



Strengthening core parliamentary functions of Provincial People’s Assemblies

Citizen Engagement for Good Governance, Accountability and Rule of Law

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.

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Context

Provincial Peoples’ Assemblies (PPAs) were introduced to the governance system of each of the 17 provinces as well as the Capital Vientiane of Lao PDR in 2016; their members were elected for the first time in March 2016, several of them with double mandates as members of the National Assembly (NA) and the PPA. PPAs constitute representative state bodies closest to the citizens. The core mandate of the PPAs is to (1) represent the people of the province with a view to their rights and interests; (2) initiate, deliberate and adopt provincial legislation; and (3) oversee the work and performance of the provincial authorities, including with regard to the provincial budget, public spending, public investments, civil service, and Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP). In exercising this mandate, PPAs engage with provincial and district stakeholders and their constituents.

With support from international Development Partners, especially through one Component of the CEGGA Programme, PPAs have become operational. They have completed their first legislature 2016-2020 and entered their second legislature with 492 PPA members who have been elected in February 2021. Further capacity development

efforts and clarification of their mandate, also vis-à-vis provincial stakeholders, are needed to consolidate the PPAs’ role as representative, legislative and oversight body in the provincial governance structure.

In order to assist PPAs on this path and to further strengthen PPAs in their representative, legislative and oversight functions, the CEGGA Programme provides GIZ technical cooperation services for further developing PPA capacities at the individual, organisational, cooperation, and framework level. The NA, PPAs and GIZ cooperate to jointly achieve the following results:

- (1) PPAs have further developed systems and practices for regular public consultation, transparency and accountability, for instance through the development and application of innovative tools for public engagement that help PPAs get feedback from citizens and stakeholders for consideration and deliberation in their decision-making;
- (2) Information resources for PPA legislative decision-making have improved, for instance through access to user-friendly socio-economic data resources;
- (3) PPAs have been enabled to play an enhanced role in the oversight of the provincial public budget and spending, for instance through dedicated training measures and orientation aimed at improving PPA staff’s knowhow for reviewing budget oversight-related information.

Milestones of PPAs in Lao PDR

- 2015: With the Law on PPAs and the Law on PPA Elections, PPAs are introduced to the governance system of Lao PDR.
- 2016: PPA members are elected in March 2016.
- 2020: The Laws on PPAs and on PPA Elections are amended.
- 2021: On February 21st, 492 members are elected to the second PPA legislature.

Organizational Structure of PPAs

PPAs have the following institutional structure:

- 1. one Chairperson and two Deputy Chairpersons;
- 3. Standing Committee consisting of the PPA Chairperson, the two Deputy Chairpersons, the Chairpersons of the three PPA Committees and the Secretary General;
- 4. three Committees with one Chairperson, two Deputy Chairperson and members: (1) Justice, Defence and Public

Security; (2) Social, Cultural and Ethnic Affairs; (3) Economic, Planning and Finance;

5. Secretary General with two Deputies who oversee all administrative and financial matters of the PPA.



Negotiation processes at local level – Illustration: @Village Focus International (VFI)/Life Project

PPA Sessions

According to Art. 56 of the amended PPA Law No. 11/NA dated 14.11.2016, there are three types of PPA sessions: (1) Opening Session, which is the first of the Ordinary Session; (2) Ordinary Session, and (3) Extraordinary Session.

The PPA Opening Session is convened no later than thirty days after the NA Opening Session (Art. 57) and is guided by the PPA Chairperson of the previous legislature until the new PPA Chairperson is elected based on the previous PPA Standing Committee's proposal.

The PPA Ordinary Session convenes twice a year after the NA Ordinary Session (Art. 58) to consider and approve (bi)annual provincial government reports on SEDP implementation and the provincial state budget, the annual SEDP and budget plans for the next year, the annual accounting report on the implementation of the provincial state budget of the previous year, the provincial Chief of the Supreme Prosecutor's and the People's Supreme Court's (bi)annual report and plan, initiation or adjustment of provincial legislation, new laws and amended laws, as well as other issues of provincial concern (Art. 59, 60).

Extraordinary Sessions of the PPAs may be convened between the two Ordinary Sessions per year to consider and decide on important and necessary issues upon the determination of the PPA's Standing Committee or on the recommendation of the Provincial Governor / the Mayor of the Capital or at least one-fourth of the total number of the PPA's Members.

PPA Functions

In cooperation with the CEGGA programme, PPA public engagement and legislative operations during their first legislature have been assessed in 2020. The assessment was designed to gain insights that inform further efforts to: (1) efficiently support PPA strategic initiatives; and (2) enhance PPA constitutional mandate.

Public Engagement: The CEGGA-supported 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. All 18 PPA, on average, held two **public hearings** per year to engage, share information with and receive feedback from constituents as well as to help resolve issues. The **hotlines** are considered a convenient means for constituents to voice their concerns, mainly during the Ordinary Sessions. **Petitions** are usually received through petition forms. Key issues raised relate to development projects, land conflicts, and livelihood issues. All PPA respondents consider **public consultations** "useful" or "very useful" to enhance the parliamentary oversight mandate towards the provincial executive and, especially, to improve legislation.

Legislation: In 2019, PPAs drafted a total of 136 pieces of legislation (an average of 8 pieces per province), most commonly dealing with social development, investment projects, internal PPA matters, environmental issues, land and buildings. The most frequently-mentioned challenges in drafting regulations are a limited understanding of the regulation-drafting process in the absence of harmonised guiding materials.

PPAs would see added value in a stronger support system, the provision of clear and practice-oriented orientation materials on various parliamentary processes, including those to analyse, follow-up on and address issues raised by constituents. The assessment findings also show that terminology needs further clarification (e.g. public hearing versus public consultation). The ongoing development of complementary public engagement tools is expected to further strengthen PPAs' parliamentary processes.

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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