SUPPORT PROJECT FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGAL SECTOR MASTER PLAN

Project ID: 00087142

Project Description

The Legal Sector Master Plan aims to strengthen the rule of law in Lao PDR. This is seen as crucial for the country to achieve its development objectives and graduate from Least Developed Country status by 2020. The “Master Plan for Law Development to 2020,” officially adopted by the Government of Lao PDR on 11 September 2009, lays out a comprehensive sectoral reform agenda to support the country on its way of becoming a state fully governed by the rule of law. In the past, preparatory and transitory phases of the project have set up the management and implementation framework, in order for the country to start implementing the Master Plan.

Project Summary:

- Duration: January 2014 - December 2016
- Geographic coverage: Vientiane Capital
- Focus area: Governance
- Implementing partners: Ministry of Justice (main partner), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Public Security, Office of Supreme People’s Prosecutor, People’s Supreme Court

This is the first project to support implementation of the Legal Sector Master Plan in a holistic way: involving all the main stakeholders and Development Partners, coordinating activities and initiatives throughout the sector to create change in a phased and cumulative manner.

The project seeks to achieve synergy and impact across the legal sector in Lao PDR by increasing sector-wide coordination. It seeks to streamline and improve efficiency of legal and judicial technical assistance administration by drawing together various donors and agencies, as well as previously ad hoc reform initiatives, thereby giving substance to the principles set out in the Vientiane Declaration on Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.
**Main Objectives and Outcomes**

**Output 1.** Enhanced capacity, procedures, and standards for legislative development in Lao PDR.

**Output 2.** Institutional capacity, structure, and arrangements further improved at legal and judicial institutions for more effective and responsive judicial process.

**Output 3.** More systematic development of legal and judicial professionals enabled through the establishment of a unified judicial training institute.

**Output 4.** Increased public understanding of legal rights and information, and increased participation in the legal system towards full realisation of citizen rights.

**Output 5.** Lao PDR’s further integration into regional and international communities enabled through adoption, implementation, enforcement, monitoring, and reporting of international legal instruments.

**Output 6.** Enhanced capacity of the Legal Sector Master Plan Secretariat for more effective coordination in the legal sector and implementation of the Legal Sector Master Plan.

**Results and Achievements to Date**

More than half way through its project cycle, the project has made considerable achievements in its six primary objectives.

Initial steps for achieving a more harmonised and strengthened law-making process have been taken with the *Law-making Process Baseline Assessment Report* and *Law-making Manual* finalised, a legal terms compilation launched and most significantly, the progressing drafting of the Penal Code.

The institutional capacity of legal sector actors has been strengthened with the establishment of a database for enforcement, a resource center for the Lao Bar Association, a Legal Aid Center in Xieng Khouang and a Statistical Analysis Unit established at the Ministry of Justice.

Significant steps have also been taken to achieve a more harmonised human resources capacity development approach in the Legal Sector.

Access to justice for the public has been enhanced through the completion of a *Legal Sector Baseline Assessment and Public Justice Survey*. Additionally, a legal awareness drama was rolled-out across the country, a regulation on the Village Mediation Unit was finalised and the drafting of a Legal Aid Decree is in progress.

International legal obligations are now more closely monitored and reported against with a Law on Treaty-Making in its draft phase, the *Universal Periodic Review* and *National Stakeholder Reports* have been facilitated and the drafting of an *International Convention on Civil and Political Rights Report is in progress.*

Coordination in the legal sector has been strengthened through the creation of a peer review mechanism under the Legal and Institutional Oversight Sub-Sector Working Group and thematic workshops on judgment enforcement, the Universal Periodic Review, Penal Code, and law-making have been organised.

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**Funding:**
- Project Budget: Approximately USD 4.1 million
- Donors:
  - UNDP: USD 0.6M
  - EU: Approximately USD 2.3 million (EUR 1.74 million)
  - France: USD 547,800
  - USA: USD 600,000
- Unfunded Budget: N/A
- Delivery (2014): Roughly 84% (USD 1.14M)

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