



Citizen Engagement for Good Governance, Accountability and the Rule of Law (CEGGA)

Filling good governance in Lao PDR with life

A joint European-Lao Programme

The CEGGA programme is a joint initiative of the European Union, Germany, Switzerland and the Government of Lao PDR as part of the European Joint Programming in alignment with the National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2016-2020. The programme aims to strengthen Citizen Engagement, Good Governance, Accountability and the Rule of Law in Lao PDR. It was launched in 2017.

Programme Title	Citizen Engagement for Good Governance, Accountability and Rule of Law (CEGGA)
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Context

The Government of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic has made efforts in further strengthening good governance in recent years that aim for the country to be governed by the rule of law and democratic principles, gradually strengthening good governance.

Achievements made through constitutional amendments, new laws and decrees need to be filled with life, with parliamentarians and civil servants deepening their understanding of purpose and goals of the legal framework as well as of their own roles and tasks and with citizens being part of the development process and aware of their rights.

This is where the CEGGA Programme comes in.

Objective

The CEGGA Programme aims for a more inclusive national development process in Lao PDR, through the promotion of good governance, human rights and the rule of law in Lao PDR, as laid out in the Government’s policies and strategies.

Approach

The CEGGA Programme supports the Government and the National Assembly in their efforts to advance progress in three core areas: 1) strengthening civil society engagement, 2) strengthening core parliamentary functions, and 3) enhancing the implementation of the rule of law and human rights.

Strengthened civil society engagement: Over 150 CSOs are registered in Lao PDR and make an important contribution to the development of the country. Many are active in the social development sector, helping disadvantaged groups and promoting sustainable agricultural or environmental practices. In order to more effectively implement the wide range of their activities, CSOs wish to further strengthen their conceptual and management capacities as well as their research skills. The need for support is great. CEGGA enables registered CSOs to manage their projects more effectively through tailor-made training and coaching; promotes the exchange of experience and knowledge between organisations; and strengthens research skills to enable civil society to better contribute their knowledge to policy discussions. CEGGA also provides small grants so that CSOs can apply their new skills in practice and scale-up their engagement. Furthermore, CEGGA assists the Ministry of Home Affairs and other government agencies to implement an enabling legal framework for civil society engagement and to facilitate the registration of CSOs. CEGGA also provides support to foster dialogue between government and civil society, and to enhance public awareness of CSOs’ valuable contribution to sustainable development.



Training on international law and human rights for the teachers of the National Institute of Justice – Photo: @GIZ/Pamela Jawad

Good Governance Milestones in Lao PDR

2009: Decree 115 creates the framework for the registration and work of civil society organisations (CSOs). In the Legal Sector Master Plan (LSMP), the government outlines the steps for achieving the goal of developing Lao PDR into a state governed by the rule of law by 2020.

2012: The government introduces the 3-builds policy (*Sam Sang*), assigning broad roles to provinces as strategic units, districts as comprehensive planning units, and villages as development units.

2015: A constitutional amendment strengthens the powers of the National Assembly. Provincial People's Assemblies are established by Law and elected, for the first time, in 2016.

2017: Decree 238 replaces Decree 115, decentralising government responsibilities for the registration of CSOs and introducing annual re-registration requirements for CSOs.

2018: Decree 77 sets the framework for the provision of legal aid services for citizens.

Strengthened parliamentary functions of the National Assembly (NA) and Provincial People's Assemblies

PPAs: The NA is the highest constitutional body of Lao PDR and together with the 18 PPAs charged with representing constituents, deliberating and adopting legislation, and conducting government oversight at the national and provincial level respectively. In the most recent national and sub-national elections in 2016, 69% of parliamentarians have been elected for the first time and need to familiarize themselves with their new mandate. CEGGA supports the NA and PPAs in areas such as overseeing the handling of public funds and the implementation of laws by the government; formulating legislation that meets constitutional standards and citizens' needs; and consulting with citizens and other stakeholders in line with the legal framework. Among other things, this includes preparing parliamentarians for legislative debates with materials and information sessions, developing and practice-testing manuals on procedures, and conducting training for parliamentary staff.

Enhanced implementation of the rule of law and human rights

The legal framework for the rule of law in Lao PDR is evolving and the government is intensifying its efforts to close the gap between written law and legal reality. CEGGA cooperates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) with regard to facilitating the integration of international human rights obligations into the domestic legal framework. Furthermore, CEGGA supports the MoJ in improving an enabling legal and policy framework for the rule of law and access to justice, in strengthening the mediation of disputes at village level, and in expanding legal aid services to all 18 provinces so that citizens have access to legal information, legal advice, assistance in drawing up legal documents, and to representation by a lawyer in legal cases. CEGGA assists the National Institute of Justice in strengthening continuing and ad-hoc legal training for legal practitioners and civil servants in the justice sector.

Results

Decree 238 has been rolled-out by training 1,260 public officials in utilising standard operating procedures in all 18 provinces. 122 CSO representatives engaged in dialogue with public officials on practical experiences with this updated CSO regulatory framework. Furthermore, CEGGA awarded small grants to 37 CSOs for implementing sustainable development projects in five thematic areas and signed complementary learning agreements for tailored capacity development support. 12 of the CEGGA-funded CSO projects focus primarily on working with women or with vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities. Generally, gender and inclusiveness considerations are mainstreamed throughout all levels of the CSO project cycle. In order to further strengthen local CSO coordination for engagement in dialogue with the Government and others, and for organising public awareness-raising events, like the CSO Fair, cooperation with the Lao Civil Society Coordination Committee (LCCC) has been established.

The broadscale transfer of knowhow and experiences from the NA to all 18 PPAs has yielded "quick wins". PPAs have followed-up with concerned authorities regarding people's issues raised in more than 800 petitions, more than 500 hotline calls, and more than 24 public hearings since the start of CEGGA. The first-ever country-wide PPA operational assessment, conducted in 2019, informs tailored capacity development approaches that are ongoing. CEGGA cooperated with the Women Parliamentarian Caucus to empower 46 female PPA members in strategic gender awareness-raising approaches, 130 female PPA members in advocacy on CEDAW, human trafficking, labour conditions of female workers, supported the NA and the Lao Women's Union with conducting public consultations on the now-adopted Law on Gender Equality, and contributed to preparing NA members for deliberations in Session by providing technical inputs on selected legislative topics, such as administrative courts and state compensation.

CEGGA comparative research with seven country case studies on rule of law practices were discussed at a high-level national rule of law conference to inform the process of developing a national strategy. More than 380 public officials gained knowledge and understanding of international human rights commitments, with CEGGA assistance.

About GIZ Laos

GIZ, as part of German Development Cooperation, has been active in Lao PDR since 1993 and is currently supporting numerous projects in two priority areas: sustainable economic development and rural development in poor regions. Moreover, GIZ Laos engages in good governance and participates in regional programmes, for example with the Mekong River Commission and ASEAN.

Please visit www.giz.de/laos for further information for GIZ's work in Laos and worldwide.

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