



# Working better together for good governance

## Team Europe flagship programme with Lao PDR

### Citizen Engagement for Good Governance, Accountability and Rule of Law (CEGGA) in Lao PDR

#### European-Lao Flagship Programme

The CEGGA Programme is a joint initiative of three Team Europe partners—the EU, Germany, and Switzerland—with the Government of Lao PDR. It is part of the European Joint Programming in alignment with the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) and has been the first Team Europe flagship programme in Lao PDR. With Germany's implementing agency, *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH* (GIZ), a European member state organisation was commissioned with implementing the CEGGA programme on behalf of Team Europe. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) was assigned to act as executing agency on behalf of Lao PDR. This European-Lao flagship programme aims to contribute to good governance, rule of law and human rights, i.e. Specific Objective 6 of the Team Europe Strategy, and to improved public governance and a society that is equal, fair, and protected by the rule of law, that is Outcome 6 of the 9th NSED 2021-2025.

<b>Project name</b>	Citizen Engagement for Good Governance, Accountability and Rule of Law (CEGGA)
<b>Partner country</b>	Lao PDR
<b>Volume</b>	30 Mio. EUR (Phase I: 19.5 Mio. EUR; Phase II: 10.5 Mio. EUR)
<b>Duration</b>	January 2017 to October 2025 (Phase II: 11/22-10/25)
<b>Co-funded by</b>	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ); European Union (EU)
<b>Implementing partner</b>	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
<b>Programme partners</b>	Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA); Ministry of Justice (MoJ); National Assembly (NA); Provinces of Khammouane and Luang Prabang (Provincial Governor's Offices; Provincial Departments of Home Affairs and of Justice; Provincial People's Assemblies); Lao Civil Society Coordination Committee (LCCC)
<b>Envisaged outcome</b>	Citizen-state interaction is enhanced for inclusive national development.

## General Context

The Government of the Lao PDR has made efforts in further strengthening good governance. These aim for the country to be governed by the rule of law and democratic principles. Achievements made through constitutional amendments, new laws and decrees shall be filled with life: with citizens and civil society aware of their rights and being part of the development process in dialogue with state actors; with parliamentarians and civil servants aware of their roles and enhancing their interaction with and orientation towards citizens to ensure an inclusive and sustainable national development. This is where CEGGA comes in. It started in 2017; phase II was kicked-off in 11/2022.

## Approach and Activities

The initial phase (2017-2022) of the CEGGA Programme had been designed with broad and largescale objectives, allowing for a variety of entry points for Team Europe partners' dialogue and cooperation with Laos around human rights, rule of law, good governance, accountability, and citizen engagement. To increase citizen engagement in national development, CEGGA aimed at an improved enabling environment and operational capacities of civil society, at strengthened core parliamentary functions of citizen representation, legislation-making, and holding the state accountable at central and provincial level, as well as at enhanced implementation of international human rights obligations and the rule of law.

GIZ utilises a variety of technical cooperation instruments and modalities for developing partner capacities at the individual, organisational and societal (cooperation and system) levels, including training, organisational development support, logistical support, facilitation of multistakeholder dialogue, fostering institutional partnerships, advisory services, and provision of grants. Key cooperation partners of CEGGA are Bridges Across Borders South-East Asia Clinical Legal Education (BABSEACLE), the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University Bern, Cord, Helvetas, and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD).

With the objective of improving the interaction between citizens and the state for an inclusive national development, phase II of the CEGGA Programme (2022-2025) shall contribute to two out of three priorities of the Team Europe Strategy for Laos: to promote good governance, human rights, and the rule of law, and to partially contribute to the Green Team Europe Initiative as green catalyser through the provision of small grants to local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as well as to showcase innovative good governance practices in the area of environment and sustainable management of natural resources, including forestry and climate change. Three outputs contribute to the CEGGA II objective through technical cooperation with partners at central level and in the two provinces of Khammouane and Luang Prabang:

- (1) The dialogue between CSOs and state institutions is improved in quantity and quality.
- (2) The National Assembly and Provincial People's Assemblies apply citizen-oriented procedures.
- (3) Citizens' access to justice is improved.



## 1. Improved CSO-State Dialogue

CSOs make important contributions to inclusive development. Many are active in social sectors, helping disadvantaged groups and promoting sustainable agricultural or environmental practices.

GIZ assisted MoHA and other government agencies to implement an enabling legal framework for civil society engagement and to facilitate the registration of CSOs. A database and website with information on the registration process was set-up. Decree 238 on Non-Profit Associations was rolled-out by training >1,400 public officials in all 18 provinces in utilising standard operating procedures for processing CSO registrations. This training was complemented by fostering an improved mutual understanding of roles and of challenges with implementation in five regional and provincial forums for dialogue between hundreds of CSO representatives and public officials on practical experiences with the CSO regulatory framework. As a result, the registration time for CSOs was reduced from 595 working days in 2018 to 151 days in 2022.

CEGGA cooperates with the Lao Civil Society Coordination Committee (LCCC) for further strengthening local CSO coordination for engagement in dialogue with the State and others, and for organising public awareness-raising events, like the CSO Fair. GIZ supported four Annual Meetings of Lao CSOs and the Government between 2017 and 2022, facilitating the introduction of a new innovative approach, resulting in LCCC-Government co-organised and more interactive Annual Meetings. With GIZ support, the 5-year action plan of CSOs was developed and CSO sector working groups were established. In collaboration with others, CEGGA enabled Lao CSO participation in the Roundtable Meeting on NSEDP implementation and the ASEAN People's Forum.

Until 2022, CEGGA awarded small grants to 37 local CSOs for implementing 35 sustainable development projects in five thematic areas and four cross-cutting themes plus one Covid-19 response project that was



jointly implemented by three CSOs. Generally, gender and social inclusion are mainstreamed throughout all levels of the CSO project cycle. 12 of the CEGGA-funded CSO projects focused primarily on working with women or with vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities. More than 350 people have benefitted from more than 40 tailored training events and periodic learning circles for peer exchange. Supported CSOs show significantly improved organisational development. Their small grants projects have reached local communities in more than 200 villages across 15 provinces and created tangible benefits for more than 5,000 women, 2,000 ethnic people, 200 LGBTIQ people, and 100 persons with disabilities. To foster the understanding of civil society's valuable role, CSOs showcased their contribution to good governance and sustainable development in two national and three sub-national events.

In phase II of CEGGA, the number of CSOs that contribute to multi-stakeholder dialogue shall grow. Thanks to grant and capacity development support, the number of implemented CSO projects contributing to inclusive socio-economic development and generating experiences and insights for policy dialogue, of technical/qualitative inputs on environmental issues, gender equality, and inclusion of vulnerable groups of supported CSOs to meetings between CSOs and state institutions, and of meetings per year between CSOs and state institutions shall increase. In May 2023, CEGGA small grants were awarded to 22 new projects on the five priority topics implemented by 23 CSOs in eleven provinces.

## 2. Citizen-oriented NA/PPA Processes

The National Assembly (NA) is the highest constitutional body of Lao PDR and, together with the 18 Provincial People's Assemblies (PPAs), charged with representing constituents, adopting legislation, and overseeing government. Between 2017 and 2022, GIZ has supported the NA and PPAs with more than 180 capacity development activities in areas such as overseeing the handling of public funds and the implementation of laws; formulating legislation that meets citizens' needs; and consulting with citizens and other stakeholders.



Public hearing – Photo: @National Assembly/Media Department

CEGGA was the first initiative supporting all 18 PPAs country wide. The first-ever country-wide PPA operational assessment has informed strategic

considerations as well as tailored capacity development approaches. The broadscale transfer of knowhow and experiences from the NA to all 18 PPAs has yielded “quick wins” and helped PPAs to become fully operational in their first legislature. A public engagement toolkit (PET) introduced innovative procedures for public hearings, oversight and petition-handling that were practice-tested in two provinces and institutionalised for country-wide utilisation. CEGGA support to the PPA petition system resulted in an increase from no petitions at PPA level in 2018 to more than 1,300 petitions being handled by PPAs in 2022 and in PPAs resolving more than 60% of the issues raised by citizens. At the NA level, CEGGA supported the development of a digital petition management system. 1,450 PPA members and staff were trained in overseeing the budget and implementation of the development plans, with 81% of participants scoring  $\geq 80\%$  in post-training tests.

CEGGA contributed to preparing NA members for parliamentary debate by providing technical inputs on selected legislative topics, such as administrative courts, state compensation, petitions, consideration of criteria for approving megaprojects. In cooperation with the Women Parliamentarian Caucus, 46 PPA women members were empowered in gender awareness-raising approaches, 130 PPA women members in advocacy on CEDAW, human trafficking, and labour conditions of women. CEGGA supported the NA and the Lao Women's Union in conducting public consultations on the Law on Gender Equality, and provided technical inputs for finalising the NA budget oversight manual with gender equity-oriented principles, and introduced methodology for post-legislative scrutiny.

In phase II, selected NA Committees shall utilise existing mechanisms for demand-oriented information resources to seek inputs on focus topics from experts, supported CSOs, and provincial showcases. The number of draft legislations deliberated during NA Ordinary Sessions to which CEGGA inputs on gender and social inclusion have been provided shall increase. The operational guide for post-legislative scrutiny shall be applied in an additional legislative process of the NA. Partner PPAs will follow-through more issues raised by citizens through public engagement by having received training for effectively utilising the toolkit in a gender-responsive manner. More PPA women members and staff in partner provinces shall perceive their role positively.



Legal Aid Heroes: CEGGA utilises colourful animations to make legal information accessible to large audiences in an easy-to-understand and engaging manner – Photo: ©GIZ

### 3. Citizens' Access to Justice

Regarding the integration of international human rights obligations into the domestic legal framework, GIZ cooperated with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice (MoFA, MoJ) in producing and sharing five gap analyses with state agencies to ensure coherence. CEGGA supported six side events to the EU-Laos Human Rights Dialogue. More than 80% of 325 trained parliamentarians demonstrated their knowledge of human rights in post-training tests.

With a view to improving an enabling legal and policy framework for the rule of law and access to justice, CEGGA provided technical expertise on various draft laws and decrees, such as State Compensation, Public Administration, Law-Making, Law Dissemination and Legal Aid, and community-friendly materials were disseminated to all districts. Comparative research resulted in case studies on rule of law practices in nine countries that were discussed among 200 policymakers in a national conference. A learning module was developed with the National Academy for Politics and Public Administration (NAPPA) and trainers from all provinces were trained accordingly. 76% of 79 trained teachers at the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) demonstrated improved practice-oriented teaching skills. 5,600

participants benefitted from interactive methods utilised in 75 capacity development events in support of Clinical Legal Education (CLE). A strategy on gender-responsive village mediation was developed and 59 trainers from all provinces were trained.

In phase II, the number of citizens who received legal aid in selected partner provinces, the number of public officials and members of the NA and PPAs in the partner provinces who are aware of rule of law development methodologies in public administration as a principle for access to justice, the percentage of CLE students of the NIJ who are able to provide a concrete example of where they provided assistance to citizens on gender-related legal issues, and the number of citizens who received legal information from legal aid offices at district and provincial level in the partner provinces will increase.

#### About GIZ Laos

GIZ, as part of German Development Cooperation, has been active in Laos since 1993, mainly on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Currently, GIZ is implementing numerous projects in three core areas: a) rural development, b) conservation of nature and natural resources and c) sustainable economic development.

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