

# GENDER EQUALITY & DISABILITY INCLUSION

## WHAT



The *DFAT Development for All Strategy (2015)* and *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy (2016)* recognise that both **Gender Equality** and **Disability Inclusion** are two priorities of Australian aid investments globally.

In Lao PDR, Australian aid investments have been achieving progress towards Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion.<sup>1</sup> These include:

- ▶ The Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR Program (BEQUAL)
- ▶ The Laos Australia Institute (LAI)
- ▶ The Making Access to Finance More Inclusive for Poor People Program (MAFIPP)
- ▶ The Access to Finance for the Poor Program (AFP)
- ▶ The Trade Development Facility II (TDF II)
- ▶ The Greater Mekong Water Resources Program (GMWRP)
- ▶ The Human Rights Technical Co-operation Program (HRTCP)
- ▶ The Laos Australia Development Learning Facility (LADLF)
- ▶ The Standing Up Speaking Out Program (SUSO)

In Lao PDR, Australian aid investments promote Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion at 3 levels;

1



At the **INDIVIDUAL LEVEL** they support women, men and people with a disability to have equality in access to services and to participate in activities and decisions that affect their lives. For example, work undertaken by GMWRP, LAI, TDF II, AFP and MAFIPP ensure women have agency in decisions about water resource management, higher education, access to credit and financial management.

2



At the **COLLECTIVE LEVEL** they work with groups, organisations and communities to strengthen their capacity to be responsive to the rights and needs of girls, women and people with a disability. Through their work with local organisations and groups, BEQUAL, LAI, SUSO and GMWRP all contribute to better access to services for girls, women and people with a disability.

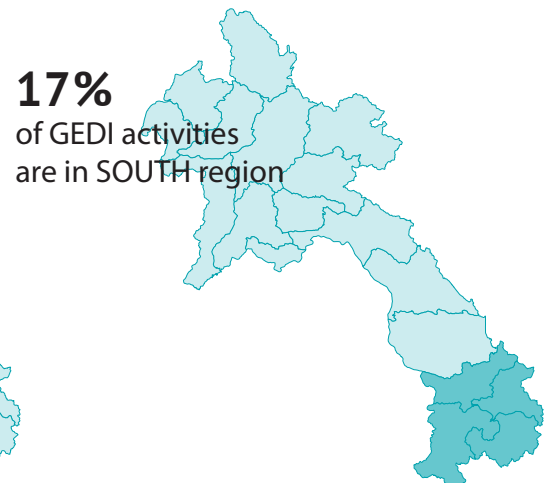
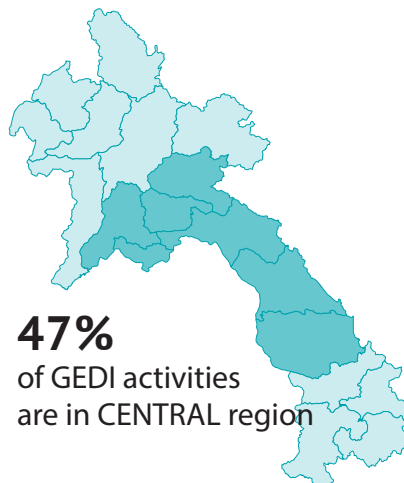
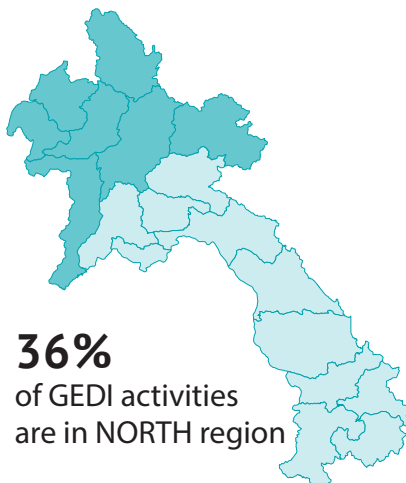
3



At the **ENVIRONMENT LEVEL** they influence the legislative and regulatory space by working with key institutions to adopt principles of equality, rights and inclusion. Under BEQUAL, GMWRP and LAI, Australian aid is improving human resource management and service delivery policies and standards.

## WHERE

Australia is implementing activities that improve Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion (GEDI) across Lao PDR. In 2016-17, a majority of activities took place in the central and northern regions.<sup>2</sup>



1. Figures and activities are sourced from implementing agency reports for the period Jan 2015 – Dec 2017

2. 'Activities' refer to sets of coherent interventions used to achieve an objective or outcome.

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## HOW



### INDIVIDUAL



### COLLECTIVE



### ENVIRONMENT



### AWARENESS

These activities bring attention to and increase knowledge gender and disability, promoting messages of equality and inclusion.

Women have more information about financial services to manage their money, save and access credit. **15,237 people have received information about financial literacy through the AFP. 53% of beneficiaries are women.**

Challenging gender and disability stereotypes in children's story books has resulted in improved reading materials for primary school students. BEQUAL collaborated with the Lao Gender Development Association and MoES to conduct a review of 388 books and made recommendations for **improving the representation of gender roles, people with a disability and ethnic minorities** in primary school reading materials.

A **community-based campaign to raise awareness about gender based violence** was successfully implemented in phase 1 of the Standing Up Speaking Out pilot. Phase 2 will build on this success by focusing on change agents and increasing coverage of the campaign to other parts of the country.



### ACCESS

These activities target, improve or facilitate accessibility to services or resources.

Australian aid is contributing to an inclusive private sector. TDF II is promoting diversification and competition with 34% of the **Business Assistance grants awarded to small and medium enterprises owned by women**. 60,008 village bank members reached by AFP, 53% are women. In the MAFIPP, 56% of digital finance users are women (4,319).

Increased financial inclusion of women is achieved through strengthening of financial service providers. The MAFIPP has supported banks in Lao PDR to **increase access to banking services** by female consumers through an agent network that builds customer relationships. Female banking agents out perform male agents in recruiting female and male customers. Currently an average of **61% of borrowers and savers in formal banking are women**.

Recognition of gender and disability in policy frameworks will ensure equality and inclusion are socialized into institutions. BEQUAL in partnership with MoES developed an **Inclusive Education Strategy and Action Plan** that will support improved access to education by girls and children with a disability.



### PARTICIPATION

These activities encourage groups or individuals to become active or involved in their own development.

**161 (52%) women have enhanced their skills for employment** by completing a university qualification through LAI since 2015. With their qualifications **many alumni are participating in the labour market** by working in the private sector, civil service and non-profit sector.

Institutional partnerships will create a supportive pathway for people with a disability to participate in higher education. LAI is bringing together disability services, the National University of Lao PDR and university lecturers to **enable 15 students with a disability to participate in learning activities**.

Improved facilities in primary schools will encourage participation of girls, boys and children with a disability. **BEQUAL collaborated with education services at the province, district and village levels to repair 389 schools.**

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## HOW



### INDIVIDUAL



### COLLECTIVE



### ENVIRONMENT



### CAPACITY

These activities focus on capacity by developing skills, abilities and processes.

28 people (7 females) with a disability and 7 people working in the disability sector are **developing their knowledge and skills for employment** by completing a university degree and English course offered by LAI.

Communities mobilized to support girls and boys to read will improve literacy. BEQUAL has **trained 313 community volunteers of this, 116 (37%) are females** who will promote reading to children and parents in their villages.

LAI in partnership with MoHA developed a **National HR Strategy**. The Strategy will result in a review and plan to improve civil service management and performance, including greater emphasis on inclusive workplace policies and practices.



### INSTITUTIONAL

These activities engage informal, private or public organisations involved in policy making, regulation and enforcement.

**GMWRP is improving the capacity and representation of women in hydropower project consultations, planning and implementation.** The Oxfam Inclusion project has supported civil society organisations, hydropower companies and government partners to integrate gender elements into their policies and procedures. Oxfam is also mobilising women living on Don Sahong Island in Champasak province to strengthen their knowledge and advocate for improved fisheries management.

Improving financial inclusion for all households, particularly those who are disadvantaged, will contribute to poverty alleviation. **MAFIPP supported the development of a national Financial Inclusion Road Map for the Government of Lao PDR.** The AFP has successfully **built 3 microfinance institutions** to provide technical support, financial services and supervision to 244 village banks.

## WHO



Please visit the Laos Australia Development Learning Facility's website ([www.ladlf.org/stories-of-impact](http://www.ladlf.org/stories-of-impact)) for more information on a collection of beneficiary stories across the Aid Investment Plan in Lao PDR.



**SMART Kids:**  
Encouraging Girls  
to Save Money  
(MAFIPP, 2015)



**Garment Skills  
Training Center**  
Case Study  
(TDF II, 2016)



**BCEL's Community  
Money Express**  
(MAFIPP, 2017)



**The Women's Leadership  
Fellowship program**  
(LAI, 2017)



**The Disability Inclusive  
Development English**  
program (LAI, 2017)