



The Asia Foundation

ADVERTISEMENT

TITLE:	External Evaluator for Legislative Development Support to the National Assembly of Lao PDR
CONTRACT TYPE:	Individual Consultancy or Non-Individual Contractor
LOCATION OF THE ASSIGNMENT:	Lao PDR
DURATION:	Approximately 3 months
EXPECTED START DATE:	26 October 2024

SUMMARY OF POST RESPONSIBILITIES

The Asia Foundation's **Lao PDR Office** is seeking a qualified *Lao or international consultant* for the assignment of **External Evaluator** for the Project of Legislative Development Support to the National Assembly of Lao PDR. The consultant is expected to implement the roles and responsibilities as stated in section 8.

BACKGROUND AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Project information

Title: Legislative Development Support to the National Assembly of Lao PDR
Duration: 15 June 2020 – 30 June 2025
Implementing Organization: The Asia Foundation (TAF)
Funding Source: The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT)

Background:

With support from MFAT, TAF has partnered with the National Assembly (NA) to implement the Activity since June 2020 (with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between TAF and the NA in October 2021). The Activity initially focused strongly on support to the Institute of Legislative Studies (ILS) within the NA. In early 2024, the Activity was extended to support NA Committees and the Provincial People's Assemblies (PPAs) across the country. The Activity program logic was revised at that point in time to encompass not only the existing focus on evidence-based policymaking but also support to the NA and PPAs to achieve other mandates, such as strengthened oversight of the executive and greater responsiveness to citizens. The Activity also added a short-term outcome focused on advancing women's political leadership.

The Goal of the Activity is to improve the quality of legislative products in Lao PDR by supporting the effective application of evidence and diverse perspectives in legislative development processes.

The outcomes to be achieved/progressed by the Activity are:

Long Term Outcome

- Legislation, resolutions, and plans in Lao PDR are high-quality, evidence-based, and reflective of citizen needs and priorities.

Medium Term Outcomes

- Improved oversight, representation, and policymaking within the NA and PPAs.
- Increased use of research and evidence by NA and PPAs in the development of legislation, resolutions, and plans.

Short Term Outcomes

- Improved capacity of NA and PPA members and staff on representative, oversight, and policymaking mandates.
- Increased demand for relevant high-quality research products from NA and PPAs.
- Improved understanding of opportunities to advance women’s political leadership in Lao PDR.

2. Scope of the evaluation

TAF seeks an independent external evaluator to comprehensively assess the results and impact of the Activity, focusing especially on the medium and long-term outcomes. The evaluation will cover activities and outcomes in selected provinces and national-level institutions in Lao PDR. The evaluator may meet with stakeholders such as sub-grantees and contractors, current and former staff of the ILS, members and staff of certain Committees of the NA, and members and staff of selected PPAs. The evaluator may also meet with government and private sector to gather additional perspectives on legislative development in Lao PDR. The assessment will span the implementation period of the Activity, from its initiation to the present. The evaluation will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the Activity's evolution, achievements, and challenges over time and make recommendations for potential focus of future support.

The evaluation is anticipated to commence on October 15, 2024, and conclude no later than January 15, 2024. This timeline is provided as a guideline and will be subject to discussion prior to finalizing the evaluation plan.

3. Purpose / Objectives / Rationale

The evaluation seeks to provide evidence-based insights into the Activity's achievements, challenges, and results, in line with the medium- and long-term outcomes provided above and to explore the drivers contributing to project successes and/or shortcomings. This will require gathering and analysing qualitative data to substantiate changes in legislative products and the processes of developing those products, which can be difficult to quantify.

Specifically, this evaluation will:

1. Examine the Activity's ongoing relevance to government priorities, New Zealand strategic priorities, and Lao PDR’s development needs, considering the specific socio-political and macro-economic cultural landscapes of Lao PDR.
2. Assess the effectiveness of the Activity in contributing to its Goal and Outcomes, with a focus on the development of legislative research services, enhancement of legislator capacity, and the promotion of a culture of learning and discourse within legislative bodies. This may involve researching and documenting stories of change, as well as reviewing the qualitative and quantitative data collected by the Activity.
3. Assess the sustainability of Activity outcomes by examining the likelihood of continued positive impacts beyond the Activity period.
4. Identify opportunities for shared learning on opportunities to improve the impact, sustainability, and inclusiveness of future support.
5. Consider how the Activity works with relevant development partner interventions.
6. Provide recommendations around key areas for adaptation or strengthening, including the MERL system for any future Activity that will build on the current work and partnerships.

4. Intended user(s) and use(s)

The primary users of the evaluation findings include TAF and the donor, MFAT. The findings will also be shared with key implementing partners in the Lao context, such as the NA. The evaluation will inform any future phases of the programme.

5. The principles and approach that will guide the evaluation.

The evaluation is designed to assess whether the interventions are relevant to the context, coherent with other interventions, achieve the objectives, contribute to outcomes sought, deliver results in an efficient way, and have positive impacts that last. This aligns to internationally agreed criteria for evaluating development assistance and the development principles in New Zealand’s International Cooperation for Effective Development (ICESD) policy. The evaluation will be guided by the core principles and criteria set out by the OECD-DAC and New Zealand’s ICESD policy statement:

CORE PRINCIPLES

- Clarity of intent
- Credibility and rigor
- Utility
- Culturally and contextually responsive
- Partnership and participation
- Inclusion
- Resilience
- Donor cooperation and collaboration
- Safeguarding and ethical practice
- Strengths-based approach to capacity building

EVALUATION CRITERIA

- Relevance
- Coherence
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Sustainability
- Impact

Note: not all criteria will be relevant to every evaluation.

6. Methodology

The bidding consultant will propose the specific methodology, but it is envisioned that the evaluation will utilize both qualitative and quantitative approaches, such as:

1. Document Review: Conduct an extensive review of Activity documents, including proposals, progress reports, MERL data, and relevant publications, to assess project design, implementation, and outcomes against international standards.
2. Key Informant Interviews: Conduct structured interviews with key stakeholders, including project staff (TAF and partner organizations), legislators, NA and PPA staff, and other participants. The interviews will explore perceptions of project relevance, effectiveness, and impact as well as whether activities had the intended result.
3. Focus Group Discussions: Organize focus group discussions with project participants to gather diverse perspectives on the project’s outcomes, relevance to local contexts, and inclusivity.

4. Site Visits: If possible, conduct on-site visits within Lao PDR to observe project activities, engage with stakeholders, and validate information obtained through other data collection methods.

7. Roles and responsibilities

- The external evaluator will:
 - Design the evaluation plan in accordance with MFAT principles.
 - Identify, recruit, and orient qualified individuals within Lao PDR to form a local evaluation team.
 - Establish effective communication channels and regular check-ins to address queries and provide guidance.
 - Oversee the data collection, analysis, and reporting process.
 - Collect and document evidence of Activity outcomes while also maintaining independence and impartiality.
- TAF staff will:
 - Facilitate access to project sites, documentation, and key stakeholders.
 - Collaborate closely with the external evaluator throughout the evaluation process.
 - Provide necessary information and insights to enhance the evaluation's depth and accuracy.
 - Provide feedback on the preliminary and final findings to enhance the evaluation's credibility.
- Key stakeholders will:
 - Actively participate in interviews, focus group discussions, and validation sessions depending on their availability.

8. Evaluator qualifications

The external evaluator should possess:

- Expertise in program evaluation, with a track record of evaluating projects with similar objectives.
- In-depth knowledge of legislative development, evidence-based policymaking, and good governance principles, in particular in similar contexts.
- Experience applying techniques for capturing both expected and unexpected project outcomes, for example, outcome harvesting.
- Demonstrated ability to actively involve diverse stakeholders in the evaluation process.
- Experience applying a gender and social inclusion lens in evaluation, ensuring that the assessment captures differential impacts and benefits across diverse groups.
- Demonstrated understanding of the socio-political and cultural nuances specific to Lao PDR.
- Commitment to ethical conduct, including prioritizing informed consent, safeguarding confidentiality, and respecting participants' rights.
- Familiarity with and adherence to international evaluation standards, ensuring the evaluation aligns with best practices in the field.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to present complex findings in a clear and accessible manner in English.

- Advanced degree in a relevant field such as International Development, Political Science, Evaluation, or a related discipline. Extensive practical work experience may substitute for an advanced degree.
- The proposed team should include members who are fluent in Lao language and familiar with Lao governance systems and institutions.

9. Reporting requirements

The external evaluator will:

1. Develop an evaluation plan early on during the evaluation period, following the MFAT template, for review and agreement with TAF before commencing the evaluation.
2. Submit a comprehensive draft report, including:
 - Executive summary
 - Introduction
 - Methodology
 - Findings and analysis
 - Recommendations
 - Lessons learned
 - Appendices with supporting documents
3. Conduct feedback sessions with project staff and key stakeholders to incorporate their insights and perspectives into the final report.
4. Submit a finalized report incorporating feedback, providing a thorough and transparent account of the evaluation findings and recommendations.

10. Estimation of the cost

The estimated cost for the evaluation is between USD \$15,000 and \$21,000, covering personnel, travel, accommodation, and other associated expenses. The budget is indicative and subject to negotiation.

11. How to Apply

Interested candidates should submit their interest by October 11, 2024 through country.laos.general@asiafoundation.org. The interested candidates shall provide:

1. Technical Proposal (methodology, evaluation questions, tools, timeline, management, and data collection & analysis plans, etc.).
2. Financial Proposal in USD.
3. Profile of the team, with CVs of key members, along with a list of previous similar assignments and at least two references.

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