

Summary of the Terminal Evaluation

I. Outline of the Project	
Country: Lao People's Democratic Republic	Project: Lao-Japan Human Resource Cooperation Center Project
Sector: Other	Cooperation scheme: Technical cooperation project
Division in charge: Japan Center Team, Social Development Department	Cooperation amount (at the time of evaluation): About 460,513,000 yen
Period of cooperation	(R/D): Sep. 1, 2000 to Aug. 31, 2005
	Partner country's implementing organization: Ministry of Education, National University of Laos
	Supporting organization in Japan: The Japan Foundation
Other related cooperation: Grant Aid	
<p>1-1 Background to and outline of the cooperation</p> <p>Laos has been carrying out economic reforms for the transition to a market economy since 1986. Thus, the development of human resources for these economic reforms has become an important issue. As a part of the development of human resources, the National University of Laos was established with the support of the Asian Development Bank in 1995. At the same time, the Faculty of Economics and Business Management was also established in the university. However, because the Asian Development Bank's support project ended in September 2001, Laos requested technical cooperation from Japan.</p> <p>On the other hand, as a part of the support for the development of human resources to countries in transition to a market economy, Japan planned the establishment of Lao-Japan Center in Laos and presented the plan to Laos in July 1998. As a result, both countries agreed that Japan would provide support for the Faculty of Economics and Business Management of the National University of Laos and cooperation in the establishment of the Lao-Japan Center as a technical cooperation project. Japan signed the Record of Discussions (R/D) on July 6, 2000, and started the five-year technical cooperation project on September 1, 2000. Although the Lao-Japan Human Resource Cooperation Center (hereinafter referred to as the "LJC") Project and the support for the Faculty of Economics and Business Management of the National University of Laos were managed as a single project in the first four years, both were managed separately from 2004 because the activities of each of them was expanded.</p> <p>1-2 Contents of the cooperation</p> <p>(1) Overall goal</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">(a) The Center will perform the core function of human resource development in the field of business area for market-oriented economic reform of Lao P.D.R.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">(b) The Center will be utilized as the key place for mutual understanding between the people in Lao P.D.R and Japan.</p> <p>(2) Project goal</p>	

- (a) The Center provides services to enhance human resource development for the market-oriented economic reform of Lao P.D.R.
 - (b) The information and the opportunities to participate in activities for mutual understanding are provided for people of both countries by the Center.
- (3) Outputs
- (a) The LJC's management system will be established and the Center will be managed smoothly.
 - (b) The LJC's business courses will provide practical knowledge on the market economy to business people in Lao P.D.R.
 - (c) Japanese courses will be developed and managed according to the Lao society's needs.
 - (d) The LJC's computer courses will be smoothly managed and carried out.
 - (e) Cultural exchange programs between both countries will be smoothly managed and carried out.
 - (f) Information on Japan, Lao P.D.R., and other countries will be available at the Center.
 - (g) The Center will be actively used for educational activities.
- (4) Inputs (at the time of evaluation)
- (a) Japanese side:
 - Dispatch of long-term experts: 9 experts
 - Dispatch of short-term experts: 29 experts
 - Training in Japan: 20 participants
 - Training in third countries: 1 participant (Thailand)
 - Provision of equipment: 17 million yen
 - Sharing of local operating costs: 108 million yen
 - (b) Lao side:
 - Placement of counterparts: 9 counterparts
 - Staff employed by the LJC: 27 staff members
 - Provision of land and facilities: site for the LJC and a parking lot
 - Operating costs: utility and communication costs

II. Outline of the evaluation team

Team members	Team Leaders: Mr. Senya MORI, Resident Representative of the JICA Office in Laos Business Course Evaluation: Mr. Masaaki HANAI, Senior Advisor of the JICA Research Institute Japanese Language Course Evaluation: Mr. Motoki KOBAYASHI, Professor of the International Student Center of Kagoshima University, Technical Advosor of JOCV Japanese Language Education: Ms. Hiroko Tsuka, Dispatch and Support Division, Japanese-Language Department, The Japan Foundation Evaluation Analysis: Mr. Isao DOJUN, Chuo Kaihatsu Corporation Cooperation Planning: Mr. Shingo MORIHATA, Japan Center Team, First Group of the JICA Social Development Department	
Period of	Jan. 31 to Feb. 24, 2005	Type of evaluation: Terminal

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III. Outline of the evaluation results

3-1 Confirmation of the achievements

Under this Project, 9 long-term experts and 29 short-term experts were dispatched over the five years to design business courses and Japanese language courses according to local needs and provide the counterparts with guidance concerning the management of the courses. They also secured and trained local lecturers and established the foundation for the LJC Project implementation system. From September 2001, short-term business courses were held 11 times (once every four months) to teach members of the society about business in general, drawing 1,234 participants in total over about four years. As planned initially, local lecturers (teachers from the Faculty of Economics and Business Management) took charge in all the subjects (16 subjects in total: 8 basic subjects and 8 advanced subjects), except for special seminars by Japanese short-term expert lecturers. Texts in the Lao language were prepared for all the subjects. Moreover, the courses were managed mainly by the LJC staff members (2 counterparts) who received technical transfer from Japanese experts. In this way, progress was shown in the localization of the management of the business courses. With regard to the Japanese language courses, the LJC copyrighted and published “Japanese for Everyone,” a text in the Lao language. Using the text, the LJC provided Japanese language courses 11 times (once every three months) with the participation of 2,618 persons in total over about 4 years. *Minna-no-nihongo* (Japanese for Everyone) has been used also by Japanese language schools in Vientiane. According to the results of a questionnaire survey conducted in 2004, more than 75% of the business course participants answered that the courses were useful for their work, and about 80% of the Japanese course participants answered that the courses were very helpful for their business and life. In addition, the library, the media room, the study room, and other LJC facilities have been frequently used mainly by students of the National University of Laos. The number of daily visitors to the LJC is 200 on average. The LJC’s computer courses are provided to officials of the Lao Government and students of the National University of Laos. A total of 834 officials and students participated in its computer courses in the past two years. The LJC’s computer courses have played a certain role in the improvement of IT skills. In addition, a total of 3,670 persons participated in mutual understanding programs (such as events in which the LJC introduces Japanese culture to Lao people), which have been held almost every month.

As planned initially, this Project achieved the goal of the LJC playing an important role in the development of human resources in Laos. However, with regard to the other goal of the “promotion of mutual understanding between the people of both countries,” although the Lao people’s understanding of Japan has been promoted through various events for the introduction of culture, the achievement of the goal was limited mainly because most of the events were held for students of the National University of Laos and because efforts have been insufficient to promote Japanese people’s understanding of Laos.

3-2 Summary of the evaluation results

(1) Relevance

The project goals and the overall goals are consistent with the main goals specified in the National Social and Economic Development Plan (2001-2005) of Laos – ensuring sustainable economic growth and promoting the development of human resources in all sectors. They are also in accordance with Japan’s aid policy. Moreover, there is a great need for the LJC’s

activities, and the size of the target group is judged to be appropriate. Therefore, this Project is highly relevant.

(2) Effectiveness

It can be said that the LJC has been playing an important role in the development of human resources through its business courses, Japanese language courses, and computer courses. The LJC has been carrying out mutual understanding programs in cooperation with various organizations to accept participants from a wider range of fields. However, many participants in mutual understanding programs are students of the National University of Laos because there is no Japanese expert in charge of the programs and there is only a limited space for the programs. Many people visit the LJC to obtain information by using the media room. While the first project goal (playing an important role in the development of human resources) can be evaluated as highly effective, the efforts for the second project goal (promotion of mutual understanding between the people of both countries) should be expanded and strengthened further, although a certain level of effectiveness has been secured.

(3) Efficiency

The inputs from the Japanese side into this Project were insufficient concerning the dispatch of experts for mutual understanding programs and the provision of training in Japan to the counterparts in the LJC's management department. However, the other inputs were carried out almost according to plan within the project period. In addition, nine full-time counterparts were placed in the LJC to be engaged in the management of the facilities and the courses, and the other inputs from the Laos side were carried out according to plan. As a result, the Lao staff members, including the counterparts, began to play an important role in the management of the LJC and the efficiency of the management increased. With regard to the LJC's mutual understanding programs, however, although the input of experts was not planned at the beginning of the Project because only the provision of places (facilities and equipment) for mutual understanding was planned, it has become necessary to consider dispatching Japanese experts in Phase 2 since the expansion of the LJC's activities requires more substantial dispatch efforts than before. In addition, with the diversification of the LJC's activities, it has become necessary to improve the capabilities of the counterparts in the LJC's management department. Therefore, when examining inputs for Phase 2, it is necessary to consider carrying out training for the counterparts in the LJC's management department (procurement, accounting, etc.) and the library management department.

(4) Impact

The Lao Government and private companies have been forced to increase their international economic competitiveness with regard to ASEAN countries. This situation has remained the same since the beginning of the Project. Under the circumstances, it can be said that the LJC's provision of useful knowledge to the participants in the business courses has played a certain role in developing human resources in the fields of economics and business management, such as business persons and government officials, and this has contributed to one of the overall goals, "Laos's social and economic development," to a certain extent. However, it has become difficult to evaluate strictly how much impact the LJC has from the quantitative viewpoint. This is because the overall goals have been set at a much higher level than the project goals and the relationship between them is unclear since there are many external factors involved. Therefore, to measure the LJC's impact on the overall goals, it is necessary to continue and expand the activities from a long-term viewpoint and evaluate them from multiple viewpoints. It is also necessary to evaluate the LJC's impact in relation to

individual changes in behavior patterns and improvements in performance, such as management improvements in the companies of the business course participants.

With regard to the second overall goal, “strengthening of the relationship between the Lao people and Japan,” it is possible to carry out a qualitative analysis, for example, to show that the LJC’s provision of information on Japan through its various activities (business courses, Japanese language courses, and mutual understanding programs) has promoted the Lao people’s understanding of Japan and thereby strengthened relations between the Lao people and the Japanese people. However, it is difficult to carry out a large-scale quantitative evaluation study, such as a study on the attitudes of people in both countries.

(5) Sustainability

(a) Organizational aspects

The LJC is a public institution belonging to the National University of Laos, where nine public employees are working as full-time counterparts. Moreover, 27 staff members have been employed from the LJC’s own revenues and are engaged in the management of the LJC. The LJC consists of three sections: the Japanese Language Course Section, the Business Course Section, and the Administrative Section. The chief and assistant chief of each section is appointed by the university. In addition, the Lao Director-General and Vice Director-General of the LJC are appointed directly by the Ministry of Education. Because the LJC regularly holds and manages business courses, Japanese language courses, and computer courses as training courses for the development of human resources, it can be said that the LJC has established the organizational foundation.

(b) Financial aspects

The LJC’s utility and communication costs are paid by the Ministry of Finance through the National University of Laos. In addition, the LJC receives tuition fees from training course participants and uses them for the basic salaries of the LJC staff members, remuneration for the lecturers of the business courses and the part-time lecturers of the Japanese language courses, the purchase of consumables, and other expenses. However, taking into account JICA’s payment for these expenses, it cannot be said that the LJC is financially self-supporting. Therefore, first of all, it is necessary for the Japanese side to cooperate with the Lao side to establish a basic financial policy for managing the LJC.

(c) Technical aspects

Most of the business course lecturers are teachers of the Faculty of Economics and Business Management of the National University of Laos. Generally, they have a high ability as lecturers. Although they have sufficient theoretical knowledge, the provision of practical knowledge and skills requires the invitation of lecturers from various types of organizations in Laos, such as private companies, government agencies, and business schools.

Most of the Japanese language course lecturers are Japanese experts and Japanese residents in Laos. Lao lecturers also give basic lessons in some courses. However, to be able to give all the lessons at the basic level, Lao lecturers need to

continuously strengthen their competence in Japanese.

The computer courses for government officials are provided by teachers of the Department of Mathematics of the National University of Laos and are managed independently. However, because they cannot flexibly handle the participants according to their learning speed and intellectual ability, it is necessary to devise teaching methods suitable for the learning capacity of the participants.

The LJC staff's management capabilities have been gradually improving as a whole. If the existing staff members continue to work for the LJC and improve their capabilities, the LJC's technical sustainability will increase.

3-3 Factors for the emergence of the effects

(1) Contents of the planning

In the first four years of the period of cooperation, this Project was the same as the support project for the Faculty of Economics and Business Management of the National University of Laos. From the beginning of the design of this Project, it was planned that teachers of the Faculty would be used as local lecturers of LJC's business courses. As planned, the teachers of the faculty have served as local lecturers of the LJC's business courses. Such a framework of mutual cooperation has facilitated the stable securing of local lecturers and contributed to an improvement in the sustainability of the business courses. At the same time, because the participants are active proprietors and employees, the local lecturers have become able to understand the actual issues through the exchange of opinions with the participants and acquire practical knowledge, which has resulted in an improvement in their lectures.

(2) Implementation process

In this Project, questionnaire surveys of the participants of each of the LJC's activities (business courses, Japanese language courses, computer courses, and mutual understanding programs) have been conducted regularly. Based on the results of these surveys, the courses have been regularly evaluated and changed. Because this improvement process incorporated into the activities has enabled the provision of services according to the needs it can therefore be said to be effective in improving the outputs.

3-4 Problems and the factors causing them

(1) Contents of the planning

At the beginning of this Project, it was assumed that the Japanese side would permanently provide inputs into the management of the LJC. Moreover, it was considered that the existence of the LJC in Laos in itself would be significant for the promotion of friendship between both countries. As a result, the management of the Project itself seems to have become the purpose of the Project. In addition, because the Project has been carried out without any quantitative indicators that measure the level of achievement, it is hard to say that the outputs have been appropriately monitored. As a result, the Project has not been fully managed according to the PDM and has insufficiently recognized the improvements in the capabilities of the LJC staff and the counterparts. This has hindered the achievement of some of the outputs.

(2) Implementation process

Communication among those within the Project has not been sufficient. Meetings between the Japan side and the Laos side have been held irregularly in reality, and meetings among the Japanese experts have been a place for reporting activities instead of solving problems. It can be pointed out that if the knowledge obtained through the project activities had been retained through smooth communication between the Japanese and Lao sides, the long-term experts might have performed their duties more productively.

3-5 Conclusions

As a result of a series of consultations, the Lao side and the Japanese evaluation team concluded that the outputs specified in the PDM have almost been achieved. However, to achieve the project goals, it is judged necessary to carry out further activities to improve the sustainability (profitability) of the LJC. In addition, because the Lao Government requested the continuation of support for another five years (September 1, 2005 to August 31, 2010) as Phase 2, the evaluation team decided to consider this positively.

3-6 Recommendations (concrete measures, proposals, and advice concerning the Project)

(1) Increase in training opportunities for counterparts and the LJC staff members

Improvements in the capabilities of the Lao staff will facilitate their positive participation in the management of the LJC, which will then contribute to the effective management of the LJC. In addition, to raise the sustainability of the LJC organization by the end of the Project, it is recommendable to consider increasing OJT and training opportunities for improving the communication abilities and acquiring basic knowledge related to the Project, such as knowledge about the mechanism of Japan's official development assistance (ODA), and consider providing training in Japan for Lao accountants and librarians in Phase 2.

(2) Strengthening of the practical contents of business courses

Although teachers of the Faculty of Economics and Business Management have sufficient academic knowledge as business course lecturers, the participants have requested more practical contents based on actual experience. The LJC is expected to take measures to diversify the lecturers by the end of the Project, such as inviting local lecturers from private companies, and to take measures to incorporate case studies in neighboring countries in the contents of the business courses in Phase 2.

(3) Support for strengthening the network among teachers of the Japanese language

There are 22 teachers of the Japanese language in Laos (as of 2003). It is important to create a network among them. The LJC should take the leadership in gradually forming the network, for example, by holding study meetings. In Phase 2, the LJC is expected to endeavor to expand the network in which Lao teachers can participate.

(4) Construction of a system for regularly providing opportunities of promoting mutual understanding between the people of both countries

The target of the LJC's mutual understanding programs is limited to the students of the National University of Laos. To alter this situation, the LJC should diversify the beneficiaries by encouraging the general public rather than university students to participate in the programs to the extent possible. In Phase 2, to ensure a match between Japan's need to

promote exchanges with Laos and the resources available in Laos, it is desirable not only to dispatch experts in the promotion of mutual understanding, but also to construct a system for regularly providing opportunities of promoting mutual understanding between the people of both countries, such as the acceptance of study tours from Japan, with the cooperation of the JICA Centers in Japan and the JICA Headquarters that have access to international exchange organizations in Japan.

- (5) Strengthening of the LJC's function to provide information (regular updating of the website)

Although the LJC has launched a website, a system for independently updating it has still not been established. Because the website is an important tool for providing information to other countries, including Japan, it is urgently necessary for the LJC to develop a system for collecting information for public relations and, in Phase 2, promote Japanese technical transfer by Japanese experts for the improvement and updating of the website.

3-7 Lessons learned (matters that serve as reference materials for the discovery, creation, implementation, and management of similar projects derived from this Project)

- (1) Project design with consideration for the local lecturers

From the outset, support for the Faculty of Economics and Business Management of the National University of Laos and the establishment of the LJC have been designed and carried out under the same project. As designed initially, all of the LJC's regular business courses have been managed by local lecturers (teachers of the Faculty of Economics and Business Management), while Japanese experts serve as lecturers for short-term special seminars and play a role in improving the capabilities of local lecturers.

- (2) Setting of practical goals and concrete indicators

Since this Project's PDM only qualitatively indicates the project goals and the overall goals, it was difficult to evaluate the extent to which the results of the project activities contributed to the achievement of the goals. In Phase 2 (or similar projects that focus on the development of human resources), it is important to establish quantitative indicators for each activity and collect quantitative data to measure the level of achievement.