes for girls and boys. A how? How? How? How? Activity will be used and the results on the flipchart can be used to form the trunk and roots of the tree.

4. Write the “how” question at the side of a long piece of paper: How can we increase opportunities for all children to regularly go to school and improve the quality of schools so that there are good learning outcomes for girls and boys?

5. Draw 3 or 4 arrows coming from the how? Encourage participants to share different suggestions as to how they can increase access and quality of schools? (e.g. by raising awareness on the value of education in the community)

6. By each of the suggestions given draw some more arrows and explore how? they will go about planning this (e.g. how would they raise awareness on the value of education in the community?). Encourage the participants to give different suggestions as to how they can practically move forwards with their ideas.

7. Keep repeating this process to identify practical next steps.

8. At the end ask VEDC members which action step they think should be prioritized and why?

Interviews (or FGD)

Purpose: To explore head-teachers, village head, VEDC members, teachers, parents and caregivers and/or community members, local government officials views about children’s access to school, factors that enable and hinder children’s school attendance and performance, and suggestions to improve education for all children.

Time: 20 – 60 minutes

Which age groups: Interview and/or FGD questions can be tailored to explore the views and suggestions (see Appendix one for interview schedules for different groups).

Materials needed: Interview schedule, notebook.
Practical Steps:

1. Explain that the main purpose of the interview is to better understand their views about children’s access to school, factors that enable and hinder children’s school attendance and performance, and suggestions to improve children’s learning. Clarify that all views will be reported anonymously, and encourage them to share their views freely.

2. Encourage the person being interviewed to introduce themselves.

3. Use the interview questions that are designed of each specific stakeholder groups: head-teachers, teachers, parents and caregivers, village head, VEDC members, community members, or local government officials (see appendix 1). Always ensure that you note the initials, gender and background of the person you are interviewing.

4. At the end of the interview thank the participants for taking the time to share their views, and clarify how the information will be used and next steps in the process.

Other Optional tools to consider if interest or time:

Child led photography – ask children to take and show photos of things they like or do not like at school or on the way to school.

FGDs using photos or visual images as stimuli for discussions “it’s my story” (e.g. see Nepali CRC picture cards, Plan CRC cards and “it’s my story” cards from India.
Appendix 1: Interview Schedules for different stakeholders

Interview with head-teacher

1. Icebreaker questions: Tell us about yourself – where are you from? When did you start teaching? When did you become a head teacher? How long have you been working at this school?
2. Tell us about your school - When was the school opened? What makes you proud about your school?

Now we’d like to ask some questions about enrollment and participation in your school.

3. [If the school has a pre-primary class] Do all boys and girls in the community enrol in the pre-primary class? Why or why not? How do the reasons differ for boys and girls?
4. Do all boys and girls in the community enrol in primary school? Why or why not? How do the reasons differ for boys and girls?
5. Do all boys and girls in the community continue to junior secondary school? Why or why not? How do the reasons differ for boys and girls?

6. Do any boys or girls attend the school irregularly during the school year or drop out of school?
7. Is grade repetition common in your school? Why or why not?
8. Which girls and boys are more likely to attend school irregularly, face repetition, or drop out from school? Why?

9. To what extent does gender affect children’s access and attendance to school? Are there any additional points that you would like to share about whether girls and boys have different access to and opportunities in school?

10. To what extent do seasons affect children’s access and attendance to school?
11. Are there any seasons which make it easier or harder for boys or girls to go to school? Why?

12. To what extent are children with disabilities attending and staying in the school?
13. What helps or hinders inclusion of children with disabilities in your school? Please describe?

14. What do you consider to be the strengths of your school? Why?
15. What do you consider to be the weaknesses or challenges faced by your school? Why?
16. What are the learning outcomes of children in your school? Whose learning outcomes are higher: boys or girls? Why do you think that is?
17. What are your suggestions to improve learning outcomes?
18. To what extent do head teachers and teachers influence the design of education policies or the school curricula?
19. To what extent do VEDCs, parents or students have opportunities to influence what happens in the school?

20. What happens to girls and boys who never enrol in school or dropout out of school? What is the impact on children/ families/ communities/ society?
21. What are your recommendations to increase opportunities for all children to regularly go to school and/or to improve children’s learning? Would you have different recommendations to improve girls’ access or boys’ access to school?
22. Are there any other comments you would like to share about boys and/or girls access to school and learning in school?
Interview with teacher

1. Icebreaker questions: Tell us about yourself – where are you from? When did you start teaching? How long have you been working at this school?
2. How many children do you usually have in your class?
3. Do all boys and girls in the community enrol in primary school? Why or why not? How do the reasons differ for boys and girls?
4. Which boys and girls find it most difficult to enrol in school? Why?
5. Which boys and girls are more likely to enrol in school and to continue with an education? Why?
6. Do any girls or boys attend the school irregularly during the school year or drop out of school?
7. Which girls and boys are more likely to attend school irregularly, face repetition, or drop out from school? Why?
8. To what extent does gender affect children’s access and attendance to school? Are there any additional points that you would like to share about whether girls and boys have different access to and opportunities in school?
9. To what extent do seasons affect girls and boys access and attendance to school?
10. Are there any seasons which make it easier or harder for girls or boys to go to school? Why?
11. To what extent are children with disabilities attending and staying in the school?
12. What helps or hinders inclusion of children with disabilities in your school? Please describe?
13. What do you consider to be the strengths of your school? Why?
14. What do you consider to be the weaknesses or challenges faced by your school? Why?
15. What are your suggestions to improve learning outcomes in your school curricula?
16. To what extent do head teachers and teachers influence the design of education policies or the school curricula?
17. To what extent do VEDCs, parents or students have opportunities to influence what happens in the school?
18. What happens to girls and boys who do not go to school? What is the impact on children/ families/ communities/ society?
19. What are your recommendations to increase opportunities for all children to regularly go to school and/or to improve children’s learning? Would you have different recommendations to improve girls’ access or boys’ access to school?
20. Are there any other comments you would like to share about girls or boys’ access to and quality of schools?

Interview with parents/ caregivers/ community members

1. Icebreaker: Tell us about your school – when was it opened? How did the community help out with setting up the school?
2. To what extent do you think that it is important for boys and girls to go to pre-primary, primary and junior secondary school?
3. What do you consider to be the strengths of the local school(s)? Why?
4. What do you consider to be the weaknesses of your local school(s)? Why?
5. Which boys or girls are more likely to go to school and to continue with an education? Why?
6. What helps it easier for some girls or boys to enrol in school and to regularly go to school?
7. What makes it harder for some girls or boys to enrol in school or regularly go to school?
8. Which girls or boys are more likely to attend school irregularly, face repetition, or drop out from school? Why? Do the reasons differ for girls and boys?
9. Are there any seasons which make it easier or harder for girls or boys to go to school? Why?
10. Are girls and boys of different ages affected by seasonal work in different ways? Why?
11. Are children with disabilities sent to school?
12. What makes it harder or what helps to send children with disabilities to school?
13. What happens to girls or boys who do not go to school? What are they doing?
14. What are your recommendations to increase opportunities for children to regularly go to school and/or to improve children’s learning? Would you have different recommendations to improve girls’ access or boys’ access to school?
15. Would like to make any other comments?

Interview with village head

1. Icebreaker: Tell us about your community. What is the community’s history? What is your role in the community? When was the school opened?
2. What proportion of the communities girls and boys are enrolled in the local schools?
3. What do you consider to be the strengths of the local school? Why?
4. What do you consider to be the weaknesses or challenges of the local school? Why?
5. Why are some girls and boys not going to school? What are the reasons?
6. Which girls and boys find it most difficult to go to school? Why?
7. Which children are more likely to attend school irregularly, face repetition, or drop out from school? Why?
8. Which girls and boys are more likely to go to school and to continue with an education? Why?
9. To what extent does gender affect children’s access and attendance to school? Are there any additional points that you would like to share about whether girls and boys have different access to and opportunities in school?
10. To what extent do seasons affect girls and boy’s access and attendance to school?
11. Are there any seasons which make it easier or harder for girls or boys to go to school? Why?
12. To what extent are children with disabilities attending and staying in the school?
13. What helps or hinders inclusion of children with disabilities in your school? Please describe?
14. To what extent is the Village Education Development Committee active in your community?
15. How often does the VEDC meet? And what are they doing?
16. To what extent do head teachers, teachers, VEDCs, parents or students have opportunities to influence what happens in school?
17. What are your recommendations to increase opportunities for children to regularly go to school and/or to improve children’s learning? Would you have different recommendations to improve girls’ access or boys’ access to school?
18. Are there any other comments you would like to share about children’s access to and quality of schools?

Interview with VEDC member

1. Icebreaker: Tell us about your committee. What role do you play in the school?
2. Who are the members and leaders of your committee – are they women or men? If there are no or few women, why do you think that is?
3. What proportion of the communities girls and boys are enrolled in the local schools?
4. To what extent is your Village Education Development Committee active in your community?
5. How often does your VEDC meet? And what tasks is the VEDC doing?
6. What do you consider to be the strengths of the local school? Why?
7. What do you consider to be the weaknesses or challenges of the local school? Why?
8. Which girls or boys are more likely to go to school and to continue with an education? Why?
9. What helps it easier for some girls or boys to enrol in school and to regularly go to school?
10. What makes it hard for some girls or boys to enrol in school or regularly go to school?
11. Which girls or boys are more likely to attend school irregularly, face repetition, or drop out from school? Why?
12. To what extent does gender affect children’s access and attendance to school? Are there any additional points that you would like to share about whether girls and boys have different access to and opportunities in school?
13. To what extent do seasons affect girls and boys access and attendance to school?
14. Are there any seasons which make it easier or harder for girls or boys to go to school? Why?
15. To what extent are children with disabilities attending and staying in the school?
16. What helps or hinders inclusion of children with disabilities in your school? Please describe?
17. What are your recommendations to increase opportunities for children to go to school and/or to improve children’s learning? Would you have different recommendations to improve girls’ access or boys’ access to school?
18. To what extent do head teachers, teachers, VEDCs, parents or students have opportunities to influence what happens in the school?
19. Are there any other comments you would like to share about children’s access to and learning in school?

Interview with local government officials

1. To what extent do you think education is valued in communities in districts in your region? Why? Does girls’ education have a different value than boys’? How?
2. What do you consider to be the strengths of the local schools? Why?
3. What do you consider to be the weaknesses or challenges of the local schools? Why?
4. Why are some girls and boys not going to school? What are the reasons?
5. Which children find it most difficult to go to school? Why?
6. Which children are more likely to go to school and to continue with an education? Why?
7. To what extent does gender affect children’s access and attendance to school? Are there any additional points that you would like to share about whether girls and boys have different access to and opportunities in school?
8. To what extent do seasons affect girls or boy’s access and attendance to school?
9. Are there any seasons which make it easier or harder for girls or boys to go to school? Why?
10. To what extent are children with disabilities attending schools in your district?
11. What helps or hinders inclusion of children with disabilities in schools? Please describe?

12. To what extent are the Village Education Development Committee active in communities in your district?

13. What are your recommendations to increase opportunities for all girls and boys to go to school and/or to improve schools? Would you have different recommendations to improve girls’ access or boys’ access to school?

14. To what extent do you have opportunities to influence the design of education policies and school curricula?

15. To what extent do district government officials, head teachers or teachers have opportunities to influence the design of education policies or school curricula?

16. Are there any other comments you would like to share about children’s access to and quality of schools?
Annex C: Facilitators Guide
LEARN Project

Consultations with Children and Communities
DOCUMENTATION GUIDE

December 2015
This documentation guide accompanies the consultation schedule and consultation tools for the consultations with children and communities. It includes:

I. Recording essentials to use during the consultations, and
II. Documentation formats to record
   i) Community Profile,
   ii) Consultation Basic Information about which participants were involved in each consultation activity, and
   iii) key findings from the different consultation activities

I. Recording essentials

- Ensure that all records are labeled with the place and date of consultation.
- Whenever feasible write down everything children or adults say. Try to write down what children or adults say, word for word.
- Record the initial gender and age of the speaker (e.g. ML8M = an 8 year old boy with initial ML; NS10F = a 10 year old girl with initial NS; NP38M_parent = a 38 year old man with initial NP who is a parent; SD28F_teacher = a 28 year old women with initials SD who is a teacher.)
- Try not to summarise what children or adults say. If you think you have summarized or missed something because of the speed of discussion, just make a note about this.
- When children (or adults) are discussing drawings or pictures – write down what they say about the meaning of their drawing or the picture and ensure that this story is documented along with the picture.
- You may think about recording the time of the session along with place and date, in order to ensure good links of material.
- When recording children’s discussions in different groups, ensure the record is labelled with the group (with details of who is in the group – girls, boys, ages, in school children, out of school children etc). If the groups are mixed, note how many girls and how many boys.
II. Documentation Format

**PART A: COMMUNITY PROFILE**  
*Background Information: TO BE COMPLETED ONCE FOR EACH COMMUNITY*

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<th>Date of consultation:</th>
<th>District name:</th>
<th>Village/ community name:</th>
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**Key characteristics of the community**

- Is the community urban, rural or remote:
- What ethnic groups are living in the community:
- What are the main livelihoods in the community:

**Key characteristics in relation to education:**

- Where-ever available add data about how many girls & boys are enrolled in the local schools:
- Does the community have a pre-primary class:
- How far is the nearest Primary School:
- Is it a complete or incomplete Primary School:
- How far is the nearest Secondary School:
- Is there a VEDC in the community:
- To what extent is the VEDC active (not active, sometimes active, active, or very active):

**Any other key relevant background information:**
**PART B: CONSULTATION BASIC INFORMATION FOR EACH GROUP OF PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED**

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<th>Community Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
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**Who was involved in the consultation:** Girls, boys, women, or men (\& add specific information about which children or adult group)  
e.g. Girls: 5-7 year old school going girls  or Adults: Mothers and female caregivers

**Which consultation activities were used with this group:** e.g. Fishing game, and Fish swimming with and against the current

**Information about children who were involved:**

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<th>Child's initials</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>In school or out of school?</th>
<th>If in school which grade?</th>
<th>If out of school what do they do?</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Whether any of the children involved have a disability if so, what? &amp;/or any other relevant information</th>
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</table>

Facilitators names:  
Documenters names:
Any other important information about the children who were involved?

Information about adults who were involved:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult's initials</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Role (e.g. parent/ VEDC member/ teacher, head teacher, community member, village head, local official etc)</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Whether any of the parents or caregivers are caring for children with disabilities, or for relative children &amp;/or any other relevant information</th>
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Facilitators names:  Documenters names:

Any other important information about the adults who were involved?
PART C: SEPARATE DOCUMENTATION FORMATS FOR EACH CONSULTATION ACTIVITY:

Separate documentation formats are provided for each key consultation activity including:
- Body Map (likes/ dislikes of school)
- School Map
- Fishing Game
- Fish swimming with or against the current: exploring factors that make it easier or harder for children to go to school
- Seasonal Map
- Problem Tree
- Village Tour (during school time)
- Solution Tree
- Body Map (general likes/ dislikes)
- Draw (& write) or puppets
- Interviews &/or FGDs
**Body map (likes and dislikes of school):**

*Record what girls and boys say about their likes and dislikes during the body map activity.* Where-ever appropriate mention the relevant body part and where-ever possible include in brackets the gender and age of the child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>😊 Likes 😊</th>
<th>☹ Dislikes ☹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E.g. (Head): I like it when I get new knowledge in my head about my country (ST8F)</td>
<td>E.g. (Head): when I worry about arriving late at school (MN8F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Eyes): I don’t like to see a teacher scolding a student (ST8F)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Record what girls and boys say during the plenary session of the body map activity (e.g. about any differences between results from girls and boys body map).
### School Map

*How many stars do they give to show the importance of girls to go to pre-primary, primary and junior school?:*

*How many stars do they give to show the importance of boys to go to pre-primary, primary and junior school?:*

*What do the participants say about how important they think it is for girls and/or boys in their community to go to pre-primary, primary and junior school?:*
What do female and male participants like about the school? The teachers? The teaching methods? The safety and security of the school? The way teachers discipline children? other aspects of the school environment (e.g. access to water, toilets, lunch etc)
What do female and male participants not like about the school? What do you not like or find challenging about the school? The teachers? The teaching methods? The safety and security of the school? The way teachers discipline children? Other aspects of the school environment (e.g. access to water, toilets, lunch etc.)
What are female and male participants’ suggestions to improve the school environment and children’s learning? What ideas do they have to improve the access and quality of schools so that children have good learning?
**Fishing Game**

*What views and experiences do girls and boys share about going to school or not going to school?*

Record all comments made by girls and boys about: whether they do or do not get the chance to go to school or not? Why? Whether girls and boys have the same or different chances to go to school and to study in school? What they like or do not like about school; What they are doing if they do not go to school; Whether they would like to go to school and why? What would help all girls and boys regularly to go to school:
What views and experiences do girls and boys share about going to school or not going to school? (continued)
Fish swimming with or against the current: exploring factors that make it easier or harder for children to go to school

Which children are like the yellow fish and find it easier to go to school? Or which parents/ caregivers find it easier to enrol and send their children to school? What makes it easier for these children to go to school?
Are there any boys or girls that find it difficult to go to school? Which children? What makes it harder for girls to go to school? What makes it harder for boys to go to school? Or what makes it hard for some parents / caregivers to enrol or send their children to school?
Which children are more likely to go to school irregularly, to repeat classes, or drop out from school? How is it different for girls and boys? Why?

Are there any seasons of the year which make it easier or harder for some girls or boys to regularly go to school or to stay in school? If so, which children? And why?
Are there any other reasons why a child may drop out of school or have to repeat a class in school? Which reasons? How are the reasons different for boys and girls?

Are there any children living without their parents, for example living with grandparents, aunties or uncles? Do these children find it easy or hard to go to school?
Are there any children with disabilities in their village? For example children who cannot hear, who cannot see, or who have difficulties walking or talking? Do these children find it easy or hard to go to school?

Is there anything else that would like to share about what makes it harder to easier for girls or boys to go to school?
Do you have any ideas or suggestions about what would help more children to regularly go to school and to study well?
### Seasonal Map

Where-ever possible try to complete the main findings that are shared on the chart, and also record more details of what people say below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a) Work</th>
<th>b) School</th>
<th>a) Work</th>
<th>b) School</th>
<th>a) Work</th>
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<th>a) Work</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Boys age 13-17</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Boys age 8-12</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Boys age 5-7</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Girls age 5-7</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Children under 5 years</strong></td>
<td><strong>Childcare:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Seasonal work of women</strong></td>
<td><strong>Work:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Seasonal work of men</strong></td>
<td><strong>Work:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Main Seasons</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Months</strong></td>
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</table>
**What are the main seasons? Which months?**

**What are the main types of work undertaken by men and women during each of the seasons:**
What is the impact of the seasons and seasonal work on girls and boys lives and their education:

During different seasons how are young children (under the age of 5 years) taken care of:

For girls age 5-7 years old a) what work are they are doing during different seasons? and b) are most (green)/ some (yellow)/ few (red) girls going to school in different seasons?
For boys age 5-7 years old a) what work are they doing during different seasons? and b) are most (green)/ some (yellow)/ few (red) boys going to school in different seasons?

For girls age 8-12 years old a) what work are they doing during different seasons? and b) are most (green)/ some (yellow)/ few (red) girls going to school in different seasons?
For boys age 8-12 years old a) what work are they doing during different seasons? and b) are most (green)/ some (yellow)/ few (red) boys going to school in different seasons?

For girls age 13-17 years old a) what work are they doing during different seasons? and b) are most (green)/ some (yellow)/ few (red) girls going to school in different seasons?
Are there any other non-agricultural events such as social / cultural events, market days, diseases, natural hazards – flood or drought affecting schooling?
What are participants ideas about how girls and boy’s education can be better supported in different seasons? Would those ideas be different for girls and boys? If so how?
Problem: Girls and boys non-enrolment or drop out from or repetition in primary school

Please record what people say about the reasons why girls and boys are not enrolled in primary school, as well as reasons why girls and boys are dropping out of or repeating classes in primary school:
What do people say about some of the deeper root causes of the problem:

Which are the top 3 most important reasons that cause girls and boys enrolment, drop out or repetition (that have a star by them):
1.
2.
3.

Please record what people say about the impact on children, families, communities or society:
Village Tour (during school time)

*Record key observations and findings from chatting to any girls and boys who were not in school during the school time. Record details about: their age and whether they usually attend school; the reasons for not being at school; what they usually do; what they like about their daily lives and what they do not like*
Solution Tree

| What is their vision of a school and a community where all girls and boys regularly go to school and have access to good learning: What would the community, children and families look like if all children regularly went to school and had access to a good education? |

| What are their proposed solutions and suggestions to increase opportunities for all girls and boys to regularly go to school, and to improve children’s learning? How? How? How? How? can they increase opportunities for all children to go to school, and to improve schools? |
Which action step they think should be prioritized and why?
Body Map (general likes/ dislikes)

Record what out of school girls and boys say about their general likes and dislikes during the body map activity. Where-ever appropriate mention the relevant body part and where-ever possible include in brackets the gender and age of the child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>☺ Likes ☺</th>
<th>☹ Dislikes ☹</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E.g. (Eyes): I like it when I see my friend and I can play with him in the forest (NT8M)</td>
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<tr>
<td>E.g. (Ears): I don’t like it when I hear bad words when my mum shouts at me (NT8M)</td>
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</table>
Record any other key comments from children about gender differences or any other comments:
Draw (& write) or puppets

For each individual drawing made by a child ensure that the child has explained what the drawing means to them, and that a record is made of this story, and that the story is attached to the drawing.

Or if children prepare a puppet show record the story that is shared by children here:

Interviews &/or FGDs

Record full details of each interview or FGD. The question asked and the responses. Also ensure that the individual code and background are mentioned (e.g. Interview with HN25F_mother of child with disabilities = 25 year old mother with initial HN who has a child with disabilities).

THANK YOU for all the documentation!!
Annex D: Training Workshop Plan

2.5 day Training of Consultation Core Team staff (with opportunities to pilot some core tools and prepare for the field work, Dec 1st, 3rd & 4th 2015, Namor District, Oudomxay Province)

Objectives:

- To orient all core team members (Plan, SC, DESB staff, TTCs) on the ToR for the consultations with children and communities (objectives, key consultation questions, key consultation tools, schedule etc)
- To increase team members’ knowledge, skills, and confidence to apply the nine basic requirements for effective and ethical children’s participation
- To increase team members’ knowledge, skills, and confidence to coordinate and facilitate child and community friendly consultations with young girls and boys, JSS students, parents and caregivers, teachers, head teachers, VEDC members and village heads.
- To increase team members’ knowledge, skills, and confidence to coordinate and support systematic documentation of children and adults’ views, and to support subsequent processes for translation to Laos and/or English).
- To enable dialogue and prioritization of core consultation tools, optional consultation tools, and priority interview questions.
- To pilot some of the core consultation tools and to update and adjust the consultation tools and consultation schedule taking into consideration key learning from the piloting
- To ensure that team members have clear understanding of their specific roles and responsibilities with specific responsibilities for the team focal point, facilitation coordinator, the documentation coordinator, and the child protection focal point.
- To ensure that all the logistic and practical preparations (including necessary materials) are in place.

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Day 1 (Tuesday December 1st): Training day</td>
<td>Introductions to each other, and to the consultation process, and the training objectives, and provide “research diary”</td>
<td>Icebreaker introductions: introduce your name, the meaning of your name, your job, agency.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.30 – 1.50</td>
<td><strong>Introductions</strong> to each other, and to the consultation process, and the training objectives, and provide “research diary”</td>
<td><strong>Introduction to the Consultations</strong>: Why they are being organized, an overview of where the Team will conduct the consultations, and a very brief introduction to the types of tools that will be used.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.50 – 2.50</td>
<td>Developing an ideal child &amp; community friendly researcher</td>
<td>Provide each team member with a research diary to record their thoughts, observations, key findings, key gaps in information throughout the research process etc. They should be encouraged to start using it during the training so that they get into the habit of recording key information, observations and reflections.</td>
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<td>Introduction to the Training workshop objectives and an overall summary of the agenda for the next few days. Q&amp;A and development of positive rules for the training workshop</td>
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<td>Let us work together to make a “body map” and work together to design the ‘body’ to create an ideal child friendly and community friendly researcher. Think about, draw or write to design the body to show what knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitudes we need to be an ideal child &amp; community friendly researcher.</td>
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</table>
Think about what skills, knowledge and attitudes we need to make girls, boys, women and men feel safe to share their views, to listen, to document, to translate, and to analyse key findings.

Think about our hopes and fears as researchers and what we can do to realise these hopes and to minimise our fears.

Think about how you start introductions with each stakeholder group.

Think about what tools we may need to have in our toolkit.

Think about any ethical issues or child protection concerns we may face and about what skills, knowledge or materials we need to respond sensitively to such concerns.

Review the “ideal researcher” findings and reinforce key points including the importance of: clear introductions, voluntary participation, good body language, using a gentle voice, asking open and probing questions, giving children time to process the questions, being non-judgemental etc.

Introduce the 9 basic requirements and think about if there is anything else to add.

Ensure that everyone is aware of and signs organisational Child Protection Policy.

### Role play scenarios

**Role play – challenging scenarios and how to overcome.** Divide into 3 groups. Each group is give a particular scenario and are asked to present a 5 minute role play to show how this challenge can be overcome.

- **Scenario 1:** Dealing with silence: You introduce an activity but the children are silent. What do you do?
- **Scenario 2:** During a consultation activity with children, their teachers stand over the group and start giving instructions to the children. What do you do?
- **Scenario 3:** During a consultation activity a girl start’s crying when talking about risks she faces on the way to school. What do you do?

### Tea break

### Overview of: a) research questions and proposed consultation tools; b) documentation guide & use of individual codes.

Provide an overview of the research questions and the proposed consultation tools. During the next few days we encourage you to reflect on and identify if there are any missing questions or questions that could be edited to make them easier to understand.

For the rest of today and tomorrow morning we will try out each of these tools (though in a fairly rapid way), so that you can then discuss and identify which are the most useful tools that should be considered priority core tools, and which are optional tools if there is time to use them.

In addition, for each tool we will encourage one of you to note key findings on the flipchart, and one of you to use the documentation guide to note detailed “word for word” transcriptions of what the participants say.

### Body Mapping (likes/ dislikes at school)

This tool is intended for use with children age 5+. It is best facilitated with small groups of children of similar gender and ages. Divide participants into a group of female and male participants; and ensure that one person is appointed as activity flipchart documenter, and another as activity documenter (using the documentation guide). Encourage the participants to pretend that they are students age 8-12 years in a remote village.

Facilitate the Body Map to explore what girls and boys likes/ dislikes when they are at school (or on the way to / from school) – what makes them happy or sad. Ensure documentation.

Present findings and identify any similarities or differences between the girls and boys body maps.
Reflect on the benefits and limitations of the tool and any challenges associated with documentation. Ensure date, no of people, photo of results. Note: that a more general version of this body map (likes/ dislikes) can also be used with out of school children.

**Day Two (December 3rd): Training and preparation for piloting**

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>8.00 –</td>
<td>Introductions &amp; welcome back</td>
<td>Welcome back and overview of today’s agenda to “try out” other consultation tools, and to work in two Teams to make further preparations for the field work, including a chance to prepare for “pilot consultations” tomorrow.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.10 –</td>
<td>School Map</td>
<td>This tool can be used with children or with adults. Today let’s work in mixed groups, but continue to imagine that you are 8-12 year children in a remote village. Ensure that one person is appointed as activity flipchart documenter, and another as activity documenter (using the documentation guide). Facilitate the School Map to explore the value of education and people’s likes and dislikes about the school environment and key suggestions to improve the school environment and children’s learning. Reflect on the benefits and limitations of the tool and any challenges associated with documentation. Ensure date, no of people, photo of results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.00 –</td>
<td>Fishing Game</td>
<td>This tool is designed for working with younger children. So now imagine you are children age 5-8 years in a town. Ensure that one person is appointed as activity flipchart documenter, and another as activity documenter (using the documentation guide). Facilitate the fishing game to explore children’s experiences of education - whether they have opportunities to go to school and what they like or do not like about school. Reflect on the benefits and limitations of the tool and any challenges associated with documentation. Ensure date, no of people, photo of results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.30 –</td>
<td>Fish swimming with or against the current: exploring factors that make it easier or harder for children to go to school</td>
<td>This tool is designed for use with people age 5+. It can be used with young children, parents/ caregivers, or other stakeholders. Which stakeholder group would you like to be to practice this tool? Ensure that one person is appointed as activity flipchart documenter, and another as activity documenter (using the documentation guide). Facilitate the “fish swimming with or against the current” to explore factors which enable children to go to school, and factors which create barriers for children to go to school. Reflect on the benefits and limitations of the tool and any challenges associated with documentation. Ensure date, no of people, photo of results.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.30 –</td>
<td>Tea break</td>
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<td>10.50 –</td>
<td>Seasonal Map</td>
<td>This tool has been designed for use with i) groups of parents and caregivers, ii) the VDEC members, and it could also be used with children 8+, or with other adult stakeholders. Ensure that one person is appointed as activity flipchart documenter, and another as activity documenter (using the documentation guide). Facilitate the Seasonal Map to explore how different seasons and seasonal work of family members (adults and children) impacts on girls and boys access to schools and study at different ages. Reflect on the benefits and limitations of the tool and any challenges associated with documentation. Ensure date, no of people, photo of results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.50 –</td>
<td>Problem Tree</td>
<td>Very brief introduction to the tool which has been designed for use with i) the VDEC members. However, it could also be used in FGDs with ii) groups of children aged 8+, iii) groups of parents and caregivers, and iv) other stakeholders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.00 –</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.00 – 13.45</td>
<td>Interview (or FGD) questions</td>
<td>Interview questions have been prepared for interviews (or small FGDs with): head-teachers, village head, VEDC members, teachers, parents and caregivers and/or community members, local government officials views about children’s access to school, factors that enable and hinder children’s school attendance and performance, and suggestions to improve education for all children. Make groups of 3. In each group assign members as A, B, or C to practice interviewing and observation skills. A will be the interviewer, B will be the person being interviewed and C will be the observer. The interviewer has 3 minutes to introduce themselves and to use some of the questions to ask the adult (e.g. head teacher, village head, parent of a child with disabilities etc) about their views about children and schools. The observer should observe the behaviour of A and B. After 3 minutes the observer should give feedback and advice to the interviewer on how to improve their interviewing skills. Change roles and repeat so that each member gets the chance to be A, B and C. Once everyone has had the chance to try being an interviewer, observer and respondent, share feedback and learning in plenary about how difficult or easy it was to interview and tips to further improve interviewing skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.45 – 14.15</td>
<td>Forming sub-teams identification of different roles and responsibilities &amp; review schedule</td>
<td>Formation of sub-teams - Team A (FGDs with children and parents/caregivers, VEDCs etc) and Team B (Interviews, FGD with teachers, classroom observation) Present and discuss the roles and responsibilities of key team roles including: i) Overall focal point; ii) facilitation coordinator, iii) documentation coordinator, iv) child protection focal point; and for each consultation activity: activity facilitator, and activity documenter. Identify which person will take on each of these different roles in the core team. Review the proposed schedule for sub-teams A and B indicating which consultation tools may be used with which stakeholder groups. Consider which are priority tools or questions if less time is available.</td>
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<td>2.15 – 2.30</td>
<td>Tea Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.30 – 4.00</td>
<td>Preparing for Piloting core priority consultation tools</td>
<td>Small teams prepare for introducing and piloting 2-3 priority consultation tools – tomorrow morning in the same community e.g. Team 1) will be meeting with JSS students age 8-12 years for 90 minutes, and with 5-8 year old children for 90 minutes e.g. Team 2) will be meeting with a group of parents for 90 minutes, and with VEDC members for 90 minutes Ensure that each team member has clear roles and responsibilities That you have carefully considered facilitation, translation, interpretation and documentation responsibilities. Ensure that you have all the necessary materials, informed consent forms, documentation formats etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.00 – 4.30</td>
<td>Reflections about translation, interpretation &amp; documentation</td>
<td>Sub-teams A and B to present their plan to facilitate and document the findings during the pilot. “Trouble shooting session” to help overcome translation challenges and other issues.</td>
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**Day 3 (Friday December 4th): Piloting in Namo District and updated preparation for field work**

TBD: 09:00 – 12:00 | Field Work: Piloting the tools | Field work to pilot the tools e.g. e.g. Team 1) will be meeting with JSS students age 8-12 years for 90 minutes, and with 5-8 year old children for 90 minutes e.g. Team 2) will be meeting with a group of parents for 90 minutes, and with VEDC members for 90 minutes |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.00 – 1.00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.00 – 2.30</td>
<td>Reflections &amp; sharing on key lessons learnt from the piloting</td>
<td>Each piloting sub-team to complete a “H” assessment to identify ☀ What went well, ☹ What was challenging and/or did not work so well, (!) Suggestions to improve (e.g. to improve introductions, to adapt the tools, the schedule, the documentation etc)  Each team to present their findings Discuss and agree what updates to the schedule/ tools etc will be made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.30 – 3.00</td>
<td>Review and update the “Ideal Researcher”</td>
<td>Based on their experiences reflect on &amp; update the ideal researcher to include any other qualities, knowledge, skills, attitudes, tools, materials etc that are needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00 – 3.20</td>
<td>Tea Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.20 – 4.30</td>
<td>Updated preparations by Core Team (and sub-teams)</td>
<td>Updated preparations by the core team for all planned consultations to be undertaken during the next week, (and the following week).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Annex E: Facilitators Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Headteacher</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Village head &amp; other village officials</th>
<th>VIDMC members</th>
<th>Parents &amp; caregivers</th>
<th>Older school children (≥ 11 - 13 years)</th>
<th>Pre &amp; primary school children (≥ 5y)</th>
<th>Go to school, but irregularly (8-12 years)</th>
<th>Out of school (8-15 years)</th>
<th>Out of school younger children (≤ 7 years)</th>
<th>Description (Ethnicity, schools in the village, and other characteristics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Community E (mixed ethnic groups)</td>
<td>04.12.15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Urban village 5km from town. We met with a mixture of Lao, Khmu and Hmong. Secondary, Junior and pre-primary school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Khmu community A</td>
<td>07.12.15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rural village accessed via a rough road approx. 40 minutes drive from Namo. Khmu community. Secondary, Junior and pre-primary school. Majority of children school going, particularly at the start of the school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>08.12.15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Khmu community B</td>
<td>09.12.15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fairly remote village, need to access via road and crossing rivers, approx. 2 hrs drive from Namo.Khmu community. Secondary, Junior and pre-primary school. Majority of children school going, particularly at the start of the school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.12.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Hmong community C</td>
<td>14.12.15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Hmong community about 10km from Namor. The villages are either side of the main road not far (approx. 30km from Chinese border). There is a primary school and pre-primary in one classroom. The school is for children from 2 villages. The school is set on land near the road about 0.2km from the village houses. The older children have to travel another km to go to a secondary school in another village. This school had a library with reading books and other good materials that had been supported by Room to Read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.12.15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Hmong community D</td>
<td>16.12.15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hmong village. It does not have a pre-primary and it only has an incomplete primary school up to grade 3. There is just 1 male teacher for the whole school who is also the school director. Children have to travel 2 km to attend grade 4+ orimary school and 6km to reach secondary school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 334 people consulted (107 boys, 105 girls, 70 men, 52 women). This included 63 boys & 65 girls under the age of 10 years; and 44 boys and 40 girls aged 11-13 years.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool used</th>
<th>No. of groups using this tool</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>only Male group</td>
<td>only Female group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Map</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Map</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing Game</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child led Tour</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw &amp; Write</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish swimming with and against the current</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Tree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal Map</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of individuals interviewed</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: More than 45 FGDs using participatory tools, plus 26 interviews.
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