



Knowledge hub - Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

An Inclusive Approach to Digital Learning in Lao PDR

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Lao PDR

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

Ministry of Education and Sports, Lao PDR, and development partners: EU, GPE, Aide et Action, Australia-DFAT and BEQUAL, ChildFund, Humanity & Inclusion, JICA, Room to Read, Save the Children, UNESCO, UNFPA, USAID and World Bank. UNICEF is also working with private sector partners: Tespack, UNITEL and Samsung.

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

Digital learning for all children and teachers including the most marginalized in Lao PDR

6. What makes it a best practice? *

Khang Panya Lao, the first national digital library for children and teachers based on the Learning Passport, is not just a response to the pandemic; backed by strong political commitment, partnership and youth engagement, it is underpinning a replicable transformation in how children learn in Lao PDR.

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

COVID-19 lockdowns led to rapid school closures across Lao PDR with schools closed for many months in 2020 and 2021. As a result, children across the country had two academic years of disrupted learning. Lao PDR cannot afford such devastating learning loss – the Southeast Asian Primary Learning Metrics (2019) showed that only 1 in 10 Grade 5 children in Lao PDR had basic numeracy and literacy skills even before the pandemic struck. Lao PDR has the highest learning poverty rate of countries with data in the region – only 2 per cent of children can read a simple text, compared with the regional average of 66 per cent. Children from non-Lao Thai ethnic groups or children with disabilities likely have lower rates. The pandemic has likely exacerbated already sub-optimal student learning outcomes, particularly for the most marginalized children. Pre-COVID, students, particularly in secondary education, already had to share textbooks which was not possible when schools were closed, limiting their access to learning materials.

In response, the Ministry of Education and Sports, with UNICEF, established the first national digital learning platform, Khang Panya Lao, with funding from the EU and GPE. In mid-2020, MoES issued a national directive instructing teachers and students to use Khang Panya as an online learning resource with offline functionality, providing continuity of learning during school closures. UNICEF ensured the platform provided high quality learning resources, including official curriculum textbooks and teacher guides from pre-primary to upper secondary, international content and learning resources from local development partners.

As schools re-opened, UNICEF ensured the platform was used not only for continuity of learning but also to support the growing digital literacy needs of students and teachers. UNICEF is supporting teacher trainings in this area, the provision of digital devices to classrooms and has established 14 partnerships to expand digital learning nationally.

Khang Panya now contains 330 courses, 5,784 lessons and is accessed by at least 90,000 users nationwide. UNICEF is investing in offline device hubs and solar-powered media system packs to power devices in remote areas and is exploring partnerships to zero-rate platform content. UNICEF is adding inclusive education content to the platform, including inclusive teaching resources. Khang Panya is not just a response to the pandemic; it is underpinning a great transformation in how children learn in Lao PDR.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

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Since Khang Panya Lao was released in June 2020, implementation has centered around four key activities:

1. Establishing Khang Panya Lao as a first port of call for continuity of learning.

MoES, UNICEF and partners promoted Khang Panya Lao as the official national learning platform for continuity of learning. It was used by thousands of students during school closures and during school holidays in 2020 and 2021. Students used the platform to prepare for the next grade and prepare for exams. As one student reported: "My friend told me about Khang Panya Lao and I downloaded it straight away. When schools closed, I had to return my textbooks to school. I could not keep learning. Khang Panya allowed me access to my textbooks so I could keep studying for my Grade 9 exams. I was so relieved!" - Ms Panatda, Grade 9, Vientiane province

2. Establishing Khang Panya Lao as the national digital repository of learning resources for students and teachers.

Throughout 2020-2022, UNICEF focused on ensuring Khang Panya contained all official textbooks and teacher guides from pre-primary to secondary education (Grade 12). Working with partners like Australia, Save the Children, Room to Read and USAID, learning materials with interactive quizzes and storybooks have been uploaded. Global resources on science, mathematics, technology and digital literacy materials have been translated to Lao. Videos like the My House ECD TV series, Learn Together, Read Aloud storybooks as well as inclusive learning content have been added to the platform and TVET courses.

3. Building the digital literacy skills of teachers, parents and children.

In 2021, trainings in Khang Panya Lao were conducted in four provinces (scaling to all provinces by end 2022). As part of trainings, UNICEF with the EU and GPE is providing tablets, laptops, TVs and projectors to select schools. For most teachers, working with digital devices is completely new. The trainings guide them in how to navigate the technology with tutorial videos, instructional guides and hands on support. Microsoft digital literacy courses on the platform have been translated to Lao language. Coursework on digital literacy and remote teaching and learning is now used at Teacher Training Colleges across the country.

4. Building new partnerships in digital learning.

By June 2022, 14 development partners are engaged expanding Khang Panya Lao content and accessibility. UNICEF is also expanding engagement with the private sector to ensure innovative solutions to reach the most disadvantaged. The solutions from these partners include:

- a. solar-powered media systems with projectors and speakers to ensure electricity access in rural areas
- b. Zero-rating or subsidized internet costs when accessing Khang Panya Lao
- c. New e-learning content development, including inclusive materials

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

1. Children, including marginalized groups, have improved access to quality learning resources. Khang Panya Lao provides access to 330 courses, 5,784 lessons and is accessed by at least 90,000 users in all provinces nationwide. (One registration can be shared by many within the same household.) Content including textbooks with interactive quizzes, teacher guides, videos, storybooks and audio files are more accessible to children with disabilities including with spoken Lao options and subtitled content.

2. Teachers have improved access to quality learning resources to support teaching and learning and continuous professional development.

Official teacher training resources, including Inclusive Education teaching materials approved by MoES are made available nationwide via Khang Panya Lao. This means teachers do not have to wait until a provincial teacher training programme rolls around to gain new skills and advance their professional development. Teachers also have access to international resources translated to Lao to help fill crucial knowledge gaps. Over 10,000 teachers have already registered to Khang Panya Lao. All Teacher Training Colleges nationally have received trainings in Khang Panya and remote learning.

3. Khang Panya Lao is providing key 21st century skills for girls and boys nationwide.

Khang Panya Lao is enabling the first generation of Lao students access to digital learning in and outside the classroom, essential for the world of work. Teachers trained in Khang Panya Lao - and equipped with tablets and other digital devices - are now bringing this technology to their students, with approximately 18,000 children benefitting so far. UNICEF is also engaging adolescent girls and boys in developing Khang Panya Lao via digital literacy camps implemented jointly via UNICEF education and child protection teams. This ensures Khang Panya Lao develops in line with the learning needs and priorities of Lao youth including in online safety for girls and sustainable development.

4. Khang Panya Lao is improving the digital literacy skills of teachers nationwide.

Teacher trainings in Khang Panya Lao have reached 159 teacher trainers and 515 teachers across 120 schools including provision of tablets to schools by June 2022. Teacher trainers are expected to reach an additional 5,000 teachers by end 2022. Khang Panya Lao also provides Microsoft courses on digital literacy in Lao language aimed at teachers and parents. The digital literacy course comes in videos with Lao audio allowing even those with low literacy to access and learn. The platform is bringing digital learning into the lives of teachers nationwide, enabling them to catch up with essential 21st century skills in digital literacy.

5. Khang Panya Lao is forging new partnerships in education.

MoES continues to see the platform as an essential national repository of key learning resources for children in Lao PDR. This enables UNICEF to easily engage with local development partners to help expand Khang Panya Lao. 14 development partners are contributing content to the platform and/or supporting its roll out across the country. Private sector partners, Tespack, UNITEL and Samsung are helping expand access to digital learning even in the most rural areas.

It has also led MoES to now partner with UNICEF in developing its ICT in Education Policy and Master Plan.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

Triggers for transformation:

1. National ownership underpinned by strong partnership.

From the outset, UNICEF ensured Khang Panya Lao was not viewed as another donor-led project, but as an essential national repository of learning resources led and owned by MoES. Political commitment enabled development partners to rally behind the platform with 14 partners now onboard. UNICEF could not have achieved these results without strong MoES ownership, strong support from development partners as well as innovative solutions from the private sector to bridge access divides with Khang Panya Lao using the Learning Passport, a global initiative of UNICEF and Microsoft.

2. Strong awareness raising and communication efforts have been essential to boosting Khang Panya Lao awareness and registrations.

UNICEF supported MoES to host a high-level Khang Panya Lao launch event ensuring national coverage and boosting registrations significantly. Chaired by the Minister of Education, the EU Ambassador and the UNICEF Representative to Lao PDR with opening remarks from UNICEF's Global Education Director, the Microsoft Regional Lead and Manager for Microsoft Education Asia and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, Siwon Choi, it was also attended by almost all provincial and district education offices nationwide, roughly 20 local development partners, the Private Schools Association, internet service provider UNITEL, Samsung Laos and local media. This highly successful 'media moment' led to a doubling of platform registrations from approximately 34,000 in early October 2021 to 68,000 by end December 2021. This was aided by UNICEF's strong social media campaign and partnership with DFAT/BEQUAL in delivering instant messaging on Khang Panya via WhatsApp to teachers nationwide.

3. Organizational and donor support has underpinned this success.

UNICEF Lao PDR has been fortunate to have the ongoing support of UNICEF HQ with Learning Passport implementation. Key donors like the EU, GPE, Australia-DFAT, USAID and the World Bank have also rallied behind this platform.

Challenges:

1. There is limited ICT infrastructure and internet connectivity across Lao PDR. A recent UNDP digital maturity assessment scored Lao PDR at 1.7 out of 5 making it "digitally nascent". Access to digital technologies and the internet is very limited especially in rural areas.

2. Digital literacy levels in Laos are low. Even though the platform is fairly simple to use, there are challenges especially with teachers in using the app and associated devices. Teacher trainings on digital literacy and digital/ICT-based pedagogies aim to address this. In rural areas, digital literacy of parents is also a challenge.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”. What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

1. Strong government ownership. Khang Panya Lao is led and owned by MoES which helps ensure its long-term sustainability and scalability. UNICEF Lao PDR recognised the importance of ensuring the Learning Passport in Lao PDR was Ministry-owned and led. This included changing the name from “Learning Passport” to “Khang Panya Lao” which is much more relevant and meaningful in the Lao context. Furthermore, all content uploaded is first approved and done together with MoES. Because of this approach, development partners have trusted UNICEF as a key partner in expanding access to digital learning. This enabled 14 development partners (and counting!) to rally behind the platform and also positioned UNICEF to grow its influence in the digital learning and digital literacy space. This has also led the MoES ICT Centre to partner with UNICEF in the development of a new ICT in Education Policy and Master Plan.

2. Khang Panya Lao can support continuity of learning during other emergencies helping build the resilience of the sector as a national repository of learning materials from ECE to TVET. As Lao PDR moves past the pandemic and transitions to learning recovery, UNICEF is amplifying focus on how the platform can support the learning needs of all children and teachers, including the most marginalized. This includes focus on remedial catch-up support for students across the country and partnering with the private sector to expand access. UNICEF will soon pilot offline device hubs and solar-powered media systems to power devices in rural areas.

3. Khang Panya Lao has the potential to transform learning for students and teachers alike. With high quality global resources now translated to Lao language, Khang Panya provides students and teachers with limitless learning opportunities (online and offline). The platform has also been designed from the start to also cater to the needs of teachers with a next phase in the expansion focusing on using Khang Panya for blended trainings and continuous professional development of teachers.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

Khang Panya Lao – MoES Teaching and Learning Platform – webpage with links to the platform and instructional videos - <https://www.unicef.org/laos/khang-panya-lao>

A New Way of Teaching and Learning for the New Normal – Human Interest Story on Khang Panya Lao teacher trainings - <https://www.unicef.org/laos/stories/new-way-teaching-and-learning-new-normal>

Digital Learning in the Making – Photo Essay of Khang Panya Lao in action - <https://www.unicef.org/laos/stories/new-way-teaching-and-learning-new-normal>