



# Laos-Vietnam – Exchanging on Local Administration Reform

## **Organization(s):**

Public Administration and Civil Service Authority (PACSA), Laos National Academy of Public Administration, Vietnam Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

## **Country (ies):**

Laos and Vietnam

## **Overview:**

Currently Lao PDR is implementing a Local Administration reform. This workshop will therefore help Lao PDR to draw lessons to proceed in an effective way with the Local Administration Reform in the country through exchanging experiences, insights and advice between Vietnam and Laos. It is well known that neighboring Vietnam has accomplished several milestones in reforming and strengthening its local administration which will be for good help for the Lao PDR government to accelerate the implementation of its own reform programme and achieve tangible results in this area.

## **Background:**

Since 2003 when the Local Administration Law was established in Laos, PACSA has been designated by the government as the leading agency for implementing this law.

At the district level, two program- reform have been piloted. One is fundamental district restructuring. In Laos, there are three levels of government administration services: Central – Provincial – District. At the district level, all district administrations are classified into three classes along with their development condition. While some smaller district administrations combine some organizations together, some bigger district administrations have decentralized some tasks and delegated authority from their belonging provincial administrations.

The other reform is establishment of municipality as new local administrations. According to the Local Administration Law, districts and municipalities are at the same administrative level in which both of them are under control of provincial administration.

However, the government plans to delegate more responsibilities to municipalities than to district administrations, and give authority for municipalities to deal with financial self reliance. At present in Laos, every district administration should submit income that district offices collect to competent provincial office that allocate budget again to district administrations by provincial decision. After several districts change into municipalities, they will be able to manage larger portions of their income without having prior approval from provincial administration.

Besides, in some districts, one stop service to improve administrative services for general public started from 2007; that is a similar system to the one in Vietnam.

Using the JICA ASEAN Regional Cooperation Meeting (JARCOM) which is a mechanism to support quality south-south cooperation in the Southeast Asian countries supported by JICA, Laos submitted a proposal to hold workshop between Vietnam and Lao PDR to exchange their experiences in Local Administration Reform.

Before the workshop, fact finding mission from Laos to Vietnam was held in August 2009. The mission member comprised one official from PACSA, one JICA expert, and a program officer from JICA. The mission studied local administration system and reform that the government is being implemented in Vietnam, and discussed various matter on mutual interest and future cooperation with the following agencies;

- Ministry of Home Affairs in Vietnam
  - Hanoi city office and district office
  - National Academy of Public Administration
- The workshop was prepared based on the results of the mission.

### **Implementation:**

The agenda of the two-day workshop includes presentations from both Vietnam and Lao sides as described below.

<Lao side>

- Current situation and challenges of the local administration reform in Laos
- Public Administration and Civil Service Authority in Laos

Summarization

- How we utilize lesson from Vietnam for Local Administration Reform in Laos?

<Vietnam side>

Roles and responsibilities of central and local administration in Vietnam

- Ministry of Home Affairs in Vietnam
1. Mandate of Province and City under central,
  2. Criteria of Urban and Rural Administration,
  3. Intergovernmental Coordination, etc

Local administration reform in Vietnam

- Academy of Public Administration in Vietnam
1. History of Local Administration Reform
  2. Balance between economic growth and local administration reform
  3. Merger to be urban administration

Local administration reform in Vietnam

- Ministry of Home Affairs in Vietnam
1. Strategy and Mid-term plan for the reform
  2. Pilot restructuring of council and administration at local

#### Urban Administration reform in urban City - Hanoi City

1. Decentralization work in each department of the city
2. Administrative procedure of merger with other Province,
3. Coordination of the city with District and Commune administration

#### Urban Administration reform in urban City - Hai Phong City

1. Abolishment of local council Process, advantage, disadvantage
2. Other reform issues

All participants actively joined in the discussion following the presentations. Since lecturers' presentation focused on similar topics in Laos such as restructuring district administration, ongoing study on clarification of responsibilities at each local administration, it helped participants from Laos to further understand pending problem and acquire knowledge to move forward with the local administration reform in Laos.

#### **Outcomes:**

-Did the relation between the providing and receiving countries / governments / organizations change with this experience? Why and how?  
- This experience helped concerned officials in Laos and Vietnam obtain better understanding of similarity and differences in local administration reform and system in both countries.

--What were the planned and unplanned achievements of the SSC experience?

- One of achievements is that participants in Laos have obtained clear understanding of local administration system in Vietnam. Beside that, some presentations from Vietnam focused on definition of urban area and function of urban administration. This stimulated discussion on establishment of municipality as new urban administration entity in Laos.

--Are these outcomes sustainable? Could they be replicated in similar contexts?

- Lessons learned by the participants from Lao will be directly reflected in the on-going activity of amendment of local administration law and municipality establishment in Laos. Outcomes are indeed sustainable and could be replicated as the Lao government is committed to fully implement the local administration law.

--For longer-term projects, could you describe (both positive and negative) impacts?

- Vietnam and Laos has a close relationship in political regime and administrative systems. Besides, situation of economic development has some similarity. On this occasion, we found some advantages of Vietnam's support to Laos with assistance by Japan. It is also hoped that future third country technical cooperation among Laos, Vietnam and Japan will join this experience.

#### **Aid Effectiveness:**

--Was national leadership and ownership supported?

- Public Administration and Civil Service Authority (PACSA) had organized the workshop, and led the discussion demonstrating thus the ownership and leadership of the government over the process.

--To which extent was the experience aligned to national priorities and systems?  
- As reflected in the National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2006-2010 in Laos, the preparation of policy framework with regard to local level is described as high priority. Moreover, establishment of municipality as urban new local administration is one of the actions to be taken. This SSC experience has an impact on the discussion on these highly prioritized activities.

--Has there been an effort to harmonize and coordinate with other programmes and development actors?  
- SSC has been coordinated with JICA expert's activities in the field of local administration for PACSA.

--Was managing for results included in the experience?  
Managing for results is one major aspects of the Lao Aid Effectiveness Agenda (Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan). However progress in this regard has been quite slow in general terms. As a result managing for results was not included in the experience. However, realizing the importance of it, we will certainly pay more attention to this aspect in the near future and include it in future activities .

### **Capacity Development:**

--Describe any specific capacity development benefits from this SSC activity at the individual, organizational or systemic level.  
-This occasion has strengthened capacity of not only participants but also institutionally, in the long run, in both countries. Lecturers from Vietnam have also improved presentation/discussion skills to clarify and summarize on advantages and unsolved problems in local administration along with needs from Laos side. On the other hands, this workshop has given opportunity to discuss especially about future visions in urban local administration for participants from Laos. Experience in organizing the workshop as a host country was also effective for capacity development of PACSA.

--Are there any lessons learned from this SSC activity that improve the overall enabling environment, especially through improved incentives for better public services?  
-There were some misunderstandings and gaps between expectation from Laos and Presentation from Vietnam. One reason may come from lack of experience of lecturers to understand cooperation needs from Laos (host country). It is necessary for the resource countries to understand needs of target countries.

**Duration:** 12-13 November, 2009

**Name of Primary Contact Person:** Kouthong Sammala

**Title of Primary Contact Person:** Anolack CHANPASITH

**City:** Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR