

INNOVATION DAYS – Experience grid

Name and function of the person who fills the grid: **Dow LUEXAXOUAYANG, Field Program Assistant**

1. Name/title of the innovation	Learning through play
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2. Context and issues

Small sparsely populated rural and remote communities, often populated by non Lao-Tai ethnic minority groups who do not speak the national language. Students score significantly lower learning outcomes in Lao language, mathematics, and other subjects than do their Lao-Tai peers. Classroom teaching/learning is limited to traditional school subjects taught in the Lao language. There is a need to support basic Lao language development as well as broader physical, social, and emotional development and creativity.

Currently, most schools are curricula base teaching in delivery the lessons and allow 20% for local curriculum to be added, however, not all teachers can follow the instructions. Many of them have little or no knowledge and time allocation to teach non-academic subjects. It is not taught in teacher education institutions. Therefore, many children have little confident, knowledge and skills in integrating to the society outside their villages. The Lao National Education Strategy highlights the important pillars to children resilience, education, and development.

Our mobile library embedded the concept of **‘learning through play’** that supports the development of early literacy and numeracy skills in an integrated approach, while also cultivating children social, emotional, physical, and creative skills. Our approach will be first introduced through the mobile library activities while we aim to support the teachers to develop extra-curricular to promote learning through play in and outside regular school hours.

We want to create space for children being active and involved in their learning. Children learn best through first-hand experiences. The purpose of play-active learning is that it motivates, stimulates, and supports children in their development of skills, concepts, language, acquisitions/communication skills and concentration. It also provides opportunities for children to develop positive attitudes and to demonstrate awareness/use of recent learning, skills, and competencies, and to consolidate learnings.

3. Type of innovation (tick the corresponding box)

Technological or practical innovation (tool, practice, technique, etc.)	
Institutional, organizational or methodological innovation (regarding processes, organizational models, relationships between stakeholders, project management, etc.)	✓
Political innovations (new policy measures, regulations, rules, etc.)	

4. Description of the innovation

This action is about providing children and youth with more holistic education and development experience than they typically receive in traditional classroom teaching/learning activities. Through play, it focused on physical, social, and emotional development and creativity. The play based learning approach promotes holistic development of children and youth, going beyond the bounds of the traditional classroom “academic” subjects. Reading folktales, role play (acting), games, quiz competition activities focus on broader physical, social, and emotional development and creativity. For example: After reading, children were asked to identify the key actors and repeated what those actors did or said; game passing ball between legs made children to work as team; Maths quiz; game feeding baby bird (passing a rubber band with a straw), fill-in water in a bottle, paper folding, drawing, singing, etc. – see photos in Annex

From the team's observation, the books in schools, it doesn't work, they just sit on the shelves gathering dust, and the books in the library are rarely read and rarely used. Probably the teacher did not have time to take children to read and the children cannot read on their own. So, the team is looking for ways to make and bring the books outside and organize games for children learn to read and read more and learn more. In addition, studying in the classroom and with the teacher.

In reading books, playing games and pretending, children develop memory, creativity, learn teamwork and cooperation, and develop social and communication skills. In listening to stories, discussing, and sometimes pretending and enacting stories, children develop their imagination, their ability to play together and cooperate, and their interest in reading and learning new things. They make up games and learn to make and follow rules together to achieve team goals.

The activities are usually conducted often within the school facilities or school grounds by village volunteers and AEA staff. Schedule is discussed and arranged with the school principal and village volunteer – normally after school hours (school extra-activity). Sometimes, volunteer conducts activity during school hours when the teacher absent. Today there are total 28 volunteers of 29 villages of the project targeted support – usually they are local community members (secondary school graduates), who can read and write in both Lao and communicate local ethnic language. Some volunteers have completed teacher education programs at teacher education institutions. All volunteers were trained basic skills how to conduct activities with children in different group age and were equipped with a set of materials, includes reading books, mats, paper, colors, glue, pencils, balls, baskets, etc. Each session, volunteers will offer children story books, read aloud to young children, organize learning games, sing song, drawing, storytelling, and often quizzing them on what they had learned.

5. Results/changes

Classroom Teachers observe improved active vocabulary, and increased interest and performance in curriculum-related activities. They have also observed heightened interest in schooling, participation in learning, and levels of performance school learning. Many teachers have also developed a more holistic view of school education and teaching/learning and apply learning games on their lessons.

Children experience physical, social, and emotional development and heightened creativity and language skills. They happily and eagerly engage in these activities, and that happiness and eagerness then transfers to more traditional school activities, leading to higher learning outcomes in traditional school subjects. One volunteer wrote: “I think this project is making the students love learning, helping them to read better, and helping them to include new vocabulary in their sentences.”

Parents observe their children’s greater interest in school and improved performance in school subjects.

Local school authorities observe higher school attendance rates, lower dropout rates, and higher transition rates from primary to lower and upper secondary school.

We, AEA, observe that children are often come to school, motivated to learn, better self-expression. The activity improves children's reading skills, answering questions, Moreover, communication skills, teamwork skills, increased self-confident and good manners. Children are able to write text, describe their own drawings and can imagine things through reading books, and telling stories. Some children discover their talents beyond teacher teaching.

6. Key elements to capitalize/document

Strengths:

- It takes child development beyond the school curriculum with a “whole child” approach to development.
- Village volunteers help to conduct activities more often and better communicating with children.
- The team learn from YouTube for new activities to play with children. Some example links: [10 GREAT DRAWING IDEAS WHEN YOU ARE BORING - YouTube](#) ; [Origami Kleid falten mit Papier - Basteln mit Kindern - Basteln Ideen: Origami Kleidung - Muttertag - YouTube](#)

Weaknesses:

- In some communities it is difficult to recruit local volunteers with the necessary language skills (Lao and the local language spoken by the children at home).
- The learning through play guidelines need to be improved and appropriated with different age cohorts.
- The team is quite young and has no training for conducting activities.

Lesson learned:

- The action relies on village volunteers to conduct activities, which they have very little training. Therefore, training needs to be arranged from time to time.
- Some volunteers left for their regular job or moved to another area and it takes a long time to recruit a replace one.
- Village volunteers may not continue after the project completed. Therefore, we shall engage with school teachers to arrange time and apply the play based learning with children.
- The team needs to explore more learning activities and to be more creative, especially basic sciences.
- Quality monitoring need to be strengthened.

Note: you can read an article for more information: <https://southeastasiaglobe.com/laos-education-covid/>

7. Who to contact for more information

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Annex: Innovation criteria grid:

Criteria: an innovation must be:		Yes/ No	Observations/analysis	Elements to capitalise/document
New in the context in which it takes place	The experience is new (the “novelty” aspect can refer to the geographical context, the scale, the theme/area of intervention, type of practice, etc.)	Yes	<p>The concept of learning through play is new in communities where “education” is generally understood primarily as classroom activities based on the traditional school subjects in the Lao language.</p> <p>Children are embarrassed. Children are reluctant to express themselves because they have never met strangers other than the people in the village and the teachers at school. This activity builds children’s courage, enabling them to learn to play and learn from friends and to show off to the team and others.</p>	<p>Happy and eager participation by children and youth, and interest and approval by school authorities, teachers, parents, and the community.</p> <p>Guidelines (draft), Team experiences, village volunteer engagement, and others source (YouTube) to learn new ideas.</p>
Useful with regards to the intended goal or to the problem to solve	The stakeholders of the territory are involved in the identification of the need/problem/issue, human-centered design is part of the design of the innovative solution, and in the implementation	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Education and Sport Bureau, Village, School, Community, Volunteer, Children were involved and approved the activities. • The volunteers we recruit was the local people who can communicate in ethnic languages that making children who cannot understand Lao language can communication in local language as well. So, people in the same area can give children more courage to express themselves. 	<p>Requirement village volunteer who has the basic knowledge, can speak lao language fluently and a person who love children and can play with children.</p> <p>Meeting schedule arrangement need to be discussed and agreed.</p>
	The experience brings new responses and added value to a need/problem/issue	Yes	For all stakeholders it helps broaden the understanding of children’s holistic development and the role of play in that development.	School Attendance Rates, Student Learning Outcomes, and increase life-skills from play based learning for children.

			Children relies their talents and develop social skills by themselves.	
	The experience has a positive impact, whether direct or indirect, to the development of the territory	Yes	<p>Medium- and long-term indirect impact will be seen on employment and social and economic development.</p> <p>Encourage new graduates and volunteer teachers to be involved. The relationships between teacher and children are better. Children get the knowledge outside their classrooms and having fun with learning, children like coming to school. So, children have more time to learn (Play game with friends)</p>	<p>New employees who have been involved in this project will be better able to understand and follow verbal and written instructions and to cooperate in team work and will show greater creativity.</p> <p>Children have authentic experiences from the play based learning activities.</p>
	The experience is a vector of autonomy/empowerment and social change for the stakeholders of the territory	Yes	<p>There are new the activities for both teacher and children for learning and to be technical for teacher. It can make good relationship between team, teachers, children, and communities as well. In the long-term children can contribute to the impact on social and economic development.</p>	To be examined/investigated
Sustainable	The experience brings a sustainable solution to the issue/problem, and builds community resilience to changes	Yes	<p>Participants in this project will tend to be more imaginative and creative and to collaborate well in teamwork, setting goals, strategies, and approaches against negative changes. Especially, reading is a best way for children to continue learning on their own, and village volunteers can help children learn and guide children do the activities.</p>	Communities participating in this project will be more likely to collaborate and find common grounds for solutions to changes that threaten the community.
	The experience is low cost	Yes	Low capital investment, for some playground equipment, some toys, and some books to read to the	Budget by expenditure category

			<p>children. Low labor costs with many volunteers. Materials can be reused many times such as ball, pen, pencil, and storybooks. And incentive for village volunteer \$32 per month (at least 8 times per month, it likes a part time job).</p>	<p>Guidelines can be developed and adjusted for the new context with minimal costs.</p>
	<p>The experience can easily be scaled up and/or inspire new projects on other territories</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Easy to scale up and/or inspire new projects because of low capital and labor costs. Volunteers act as facilitators between the team and the village or school. Teachers and student's parent say that since has the activities, children have become more excited about learning, coming to school, children have developed more and more in terms of reading the Lao language, calculating, asking questions, and more talking with friends, family, and teachers. DESB and village authority also agree with the activities.</p>	<p>As above</p>

Annex: Photos of Activities

Passing rubber band without hands



Read story for young ethnic children



Mud clay for children to create arts work



Traditional dance



Drawing



Words order

