

Consultant for Proposal Development on ‘Promoting Better Education Services through Improved School Governance and Increased Social Accountability in Lao PRD’

I. Background

Aide et Action (AEA) is an international solidarity organization for development which was created in 1981, with its headquarters located in Geneva, Switzerland. It is present in 25 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Caribbean and Europe through its 110 projects, and contributes to the improvement of access to quality education for over 3 million children and adults. AEA started working in Southeast Asia in 2002, first in Cambodia, and later extended to Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and China through both partnerships and direct implementation with local stakeholders (NGOs, governments, and communities). AEA believes in the universal right to a quality education, and thus, bases its interventions around this ethos. Aide et Action in South East Asia focuses its approach on four main themes:

- Access and Quality of Education
- Early Childhood Care Education
- Education for Girls and Women
- Inclusive Education

The Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is a land-locked, ethnically diverse and mountainous country with an estimated population of 6.8 million. Only one-quarter of the country’s land area is considered cultivable. The country is divided into 17 provinces and Vientiane Capital, with 145 districts and 8,600 villages. The rural population is estimated at 68% in 2015. While Lao PDR has achieved the MDG Net Enrolment Rate target of 98% in 2013-14, primary education survival rate remains well below the target rate of 95%.

Poverty and isolation of communities cause children and adults to miss schooling or learning opportunities and other public services. Children from non-Lao-Tai ethnic groups living in rural and remote areas have the lowest rates of primary education. High dropout and low retention rates in early grades remain key challenges facing students in Laos. The quality of teaching and learning outcomes is inadequate and needs to be addressed by significantly improving teacher quality, teacher training programmes, and teacher distribution. Teachers must also reform their student evaluation methods and conduct regular evaluations, be able to identify exactly what a student is failing to grasp and what they are still unable to do, and must assist students in attaining their learning targets. Schools must understand and be able to disseminate the various policies for educational development and to promote the participation of all society in the education development process extensively and procedurally. To meet the National Education Quality Standard (EQS), school governance needs to be strengthened.

AEA with the Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES) has implemented various projects since 2006 to promote access and quality of education and early childhood care and education.

II. Purpose of the consultancy

The consultant will take the lead, in conjunction with AEA staff and other potential partners, in developing a compelling, evidence-based concept note and full proposal for submission to the European Union (EU)-current local call in Laos for proposal and other donors.

The consultant will bring to the project design process a thorough understanding of and prior experience in Laos education contexts and system. He/she will also have a background of demonstrated success in designing proposals for international, institutional donors, especially with the EU and preferably the proposal from Laos building the capacity of local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), good governance, school governance, and/or social accountability in education sector. Building upon this experience, the consultant will help develop the concept note and full proposal to (1) improve technical, operational and management capacities of Lao CSOs to promote better education services through improved school governance and social accountability to the most marginalised and vulnerable groups in Lao PDR; and (2) - improve technical, operational and management capacities of Lao CSOs in policy dialogue, and the promotion of participation, transparency and accountability.

This will require scoping, reviewing, analysing, and integrating existing plans, projects, and identifying local Lao CSOs to participate in the proposal. This will include in the areas related to civic society, building the capacity of small organization to (1) promote and provide improved access of disadvantaged populations to quality basic services in primary/lower secondary education activities to the most marginalised and vulnerable groups in Lao PDR; (2) enhance Lao CSOs capacity and actions to participate in and contribute to the policy dialogue and accountability processes at local and national level including monitoring and implementation in primary/lower secondary education in Lao PDR; and (3) increase documentation, sharing and dissemination of knowledge, experiences, networking among CSOs and/or interaction between CSOs in a local public policy related to the above mentioned issues.

But more importantly, the proposed concept and proposal address all requirements underlined in the EU Call for Proposal under Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities Development in Lao PDR with the call reference of EuropeAid/151225/DD/ACT/LA. The consultant is expected to rigorously read the detailed guidelines of the call with deep understanding and requirements before starting the work. The consultant will organize a series of consultations with our key staff and related stakeholders to review, analyse, and prioritize the activities for the project and work out the required budget to implement these activities.

III. Specific Tasks to be performed by the Consultant

The consultant will develop, in collaboration with AEA Senior management, a detailed work plan that will include undertaking the following tasks:

1. Review existing literature on school governance, related policies, social accountability, assessments/reports based on the secondary data analysis, identify gaps in implementation and primary data collection from the proposed areas. This should include reviewing and compiling relevant research, evidence from prior similar interventions, best practices, and lessons learned.
2. In line with the call guidelines; develop survey questionnaires and conduct the survey (field work). Finalise primary data collection tools and methodologies to assess school-level needs with regards to school governance and social accountability in primary and lower secondary level.

3. Review and analyse national, regional, and inter-governmental agreements on Democratic Development, Decentralisation and Deconcentration, and Social Accountability and relevant policy/advocacy recommendations.
4. Based on the primary and secondary information gathered, design a concept note and full project proposal (using the EU Concept Notes and proposal application formats), including logical framework (LFA), budget,

a. Outcomes of the Consultancy

- A completed, comprehensive concept note; proposal; and LFA for AEA that is based on the primary and secondary data findings/analysis meeting the EU call requirements and timeline. This should be developed through close working with AEA staff, especially with Laos Programme Director and Director of programmes for the region and key stakeholders as identified during the consultancy.

b. Lines of Communication

- The consultant will report to AEA's Laos Programme Director and will work closely with the Regional Director of Programmes and other key staff members.

c. Timeframe and budget

30 days (start from February, March, and April 2016) (please note the start/end date of the assignment may change due to unavoidable circumstances in which case a revised timeframe will be drawn up with the mutual agreement of both parties but the concept note must be finalised by 25 th March 2016). The total budget available from AEA for the entire assignment is US\$ 5,000 (excluding travelling related expenses which will be provided by AEA). The payment will be made by AEA to the consultant as indicated in the contract.

d. Qualifications and Experience

- Preferably an advanced university degree (masters or equivalent) in education, international relations, development studies, or a related field;
- Minimum 5 years of experience in the design, execution, and/or management of similar programs.
- Strong program design skills, including capacity to prepare logical, coherent, and consistent documents including logframes and budgets;
- Prior demonstrated success experience developing proposals for institutional donors, in particular the proposal from Laos to the EU;
- Ability to work efficiently and effectively with project members in various locations and from multiple organizations, including remotely writing and revising proposal documents;
- Ability to integrate different experiences, methodologies, and approaches from a diverse range of stakeholders, organizations, and technical experts from multiple sectors;
- Flexibility to adapt to any subsequent changes in the terms of reference;

- Willingness and ability to travel to the field to conduct assessments and gather primary data;
- Excellent English (Native preferred) speaking/writing skills required; prior experience of facilitating multi-stakeholders workshops and dialogues.

Note: This consultancy is open to individuals, group of individuals as well as consultancy firms having the requisite skills/ experience are eligible to apply. International applicants having prior work experience in Laos preferred. The above mentioned tasks to be performed are intended as a guide and should not be viewed as an inflexible specification as it may be modified following discussion with the selected consultant or firm.

AEA advertises this consultancy until 29th February 2016 and accepts the applicants on a rolling basis. If an acceptable candidate is identified, AEA may engage their services before the end of the advertisement period.

For this reason, interested applicants are advised to submit their applications as early as possible to our focal staff with e-mail addresses below. Applicants are also advised to include their writing sample and/or successful proposal to the previous EU call as Annex to their CVs.

Contact persons:

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