

**FWC SIEA 2018-LOT 2: Infrastructure, sustainable growth and jobs
EuropeAid/138778/DH/SER/multi**

Mid-term Evaluation of the ARISE Plus Lao PDR Programme

Request nr: SIEA-2018-3322 (SIEA 2018)

Final Report

Prepared by:

Dr Channa Gunawardena, Team Leader

April 2022



A project funded by the
European Union

A project implemented by AESA



1 of 128 FWC Consortium led by STANTEC





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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
ARISE+	ASEAN Regional Integration Support from the EU Plus
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATISA	ASEAN Trade in Services Agreement
ATIGA	ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement
CLMV	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam
DFQF	Duty-free and Quota-free
DFTP	Department of Foreign Trade Policy
DIMEX	Department for Import and Export, MOIC
DOA	Department of Agriculture, MOAF
DOF	Department of Forestry, MOAF
DOIH	Department of Industry and Handicraft, MOIC
DOSM	Department of Standards and Metrology, MOIC
DPC	Department of Planning and Cooperation, MOIC
DTP	Department for Trade Promotion, MOIC
EBA	Everything But Arms
ECCIL	European Chamber of Commerce Laos
ER	Expected Result
ERIIT	Economic Research Institute of Industry and Trade, MOIC
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation to Lao PDR
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
FTNR	Foreign Trade Negotiation Roadmap
FTPD	Foreign Trade Policy Department, MOIC
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GI	Geographical Indication
GMP	Good Manufacturing Practices
GoL	Government of Lao PDR
GSP	Generalized System of Preferences
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
ITC	International Trade Centre, UN/WTO
JP	Joint Programming (European)
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LCA	Lao Coffee Association
LDC	Least Developed Country
LNCCI	Lao National Chamber of Commerce of Industry
MOAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MDF	Multi-donor Trust Fund
MIP	Multiannual Indicative Programme
MOIC	Ministry of Industry and Commerce
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium-sized enterprises
MTE	Mid-term evaluation
NSEDP	National Socio-Economic Development Plan
NIU	National Implementation Unit, MOIC
PCO	Project Coordination Office
PEC	Project Executive Committee
PRC	Project Review Committee
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPS	Sanitary and phytosanitary measures

SYMST	Systematic Mechanism for Safer Trade
TA	Technical Assistance
TBT	Technical Barriers to Trade
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement, WTO
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement
WTO	World Trade Organization

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE ASSIGNMENT

The ASEAN Regional Integration Support from the EU Plus – Lao PDR Programme (hereafter referred to as “ARISE+ Lao PDR”) is one of national components of the ARISE+ Regional Programme financed by EU under focal sector 1 of the 2014-2020 EU Multiannual Indicative Programme for ASEAN which supports the ASEAN and its Member States (including Lao PDR) for the ASEAN economic integration. The EU also finances three ARISE+ regional programmes (i.e. ARISE+ Regional for ASEAN, ARISE+ IPR and ARISE+ Aviation) and eight bilateral ARISE+ country programmes to support eligible ASEAN member states to integrate with ASEAN and the world trading system. These eight eligible countries include Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. Although there is a coordination mechanism between the ARISE+ regional and country programmes, each ARISE+ country programme operates independently based on the needs and priorities of that country. The implementing modalities also vary, depending on the choices of the EU delegations to those ASEAN Member States. The ARISE+ Lao PDR programme is being implemented by the Geneva-based International Trade Centre (ITC) under the Contribution Agreement signed between the EU and ITC in July 2018.

The **Overall Objective** of the ARISE+ Lao PDR programme is to promote inclusive economic growth, increased climate change resilience, mitigation of vulnerability and job creation in Lao PDR. The **Specific Objectives** of the programme are to improve the business environment in targeted sectors with a focus on regional economic integration (ASEAN), and to increase trade and participation in global value chains in the targeted sectors. More specifically, the programme aims to support the regional economic integration of the Lao economy into global production chains through targeted support to both public and private sectors, with a particular focus on smallholders and SMEs. The programme supports the Government of Lao PDR (GoL) to reap the benefits of regional integration in line with multilateral trade frameworks such as the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), and the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA). The ARISE+ Lao PDR programme has three expected results (ER) as follows:

- ER1: Increased regional economic integration by addressing specific constraints in selected sectors through support for implementation of measures contained in the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) and other commitments under the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025;
- ER 2: Increased awareness on trade preferences for exports, including to the European Union, with greater use of Everything But Arms (EBA), and on the requirements for placing products on the EU market; advanced preparation of Lao PDR to shift to a new trade preference scheme (post-EBA); and
- ER 3: Strengthened support services (especially for smallholders and SMEs, with a focus on women), education of supply-side constraints, and trade and investment promotion in targeted sectors (e.g. wood processing and agro-based products).

The ARISE+ Lao PDR programme has a total budget of €4,867,000, to which EU contributes €4,850,000 and ITC agreed to co-finance €17,000 to the implementation of the programme activities from November 2018 to October 2022. The Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MOIC) is the focal point and main beneficiary of the programme. The ITC has been working closely with the MOIC through its National Implementation Unit (NIU) under the Department of Planning and Cooperation (DPC), the Department of Foreign Trade Policy (DFTP), the Department of Trade Promotion (DTP) and the Department of Import and Export (DIMEX), and other Lao public and

private sector participating institutions to design and implement the programme activities in the last three years.

1.2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The main objectives of the mid-term evaluation (MTE) of the ARISE+ Lao PDR programme are to provide the relevant services to the EUD, other interested stakeholders and the wider public with:

- an overall independent assessment of the past performance of ARISE+ Lao PDR, paying particular attention to its intermediate results measured against its expected objectives, the reasons underpinning such results, and the synergies between the Lao PDR component and the regional component of the ARISE+ regional programme
- key lessons learned, conclusions and related recommendations in order to improve current and future Interventions
- Provide recommendations towards future strategy of intervention in the sectors concerned and programming of the cycle support
- Identify key learning points that may influence the next cycle of the European Joint Programming (JP) 2021-2025, particularly in Trade Private Sector Development and the trade priority outcomes in the 9th NSEDP 2021-2025, and
- In particular, this evaluation will serve to understand the performance of the targeted action, its enabling factors and those hampering a proper delivery of results as to inform the planning of the future EU interventions and actions in the same sector.

In accordance with the terms of reference (TOR), the mid-term evaluation of ARISE+ Lao PDR covers the period of the project implementation from 1 November 2018 to 30 April 2021. However, where available data until December 2021 has been utilized. The MTE was conducted by three team leaders. The first team leader resigned during the inception phase of the MTE in September 2021. A second team leader developed the design of the MTE and undertook data collection. However, he had to resign in December 2021 due to health reasons. The present team leader took over in February 2022.

1.3 COUNTRY AND SECTOR BACKGROUND

Lao PDR is one of the least developed countries (LDCs) in Southeast Asia with a population of 7.276 million (2020) and per capita GDP of US\$2,630 (2020). In the last several decades, Lao PDR has made significant economic progress. Since the reform programme was introduced in 1986, Lao PDR has gradually transformed from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy. Lao PDR joined the ASEAN in 1997 and became a WTO member in 2013. The reform measures introduced and the integration with the ASEAN and the world economy have produced remarkable economic performance for Lao PDR, resulting in an impressive progress in economic growth and poverty reduction. According to the World Bank reports, between 1993 to 2019, the annual GDP growth rate in Lao PDR was recorded at 7.3%, which has effectively cut the poverty rate from 46% in 1993 to 18% in 2019. However, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the real GDP growth rate in 2020 was only recorded as 0.5%, and it is projected to rebound to 3.6% in 2021.¹ Overall, this is still impressive for Lao PDR as an LDC. The Government of Lao PDR (GoL) has determined to further integrate its economy into the rapidly growing Asian region through the implementation of trade commitments with ASEAN and the WTO, particularly through the ASEAN Economic

¹ The World Bank: Lao PDR Economic Monitor, 2021

Community (AEC) and the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). Lao PDR has the overall ambition to accelerate economic and social development to graduate from LDC in 2026².

The 8th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED, 2016-2020) of Lao PDR highlights some gaps that hinder its further economic growth and regional integration. These include some policy areas that requires more reforms and the capacity building of the government and business sectors to meet the requirements for the regional integration. More specifically, Lao PDR needs to do more to achieve the rule of law and good governance, a favourable business and investment environment, and more diversified economy which is currently highly dependent on hydropower and mining sectors, more effective regional and international integration, more adequate physical and service infrastructure, and more active participation of women and girls in economic activities of the country. The 9th NSED³ which was approved by the National Assembly on 26 March 2021, continues the implementation of the National Strategy on Socio-Economic Development 2016-2025 and the Vision 2030 of Lao PDR, and focuses on the preparation of the graduation of Lao PDR from the LDC status, the mitigation of the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and international and regional uncertainties, and the creation of the quality economic growth and job opportunities by bolstering key production and service sectors. Among many outputs and outcomes embedded in the 9th NSED, regional and international trade and investment cooperation and integration is particularly highlighted to implement commitments under the EU-ASEAN Trade Facilitation Action Plan 2017-2022, to improve overall trade and investment environment and reduce business transaction costs, and to continue the implementation of the commitments under the WTO, ASEAN, GMS, and other regional and bilateral trade agreements.

Lao PDR is a least developed country and is eligible for duty-free and quota-free exports to the EU except for arms and armaments under the “Everything but Arms (EBA) regime⁴. If Lao PDR graduates from the LDC status in 2026 as anticipated, the EU will grant Lao PDR three more years of the EBA during the transition period. Therefore, Lao PDR and its exporters can enjoy the EBA regime and its preferential status until 2029. After 2029, Lao PDR will no longer be eligible for the EBA. However, Lao PDR will have the standard GSP⁵ scheme which is applicable to low and middle-income developing countries. Lao PDR could also negotiate the GSP+ scheme⁶ which is an incentive tariff treatment to those developing countries which have complied with 27 international conventions on labour, human rights, environmental protection, and good governance.

The ARISE+ Lao PDR project has selected coffee and processed wood sectors for interventions which are also of particular interest of the EU and its member states. For the coffee sector, Lao PDR has exported its coffee to the EU market and one of the Lao companies has obtained the certificate from EU to export organic coffee to EU. For the processed woods, the EU is currently negotiating a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA), which is legally-binding once signed. This is one of the tools of the EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan⁷. When fully operational, the EU will issue the FLEGT license to Lao exports of verified legal timber products to the EU only. The FLEGT-licensed timber is considered as meeting the requirements of the EU Timber Regulation, which prohibits EU importers and domestic producers

² <https://laopdr.un.org/en/113944-lao-pdr-recommended-graduate-2026-least-developed-country-category-extended-preparatory#:~:text=Vientiane%2C%20February%202021%20%E2%80%93%20The,period%20effectively%20setting%20the%20graduation>

³ 9th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021-2025)

⁴ Action Document of the ARISE+ Lao PDR Programme

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/development/generalised-scheme-of-preferences/>

⁶ As above

⁷ <https://www.euflegt.efi.int/flegt-action-plan>

from importing illegally logged timber and timber products into the EU market. Therefore, the two sector choices are consistent with the EU strategy and programming in Lao PDR.

The Government of Lao PDR attaches great importance to the gender equality and attempts to bridge the gender gaps in political, economic, and social-cultural affairs for the country⁸. The GoL formulated the Vision 2030 and 10-year Strategy on Gender Equality (2016-2025) and adopted the 3rd Five-year National Plan on Gender Equality (2016–2020) to ensure the proportion of women’s leadership and decision-making positions in the government for at least 20%. In order to promote gender equality and empower women, Lao PDR continues to mobilize the Official Development Assistance (ODA) from development partners to advance gender equality and women empowerment.

1.4 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

To provide answers to the above evaluation questions, the evaluation team has employed various evaluation methods to collect primary and secondary data and information for the analysis of the project performance, progress and results. The following is a short summary of the major evaluation methods employed for the data collection and analysis of the assignment:

- **Detailed Document Review:** Documentation included progress reports, project records, minutes of the Project Review and Executive Committees, workshop reports, training materials, studies conducted by the project, strategies and roadmaps prepared by the project, project website, project Facebook page, and documents prepared by other development partners. Overall, more than 50 project documents were reviewed and analysed by the Evaluator. The list of relevant documents reviewed by the Evaluator is attached as **Annex 3** to this evaluation report.
- **Survey Questionnaire:** During the Inception Phase, the second team leader designed a bilingual evaluation questionnaire (English and Lao) and distributed to about 250 stakeholders, beneficiaries, experts, and participants to collect their feedbacks and comments on the performance, progress, and results of the project. 65 completed questionnaires were received. The respondents have provided their ratings, assessment, comments on the project performance and results, based on the evaluation criteria and specific evaluation questions. Their ratings of the specific questions in the completed questionnaires are attached as **Annex 7** to the final evaluation report. The survey had some limitations as the data collected on ratings was aggregated and not available according to specific stakeholder group types (e.g. government, private sector intermediaries, private sector companies etc)
- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**– EUD, NIU and ITC provided a list of key stakeholders of the project and the second team leader conducted the stakeholder analysis and selected government officials, business association representatives, private sector participants, ITC team and its experts, and a few donors for virtual interviews. In particular, the Evaluator tried to reach the private sector participants. 53 interviews were conducted. The detailed list of the KIIs interviewed by the second team leader, and the virtual meeting schedule is attached as **Annex 4** to the final evaluation report. Although 53 interviews were conducted, the third team leader had access to interview data from 11 interviews, as the full set of data from the second team leader was not transferred when he resigned. The 11 interviews covered companies from the coffee and wood processing sector who benefitted from project activities, private sector intermediaries such as associations and key departments from MOIC. The third team

⁸ 9th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021-2025)

leader conducted interviews with the EUD and ITC project team, resulting in data from a total of 13 interviews available.

Following the primary and secondary data collection through various evaluation methods, the evaluation team undertook analysis of each individual data source. Qualitative data from interviews was analysed using structured methods. Analysis was followed by triangulation to develop evidence based findings. The evaluation team has followed the evaluation matrix with the judgement criteria and indicators and conducted a objective and balanced analysis for the evidence-based findings, which constitute the basis for answering the nine evaluation questions agreed previously with EUD. These findings and assessment allowed the evaluation team to draw valid conclusions and lessons learned, as well as to formulate actionable recommendations for EUD, ITC, MOIC and other relevant stakeholders of the project.

The evaluation team has taken consideration of gender of the project during the evaluation exercise. Relevant data and information have been collected to analyse whether the gender issues were mainstreamed in the overall project design and implementation, and how the project activities are effectively ensuring equitable access and opportunities to all genders.

1.5 LIMITATIONS

The evaluation faced some limitations which are summarised below.

1. Halo Bias: There is a known tendency among informants to under-report socially undesirable answers, such as negative feedback and alter their responses to approximate what they perceive as the social norm (halo bias). To mitigate this potential limitation, the Evaluation Team provided the informants with confidentiality and anonymity guarantees and established rapport with the informant.

2. Limited Data Sources: This assignment was conducted by three different team leaders. When the third team leader undertook the assignment, the volume of primary data available was limited to data from 13 interviews, the online survey and secondary data from the project documentation. This limited the range and qualitative nature of findings which would have been captured if data from more interviews was available. It was not feasible to conduct new interviews with key stakeholders due to the urgency of completing the evaluation. The very tight timeline available to undertake the assignment meant that data collection, data analysis, synthesis and preparing the first draft final report had to be undertaken within less than two months. The TOR provided for only 25 working days for one expert, which limited the amount of work that could be done during the evaluation. However, the team leader, the EUD and AESA worked in close collaboration to mitigate some of the effects from these challenges. AESA allocated an assistant who supported the second team leader in the conduct of interviews. The assistant transcribed and translated his notes to English for use by the third team leader. The document review carried out was comprehensive and provided sufficient data for the conduct of an evidence-based evaluation.

2 EVALUATION FINDINGS

The findings to each of the nine evaluation questions are presented in this chapter. For each evaluation question findings are provided to the respective judgement criteria (JC) and other considerations relevant to answering the evaluation question. For each judgment criteria, values to the indicators determined in the evaluation matrix are provided, together with an overview of the data collection methods used and robustness of evidence. Additional findings to support the assessment of the judgement criteria are also presented as part of the narrative.

2.1 EVALUATION QUESTION 1

TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE ARISE+ LAO PDR PROJECT DESIGN, AREAS/ACTIVITIES SELECTED, AND THE OUTCOMES RESPOND TO THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF THE LAO GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTOR UNDER THE CURRENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONDITIONS OF THE COUNTRY AS WELL AS THE EU STRATEGY AND POLICY OBJECTIVES?

The project design, activities selected, activities implemented and outputs have responded to specific needs and challenges of the GoL identified in the 8th and 9th NSEDP, DTIS and ATIGA/AEC; needs for support from the private sector in the coffee and wood processing sectors; and specific priorities in the European Joint Indicative Programme for Lao PDR 2016-2020 (JP 2016-2020), Team Europe Strategy in the Lao PDR 2021-2025, EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, the Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme for Asia 2014-2020, COM(2017) and COM(2014) 263.

Judgement criteria (JC)	Sources of evidence	Judgement
JC 1.1 – The project responds to the needs and priorities of GoL identified in the 8 th and 9 th NSEDP as well as in DTIS and ATIGA/AEC	Document review, survey questionnaire, KIIs	Positive
JC 1.2 – The project responds to the needs for support from the private sector, particularly the coffee and processed woods sectors	Document review, survey questionnaire, KIIs	Positive
JC 1.3. The project is consistent with the EU strategy and programming in Lao PDR and in ASEAN as per European Joint Indicative Programme Document for Lao PDR (2016-2020) and the European Joint Programme (2021-2025)	Document review	Positive

2.1.1 JC 1.1 – The project responds to the needs and priorities of GoL identified in the 8th and 9th NSEDP as well as in DTIS and ATIGA/AEC

The evaluation concludes positively that the project design, activities selected, activities implemented and outputs have responded to specific needs and challenges of the GoL identified in the 8th and 9th NSEDP as well as specific priorities in the ATIGA/AEC.

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
I.1.1.- number of areas covered from those documents for assistance	Document review, survey questionnaire,	High	1 Strategic Measure of AEC and 11 chapters of ATIGA
I.1.2 – Alignment between project support and priority areas from NSEDPs	Document review, survey questionnaire	High	5 priorities from 8 th NSEDP, 4 priorities from 9 th NSEDP
I.1.3 – Positive feedback from government stakeholders	Document review, survey questionnaire, KIIs	Moderate	Participatory approach and methodology for capacity building viewed positively by government stakeholders

Additional evidence which informed the judgement of the MTE is presented below.

Based on an analysis of the Action Document, by design the project was expected to contribute to the regional and international integration priority of the 8th NSEDP: including “opportunity for market expansion both within and outside the country”, “open up competition in the processing industry and trade service sectors by determining the niche products of the country”. The

evidence⁹ indicates that the project has responded to **five priorities from the 8th NSEDP**, namely: “identifying opportunities for market expansion”, “open up competition in the processing industry and trade service sectors by determining the niche products of the country”, “diversify commercial goods production for export needs”, increasing “production in the coffee and wood processing sectors in a sustainable manner”; and “enhancing favourable conditions for regional and international integration”. The project has also responded to **four priorities from the 9th NSEDP** according to the document review¹⁰: “ASEAN cooperation “; “improving integration with the AEC”; promoting “agricultural production and agro-processing industries such as coffee processing, wood processing”; and “forest resources management and use”.

The project responded to the 8th NSEDP priority of “identifying opportunities for market expansion” and 9th NSEDP priorities of “ASEAN cooperation “and “improving integration with the AEC” through relevant outputs under its 3 core result areas according evidence from the documentation. Under expected result 1 (ER1) the project delivered a number of outputs to with the aim of improving the Lao PDR business environment so Lao business can benefit from regional and possibly international value chains. These include Gap analysis of ATIGA implementation in Lao PDR, the Foreign Trade Negotiation Roadmap (FTNR), Regulatory assessments for transport and tourism sectors, drafting of four eCommerce guides. These outputs are also relevant to the 8th NSEDP priority of “enhancing favourable conditions for regional and international integration”. Under ER2, the project has responded through outputs to enhance export readiness and improve export prospects in the coffee and processed wood sectors. These include the EU EBA Business Guide, training on export potential analysis, development of a Quality Compass online tool providing information on EU market requirements, design of an eLearning course to train businesses on regulatory and procedural requirements for export, creation of a pool of Quality Champions to mentor and train MSMEs on quality aspects.

The project responded to the 8th NSEDP priorities of “open up competition in the processing industry and trade service sectors by determining the niche products of the country”, “diversify commercial goods production for export needs” and increasing “production in the coffee and wood processing sectors in a sustainable manner” through its efforts under ER3. Similarly, the outputs from ER3 also respond to the 9th NSEDP priorities of “agricultural production and agro-processing industries such as coffee processing, wood processing”. Relevant outputs include the Wood Processing Sector Export Roadmap (2021-2025) and the Coffee Sector Export Roadmap (2021-2025) which includes the identification of niche products; training for international marketing of wood products; training on sustainable management of forests and timber products, which addresses the priority of the 9th NSEDP on “forest resources management and use” to meet the needs of wood processing industries; training on establishing organic coffee farms; and establishment MSME support services.

The results from the documentation review were reinforced by feedback from the stakeholder survey and interviews. A number of survey respondents mentioned that the project is well aligned with the priorities of the 9th NSEDP. According to these respondents the project approach, makes ARISE+ Lao PDR a very relevant instrument to support the implementation of priorities of the 8th NSEDP earlier and currently the 9th NSEDP. The project approach covers policy and institutional gap assessment, formulation of evidence-based recommendations, capacity building for government departments to implement and partnerships with private sector to roll-out and benefit from the reforms. The project works closely with the implementation and coordination structures of the government and private sector that are implementing the 9th NSEDP. These include the NIU of the MOIC who coordinates and monitors alignment with the 9th NSEDP in trade related areas,

⁹ Document review of Project Six Monthly Progress reports and Annual Progress reports and 8th NSEDP

¹⁰ Document review of Project Six Monthly Progress reports and Annual Progress reports and 9th NSEDP

agencies from Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MOAF) and the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry representing the private sector.

According to interviews, government representatives felt the support provided by ARISE+ in developing the Coffee Sector Export Roadmap, guidelines on e-commerce, online resources and capacity building as very beneficial. Similarly, Government officials have described the Wood Processing Roadmap as a highly relevant document that provides new direction for the timber industry in Laos. Highly relevant examples included the recommendations to focus on legal timber sources, improve quality and productivity through use of machinery, such as for the processing of bamboo and linking the tourism industry to furniture production. Government officials see the roadmaps as timely and instrumental given that the Lao-China railway is projected to open up more economic opportunities for local producers. They are convinced of the potential for growth and the project is highly relevant to support Laos to be prepared to capitalize on these opportunities in trade and investment.

The project is supporting stakeholders from Lao PDR in better integrating with the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint 2016-2025 focussing on the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA). Strengthening ATIGA is a Strategic Measure under the Trade in Goods Element of the Characteristic ‘A Highly Integrated and Cohesive Economy’ in the AEC Blueprint and the project is addressing this under ER1. This includes public-private dialogue workshops to create understanding on the benefits of addressing gaps in the ATIGA and related commitments to facilitate regional trade and integration, and an ATIGA gap assessment assessing the level of implementation in provisions across its 11 chapters and recommendations for priority areas to be addressed which is in its final draft stage. This will be followed by the development of an Executable Roadmap to implement coordinated reforms to address the gaps identified in each priority and responsibilities for key agencies and institutes. According to respondents from the stakeholder survey, the project is very relevant to supporting Laos to better link its economy to ASEAN

2.1.2 JC 1.2 – The project responds to the needs for support from the private sector, particularly the coffee and processed wood

According to the MTE assessment, the project responds well to the needs of the private sector from the coffee and wood processing sector through a participatory approach, evidence-based studies, and relevant follow-up support.

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
1.2.1 – sectors prioritized (coffee and wood processing)	Document review, survey questionnaire, KIIs	High	Coffee and wood processing sectors prioritised
1.2.2 – number of support measures in coffee and wood sectors	Document review, survey questionnaire,	High	62 support measures (activities) identified in coffee export roadmap; 64 support measures (activities) identified in wood roadmap;

According to the evidence¹¹, the project has implemented several measures to address the needs of the private sector particularly in coffee and processed wood. The most significant outputs are the Wood Processing Sector Export Roadmap (2021-2025) and the Coffee Sector Export Roadmap (2021-2025) which provide an overall strategy addressing sectoral challenges, market opportunities, strategic options and a plan of action. These roadmaps are complemented by

¹¹ KIIs with coffee and wood processing MSMEs, LNCCI, LWPA, LFA, LCA and survey questionnaire provided in Annex 7

training for MSMEs on specific regulatory and procedural requirements for export, an EU EBA Business Guide, development of a Quality Compass online tool providing information on EU market requirements, an eLearning course to train businesses on regulatory and procedural requirements for export and creation of a pool of Quality Champions to mentor and train MSMEs on quality aspects. The project has also developed investment profiles for these sectors. According to survey respondents¹² and interviews with private sector¹³, the project has responded well to priority needs expressed by government and private sector stakeholders by developing the sectoral roadmaps which are viewed very positively, as they provide an evidence-based assessment of current status in Laos, global opportunities and strategic options to strengthen these sectors.

The strong participatory approach, closely involving public and private sector stakeholders, in the development of outputs has been cited as major factor in ensuring the outputs are highly relevant and respond to the priority needs of these sectors according to respondents to the survey and interviews. Key private sector stakeholders involved include the Lao National Chamber of Commerce (LNCCI), the Lao Wood Processing Association (LWPA), the Lao Furniture Association (LFA), Lao Coffee Association (LCA), and the Lao Farmers Network. The collaboration with LNCCI, has been particularly strong and this is of significance as they are the largest business chamber in the country and also play a strong advocacy role with government. LNCCI has been engaged not only in consultations but also as a partner in key areas such as the quality champions programme, the Learning course and training of MSMEs.

The follow-up support including capacity building, information sources and market linkages are highly relevant as they implement key aspects of the respective roadmaps. According to MTE interviews with private sector representatives from coffee, the different types of training provided were found to be very relevant to the actors along the coffee value chain from both the private and government sector. The training on Quality Champion and Food Safety were both found to be very relevant to the everyday operations of coffee companies and supported export initiatives of Lao coffee farmers. The comprehensive training provided by ARISE+ included quality control, the improvement of organic coffee production, export capability and market access. ARISE+ also provided support to the Ministry of Agriculture-Forestry by providing advise on how to improve the production through soil, seeds and varieties of crops that the small farmers can use. The government stakeholders reinstated in interviews and the survey that the content of project outputs caters to the local context and needs.

In the wood processing sector, survey and interview respondents indicated strong buy in for the Wood Processing Roadmap. They also requested for additional training, to continue the shift promoted by the project, which further validates the relevance of the ARISE+ project.

2.1.3 JC 1.3. The project is consistent with the EU strategy and programming in Lao PDR and in ASEAN) as per European Joint Indicative Programme Document for Lao PDR (2016-2020), the European Joint Programme (2021-2025) and other EU priorities

The project is consistent with the EU strategy and programming in Lao PDR, the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, the Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme for Asia 2014-2020, COM(2017) and COM(2014) 263 according to the MTE assessment.

¹² Refer Annex 7 for summary of survey data

¹³ KIs with coffee and wood processing MSMEs, LNCCI, LWPA, LFA, LCA

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
I.3.1 – # of areas covered by the project consistent with those in the country strategy paper and the European Joint Programmes	Document review,	High	1 area for Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme for Asia 2014-2020; 3 sectors and 5 expected results of JP 2016-2020 ¹⁴ ; 1 priority area, 3 themes and 5 expected results of the Team Europe Strategy ¹⁵

The project design is coherent with the Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme for Asia 2014-2020 to support regional integration amongst all ASEAN Member States and establish an EU-ASEAN FTA through the ARISE Plus programme, through ER1 focusing support for implementation of measures under the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) and other commitments under the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint 2025.

In terms of other EU priorities, the design and implementation of the project is consisting with COM(2017) 667 ‘EU Aid for Trade Strategy’ by supporting Lao SMEs to benefit from trade opportunities with the EU including its EBA regime which provides duty free to EU markets access for LDCs, through Expected Result 2 (ER2) of the project, which focusses on increased awareness on trade preferences and requirements for exports to the EU. The project design and implementation is aligned with COM(2014) 263 ‘A Stronger Role of the Private Sector in Achieving Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Countries’ through Expected Result 3 (ER3) of the project, which focuses on support services for MSMEs in the wood and coffee sub-sectors covering primary production and processing including integration of sustainable, gender mainstreaming and social inclusion considerations. The project contributes to the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific in the priority area of “sustainable and inclusive prosperity” through its efforts in the coffee and wood processing sector which “reinforce value chains, strengthen and diversify trade relations”

The project design and implementation is consistent with the European Joint Indicative Programme for Lao PDR 2016-2020 (JP 2016-2020), which combines development assistance from the EU, 8 EU Member States and Switzerland to support 7 sectors with the 8th NSED. The project focuses on three sectors of the JP 2016-2020 namely private sector development, agriculture, and environment and natural resources. Within private sector development, the project contributes to SO1 (Enabling Lao PDR increasingly make use of the potentials and reduce the economic risks of the AEC). Project outputs under ER, including the gap analysis, roadmap, and training are contributing to increased capacity and evidence to support the SO1 expected result of ‘key stakeholders in the government are able to effectively steer, coordinate, implement and monitor processes related to the AEC’. The project through its outputs in ER2 and ER3 focusing on coffee and wood processing sectors is contributing to the SO1 expected result of ‘SMEs in key economic sectors are able to use the opportunities presented by the AEC’. Within the agriculture priorities of the JP, the project through its outputs in ER2 and ER3 is aligned and contributes to SO1 (improve agriculture practices) and SO3 (improve economic efficiency). Within the environment and natural resources priority of the JP, the project targets SO1 (particularly the expected result of illegal logging is reduced and forests are managed sustainably) through efforts under activity 3.3 including training on sustainable forest management and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification.

The project is consistent with the Team Europe Strategy in the Lao PDR 2021-2025 focusing on the priority area of Green and Inclusive Economy covering three themes of ‘agriculture and rural

¹⁴ European Joint Indicative Programme for Lao PDR 2016-2020

¹⁵ Team Europe Strategy in the Lao PDR 2021-2025

development’, ‘natural resources and environment’ and ‘private sector development, trade and tourism’. In agriculture and rural development, the project is consistent with and contributes to Expected Result 1.1 (enhanced sustainable and climate-resilient agricultural practices) and Expected Result 1.3 (improved competitiveness, quality and added value of agriculture products) of the Team Europe Strategy through project outputs under ER3 for the coffee sector. In natural resources and environment, the project will contribute to Expected Result 2.1 (sustainable management of forest areas) including the ongoing negotiations between the EU and Lao PDR on a Voluntary Partnership Agreement under the FLEGT scheme through outputs under ER3 of the project focusing on the wood processing sector. In private sector development, trade and tourism area, the project is consistent with Expected Result 3.1 of the Team Europe Strategy (expanded and diversified markets for Lao exports) through outputs in ER2 and ER3 of the project. It also contributes to ER3.2 (improved business climate) of the Team Europe Strategy through efforts under ER1 of the project.

2.2 EVALUATION QUESTION 2

TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THE ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES OF THE ARISE+ LAO PDR PROJECT COHERENT, COMPATIBLE AND COMPLEMENTARY WITH THE INTERVENTIONS OF OTHER DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS, INCLUDING THOSE OF THE EU MEMBER STATES?

The activities and outputs of the project are coherent compatible and complementary with the interventions of other development partners, particularly those of UN agencies including ITCs. Regular information sharing with other interventions takes place through mechanisms such as the PEC to avoid duplication and explore synergies.

Judgement criteria (JC)	Sources of evidence	Judgement
JC 2.1 – The effects of the project and the effects of the interventions of other like-minded development partners are likely to reinforce (or contradict) each other.	Document review, interviews	Somewhat positive

2.2.1 JC 2.1 – The effects of the project and the effects of other relevant development interventions are likely to reinforce (or contradict) each other.

The evaluation concludes somewhat positively that the project reinforces interventions of other development partners, particularly those of UN agencies including ITC, with regular information sharing for other relevant interventions.

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
2 1.1. – positive synergy between the expected effects of ARISE+ Lao PDR and those projects funded by other development partners	Document review Survey questionnaire	Moderate	Positive synergies with UN and ITC projects and interventions
1.2 – efforts of the project team to collaborate with other partners on joint activities; quality of collaboration	Document review Survey questionnaire; Interviews;	Moderate	Regular information exchange through PEC; follow-up meetings with project; collaboration with ITC and UN projects

The project was designed within the context of the EU’s ARISE Plus programme and is the Lao national component of ARISE Plus¹⁶. The project has attended and contributed to the regional

¹⁶ Action Document of the ARISE+ Lao PDR Programme

meeting held for the ARISE Plus programmes on 24 June 2020. The project has thematic synergies with the other ARISE Plus projects including¹⁷: strengthening of policy frameworks, national implementation of ASEAN agreements (in this case ATIGA), trade related institutional support, private sector capacity building, national quality infrastructure, standards harmonisation, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) / food safety, gender and SDGs. Further details are provided below in table 3.1.

ARISE PLUS projects	Regional ASEAN	IPR	Cam	IDN	LAO	MM	MY TH	PH	VN
Review and strengthening policy framework	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√
Implementation of ASEAN agreements (e.g. ATIGA)	√	√	√		√	√			
Trade facilitation	√		√	√		√		√	√
Regional / national trade related institutional support	√		√	√	√	√			√
EU FTA / CEPA / GSP+				√		√			√
Customs / ACTS	√		√	√					
Private sector engagement and capacity building	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√
National quality infrastructure	√		√	√	√	√		√	√
Standards harmonisation / compliance (regional / EU)	√			√	√	√		√	√
SPS / Food safety	√			√	√	√			
Rapid alert systems food / non-food	√			√		√			√
Statistics support	√		√		√				
Gender / SDGs		√		√	√	√			
IPR/ GIs / Branding		√		√		√			

Table 3.1: synergies between ARISE Plus projects

Annex 6 provides an overview of trade related projects funded by the EU, EU Member States (EUMS) and other development partners.

Through the Programme Executive Committee (PEC) meetings organized by the NIU of MOIC and the Trade and Private Sector Working Group of the like-minded donors, the ARISE+ Lao PDR project has been sharing progress, avoiding duplications and seeking collaborations with other initiatives. The ITC project team has met with most of the project implementors listed in annex 4.7 and has established stronger collaborations with some of the projects.

According to the evidence¹⁸, the project has been strong in engaging with UN agencies and establishing synergies with UN initiatives. For example the project has liaised with UNDESA and

¹⁷ Document review of Project Six Monthly Progress reports and Annual Progress reports

¹⁸ Project Six Monthly Progress reports and Annual Progress reports, interviews with EUD and ITC

WTO EIF on efforts related to Lao PDR's graduation from LDC status. The project has also liaised with UNCTAD on their coffee value chain study and development of sustainability standards. The project takes part in regular UN Country Team meetings and has contributed certain efforts as part of the UN response to the pandemic. These include the rapid assessments on the coffee and wood processing sectors which contributed to the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA).

The project has collaborated closely with a number of ITC projects implemented in Laos including the Trade for Development (T4SD) and the EU Systematic Mechanism for Safer Travel (SYMST) project. With the SYMST project the collaboration covers conformity assessment, implementation of recommendations to improve the quality and SPS infrastructure, recommendations to develop crop related national standards, training on ISO/IEC 17025:2017, training on analysis of pesticide residue in fruits and vegetables, implementation of GAP and organic practices.

The project has collaborated with the Green To Compete (GTC) project to identify synergies and avoid duplication, for example by focusing on export development activities such as the training modules in processed wood. The project has liaised closely with EU projects, GIZ, AFD, USAID and other development partners in the development of the Roadmaps for coffee and wood processing. According to the survey data, many development partners have acknowledged the value of the wood processing and coffee roadmaps and are building their upcoming support based on the findings and proposed action plans of the roadmap. These include the GIZ through its FLEGT project and AFD support to the coffee sector.

According to the evidence¹⁹ the project has held meetings to identify synergies and avoid overlap with USAID Lao Business Environment (LBE) project, the World Bank LCT project and GIZ supported initiatives such as RELATED (Regional Economic Integration of Lao PDR into ASEAN, Trade and Entrepreneurship Development), COMPETE and ProFLEGT. However, more tangible collaboration has not materialised according to the evidence available.

The project has also engaged with the European Chamber of Commerce Laos (ECCIL) through workshops, in the development of awareness raising materials on the mandatory requirements to export to the EU, in the development of the quality champions pool, dialogue on COVID-19 issues and dissemination of ARISE+ information. Collaboration is also being explored with ECCIL to develop private consultancy services to provide certification in areas such as organic coffee, Fair Trade Practices, Global GAP, FSC in conjunction with certifying bodies in Thailand and Vietnam.

2.3 EVALUATION QUESTION 3

TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE THE ARISE+ LAO PDR PROJECT ACTIVITIES BEEN IMPLEMENTED IN COST-EFFECTIVE, TIME-EFFICIENT AND WELL-MANAGED MANNER?

The project and its activities are implemented in a cost-efficient manner, with value for money considerations. Clear stakeholder engagement mechanisms are in place across different levels and strong participatory approaches are in place. The quality of reports is satisfactory. Activities are timely although the project has experienced significant delays due to factors outside its control.

¹⁹ Document review of Project Six Monthly Progress reports and Annual Progress reports

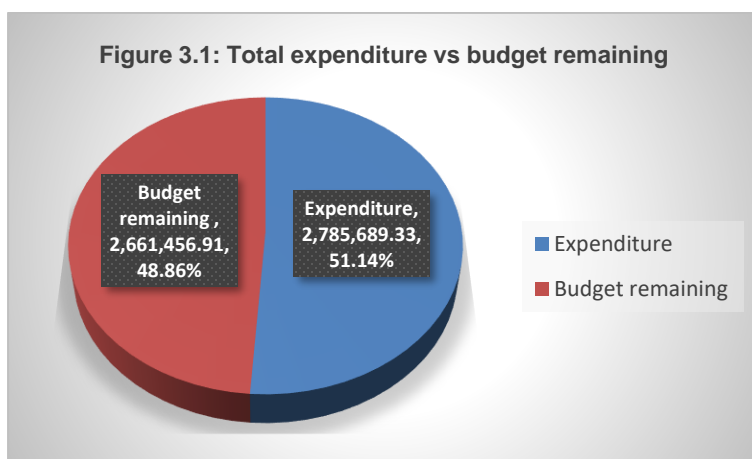
Judgement criteria (JC)	Sources of evidence	Judgement
JC 3.1 – The project is cost-effective and presents good value for money	Document review, survey questionnaire, KIIs	Positive
JC 3.2 – The project implementation shows clear stakeholder coordination, timely activity implementation and results-oriented management	Document review, survey questionnaire, KIIs	Positive

2.3.1 JC 3.1 – The project is cost-effective and presents good value for money

The project has been cost efficient in implementing activities and generating outputs as a result of good management practices, partnering with key stakeholder organisations where feasible and due to virtual activities due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
3 1.1 – Actual expenditure against the original budget	Document review KIIs	High	Expenditure as of 31 Oct 2021 is US\$2,785,689.33 or 51.14% out of total budget of US\$5,447,146.24
3.1.2 – expenditure breakdowns to examine main expenditures on priority areas/activities	Document review KIIs	Moderate	ER1: US\$448,146.34 ER2: US\$646,173.73 ER3: US\$850,120.88 Management: US\$501,044.34 NIU Coordinator: US\$127,040 Visibility: US\$30,922.68 Admin charges: US\$ 182,241.36 For further information please refer to Figure 3.2 below.
3 1.3 – remaining budget vs the remaining time for project implementation	Document review KIIs	High	48.86% of the budget (or US\$ 2,661,456.91) remains as of end October 2021 with 25% of the project duration or 12 months remaining.

The total budget of the ARISE+ Lao PDR project was €4,875,000 inclusive of €17,000 co-financing from the ITC. This was converted into US\$5,447,146.24 at the EU official exchange rate at that time. As of end October, 2021, when the MTE gathered data on expenditure, the total expenditure by the project was \$2,785,689.33. This accounted for 51.14% of the total project budget utilising 75% of the project time since its expected start date on 01 November 2018. The remaining budget of the project was \$2,661,456.91 which accounts for 48.86% of the total budget as of end October 2021, with 25% of the project duration (or 12 months) remaining.



The project faced a number of significant delays due to factors outside its control according to evidence from the progress reports and interviews with stakeholders. Firstly, there was a delay, of around 8 months, in the signing of the Financing Agreement between the EUD and the Government of Laos (GoL) from 01 November 2018 until 04 July 2019²⁰. The delay was because MOIC tried to persuade the EUD to adopt the same delivery modality as the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) managed by the World Bank since the MOIC was more familiar with that modality. However, since EUD had already chosen the ITC as the implementing agency there were administrative difficulties in changing the delivery mode. The EUD authorised ITC to start preparatory such as the conduct of export potential assessments, confirmation of sectors and conduct of consultations.

The other significant delay arose as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first wave in Laos took place from late March 2020 and a national lockdown was imposed from 30 March until early June 2020²¹. Despite the lockdown being lifted in early June 2020, many restrictions continued such as border closures, social distancing and movement control between provinces and districts. With the establishment of the National Taskforce Committee for COVID-19 Prevention and Control (COVID-19 Taskforce) to coordinate government response, many government stakeholders were involved in COVID-19 prevention efforts which enabled the NIU to update the ITC project team on COVID-19 effects and potential consequences for the project activities. Some activities such as those dealing with the food and drug administration had to be postponed due to their involvement in COVID-19 measures with the taskforce. During this period stakeholders were initially not available to engage through online events. As the realities that COVID-19 began to unravel including it's the relatively long timeline, hybrid meetings were implemented involving stakeholders gathering in a room, with a Lao facilitator and international experts engaging through online means. Certain technical activities such as those on trade statistics and big date had to be delayed as they were felt not suitable to be conducted through online means. The second wave took place from mid-April onwards late 2021. This was accompanied by intermittent lockdown and movement control between provinces and districts. According to respondents to the survey, the project team and stakeholders had to adopt to the new norm following the commencement of the pandemic including the use of hybrid and online meetings, training workshops and events. According to the survey respondents, despite the challenges, the project team adapted quickly to provide alternate approaches and adjust activities to suit the prevailing conditions.

Another source of delay has been the approval processes which can be very time consuming due to available capacities and workload of key departments in the MOIC²². Although the MOIC has appointed focal points from key departments, the focal points require feedback from other stakeholders within the government. Many of these focal points implement a number of projects. In some case, the focal points of the project have changed which has implications on the implementation period.

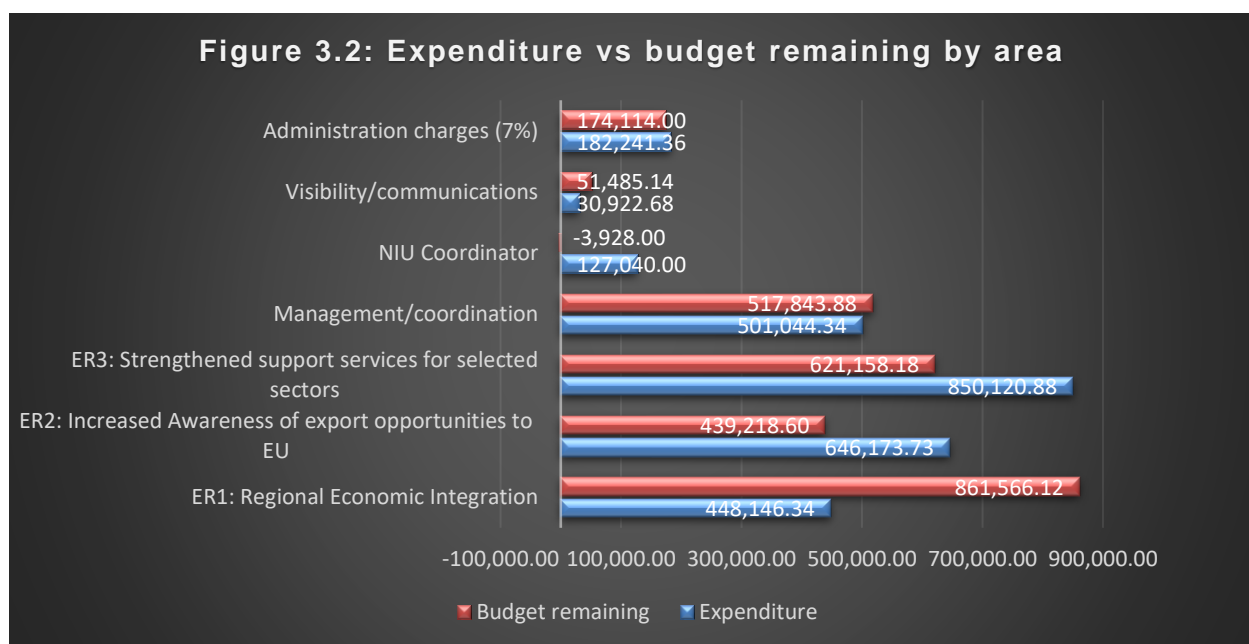
Figure 3.2 provides an overview of expenditure and budget remaining according to the 3 Expected Results and other budget lines.

²⁰ Interviews

²¹ MOH. (2020). National COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan for Health 2020-2025. Vientiane

²² Interviews

Figure 3.2: Expenditure vs budget remaining by area



ER1 has a significant proportion of its budget remaining (US\$861,566.12 or 65.78%). According to interviews with the project team this is in part due to the long approval process for the ATIGA Gap Assessment, recommendations and roadmap by the GoL due to the sensitive nature of the assessment which requires input from a range of government stakeholders including other line ministries. A number of sub-activities and tasks, focussing on conformity assessment, are on hold pending this approval. ER2 has 40.47% of its budget remaining (or US\$439,218.60) and ER3 has 42.22% of its budget remaining (or US\$621,158.18), which are in closer proportion to the overall project budget remaining (48.86%). Whilst the pandemic resulted in numerous challenges, it is also contributed to cost savings due to the shift from in-person to online and hybrid modalities. As a result, efficiencies and savings have been accrued by conducting online workshops, as opposed to physical events, and provision of inputs by international experts via remote means as opposed to having expert missions to the country.

The rate of activity implementation has accelerated since April 2021 according to the workplan in the PRC4 and interviews with stakeholders, with stronger stakeholder adaptation to virtual delivery modes as a result of the pandemic situation. However, it is highly unlikely the project will complete all its remaining activities to a sufficient level of quality by its current end date of 31 October 2022.

According to seven respondents from the survey, the project has implemented its activities in a cost-efficient manner, taking into account value for money considerations. These include identifying suitable offers from local vendors, engaging local experts alongside international experts, devolving management and coordination of specific activities to local stakeholders where feasible and screening workshop participants to ensure they are relevant candidates who can benefit from the events.

2.3.2 JC 3.2 – The project implementation shows clear stakeholder coordination, timely activity implementation and results-oriented management

According to the MTE assessment, the project implementation demonstrates clear stakeholder coordination mechanisms and roles, timely activity implementation and somewhat positive results-oriented management.

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
3.2.1 – roles of key players in project management	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs	High	Key stakeholder coordination mechanisms are in place (PCO, PRC, PEC) and roles of stakeholders including lead partners identified in specific sub-activities, activities
3.2.2. – timeliness of activities and outputs by the project team, taking into account the impact of COVID pandemic	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs	High	The rate of activity implementation by the project is in proportion to the approximately 14 months in delays experienced by the project due to factors outside its control
3.2.3 – quality of reports and monitoring	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs	High	Quality of reports is satisfactory, though more resources can be deployed for monitoring to support decision making.

Stakeholder coordination

The project in collaboration with the NIU at MOIC have established suitable coordination structures and mechanisms to enable project implementation, stakeholder coordination, decision making and broader coordination with other donors²³.

The project is implemented through a Project Coordination Office (PCO) at the MOIC and builds on the project design which recommended close embedding of the project team within the Lao government. The PCO was operated by three fulltime staff members including an Admin Assistant, National Project Officer and Senior Programme Coordinator, according to interviews with the EUD and the progress reports. The project also has a communication consultant who supports the PCO. The PCO has interacted closely with staff from the National Implementation Unit (NIU) of the MOIC. This has facilitated government and private sector stakeholder engagement and coordination. The ARISE+ Lao PDR project has appointed a coordinator working closely with the NIU team to coordinate with government agencies, particularly with various departments of MOIC. The Department of Import and Export (DIMEX) is primarily responsible for the implementation of the activities under ER1, the Department of Foreign Trade Policy (DFTP) is responsible for those under ER 2, while the Department of Trade Promotion (DTP) is responsible for those activities under ER3. The NIU works closely with the three departments and other relevant government agencies and private sector institutions to design and implement the ARISE+ project activities. The project is supported by ITC HQ.

A Project Review Committee (PRC) provides oversight, reviews project progress and endorses workplans. Four PRC meetings have been held (24 Jan 2020, July 2020, 10 December 2020, 15 July 2021) according to the documentation reviewed. The PRC is co-chaired by the EUD and a senior official from MOIC, such as the Deputy Director General and one on occasion the Vice-Minister. The PRC has been well attended by senior officials from key agencies. These include (DFTP), Department for Trade Promotion (DTP), Department of Industry and Handicraft (DOIH), Department for Import and Export (DIMEX) (from MOIC), DOA and DOF (from MAF), Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI), Lao Coffee Association (LCA), Wood Processing Association (WPA), Lao Furniture Association (LFA). The endorsement of workplans by the PRC includes agreement on lead organisations to implement sub-activities in cooperation with ITC. In addition, the NIU also organises annual consultations all trade-related projects through the Programme Executive Committee (PEC) meetings and invites the project to share the progress and experience. According to interviews and the project progress reports, the PEC led by NIU are

²³ Interviews, survey and document review of Project Six Monthly Progress reports and Annual Progress reports

an excellent mechanism to create awareness on trade-related initiatives in Lao PDR and to promote donor coordination and collaboration.

The EU Delegation to Lao PDR has also been playing an important role in the management of the ARISE+ Lao PDR project, through timely feedback on reports, approvals of administrative requests and participation in project events according to interviews.

Timely activity implementation

The rate of activity implementation by the project is in proportion to the approximately 14 months in delays experienced by the project according to a review of the project progress reports and workplans. As of October 2021, the status of the implementation of project activities can be summarized in table 3.2. Out of 15 activities, two activities have been completed, 11 are ongoing, one has been merged with another activity and one is yet to commence.

Result Area	Planned	Completed	Ongoing	Not yet started	Merged
ER1: Increased regional economic integration with ASEAN	3	1	2	0	0
ER2: Increased Awareness of export opportunities to EU	5	1	4	0	0
ER3: Strengthened support services for selected sectors	7	0	5	1	1
Sub-total	15	2	11	1	1

Source: information provided by the ITC project team

Table 3.2: The status of the implementation of the planned activities by results area (as of October 2021)

According to feedback from some respondents to the survey, the project is timely in its response however qualification on the manner in which the project responds was provided. There was no evidence from MTE interviews regarding timely activity implementation.

Quality of reports and monitoring

The timeliness and quality of the project progress reports is satisfactory according to a review of progress reports²⁴ and feedback from the EUD. Progress reports are of 2 kinds: annual reports and six-monthly reports. Both progress report provide an executive summary with an overview of key achievements and summary of project set-up and management results. This is followed by a detailed description of each activity including its aim, the methodology used, implementation progress, challenges and next steps. The annual progress report provides an update to the logframe against each of its indicators, which should be include in the six-monthly progress report. There is a lack of information regarding the achievement of outcomes or intermediate outcomes in both sets of progress reports. The project is managed by a professional team including a project manager from ITC HQ, a senior programme coordinator, supporting staff and a coordinator from the NIU. According to feedback from interviews and the survey, the quality of technical experts has been good and many positive comments were provided about the trainers.

The use of monitoring to support decision making is an important part of results-based management. Although the Action Document recommended sufficient project analytical capabilities for monitoring and planning of project activities, this is relatively limited in implementation²⁵. The project lacks a dedicated expert or resource person undertaking regular monitoring of the project. The project manager from ITC HQ undertakes monitoring and more recently a Junior expert from ITC's Asia Pacific office, is supporting the project in data collection

²⁴ Document review of 4 Project Six Monthly Progress reports and 3 Annual Progress reports

²⁵ Interviews and document review of 4 Project Six Monthly Progress reports and 3 Annual Progress reports

and compilation activities based on interviews with ITC. The project has limited data on some of its indicators such as number of stakeholder representatives with increased knowledge in a given area²⁶. The project implements formal assessments for certain training activities, such as those on FTNR and the quality champions, however data was not available for all training activities. Some workshop reports contained analysis of end of event feedback data, including indications of increased knowledge and awareness on certain topics. However, there was no evidence that pre-event tools were being used to capture awareness and knowledge of workshop participants before an event.

2.3.3 Other: Response to COVID-19

The project implemented a number of measures to mitigate the effects of COVID-19²⁷. These included procedures for remote working, conducting online events and social distancing measures during in-person activities. The project also implemented a number of COVID-19 response measures to support its target beneficiaries, demonstrating good adaptive management practices. Examples of COVID-19 response measures include:

- A survey of MSMEs covering how they were affected by the pandemic
- COVID-19 Business Impact Assessments for coffee and wood processing sub-sectors
- COVID-19 adjustments to the sectoral roadmaps in coffee and wood processing, to strengthen resilience and risk management, including identification of opportunities from digitalisation
- Increased consultations on e-commerce and draft concept note
- A chapter on the impact of COVID-19 in the Foreign Trade Negotiations Roadmap
- COVID-19 responses in conformity assessment consultations and action plan
- Updates to the study “Trade implications of Lao PDR’s graduation from LDC status”, reflecting revised GDP growth due to the pandemic
- Support the COVID-19 Business Impact Survey report conducted by LNCCI

At an organisational level ITC has also implemented initiatives to support MSMEs across the world in addressing some of the effects of the pandemic through initiatives such as a 15-points guideline, a website sharing activities and blogs, a website tracking COVID-19 temporary trade measures and publications.

2.4 EVALUATION QUESTION 4

TO WHAT EXTENT IS ARISE+ LAO PDR LIKELY TO ACHIEVE THE EXPECTED OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES AND RESULTS OF THE PROJECT, PARTICULARLY IN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC AGENCIES AND PRIVATE SECTOR AND IN THE CONTRIBUTION TO THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ARISE+ REGIONAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ASEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION?

The project is likely to achieve its expected outputs and outcomes if the recommended extension is granted to allow for sufficient implementation time given the substantial delays due to factors outside the control of the project. The outputs are of good quality, are not delivered in isolation and are reinforced or supported by other outputs in a strong participatory manner. These contribute to the overall effectiveness and likelihood of achieving the expected outcomes.

²⁶ Document review of 4 Project Six Monthly Progress reports and 3 Annual Progress reports

²⁷ Interviews, survey and document review of 4 Project Six Monthly Progress reports and 3 Annual Progress reports

Judgement criteria (JC)	Sources of evidence	Judgement
JC 4.1 – Trade capacity of MOIC and other government agencies for trade preference in goods (ATIGA)	Document review, survey questionnaire	Positive
JC.4.2 – Export readiness and potential in the target sectors (coffee and processed woods)	Document review, survey questionnaire, KIIs	Positive
JC.4.3 – Readiness for the LDC graduation (EBA, DFQF, GSP and GSP+)	Document review, survey questionnaire	Positive

2.4.1 JC 4.1 – Trade capacity of MOIC and other government agencies for trade preference in goods (ATIGA)

The MTE assessment is positive on the trade capacity of MOIC and other government agencies for ATIGA contributions made by the project based on the evidence that is presented in this section below. The assessment based on the indicators from the evaluation matrix are summarised in the table below.

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
4.1.1 – number of ATIGA measures implemented that were supported by ARISE+ Lao PDR	Document review,	Moderate	Consensus with GoL was forged for 4 measures with the support of this Action
4 1.2 – Number of trained officials with increased knowledge on trade preference for LDCs	Document review	Low	29 participants at training on ITC market analysis tool ²⁸
4 1.3 – More trade officials with enhanced skills to deal with trade policy & FTA negotiations	Document review, Survey questionnaire	Low	50

Table 3.3 below provides an overview of relevant logframe indicators relevant to this judgement criteria, including targets and achievements. The achievements are based on the logframe in the draft Annual Progress report for 2021, except where otherwise stated.

Outcome Indicator	Target	Achievement
Number of recommendations on ATIGA and AEC Blueprint 2025 related trade policy and regulatory measures for which a consensus was forged with the support of this Action	8 recommendations	4 recommendations
Output indicators	Target	Achievement
Number of recommendations produced in order to implement ATIGA and related AEC Blueprint commitments in sectors with intraregional export growth potential, with the support of this Action.	10	24
Number of ATIGA and related AEC Blueprint 2025 gaps identified	15	18
Number of national standards adopted, harmonised, promoted with the support of this Action	3	2

²⁸ There was no evidence available regarding the number of participants with increased skills and capacity as a result of the workshop

Number of policy makers/private sector representatives reporting increased knowledge on trade policy/trade facilitation/ quality related issues	300	50 ²⁹
Number of conformity assessment bodies strengthened	2	4
Number of national trade policy/negotiation document developed with the support of this Action	1	1

Table 3.3: overview of indicators, targets and achievements for ER1

Under activity 1.1 a Gap analysis of ATIGA implementation in Lao PDR was carried out across the 11 ATIGA chapters, along with recommendations and a roadmap for implementation which includes a monitoring framework³⁰. In response to the **output target of 15 priority ATIGA gaps identified, the project has identified 18 ATIGA gaps**. In response to the **output target of 10 recommendations produced to address gaps in ATIGA, the project has developed 24 recommendations across seven areas**. These recommendations aim to help Laos better align itself in ASEAN economic integration efforts and enhance the business environment so Lao enterprises can benefit from regional and potentially international value chains. Follow-up action is planned through a validation event.

A Foreign Trade Negotiation Roadmap (FTNR) has been finalised and validated with stakeholders through an event chaired by the DFTP Director General³¹. The FTNR aims to promote Lao PDR's economic interests in the ASEAN economic integration process and in negotiating trade agreements. The FTNR will be translated to Lao language. The operationalisation of the FTNR has been further enhanced through a training programme on trade negotiations for Lao policy makers. This included development of training materials, training of trainers and training of provincial officials. The output indicator for this area is number of policy makers/private sector representatives reporting increased knowledge on trade policy, trade facilitation and quality related issues, with a target of 300 including 25% women. This indicator is more relevant as an outcome indicator. Although the project reported³² a figure of 789 including 37% women this is the total number of participants at events and does not reflect participants with increased knowledge. **23 trainers passed** including 15 trainers from GoL and 8 trainers from the Economic Research Institute for Industry and Trade (ERIIT)³³. This was followed by training of 50 officers from national and provincial government through 2 provincial level training sessions delivered by the trained trainers supported by the ITC expert remotely. The 2 provincial level training sessions were held in the Vangvieng and Thakek districts on multilateral and regional trading arrangements with **27 participants passing** and 12 failing. There was no additional evidence available on the number of participants with increased knowledge on trade policy, trade facilitation and quality related issues.

A regulatory assessment for transport and tourism sectors has been carried out, which includes regulatory reforms needed to meet commitments under the ASEAN Trade in Services Agreement (ATISA) which has been signed by Lao PDR. The drafting of four eCommerce guides are in progress covering International Trade Aspects Of Ecommerce, Ecommerce Transactions, Data Protection and Privacy and Consumer Protection.

²⁹ Based on evidence available to the MTE

³⁰ Document review of 4 Project Six Monthly Progress reports and 3 Annual Progress reports

³¹ Interviews, survey and document review of 4 Project Six Monthly Progress reports and 3 Annual Progress reports

³² Draft Progress Report / Annual Work Plan, 5 January 2021 – 31 December 2021

³³ Progress Report / Annual Work Plan, 5 January 2020 – 31 December 2020

A gap assessment of the Lao PDR conformity assessment was carried out by the project³⁴. This led to the formulation of 17 recommendations with an action plan for follow-up activities to be implemented by key stakeholder agencies. As part of the project demand driven provisions, the implementation of specific priority recommendations, requested by stakeholder agencies, will be supported by the project. The project has promoted **two national product standards** to date in comparison to its target of three national standards adopted, harmonised and promoted. The two standards are for roasted coffee and for green coffee beans.

The findings presented above indicate that the project methodology links sub-activities and activities with each other in a coherent manner. Assessments and gap analysis done in some sub-activities contribute to the identification of recommendations which are prioritised by stakeholders and lead to the design of follow-up activity. This ensures a strong needs-oriented approach is adopted in the implementation of sub-activities and activities. As described above, there is evidence that most outputs are not delivered in isolation but are reinforced or supported by other outputs, such as capacity building or knowledge products. This in turn contributes to the overall effectiveness of outputs.

2.4.2 JC.4.2 – Export readiness and potential in the target sectors (coffee and processed wood)

The MTE assessment is positive on the contributions made by the project for export readiness and potential in the target sectors based on the evidence that is presented in this section below. The assessment based on the indicators from the evaluation matrix are summarised in the table below.

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
4.2.1 – increased exports in targeted sectors (value or %)	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs	Moderate	Limited evidence of increase in exports in the coffee and wood processing sectors. Some wood processing companies have indicated the potential to increase exports to Thailand has materialised as a result of GMP training from project.
4.2.2 – usefulness of the sector roadmaps reported by exporters	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs	High	Roadmaps are viewed as strategically significant outputs as they provides credible, evidence-based strategies to develop the export potential of these sectors.
4.2.3 – EBA/DFQF utilisation rate by Lao exporters, particularly the targeted sectors	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs	Moderate	276 participants (44% women) trained on EBA but no evidence available on utilisation rate. To increase utilisation systemic changes are required including improving quality and capital investments.

Table 3.4 below provides an overview of relevant indicators under this judgement criteria, targets and achievements. The achievements are based on the logframe in the draft progress report for 2021³⁵, where data was available.

³⁴ Draft Progress Report / Annual Work Plan, 5 January 2021 – 31 December 2021

³⁵ As above

Outcome Indicator	Target	Achievement
Value of Laos' wood processing and coffee exports to ASEAN (in USD)	Increase of exports to ASEAN in wood processing and coffee by 2022	Trade data for 2021 is not available
Value of Laos' wood processing and coffee exports to EU (in USD)	Increase of exports to EU in wood processing and coffee by 2022	Trade data for 2021 is not available
Value of Laos' wood processing and coffee exports to China (in USD)	Increase of exports to China in wood processing and coffee by 2022	Trade data for 2021 is not available
Value of Laos' wood processing and coffee exports to Rest of World (in USD)	Increase of exports to ROW in wood processing and coffee by 2022	Trade data for 2021 is not available
Output indicators	Target	Achievement
Number of publications on export markets	3	6
Number of exporters reporting increased knowledge on export management	300	Evidence not available
Number of public and private sector stakeholders reporting increased knowledge on benefits of EBA scheme	140 (including 25% women)	276 participants (44% women) but evidence not available on participants with increased knowledge
Number of stakeholders confirming understanding of key quality related market requirements and standards for the private sector	10 quality champions 10 awareness raising activities involving 100 individuals on EU & regional quality requirements	21 active quality champions (5 women) 1 awareness raising with 21 participants (8 women)
Availability of online tool with information on regional and EU quality requirements	1	1 being finalised
Number of options for future preferential access to EU markets assessed	3	Evidence not available

Table 3.4: overview of indicators, targets and achievements for ER2

The expected outcome of ER2 is increased awareness on trade preferences for exports, including to the European Union, with greater use of Everything But Arms (EBA), and on the requirements for placing products on the EU market; advanced preparation of Lao PDR to shift to a new trade preference scheme (post-EBA). A number of outputs have materialised under ER2 and ER3 which are improving the export readiness of Lao PDR in the target sectors of coffee and processed wood³⁶.

At a policy and institutional level, major outputs were the Wood Processing Sector Export Roadmap (2021-2025) and the Coffee Sector Export Roadmap (2021-2025) which were finalised and endorsed by the MOIC Minister. According to the evidence³⁷ these roadmaps have been developed in a participatory manner with stakeholders from these 2 sectors including government and private sector representatives. A review of these Roadmaps showed they were of high quality covering the global market and trends, the status of these sectors in Lao PDR, sectoral challenges, market opportunities for Lao PDR, strategic options or objectives and a plan of action to achieve these strategies with lead agencies and supporting partners identified. Following the development of the roadmaps, training events for the coffee and wood processing sub-sectors have been held.

Under activity 2.2.1, an EU EBA Business Guide has been developed which provides general guidance on Lao PDR's preferential market accessing to the EU under the Everything But Arms regime and specific conditions and opportunities for five product sectors (agricultural products, processed food products, textiles and garments, footwear, and wood products). The guide is expected to be translated to Lao and used for awareness creation events linked to activity 2.2.4.

³⁶ Interviews, survey and document review of Project Six Monthly Progress reports and Annual Progress reports

³⁷ Interviews, survey and document review of Project Six Monthly Progress reports and Annual Progress reports

In the area of quality, a number of measures have been developed to better support businesses in the adoption of quality standards and understanding of export market requirements. A Quality Compass online tool is under development to provide information on EU market requirements, standards and other market needs for coffee and wood products. **A pool of 25 national quality champions** (including 11 women) to mentor and train MSMEs in the coffee and wood processing sectors has been established. The quality champions have undergone training covering six workshops. The training programme covers quality related topics such as international quality requirements, WTO TBT/SPS agreements, EU Traces, conformity assessment, national quality infrastructure and services. According to evidence from the 4th PRC Progress Report, **21 out of the 25 quality champions** are active. The training of Quality Champions has been followed by pilot quality improvement initiatives for MSMEs in collaboration with LNCCI. An eLearning course to support private sector export is also under development with the close collaboration of LNCCI. This covers regulatory and procedural requirements for export including to ASEAN and EU markets. Once the course has been developed it will be translated to Lao language, and LNCCI trainers will be trained to offer this course to MSMEs.

Other training and capacity building includes:

- Needs assessment on strengthening data collection and statistical production capacities and design of a five day training workshop.
- Two training workshops were held on international marketing of wood products and sustainable forest management and supply according to EU market requirements. The workshops were attended by 24 participants from government and private sector. These workshops are being supported by development of two modules covering documentation requirements of EU markets and FSC certification to facilitate export to the EU.
- A training workshop on establishing organic coffee farms was conducted for 70 participants from Lao cooperatives, small businesses and farmers

Coffee sector - emerging outcomes

There is evidence that the project outputs are contributing to emerging outcomes in the coffee sector. Testimonies from interviews³⁸ suggest that the training provided by ARISE+ is effective and is being applied by actors across the different stages of the coffee value chain. According to these informants, the project has engaged the different actors of the coffee value chain in Laos through the technical assistance and know-how provided. These include the smallholder coffee farmers, medium scale coffee farmers/companies, fertilizer producers, coffee associations and also government agencies. By engaging with the coffee value chain, the project has demonstrated a holistic approach to strengthening support services.

The project outputs have contributed to improve the quality of coffee bean production according to the evidence³⁹. Coffee producers expressed that the biggest challenge they faced was the quality control of the organic coffee beans including pest control. According to these informants the training programmes and Quality Champions programme have started to improve the of quality coffee production for the export market. The training has helped some farmers address challenges commonly faced in coffee such as worms and diseases that infect the coffee plants, for which farmers have been against using pesticides as a principal. Informants shared that training provided by ARISE+ was very relevant to fill the knowledge and technical gap they faced. One participant said that the knowledge and new techniques learned on how to harvest and dry coffee beans will help them improve their organic farming methods and yields. Informants⁴⁰ requested for training

³⁸ Interviews with 5 coffee businesses, representatives from the Lao Coffee Association and LNCCI

³⁹ As above

⁴⁰ As above

on training on pest control using sustainable methods and sustainable production techniques to cover processing including drying of coffee beans. They expect it would eventually enable Laos to export better quality coffee at higher prices to existing markets such as EU, USA and Japan. An interviewee mentioned, *“Yes, we gained knowledge and skills on quality control and then applied into our business operations. Our staff and I learn how to check the coffee bean supplied by local small farmers. There are many benefits from the training course.”*

The trainers were of high quality and demonstrated subject matter expertise that participants found beneficial according to informants⁴¹. A participant from a private sector company mentioned that as a result of the training provided, she was able to share her new gained knowledge on the definition, standard and quality control in relation to fertilizer and coffee production. Coffee associations have said that the trainings provided by ARISE+ have helped their members enhance their knowledge about quality and standards. This includes standards on food safety and exporting coffee with GQM. The high quality of the trainers engaged contributed to the effectiveness of the training provided, participants added that *“the experts and trainers supported by ITC are highly qualified to deliver the training for our members”*.

The ARISE+ Project TA also appealed to larger Laotian coffee companies with an annual turnover of USD5 million who felt that the QC Training provided was beneficial to the company that currently uses a software that offers traceability system which helps to record and profile members and engages 300 people for monitor and meet International Control Systems⁴². The company expressed that the training provided by ARISE+ is relevant in supporting its focus on building quality infrastructure and capacity building through awareness of international trade practices.

Wood processing sector - emerging outcomes

The training provided by ARISE+ is relevant to the wood processing sector actors in Laos as it helps to strengthen product quality, support market access and linkages⁴³. The support provided in drafting the timber roadmap and guidelines for the timber industry association are beneficial to the members of the two associations. The ongoing E-learning course provides inputs and creates awareness on how to access international market and exportation. Currently, Thailand is the main importer of timber/ timber products from Laos.

The training provided by ARISE+ is viewed by the informants⁴⁴ as comprehensive and valuable in increasing the knowledge and skills of Laos timber industry actors in processing strategies, steps of exporting and packaging. The training also helps businesses respond to market demand for 'Fair Trade' products by increasing understanding of the concept. The sharing of lessons learnt, and benefits is seen as very useful. Training of trainer activities were requested for wood product development by informants⁴⁵.

The wood processing roadmap maps the path for improvement from primary industries to the modernization of processing industries⁴⁶. The roadmap has been described by informants as an important document that offers practical solutions to many key constraints faced by the wood processing sector. It highlights root causes to several problems and provides recommendations. Suggested approaches include the use of more sustainable sources of raw material such as from rubber plantations and exploring the possibility of using less known timber species. The engagement of the EU Ambassador at the ground level visiting the timber factories in Laos and

⁴¹ Interviews with 5 coffee businesses, representatives from the Lao Coffee Association and LNCCI

⁴² Interview with coffee business

⁴³ Interviews with representatives from the Lao Furniture Association, Lao Timber Processing Association and the Department of Industry and Handicraft from MOIC

⁴⁴ Interviews with representatives from Lao Furniture Association, Lao Timber Processing Association and the Department of Industry and Handicraft of MOIC

⁴⁵ As above

⁴⁶ Wood Processing Sector Export Roadmap (2021-2025)

promoting the adoption of the FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) was well accepted by the stakeholders as a practical idea. This approach was effective in creating buy in and mutual trust between the EU and local stakeholders in the timber industry.

2.4.3 JC.4.3 – Readiness for the LDC graduation (DFQF, GSP and GSP+)

The MTE assessment is positive on the contributions made by the project for readiness for LDC graduation. The assessment based on the indicators from the evaluation matrix are summarised in the table below.

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
4.3.1 – understanding of the impact of the LDC graduation (no DFQF/EBA) for Lao PDR; Needs for GSP, GSP+ & FTAs with other countries	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs	Moderate	48 companies and associations reporting increasing knowledge on international competitiveness (59 participants including 12 women)
4.3.2. – Capacity for FTA negotiations after the graduation of Lao PDR from LDC status	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs	Moderate	Pool of 23 trained trainers and 27 trainees on multilateral and regional trading agreements.

The above table indicates a somewhat positive judgement by the MTE against the specific indicators from the evaluation matrix. However, **the findings that are presented in the rest of the section below provides additional evidence to form a more positive judgement.**

Table 3.5 below provides an overview of relevant indicators under this judgement criteria, targets and achievements. The achievements are based on the logframe in the draft Annual Progress report for 2021, where data was available.

Output indicators	Target	Achievement
Number of sector export strategies updated	2	2 for coffee and wood processing
Number of wood processing companies having made changes to their operations after receiving training on Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS), design and technology and quality management (disaggregated by sex of training participant)	25 reporting enhanced competitiveness through TLAS, design and technology training	8 wood processing companies reporting increased knowledge on sustainable sourcing of raw materials and identification of new markets (34 participants including 12 women)
Number of agro-based companies and suppliers having made changes to their business operations for increased international competitiveness as a result of training and advisory support (e.g. in areas standards compliance, climate resilience, quality management and marketing (disaggregated by sex of training participant)	120 (including 25% women)	48 companies and associations reporting increasing knowledge on international competitiveness (59 participants including 12 women)
Number of enterprises having made changes to their business operations for increased international competitiveness as a result of the project's support (disaggregated by sex of training participant).	100 (25% women)	No data available
Percentile share of enterprises supported by this Action that are owned, operated and controlled by women reporting improved international competitiveness as a result of the project's support	25%	No data available

Table 3.5: overview of indicators, targets and achievements for ER3

In activity 2.2.2 an assessment of the impact of tariff changes, as a result of graduating from LDC status, was conducted revealing a loss of 102 Million US\$⁴⁷. The study also recommended three strategies to mitigate this loss, including attaining GSP+ status, targeted trade promotion such as rice exports to the EU and food exports to Japan and increased business and export diversification. Awareness creation activities are to be carried out under activity 2.2.5. Under activity 2.2.3 capacity building has been carried out through a workshop on export potential analysis and ITCs market analysis tools which had 29 participants. There was no evidence available regarding the number of participants with increased skills and capacity as a result of the workshop. A more advanced workshop, building on the first workshop, was planned to focus on advanced export potential analysis and trade policy modelling.

Under activity 3.6 the study ‘Leveraging export potential and tariff advantages to attract foreign direct investment into Lao PDR: Wood processing and coffee’ has been published. Draft investment profiles for the wood processing and coffee sectors have also been developed which include a country and sector analysis, value chain segments, investment opportunities along the value chain and procedural and legal guidelines for investment in Lao PDR. These provide relevant and informative, guides for potential international investors to invest in the wood processing and coffee sectors of Lao.

2.4.4 Intervention logic

The intervention logic contains some structural issues. A number of indicators at output level, such as those dealing with increased knowledge by stakeholder organisations in different topics, are more suitable as outcome indicators. Some of the outcome indicators, for the specific objective, dealing with increased exports by the wood processing and coffee sectors are more relevant as impact indicators. The changes required for Laos to increase its exports in these sectors are long-term and systemic in nature and it is not realistic for a project to achieve these its own. It is part of a longer-term process that requires government, private sector, other development partners and financing institutes, with the project implementing some catalytic actions to initiate the process.

2.5 EVALUATION QUESTION 5

TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE ARISE+ LAO PDR PROJECT GENERATED EARLY EFFECTS ON THE TRADE POLICY CAPACITY OF THE GOVERNMENT AND ON THE EXPORT POTENTIALS OF THE TARGETED SECTORS (I.E. COFFEE AND WOOD PROCESSING)?

A core group of GoL trainers passed training of trainer programmes on multilateral and regional trading agreements. They have successfully demonstrated their trainer capacity by training two groups of government officials through provincial workshops. There was limited evidence of impact in terms of increase in exports in the coffee and wood processing sectors, which also require shifts towards value addition and capital investment. Some companies have indicated the potential to increase processed timber exports to Thailand due to training in GMP.

Judgement criteria (JC)	Sources of evidence	Judgement
JC 5.1 – The government shows a capacity increase in conducting trade policy and trade negotiations related to the support provided by the project	Document review, survey questionnaire	Positive

⁴⁷ Study on trade implications of Lao PDR’s graduation from LDC status, ARISE Plus Lao PDR

JC 5.2 – The targeted sectors show an increase in exports of products to EU and international markets through the support of the project	Document review, survey questionnaire, KIIs	Moderate, with one potential example
JC 5.3 – An increase in the exports of the sectors/products targeted by the project is likely to generate income for those people benefited from the project, leading to poverty reduction	Document review, survey questionnaire	Negative

2.5.1 JC 5.1 – The government shows a capacity increase in conducting trade policy and trade negotiations related to the support provided by the project

The MTE judgement is positive that the government shows a capacity increase in conducting trade policy and trade negotiations related to the support provided by the project.

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
5.1.1 – # of government officials with increased trade capacity in conducting trade policy and trade negotiations	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs	Low	Pool of 23 trained trainers and 27 trainees on multilateral and regional trading agreements.

23 participants passed the assessment on multilateral and regional trading agreements, as trainers. This was followed by 2 provincial level training sessions held in the Vangvieng and Thakek districts on multilateral and regional trading arrangements with **27 participants passing** and 12 failing. There was no additional evidence available on the number of participants with increased trade capacity in conducting trade policy and trade negotiation.

2.5.2 JC 5.2 – The targeted sectors show an increase in exports of products to EU and international markets through the support of the project

The MTE judgement is moderate that the targeted sectors show an increase in exports of products to EU and international markets through the support of the project with one potential example. The MTE judgement, based on the evidence, is that this is a long-term process that requires systemic changes.

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
5.2.1 – Volume or value of the increased exports of the targeted sectors/products	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs	Low	Long-term process with systemic changes required including capital investment. One potential increase in exports in the area of wood processing to Thailand.

There is limited evidence of impact in terms of increase in exports in the coffee and wood processing sectors. The data currently available on export statistics is from 2020 which was a difficult year for Lao businesses due to the pandemic. The objective to increase exports to EU and international markets, in coffee and wood processing is part of a long-term process that requires a systemic change in the business environment and value chains. It requires investment to add value such as for example moving away from the current focus of exporting green coffee beans, without value addition, to regional markets such as Vietnam and focussing on value addition through coffee bean drying, processing and GI branding. However, according to interviews, there is regular demand for green Lao coffee beans from neighbouring countries and most producers prefer this approach as it requires limited capital expenditure and operating costs. According to LNCCI, the appetite for borrowing and new investments by Lao businesses is low due to the broader economic challenges faced by Lao PDR as a result of the pandemic. The project is attempting to undertake direct marketing for Lao companies to engage with buyers and

intermediaries in export markets⁴⁸. Some of these activities have been delayed, due to the pandemic, as they required trade missions or business-matchmaking to take place through physical events⁴⁹.

In the wood processing sector, according to the interviews, several companies experience difficulties in selling domestically and exporting due to challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. Some companies face challenges in dealing with complex government regulations to export and to obtain accurate export market information. Evidence from interviews suggest that the project has been effective in initiating some potential impacts in the wood processing area. Based on the feedback received it was shared that the training provided by the project has helped some association members to improve their operations and increase their potential exports into Thailand through the adoption of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP). However, as highlighted in the Roadmap there are major systemic changes required in order to increase wood exports. Investment in technology and equipment, as well as new approaches are required. This necessitates a long-term process for the shift to take place.

2.5.3 JC 5.3 – An increase in the exports of the sectors/products targeted by the project is likely to generate income for those people benefited from the project, leading to poverty reduction

The MTE judgement is negative on this JC as there have been no tangible increases in exports to assess if they have led to generate income for those people benefited from the project, leading to poverty reduction.

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
5.3.1 – Number of people with the increased income from the interventions of the project activities (difficult to gather the data)	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIs	Low	No evidence. Requires systemic changes including capital investments to increase exports, before impact on income and poverty reduction can be affected positively.

There is no data available on the number of people with the increased income from the interventions of the project activities. Thus, the MTE is not able to make an assessment for this judgement criteria.

2.6 EVALUATION QUESTION 6

TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE ARISE+ LAO PDR PROJECT TAKEN OR PLANNED STRATEGIES AND MEASURES TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY OR TO INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF ACHIEVING SUSTAINABILITY OF THE TARGETED GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND PRIVATE SECTOR INSTITUTIONS AFTER THE COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT?

The project has emphasised capacity building of key government agencies and private sector intermediaries which provides good institutional sustainability prospects. Capacity building activities are comprehensive in many areas, involving gap analysis, prioritisation of areas, training of trainers, training of staff, development of training materials and in some cases additional knowledge products. There are prospects for financial sustainability of outputs like training materials, guidelines and roadmaps through operating budgets of the lead GoL organisations or generation of fees through provision of services to the private sector by private sector intermediaries like LNCCI. Several policy instruments and guidelines were developed by the project, with good potential for policy sustainability.

⁴⁸ Draft Progress Report / Annual Work Plan, 5 January 2021 – 31 December 2021

⁴⁹ Interviews with ITC and Lao Coffee Association

Judgement criteria (JC)	Sources of evidence	Judgement
JC 6.1 – Institutional and financial sustainability mechanisms to continue the results and benefits of the project	Document review, survey questionnaire, KIIs	Positive
JC 6.2 – Policy and procedural sustainability mechanisms to continue the results and benefits of the project	Document review, survey questionnaire, KIIs	Positive

2.6.1 JC 6.1 – Institutional and financial sustainability mechanisms to continue the results and benefits of the project

The MTE assessment is positive on the institutional and financial sustainability mechanisms that are being implemented which have prospects to continue the results and benefits of the project. The assessment based on the indicators from the evaluation matrix are summarised in the table below.

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
6.1.1 – number of officials of the targeted institutions (MOIC in particular) trained with increased knowledge and skills	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs	Moderate	Pool of 23 trained trainers and 27 trainees who passed training on multilateral and regional trading agreements. 15 trainers trained in EU EBA Business guide (no evidence on increased knowledge)
6.1.2. – number of technical staff (standards, metrology and SPS) trained with increased skills in the targeted institutions	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs	Moderate	21 active quality champions. Training of trainers from DOSM, LNAB, LMC & NBSM, but no evidence available on number of staff with increased skills as a result of project training.

The above table indicates a somewhat positive judgement by the MTE against the specific indicators from the evaluation matrix. However, **the findings that are presented in the rest of the section below provides additional evidence to form the positive judgement.**

The project has engaged a range of stakeholders in the implementation of its activities. Coordination of these stakeholders is done through the official structures of the Lao PDR government, through the NIU of the MOIC. In the MOIC, the Department of Import and Export (DIMEX), the Department of Foreign Trade Policy (DFTP), the Department of Trade Promotion (DTP), the Department of Industry and Handicrafts (DOIH), and the Department of Standards and Metrology (DOSM) are the key departments to lead the implementation of the ARISE+ project activities. The Department of Agriculture (DOA) and the Department of Forestry (DOF) are the two departments under the MOAF to actively participate in the project implementation. The Department of Food and Drugs (DFD) under the Ministry of Health is also participating in the ARISE+ implementation. In addition to these key government agencies, LNCCI, Lao Coffee Association, Lao Wood Processing Association, Lao Furniture Association are also engaged in the design and implementation of the specific project activities.

Evidence⁵⁰ indicates that the project approach places emphasis on institutional capacity building of key government agencies and private sector intermediaries. This is done both directly through capacity building activities and indirectly by partnering with lead organisations to implement

⁵⁰ Survey, interviews with government and document review of 4 Project Six Monthly Progress reports and 3 Annual Progress reports

specific activities, through the formal structures of the government, which will support the sustainability of project outputs and outcomes. Capacity building activities in many areas use an integrated approach involving gap analysis, recommendations, identification of priority recommendations, implementation of priority recommendations, development of training materials, training of trainers followed by training using the trained trainers. This approach is evident in areas such as foreign trade negotiations, strengthening quality in coffee and wood processing, promotion of the benefits of the EBA preferential regime, improving quality standards and tariff assessments preparing Laos for LDC graduation.

In the area of foreign trade negotiations, the project has collaborated closely with DFTP in the development and validation of the FTNR chaired by the Director General, followed by development of training materials, training of trainers and training of government officials⁵¹. The ownership of these outputs by DFTP, including its senior management provides a strong institutional mechanism to sustain these outputs once the project ends. The establishment of a pool of **23 trainers**, who passed the train the trainers programme on foreign trade negotiations provides a viable capacity building measure for sustainability as they can replicate and extend the skills learnt across additional government staff at national and provincial level. The trainers have experience in delivering training to government staff through the conduct of 2 provincial level training sessions on multilateral and regional trading arrangements with **27 participants passing**. Financial sustainability for this area is likely to come from the operating budget of the DFTP.

In the area of quality, the establishment of an online Quality Compass tool and an eLearning course which will be hosted and operated by LNCCI as a service for its business members. The Lao Coffee Association, Lao Wood Processing Association, Lao Furniture Association who are constituent members of the LNCCI have also being close engaged by the project⁵². This provides strong institutional and financial mechanisms to sustain these knowledge-based resources for continued use by MSMEs. Linked to these outputs are the establishment of a pool of Quality Champions who have been trained to mentor and guide MSMEs in implementing quality measures. 21 of the Quality Champions remain active after over a year of being trained. The Quality Champions have strong prospects for sustainability and replication of project outputs. They were carefully selected based on their experience and motivation in implementing quality measures in the selected sectors and intend to offer their services to MSMEs on a fee charging basis once the project ends. This provides another financial avenue to sustain the quality related outputs of the project.

The project has strengthened four agencies involved in conformity assessment. These include through a training of trainers workshop on ISO9001:2015 and ISO14001: 2015 for DOSM, the Lao National Accreditation Bureau (LNAB) and other quality agencies. This has some prospects for sustainability in creating awareness amongst government and private organisations on these quality management systems, beyond the completion of the project. The project is supporting the establishment of SOPs for standards conformance and this together with associated capacity building in the four agencies is expected to remain sustainable.

The outputs in the EBA area such as the EU EBA Business Guide were developed with close collaboration of the DTP, which provides the main institutional sustainability. The guide has been launched at an event will also be translated into Lao language. A training of trainers workshop was conducted for 15 participants from DTP, DIMEX, ERIIT, LNCCI, ECCIL, DFTP and the Department of SME promotion⁵³. This provides a pool of trainers within structures of several organisations that can promote, sustain and extend the EBA guide to MSMEs as part of their institutional mandate. Follow up workshops for MSMEs are planned using the trained trainers.

⁵¹ As above

⁵² Survey, interviews and document review of 4 Project Six Monthly Progress reports and 3 Annual Progress reports

⁵³ Draft Annual Progress report for 2021

2.6.2 JC 6.2 – Policy and procedural sustainability mechanisms to continue the results and benefits of the project

The MTE assessment is positive on the policy and procedural sustainability mechanisms which have prospects to continue the results and benefits of the project. The assessment based on the indicators from the evaluation matrix are summarised in the table below.

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
6.2.1 – number of roadmaps continuing to provide guidance to exporters and policy makers	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs	High	3 including the FTNR, coffee and wood processing export roadmaps
6.2.2. – number of standards that will continue to be adopted and used by stakeholders and private sector	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs	High	2 standards for roasted coffee and for green coffee beans

Additional evidence which informed the judgement of the MTE is presented below.

A number of policy instruments and guidelines have been developed by the project, which have good potential for policy sustainability as they aim to support the commitments of Lao PDR to various ASEAN agreements and the participation of Lao PDR in regular ASEAN meetings. The Foreign Trade Negotiations Roadmap (FTNR) from 2021-2025 was developed in response a request from the DFTP to support Laos in its ASEAN economic integration process and negotiations for trade agreements. According to stakeholders interviewed there is political will to continue this process, beyond the project duration as part of preparations to support the graduation of Laos from LDC status. The FTNR has the potential to be used, as a resource to support Lao PDR in its engagement, through regular formal meetings with ASEAN sectoral bodies such as the High-Level Task Force on ASEAN Economic Integration (HLTF-EI), the Senior Economic Officials Meeting, ASEAN Trade Facilitation Joint Consultative Committee (ATF-JCC) and the Consultative Committee on the Implementation of ATIGA (CCA). The four e-commerce guides aim to increase awareness and build capacity on e-commerce amongst the public and private sector. Developed in line with needs expressed by DFTP, these guides also aim to capacitate officials to develop and operationalise e-commerce frameworks so as to fulfil Lao PDR's commitments to the ASEAN Agreement on e-commerce and consultations with the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Electronic Commerce. Similarly the regulatory assessment for transport and tourism sectors has good policy sustainability prospects as it will support Lao PDR in identifying relevant regulator reforms needed to meet its commitments towards the ASEAN Trade in Services Agreement (ATISA).

The Coffee Sector Export Roadmap 2021 to 2025 was developed in a participatory manner⁵⁴ with the DTP of the MOIC, DOA (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry), the LNCCI and the Lao Coffee Association and supports the goals of the Lao Coffee Sector Development Strategy. It has been endorsed by senior decision makers including the Minister of Industry and Commerce, the DG of the DOA, President of LNCCI and President of the Lao Coffee Association. These stakeholder organisations remain committed to utilising the Roadmap until 2025 according to interviews. Coffee companies interviewed expressed interest in obtaining guidance on market access till 2025 and information of the different funding available such as those from AFD. They also were keen on receiving training to access the EU coffee market better. The demand for further training and areas of interest demonstrates that ARISE+ Laos remains relevant to the local stakeholders in Laos. Coffee associations and businesses have shown great interest in the production and promotion of organic coffee. The project has responded to local stakeholder demand by embarking to develop an Organic Coffee Roadmap. According to the stakeholder, *“the Project helps our*

⁵⁴ Survey, interviews with government and associations, and document review of Project Six Monthly Progress reports and Annual Progress reports

members to gain knowledge on organic coffee production, how to improve the quality of coffee bean and also supports standards and sustainable production”.

In terms of standards, the project has developed two standards, which have strong potential for sustainability⁵⁵. These are the standard for roasted coffee and the standard for green coffee beans. The standards are being promoted through the Quality Compass platform and also through the Quality Champions programme and follow-up training events. There is strong interest in these standards as they provide clear opportunities for coffee producers to add value, improve their quality and increase exports⁵⁶.

The Wood Processing Sector Export Roadmap 2021 to 2025 was developed in collaboration with Department of Forestry (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry), and is in line with the Prime Minister’s Order No.15 on promoting higher value addition and other initiatives such as the ongoing FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement negotiations with the EU. The roadmap, accompanying guidelines and training is beneficial to businesses according to interviews with the Lao Furniture Association and Lao timber Processing Association. According to these informants, the actors of the timber industry have received various support from different international agencies such as the World Bank, and GIZ and several documents have been produced in the process. However, actual implementation and progress on the ground has been slow and tangible results have been absent as the local actors find it challenging to implement or follow the various recommendations and guidelines as previous documents did not sufficiently incorporate the local context and consider Lao challenges.

The reliance of the timber industry on traditional methods of sourcing timber from natural forests is a threat to the wood processing industry in Laos⁵⁷. The industry is not coping well with the switch from natural sourced timber to farmed timber sources. Due to this many saw-mills are closing down and workers are losing their jobs according to the interviews. Only a few actors along the timber value chain are able to adapt to the use of legal timber. However, government officials⁵⁸ have challenged the claim made by associations that raw timber materials are scarce in Laos. Government officials instead claim that raw timber materials are easily available across the country and said that this can be confirmed by the ITC experts that were on mission with them.

The importance of the Coffee Sector Export Roadmap 2021 to 2025 and Wood Processing Sector Export Roadmap 2021 to 2025, by MOIC has been highlighted by the Minister of Industry and Commerce H.E. Dr Khampheng Saysompheng⁵⁹ at the annual meeting of the industry and commerce sector held in March 2022. The minister refers to these roadmaps as “significant achievements” of last year’s MOIC plans which augurs well for their policy sustainability and institutional ownership by MOIC.

⁵⁵ Survey, and document review of Project Six Monthly Progress reports and Annual Progress reports

⁵⁶ Interviews with coffee businesses and the Lao Coffee Association.

⁵⁷ Interviews with Lao Furniture Association, Lao Timber Processing Association

⁵⁸ Interviews

⁵⁹ Vientiane Times 28 March 2022: https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/sub-new/Previous_060/sub-new/Business/Business_Index.php

2.7 EVALUATION QUESTION 7

TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE ARISE+ LAO PDR PROJECT DEMONSTRATED THE EU ADDED VALUE IN THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF VARIOUS PROJECT ACTIVITIES?

The project has reinforced the EU added value through activities and outputs in strategic areas which enhance the ability of Lao PDR to harmonise its regulations, meet ASEAN commitments, improve quality (in coffee and wood processing) and improve the readiness of Lao PDR to trade with EUMS. The project is contributing to the implementation of the Team Europe Strategy in the Lao PDR 2021-2025 in the priority area of Green and Inclusive Economy.

Judgement criteria (JC)	Sources of evidence	Judgement
JC 7.1 – Exclusive rights and authority of EU on trade-related matters on behalf of EU Member States	Document review	Positive

2.7.1 JC 7.1 – Exclusive rights and authority of EU on trade-related matters on behalf of EU Member States

The MTE judgement is positive on the exclusive rights and authority of EU on trade-related matters on behalf of EU Member States. The assessment based on the indicators from the evaluation matrix are summarised in the table below.

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
7.1.1 – number of trade-related projects supported by EU vs by EU member states in Lao PDR	Document review	Moderate	3 EU projects vs 8 projects by EUMS
7.1.2 – coordination mechanism between EU and MS on trade-related technical assistance	Document review,	Moderate	Team Europe coordination and joint programming

Additional evidence which informed the judgement of the MTE is presented below.

The EU has the authority to handle trade matters on behalf of 27 EU Member States. Since its establishment, the European Union has accumulated a lot of trade-related experience and expertise which can be shared with other countries and regional trading blocs. As a result, the EU has provided trade-related technical assistance to most developing countries, including Lao PDR.

The project has reinforced the EU added value through its activities in strategic areas such as the ATIGA gap analysis, regulatory assessment for transport and tourism sectors to meet commitments from the ATISA and gap assessment of Lao PDR conformity assessment⁶⁰. These efforts enhance the ability of Lao PDR to harmonise its regulations, meet ASEAN commitments, and integrate with the international trading system. These activities will also improve the readiness of Lao PDR to trade with EUMS.

The work done by the project in ER2 is specifically contributing to enhance capacities and knowledge for export readiness by government and private sector. Outputs such as the EBA Business Guide and training activities specifically promote EU market access opportunities across agricultural products, processed food products, textiles and garments, footwear, and wood

⁶⁰ Document review of Project Six Monthly Progress reports and Annual Progress reports

products. Other outputs under ER2, aim to improve the readiness of Lao PDR to export to international markets, in particular the EU, in the coffee and processed wood sectors. Important outputs which contributed to the EU added value include the Wood Processing Sector Export Roadmap (2021-2025) and the Coffee Sector Export Roadmap (2021-2025) which feature specific strategies and recommended activities to enable export to EU markets. The development of the roadmaps involved close collaboration with representatives from EUMS development agencies based in Lao PDR, such as GIZ and AFD⁶¹.

The outputs to strengthen quality in the wood processing and coffee sectors, such as the Quality Compass, Quality Champions, eLearning course, training and promotion of two national standards for coffee are supporting Lao PDR in increasing quality and adopting international standards which will increase the ability for Lao businesses to export to EU markets. According to interviews with Lao companies, coffee companies are keen to receive training to access the EU coffee market better including collaboration with EU coffee companies. This interest opens avenues for collaboration between the EU and EUMS on meeting the coffee demand and supply, which demonstrate the EU added value. Actors of the wood processing industry have expressed interest in learning about the requirements and regulations of timber/timber product trade with EUMS.

The assessment of the impact of tariff changes and recommendations to attain GSP+ status will prepare Laos to better access EUMS markets once Lao PDR graduates from LDC status. The study will create awareness on areas that Lao PDR has to comply in labour, environment, human rights and governance and provides a start for Lao PDR to negotiate with the EU on the GSP+ preferential treatment, with the use of complementary outputs from the project such as the FTNR.

The study on “Leveraging export potential and tariff advantages to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) into Lao PDR: Wood processing and coffee” along with the draft investment profiles for the wood processing and coffee sectors is one of the first FDI assessments outside the energy and minerals sector in Laos. This provides opportunities for investors and business from EUMS to explore the investment potential in Lao PDR alongside accompanying developments such as the Lao-China railway and major free trade agreements such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

The project is supporting the implementation of the Team Europe Strategy in the Lao PDR 2021-2025 focusing on the priority area of Green and Inclusive Economy. The Team Europe Strategy aims to streamline, effectively coordinate development cooperation efforts and enhance the added value of bringing together the following European partners in Laos: EU, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg from the EUMS and Switzerland. The project is supporting the implementation of the Team Europe strategy covering the themes of ‘agriculture and rural development’, ‘natural resources and environment’ and ‘private sector development, trade and tourism’. The project is contributing to an EU and European Added value through its efforts in sustainable and climate-resilient agricultural practices for coffee; competitiveness, quality and added value of agriculture products such as coffee; ongoing negotiations between the EU and Lao PDR on a Voluntary Partnership Agreement under the FLEGT scheme through outputs under ER3 of the project focusing on the wood processing sector; and development of strategies for expanded and diversified markets for Lao exports in coffee and processed wood.

As the project works closely with the NIU and engages with the PEC, it ensures that the benefits of an EU wide approach across project activity areas are well coordinated with other development partners operating in the trade and business environment area⁶².

⁶¹ Survey and document review of 4 Project Six Monthly Progress reports and 3 Annual Progress reports

⁶² Survey and interviews

2.8 EVALUATION QUESTION 8

TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE ARISE+ LAO PDR PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION CONTRIBUTED TO HIGHLIGHTING AND BRIDGING THE GENDER GAP AND OTHER CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES IN THE COUNTRY?

The main gender strategies focus on gender balance at project events and gender differentiated analysis in specific outputs such as the coffee sector export roadmap. The project lacks a documented gender mainstreaming strategy and opportunities exist to engage women in employment generation activities given the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women in Lao PDR. The coffee sector and wood processing sector export roadmaps have incorporated environmental and climate change considerations along with the promotion of organic coffee and FSC and FLEGT certified timber.

Judgement criteria (JC)	Sources of evidence	Judgement
JC 8.1 – equal participation of men and women in project activities, management, and decision-making process and a gender mainstreaming approach	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs	Somewhat Positive
JC 8.2 – promotion of positive impact of trade on environment/ climate change and the mitigation of the negative impact of project activities	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs	Positive

2.8.1 JC 8.1 – equal participation of men and women in project activities, management, and decision-making process and a gender mainstreaming approach.

The MTE judgement is somewhat positive on equal participation of men and women in project activities, management, and decision-making process and a gender mainstreaming approach. The assessment based on the indicators from the evaluation matrix are summarised in the table below.

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
8.1.1 number breakdown (or percentage) of gender in participation in project activities	Document review	Moderate	292 women participants (37%) and 497 men participants (63%) out of 789 participants at events
8.1.2 – gender mainstreaming in coffee and wood roadmaps	Document review, Survey questionnaire,	High	Coffee sector roadmap includes gender differentiated analysis of roles and challenges faced by women, and identification of specific activities for women in the plan of action. The wood processing sector roadmap did not provide a gender differentiated analysis.

Additional evidence which informed the judgement of the MTE is presented below.

The expectation from the action document was that the project would incorporate gender mainstreaming, in sectoral strategies to promote gender balance in the priority sub-sectors of wood and coffee. The document review⁶³ by the MTE indicated the absence of a documented gender mainstreaming strategy or gender plan for the project. The main strategies for gender adopted by the project focus on promoting gender balance at project events and addressing gender issues in specific policy documents and studies such as the coffee sector roadmap. The project encourages gender balance amongst participants at project events, such as workshops

⁶³ Document review of 4 Project Six Monthly Progress reports and 3 Annual Progress reports, mission reports and PRC meeting minutes

and training, and gathers gender disaggregated data on participants. According to the figures available in the draft Annual Progress Report for 2021, there has been a total of 789 participants at project events including 292 women (37%) and 497 men (63%).

The coffee sector roadmap includes some gender differentiated analysis, in terms of roles and challenges faced by women, and identification of specific activities for women in the plan of action. The wood processing sector roadmap did not provide a gender differentiated analysis. There was no evidence regarding the engagement of specific CSOs and business associations dealing with women and gender issues.

According to studies⁶⁴ many of the sectors most negatively impacted by COVID-19 – including tourism, handicrafts, restaurants, entertainment, and garments – employ a higher proportion of female staff. Furthermore, out of over 200,000 migrant workers, returned to Lao PDR in 2020 during the initial phase of the pandemic approximately 65% were female, resulting in a total of between \$125-136 million in reduced remittances to Lao PDR⁶⁵. In 2020, unemployment amongst women as a result of the pandemic was 32.5% compared to 19.2% amongst men⁶⁶. Women have thus been hit hard by the economic impact from the pandemic according to this evidence. This provides both challenges and opportunities to engage women in reskilling, establishment of small businesses, such as in agriculture processing and packaging and encouraging women to work in male dominated sectors such as wood processing.

2.8.2 JC 8.2 – promotion of positive impact of trade on environment/ climate change and the mitigation of the negative impact of project activities

The MTE judgement is positive on promotion of positive impact of trade on environment/ climate change and the mitigation of the negative impact of project activities. The assessment based on the indicators from the evaluation matrix are summarised in the table below.

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
8.2.1.- environmental impact implications of the selected sectors (processed wood in particular)	Document review, Survey questionnaire,	High	For coffee, environmental impact implications are somewhat strong as existing coffee production is low intensity with limited artificial agriculture inputs (fertilizer and pesticides) can be made more sustainable with a stronger organic approach. For wood processing the implications are significant through the promotion of legal timber.
8.2.2.- # of mitigating measures to minimise negative environmental impact by the project	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIs	High	3 mitigating measures: organic coffee including voluntary sustainability standards, supporting the finalisation of VPA on FLEGT and identification of legal timber sources

Additional evidence which informed the judgement of the MTE is presented below.

The expectation during the design was that environmental and climate change mainstreaming would be a key component of ER3, through capacity building for climate change mitigation and adaptation⁶⁷. Environmental and climate change considerations have been incorporated into the

⁶⁴ Southichack, M., Siliphong, P. Inthakesone, B. (2020). Socio-Economic Impact Assessment Of COVID-19 On Lao PDR. Vientiane. UN Lao PDR and World Bank. (2021). Lao PDR Economic Monitor: Supporting Economic Recovery. Vientiane. World Bank.

⁶⁵ UN Lao PDR. (2020). Socio-Economic Response Framework to COVID-19. Vientiane. UN Lao PDR.

⁶⁶ MPI. (2021). COVID-19 Risks and Vulnerabilities in Lao PDR. Vientiane. UNICEF Lao PDR

⁶⁷ Action Document of the ARISE+ Lao PDR Programme

coffee sector and wood processing sector export roadmaps⁶⁸. In the coffee sector the project is promoting a move towards organic coffee production and the adoption of voluntary sustainability standards. The coffee sector export roadmap highlights increasing interest among buyers and consumers in the guarantees offered by voluntary sustainability standards, which provide attractive options for some coffee producers in Lao PDR. The roadmap promotes these sustainability standards together with new production models such as sustainable farming approaches, which aim to mitigate any potential negative impacts of increased productivity with sustainability considerations. The roadmap actions aim to address challenges such as pests and climate change adaptation through climate smart agriculture practices. The action plan includes specific activities to promote dialogue on the uptake of these voluntary sustainability standards in coffee and training activities on climate smart agriculture practices.

With respect to the processed wood sector, the Lao government is currently negotiating with EU on an EU-Lao Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) on the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT)⁶⁹. By entering into the VPA with the EU, Lao PDR aims to enable the Lao timber, processed wood and furniture industries to access the EU market through enhanced sustainability measures by promoting the use of legal timber. The ARISE+ Lao PDR project has selected the processed wood sector to use the VPA process in the effort to ensure sustainable development of the sector and increase the proportion of skilled jobs in the processed wood industry⁷⁰. Strategic Objective 1 of the wood processing export roadmap focuses on improving the sector's sustainability through better coordination and increased access legal timber. The project is engaging with both government and private sector to raise awareness on the benefits of legal timber in the country including access to EU markets whilst mitigating negative impacts on climate change, on the environment and on bio-diversity⁷¹. Mitigating measures promoted by the roadmap include improving access by the wood processing sector to plantation timber, enhancing the quality of raw timber material, promoting the use of lesser-known species, waste recovery, the importance of sustainable timber as a brand and traceability of the wood supply chain. Actions under the Roadmap support the finalization of the VPA's negotiations, facilitate implementation of related regulations and procedures and promote FLEGT compliant timber as a means to enter EU markets. Capacity building of relevant institutions and enhanced coordination is also being promoted.

The project promotes the economic integration of Lao PDR into ASEAN and the rest of the world based on the rules-based international trading system. This indirectly addresses good governance. The project focuses on developing capacities of MSMEs for production and exports in the coffee and wood processing sectors. Project activities have a strong participatory approach involving representatives from government, business intermediaries (LNCCI and other business associations), CSOs, development partners and MSMEs thus promoting good governance and inclusion. However, inclusion can be enhanced by developing materials in languages of the main ethnic groups, rather than solely in Lao language and this is further discussed under evaluation question 9.

⁶⁸ Interviews, survey and document review of 4 Project Six Monthly Progress reports and 3 Annual Progress reports

⁶⁹ Team Europe Strategy in the Lao PDR 2021-2025

⁷⁰ Interviews and document review

⁷¹ Interviews, survey and document review of Project Six Monthly Progress reports, Annual Progress reports, sectoral studies and sectoral roadmaps

2.9 EVALUATION QUESTION 9

TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE ARISE+ LAO PDR PROJECT IMPROVED EU VISIBILITY THROUGH THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF VARIOUS PROJECT ACTIVITIES?

Several tools are being used for communication and to increase EU visibility. Logos of the EU, ARISE Plus programme, MOIC and other organisations are not used consistently across communication tools and the EU Visibility guidelines⁷² are not fully adopted with respect to the background colours, font colours and accompanying text for the EU emblem

Judgement criteria (JC)	Sources of evidence	Judgement
JC 9.1 – adherence to the EU visibility guidelines	Document review, KIIs	Somewhat Positive

2.9.1 JC 9.1 – adherence to the EU visibility guidelines

The MTE judgement is somewhat positive on the adherence to the EU visibility guidelines. The assessment based on the indicators from the evaluation matrix are summarised in the table below.

Indicators	Data collection methods	Robustness of evidence	Facts / Values
9.1.1 – existence of the EU visibility strategy and communication plan prepared by the project	Document review KIIs	High	A Communication and Visibility Plan is available and used to guide activities
9.1.2 – number of communication tools (including social media) conducted with the increased awareness of the project outputs and results	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs	High	10 communication tools (Project flyer, project website hosted on the ITC web portal, a Facebook group with 232 posts ⁷³ including event flyers, LinkedIn posts through the accounts of key project experts, 47 media posts of key project events in the Lao press ⁷⁴ , a poster, press releases, human stories in the UN and ITC websites and templates for documents and presentations
9.1.3. – number of stakeholders and participants who visited the project website and social media received more project information, etc	Document review, Survey questionnaire, KIIs		As of September 2021, 1,360 people visited the project website. As of April 2022, the Facebook group has 1,100 unique followers

Additional evidence which informed the judgement of the MTE is presented below.

During the inception phase, the project team developed a Communication and Visibility Plan, which has the following objectives:

- Create stronger relationships with stakeholders and increase ownership from project beneficiaries and partners.
- Increase impact and visibility for the project itself by promoting and advocating the project and its results among project beneficiaries, stakeholders, development partners and a wider audience.

⁷² Communication and Visibility in EU-financed External Actions (2018 edition)

⁷³ As of 12 April 2022 from <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ariseplus>

⁷⁴ As of July 2021 based on Inception Report, Progress Report for Year 1 and draft Progress Report for Year 2

- Disseminate information on project activities to react to, support and benefit from current and new developments and programmes and initiatives in Laos in a timely manner, and build synergies with other projects and initiatives when possible;
- Facilitate project coordination and monitoring among stakeholders; this includes communications related to the operational aspects of the project and to its day-to-day management, as well as forward planning, strategic guidance and navigation.

A project Communication Working Group was established in September 2020, to ensure communications are implemented in-line with the Communication and Visibility Plan and in coordination with key stakeholders in Lao PDR⁷⁵. The working group includes the project management staff from ITC, ITC communication consultant, representatives from the NIU, EUD and the UN Resident Coordinator Office communication staff. Meetings are held every six months. The meetings covered a range of topics, including ways to better promote the ARISE+ Lao PDR on social media. The key outcomes of the meetings include strengthening the communication network within the ARISE+ Lao PDR team, UN bodies in Lao PDR and the EU Delegation. The meetings also discussed the importance of developing human-centric stories, regular frequency of communication and consistency of key messages. The project also shares one photo per month with the EUD Lao PDR, for dissemination through the EUD social media.

Based on the Visibility and Communication Plan the project has developed several key communication tools⁷⁶. These include a project flyer, event flyers, project website hosted on the ITC web portal, a Facebook group with posts, LinkedIn posts through the accounts of key project experts, media coverage of key project events in the Lao press, a poster, press releases, human stories in the UN and ITC websites and templates for documents and presentations with key visibility and branding elements, such as the EU, ITC, MOIC and ARISE Plus programme logos.

The broad guidelines for Communication and Visibility in EU-financed External Actions (2018 edition) have been followed in some communication tools such as the project leaflet, some event eflyers and some publications. This includes the use of the branding from the ARISE Plus programme which incorporates the flags of the EU, Lao PDR, ASEAN and acknowledges “Funded by the European Union”. These publications also include separately the logos of the EU, MOIC and ITC. Some of the communication tools such as the project Facebook page, event eflyers and published documents such as the Roadmaps, do not include the ARISE Plus programme branding. Some communication tools like the coffee infographics display the ARISE Plus programme branding but do not display the EU flag/emblem. Communication materials such as eflyers for events do not fully adopt the EU guidelines for the background colours of the EU emblem as stipulated in the ‘Use of the EU Emblem in the Context of EU Programmes 2021-2027: Operational Guidelines for Recipients of EU Funding⁷⁷’. Examples include the following eflyer which has the EU emblem in a light blue background as opposed to what should be a dark grey background :

<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=623227322083386&set=gm.942683963277043>.

Most communication materials developed by the project⁷⁸ do not fully adopt the EU guidelines for Communication and Visibility and the operational guidelines for the use of the EU Emblem regarding the accompanying text. Some communication tools use “Funded by the European Union” in line with the guidelines. However, other communication tools such as the Facebook group top banner and eFlyers for events (e.g <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=626535155085936&set=gm.945698056308967>) state

⁷⁵ TOR for Communication Working Group and Annual Progress Report for 2020

⁷⁶ Document review, review of Facebook Group, project website and communication materials

⁷⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/eu-emblem-rules_en.pdf

⁷⁸ Document review, review of Facebook Group, project website and communication materials

European Union in Lao and English without the “funded by” statement. These materials do not follow the guidelines for bilingual options in the association of the EU emblem, whereby English should be first followed by Lao (refer page 8 of the operational guidelines). Furthermore, almost all communication tools do not use the appropriate font colour (Reflex blue, white or black) for the funding statement and the correct proportions of the text to the EU emblem as referred to in the operational guidelines (refer pages 8-10). The updated project website (<https://www.intracen.org/arise-plus-laos>) has the European Commission logo, but it does not contain the EU emblem and accompanying ‘funded by’ text, in line with the EU guidelines for Communication and Visibility.

The project website was created in September 2020 by the ITC team⁷⁹. As of September 2021, 1,360 people visited the project website and 1,140 pages were viewed by visitors from 1 April to 30 September 2021. The project Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ariseplus>) has been active with regular posts, sometimes weekly, providing information on project events, stories and other articles. Much of the content is bi-lingual. The project Facebook group has 1,100 followers at the time of writing this report in April 2022. The top three viewed posts on the Facebook page have had over 9,600 views, 5,466 views and 4,730 views⁸⁰ but these are total views or impressions and not unique views.

The project team has developed a number of human stories which have been disseminated through its Facebook group and the project website. These stories are of good quality and provide a professional, yet human approach to communication which relates to end-users. These remain sincere by highlighting the challenges faced by the participants in the story, but provide a hope for a positive future, through the support of the project, in line with some of the guidelines from the EU INTPA Digital style guide⁸¹. Some human stories are in Lao or bilingual, but others are mostly in English. Examples of these human stories include:

- Training on How to Start Organic Coffee Farms
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ariseplus/permalink/794318978113543/>
- Trade Policy Modelling
<https://www.facebook.com/100031883719358/videos/439775364050301/>
- Trade Policy Modelling
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ariseplus/permalink/831106654434775/>
- The Quality Champions Programme
<https://www.facebook.com/100031883719358/videos/554331102454341/>

There was no evidence of content being translated to languages of ethnic minority groups of Laos.

The media monitoring conducted by the project revealed a total of 47 media posts published across media of external organisations including 13 newspaper articles as of December 2021⁸².

Hashtags such as #euInlaos, #UNINLaoPDR, #uninlaos, #ITC and #laocoffee have been used for social media posts published by the project on its Facebook Group.

The expenditure for communication and visibility is a relatively small proportion of 1.11% of the total expenditure by the project. This primarily covers the implementation of the activities relating to the communication and visibility strategy and the salary of the communication consultant. As of

⁷⁹ Progress Report / Annual Work Plan, 5 January 2020 – 31 December 2020

⁸⁰ Draft Progress Report / Annual Work Plan, 5 January 2021 – 31 December 2021

⁸¹ https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/digital-content-production-guidelines_en and https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/eu-international-partnerships-digital-style-guide_en.pdf

⁸² Document review of 3 Annual Progress reports

26 October 2021, 37.52% of the budget for communications and visibility had been spent across three years, which accounts for 75% of the project time.

3 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 LESSONS LEARNT

1. The strong participatory approach adopted by the project in the development of many deliverables is a key success factor for the project and for future interventions. The project has involved both government and private sector stakeholders in the development of outputs and this has resulted in alignment to priority needs, specific challenges and good ownership.
2. The project methodology which includes strong needs-oriented elements and coherence between activities and outputs is another success factor for the project and has contributed to highly relevant and effective outputs. The methodology includes gap assessment which contributes to the development of action plans (or roadmaps), implementation of priority activities, development of training resources and delivery of capacity building programmes. The design of future projects should consider such methodologies in their design and Action Documents.
3. The engagement of the EU Ambassador at the ground level, such as visiting the timber factories and promoting the FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) was seen by stakeholders as effective approach in creating buy in and mutual trust between the EU and stakeholders from the timber industry, over a potentially sensitive topic.
4. The establishment of the PCO at the NIU of the MOIC, has facilitated stakeholder coordination and embedded the project within the official structures of the government. This is a good operating structure for future projects in Lao PDR where relevant.

3.2 CONCLUSIONS

This section provides conclusions to the findings by evaluation criteria.

3.2.1 Relevance

The **project design was relevant to two priorities of the 8th NSEDP**. According to the evidence, through its activities and outputs, **the project has responded to five priorities from the 8th NSEDP** dealing with opportunities for market expansion, determining niche products in the country, diversification for export needs, increasing sustainable production in coffee and wood sectors, and enhancing conditions for regional and international integration. The **project responds to four priorities from the 9th NSEDP** focusing on ASEAN cooperation, integration with AEC, promoting production and processing in sectors such as coffee and wood and forest resource management. According to feedback, the integrated project approach, makes it a relevant instrument to support the implementation of priorities of the 9th NSEDP. The approach includes gap assessment, evidence-based recommendations, capacity building, partnerships with private sector to roll-out and benefit from the reforms. The project works closely with the NIU of the MOIC who coordinates and monitors alignment with the 9th NSEDP in trade related areas and other agencies. According to the findings, the **project is highly relevant and responds to priority needs of the private sector and government in the coffee and wood processing sectors**, through the development of roadmaps and capacity building resources focussing on quality. The **strong participatory approach** involving public and private sector stakeholders in **contributes to ensuring the outputs are highly relevant**.

The **project is consistent with EU strategies** such as the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, the Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme for Asia 2014-2020, COM(2017) 667 'EU Aid for Trade Strategy', COM(2014) 263 'A Stronger Role of the Private Sector in Achieving Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Countries'. The project design and implementation is consistent with the European Joint Indicative Programme for Lao PDR 2016-2020 (JP 2016-2020). The project is consistent with the Team Europe Strategy in the Lao PDR 2021-2025, particularly the priority area of Green and Inclusive Economy covering 'agriculture and rural development', 'natural resources and environment' and 'private sector development, trade and tourism'

3.2.2 Coherence

The project design and implementation is **coherent with the ARISE Plus programme involving national and regional projects in the region**. Through mechanisms such as the PEC, **the project shares information other development partners and has met with most trade related projects** in Laos to share information and avoid duplication. With ITC as the implementing partner, **the project has engaged well with UN agencies** such as UNDESA, UNCTAD and the UN Country Team and their initiatives. The project collaborates closely with ITC projects such as T4SD, EY SYMST and GTC.

3.2.3 Efficiency

The **project has faced significant delays, due to factors outside its control** such as the delay in signing the financing agreement and the COVID-19 pandemic. Another source of delay has been the approval processes which can be very time consuming due to available capacities and workload of key departments in the MOIC. As of October 2021, **the project had used 51.14% of its budget utilizing 75% of the available project time**. The rate of activity implementation has accelerated since April 2021. However, it is **highly unlikely the project will complete all its activities to a sufficient level of quality by its current end date of 31 October 2022**. The project has been cost efficient in implementing its activities and generating outputs through good management practices and partnering with key stakeholder organisations where feasible. **The project is implemented through clear stakeholder engagement mechanisms** including the PCO who works alongside the NIU at MOIC, a PRC for oversight and endorsement and the PEC for broader sectoral collaboration. The rate of activity implementation is in proportion to the delays faced by the project. **The timeliness and quality of progress reports is satisfactory**, though greater resources can be deployed to improve monitoring and support decision making. The project has been responsive to the operating challenges brought about by the pandemic and implemented suitable working procedures. **The project has also implemented several COVID-19 response measures** to support its target beneficiaries demonstrating good adaptive management.

3.2.4 Effectiveness

The project methodology adopts a strong needs-oriented approach which drives the implementation of sub-activities and activities and delivery of outputs. Most outputs are reinforced or supported by other outputs and are not delivered in isolation. For example, gap assessment contributes to the development of action plans, implementation of priority activities, development of training material and delivery of capacity building programmes. These approaches in turn contributes to the overall effectiveness of outputs and the likely achievement of outcomes.

Under ER1, the project has achieved and, in some cases, exceeded some of its output indicators, especially with regards to ATIGA gaps identified and recommendations. In terms of number of

stakeholders with increase knowledge of topics, the evidence available was limited, as the monitoring system appears to focus on number of participants, as opposed to number of participants with increased knowledge. In terms of outcomes the project has achieved half of its targets on number of ATIGA recommendations for which a consensus was forged. In terms of export readiness and potential in the target sectors of ER2, the export roadmaps for the coffee and wood processing sector are strategically significant outputs as they provides credible, evidence-based strategies to develop the export potential of these sectors. Other significant outputs include those in the area of quality such as the Quality Champions programme, Quality Compass, eLearning course and follow-up training for MSMEs. In coffee these have contributed to emerging outcomes such as application of new practices by different actors in the coffee value chain and improving the quality of coffee bean production. The wood processing roadmap provides recommendations to address several key constraints faced by the wood processing sector. The engagement of the EU ambassador, at ground level visiting timber factors was viewed as an effective approach to get buy-in and establish mutual trust for the FLEGT VPA. Data on export values in coffee and wood processing for 2021 was not available and thus progress against the relevant outcome indicators could not be measured.

In terms of project contributions to prepare Lao PDR for LDC graduation, relevant outputs include the assessment of the impact of tariff changes, awareness creation, capacity building on market analysis tools were viewed by informants as important, along with the study on attracting FDI into the Lao PDR coffee and wood processing sectors.

3.2.5 Impact

A **core group of GoL trainers have been established** on multilateral and regional trading agreements. These training have successfully carried out training for two batches of GoL officials. There was **limited evidence of impact in terms of increase in exports in the coffee and wood processing sectors**. In coffee, most producers prefer to follow their existing modus operandi, which is to export green coffee beans, with no value addition, to regional markets such as Vietnam. The shift towards value addition and exporting to markets such as the EU, is expected to take time as it requires capital investment. In wood processing, companies have experienced challenges in both the domestic and export markets due to the pandemic. As a **result of project training in areas like GMP**, some wood processing companies have indicated the **potential to increase exports to Thailand** has materialised.

3.2.6 Sustainability

The project has placed **emphasis on capacity building of key government agencies and private sector intermediaries which provide good institutional sustainability prospects**. **Capacity building activities are comprehensive** in many areas, involving gap analysis, prioritisation of areas, training of trainers, training of staff, development of training materials and in some cases additional knowledge products. The **project partners with lead organisations in many areas** such as DIMEX, DFTP, DTP, DOIH, DOSM, DOA and DOF which provides good prospects for ownership of outputs and their sustainability. **There are prospects for financial sustainability of outputs** like training materials, guidelines and roadmaps through operating budgets of the lead organisations or in the case of private sector intermediaries like LNCCI, generation of fees through provision of services to the private sector. **Several policy instruments and guidelines were developed by the project, with good potential for policy sustainability**. Some policy instruments support the commitments of Lao PDR to various ASEAN agreements and the participation of Lao PDR in regular ASEAN meetings. Other instruments like the export roadmaps for coffee and wood have strong ownership from senior decision makers at MOIC including the Minister, DOA, LNCCI and the respective associations. The roadmaps have gained credibility as evidence-based resources to guide sectoral development. The two standards

developed for coffee have strong potential for sustainability due to interest from coffee producers to add value.

3.2.7 EU added value

The project has **reinforced the EU added value through activities and outputs in strategic areas** like ATIGA and ATISA which will enhance the ability of Lao PDR to **harmonise its regulations, meet ASEAN commitments, and improve the readiness of Lao PDR to trade with EUMS**. Several outputs enhanced capacities and knowledge for export readiness by Lao PDR targeting EU markets in specific sectors. Some outputs involved close collaboration with EUMS representatives based in Lao PDR. The outputs to strengthen quality in the wood processing and coffee sectors will increase the ability for Lao businesses to export to EU markets. The FDI assessments provide opportunities for investors and business from EUMS to explore the investment potential in Lao PDR. **The project is supporting the implementation of the Team Europe Strategy in the Lao PDR 2021-2025** in the priority area of Green and Inclusive Economy, through its activities in the coffee and wood processing sectors.

3.2.8 Cross-cutting

The **project lacks a documented gender mainstreaming strategy**. The main gender strategies of the project focus on **promoting gender balance at project events and use of a gender differentiated analysis in specific policy documents** such as the coffee sector export roadmap. With unemployment amongst women higher than amongst men as a result of the pandemic, **opportunities exist to engage women in employment generation activities** and establishment of small businesses in the sectors of the project.

Environmental and climate change considerations were incorporated into the coffee sector and wood processing sector export roadmaps and promoted amongst businesses through training activities on organic coffee and FSC and FLEGT certified timber.

3.2.9 EU Visibility

A Communication and Visibility plan and working group guide the implementation of communication activities. **Several communication tools are used** such as flyers, project website hosted by ITC, social media channels, press releases and human stories. These tools use key branding elements such as the EU, ITC, MOIC and ARISE Plus programme logos. However, these **logos are not used consistently across all the communication tools**. Whilst broad visibility guidelines⁸³ have been followed in some communication tools, the **EU guidelines are not fully adopted** with respect to background colours for placement of the EU emblem, font colours for accompanying text, bilingual text options and consistency in the use of the acknowledgement "Funded by the European Union". The project **website and Facebook page have over 1000 visitors** each. The project has developed **good quality human stories which is an effective approach to engage end-users**. Expenditure on communication and visibility is a relatively small proportion of the budget and the project has used 37.52% of its communication budget cover 75% of the project time.

⁸³ Communication and Visibility in EU-financed External Actions (2018 edition)

3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

No.	Issue	Recommendation
Short-term (1 to 2 months)		
1.	Delays due to signing of agreement and COVID-19 will result in some outputs not completed, reduced outcomes and sustainability measures	Given the delays and extenuating circumstances resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the signing of the agreement, a no-cost extension to the Action for a minimum of 12 months and up to 18 months is strongly recommended. This would allow the project to complete the delivery of remaining activities and outputs to a good level of quality, facilitate the realisation of tangible outcomes and improve sustainability measures including handover mechanisms. Implementer: EUD, ITC, PRC
2.	Structural issues in intervention logic of logframe at output and outcome level.	The indicators dealing with increased knowledge by stakeholder organisations in different topics can be consolidated under the different ERs and placed as outcome indicators under the specific objective. The indicators dealing with increased exports by the wood processing and coffee sectors should be considered as impact indicators under the overall objective. Implementer: Project Team, EUD, ITC
3.	Limited data and monitoring on certain project indicators such as number of stakeholder representatives with increased knowledge in a given topic.	Monitoring efforts should be strengthened, as part of a results-based management approach to support decision making. Data from training activities should be systematically and consistently captured, including the number of stakeholder representatives with increased knowledge in a given area as a result of the event. The use of both pre-event and end-of-event survey tools are recommended to adequately capture this change. Where possible lessons should be captured and learning sessions conducted to reflect on these lessons and how it can improve future activities. Implementer: Project team
4.	More comprehensive training topics requested by informants	Additional training topics were requested by informants from the interviews and the survey. Topics included extending the training on pest control using sustainable methods and sustainable production techniques to cover processing including drying of coffee beans. In wood processing, training of trainer activities were requested for product development. These recommendations from informants can be considered by the project team in their next workplan, in collaboration with the respective coffee and wood processing sector associations. Implementer: Project team, coffee and wood processing sector associations
5.	Misalignment between government and private sector associations regarding availability of legal timber	Private sector associations feel that legal timber resources are scarce. It is recommended that a study on available legal timber resources be undertaken to provide evidence on available resources and help clear the misaligned views on the topic between the government and timber associations Implementer: Project team, DTP, DOF, wood processing sector associations

6.	<p>Lack of consistency in branding and visibility elements.</p> <p>Not fulfilling all guidelines for Communication and Visibility in EU financed external Actions particularly around the use of the EU emblem.</p>	<p>The project should review its communication tools and develop a branding guideline to ensure visibility and branding elements are consistent across all tools. These include the use of the EU, ITC, MOIC and ARISE Plus programme logos and the use of bilingual text to accompany the EU emblem. The text accompanying the EU emblem should be consistent including the use of “Funded by the European Union”. The text should be formatted according to guidelines in the ‘Use of the EU Emblem in the Context of EU Programmes 2021-2027: Operational Guidelines for Recipients of EU Funding⁸⁴’, including the order of bilingual text, font colour (Reflex blue, white or black) and correct proportions of the text to the EU emblem. Where the EU emblem and accompanying text is placed in a background, the relevant background colours should be adopted as per the guidelines.</p> <p>Implementer: Project team</p>
Medium term (2-6 months)		
7.	<p>Potential for outreach and communication not fully realised and allocated communication budget not spent.</p>	<p>The project should increase the scale of its communication activities, to utilise the allocated budget in a results-oriented manner. Efforts should target increased outreach and inclusion, including ethnic minority groups. The project should explore collaboration with private sector intermediaries such as LNCCI, ECCIL and other business associations to support its outreach efforts as communication multipliers. This can include their support in disseminating articles, videos and useful information through their social media channels. This would leverage on their larger social media presence. For example, LNCCI has over 19,000 followers and ECCIL has over 8,000 in their respective Facebook pages. Such communication multipliers should be involved in the communication working group.</p> <p>The selection and use of hashtags should be explored including use of hashtags from the communication multipliers such as LNCCI or ECCIL, in addition to existing hashtags being used such as from the EUD and UN.</p> <p>Content, particularly human stories and information relevant to coffee and wood processing should be translated to Lao language and ideally languages of other ethnic groups such as Mon-Khmer, Hmong-Mien and Sino-Tibetan, to ensure a stronger inclusive approach and that “no-one is left behind”.</p> <p>Implementer: Project team</p>
8.	<p>Limited gender mainstreaming activities and substantial impact of COVID-19 on women in Laos</p>	<p>The project should strengthen its gender mainstreaming approach by identifying activities that can support women in reskilling, establishment of small businesses, such as value addition in agriculture products and encouraging women to work in male dominated sectors such as wood processing.</p> <p>The project can explore collaboration with relevant CSOs involved in gender issues, such as the Lao Women’s Union and the Lao Women’s Business Association in developing activities to support women.</p> <p>Implementer: Project team, LNCCI</p>

⁸⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/eu-emblem-rules_en.pdf

9.	Strengthening sustainability measures	<p>Stronger sustainability measures are required to ensure the project outputs continue to be used after the project ends and outcomes continue to be delivered. The project should explore the provision of capacity building activities to strengthen the operation and management of LCA, WPA, LFA and the Coffee Producers Cooperative. The project should also explore partnerships with lead companies across the coffee and wood processing value chains. Collaboration between micro-finance providers and business stakeholders in the target sectors should be explored.</p> <p>Implementer: Project team, PRC, stakeholders</p>
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4 ANNEXES

4.1 ANNEX 1: MID-TERM EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

SPECIFIC TERMS OF REFERENCE – PART A
ARISE Plus Lao PDR – Mid-Term Evaluation
FWC SIEA 2018 - LOT 2: Infrastructure, sustainable growth and jobs
EuropeAid/138778/DH/SER/multi
OPSYS: RFS-SIEA-2018-3322

CONTRACTING AUTHORITY: THE EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION TO THE LAO PDR

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1 BACKGROUND

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is a lower middle-income country within the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). It is a sparsely populated land-locked country with a population of 6.9 million (2016) and a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of USD 2,150 (2016).

Lao PDR is also a least-developed country (LDC). GDP per capita in Lao PDR is the third lowest of all ASEAN countries after Myanmar and Cambodia. Its GDP per capita is 3% of that of Singapore, 26% of that of Thailand, 52% of that of Philippines, and 71% of that of Vietnam.

Despite its LDC status, Lao PDR has made significant progress in the last decades. Since 1986, it has gradually introduced reform measures to transform the country from central planning to a market economy. Lao PDR became a member of the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) in 1997 and completed the accession to World Trade Organisation (WTO) in early 2013. The reform program has resulted in remarkable economic performance since the 1990s, with real GDP growth at more than 7% per year, until 2014. The growth performance also brought about impressive progress in reducing poverty. The share of the population below the national poverty line decreased from 46% in 1992 to 23.2% in 2013. Additional economic reforms are programmed and they are expected to further shift the country towards greater market orientation through further liberalisation of the economy, creating an enabling environment for the private sector to operate and to stimulate trade and investment in the country. Lao PDR has the overall ambition to accelerate economic and social development to graduate from LDC status. Yet Lao PDR's weakest indicator is precisely the one related to Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI).

Lao PDR continues to integrate more closely into the rapidly growing regional economy through the implementation of trade commitments both multilaterally and within ASEAN, particularly within the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) that entered into force at the end of 2015 and the AEC Blueprint 2025 that provides fresh impetus for regional economic integration through the maintenance of low tariffs, and improved physical infrastructure and connectivity with neighbours. This has resulted in strong growth in cross-border flows of goods, services and investment. Around 72% of Lao PDR's external trade is with its neighbouring countries. However, much of this has been driven by the growing external appetite for its natural resources, which entails serious risks with respect to the sustainability of the country's long-term development. The country's economy is also more volatile and susceptible to external shocks, which are driven by commodity price movements, and not suited to generate the job and income creation that is needed to benefit a significant proportion of Lao PDR's population. The same challenges remain today. Lao PDR's growth declined in 2016 to 6.9% from 7.4% in 2015 and 7.8% in 2014. Lao PDR has reached a point where it needs additional investments in new sectors and overall diversification of its economy.

In order to reach this objective, fundamental structural reforms are still required. The 8th NSEDP 2016-2020 itself highlights the gaps that exist in several interrelated policy areas as well as the lack of capacity in government to appreciate and manage such interrelationships. It is important to achieve the rule of law and good governance, a favourable business environment, diversification of an economy that is currently highly dependent on hydro-power and mining, more effective regional and international integration, improved education, adequate mind-set, towards investment facilitation and private sector development, and more adequate physical and services infrastructure. Increased recognition and attention to women's participation in the economy is also important, as highlighted in EU's Gender Analysis of Lao PDR, 2016 (75% of Lao women are currently part of the workforce).

1.1 The Intervention to be evaluated¹

Title of the Intervention to be evaluated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARISE Plus Lao PDR
Budget of the Intervention to be evaluated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUR 4,867,000 as a total eligible cost <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ EUR 4,850,000 as EU contribution and co-financed by International Trade Centre in the amount of EUR 17,000.
CRIS and / or OPSYS number of the Intervention to be evaluated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACA/2019 /407-542
Dates of the Intervention to be evaluated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start: 1/11/2018 • End: 31/10/2022

ACA/2019 /407-542 “The ASEAN Regional Integration Support from the EU Plus – Lao PDR (ARISE Plus Lao PDR) is the four-year National Lao component of the “ASEAN Regional Integration Support from the EU (ARISE Plus)” as a regional ARISE Plus programme that contributes to the integration of the Lao economy into global production chains through targeted support to both the public and private sector, with a focus on smallholders and SMEs with a total budget of EUR 4,867,000 as a total eligible cost, where EUR 4,850,000 is a EU contribution and co-financed by International Trade Centre in the amount of 17,000 as mention above.

The ARISE Plus Lao PDR is the national Lao component of the regional ARISE Plus programme financed under Development Cooperation Instrument to support regional economic integration under focal sector 1 of the 2014 – 2020 EU Multiannual Indicative Programme for ASEAN, with a total budget of EUR 40 million. Bilaterally, it provide support to ASEAN member states; Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The specific objectives of the regional programme are:

1. To improve customs, transport facilitation, trade facilitation and standards with a view to achieve a highly integrated and cohesive economy;
2. To improve in the areas of IPR, competition policy, consumer protection and good regulatory practices with a view to achieve a more competitive, innovative, and dynamic ASEAN;
3. To enhance connectivity and sectoral cooperation particularly in Food and Pharmaceuticals (Agro-based products and Healthcare), as well as Transport (including enhancement of the ASEAN Single Aviation Market);
4. To enhance private sector engagement, notably SMEs, and efforts to narrow the development gap among and within ASEAN Member States with a view to contributing to a more resilient, inclusive and people-oriented, people centered ASEAN;
5. To enhance engagements with regional and global partners to become a more Global ASEAN;
6. To strengthen institutional capacities through, in particular, managing the integration process with an emphasis on progress monitoring and impact assessment, including statistics, coordination and management and improved capacity among ASEAN bodies and the ASEAN Secretariat.

The ARISE Plus Lao PDR project focuses on supporting the government of Lao PDR to reap the benefits of regional integration in line with multilateral trade frameworks such as the WTO agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA).

¹ The term ‘Action’ is used throughout the report as a synonym of ‘project and programme’.

The progressive integration of Lao PDR into regional value chains within the ASEAN Economic Community and related trade agreements with neighbouring Asian countries can generate significant growth, increase exports and create employment opportunities in non-resource sectors. Exports to the EU under the existing Everything But Arms' (EBA) scheme can also be expanded. ARISE Plus Lao PDR will help the country take advantage of these opportunities by improving the business environment in specific sectors, with a focus on regional economic integration and trade and investment to and from the EU, and by productive capacity, addressing supply-side constraints, business competitiveness and investment in these sectors. Together, these activities will contribute to the overall objective of inclusive economic growth, mitigation of vulnerability (especially due to dependence on few sectors and markets) and job creation. The ARISE Plus Lao PDR programme will assist the Government of Lao PDR, through the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and other competent ministries, departments and agencies, as well as the private sector. The programme provides for an equitable mix of activities between the two categories of stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The programme contains 3 Expected Results (ER) of the Action are:

- ER 1. Increased regional economic integration by addressing specific constraints in selected sectors through support for implementation of measures contained in the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) and other commitments under the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025;
- ER 2. Increased awareness on trade preferences for exports, including to the European Union, with greater use of Everything But Arms (EBA), and on the requirements for placing products on the EU market; advanced preparation of Lao PDR to shift to a new trade preference scheme (post-EBA); and
- ER 3. Strengthened support services (especially for smallholders and SMEs, with a focus on women), education of supply-side constraints, and trade and investment promotion in targeted sectors (e.g. wood processing and agro-based products).

The action is a project-based approach in support of the Government of Lao PDR's implementation of the National Economic Social Development Plan (NSED). The intervention logic of the action is to contribute to the implementation of the Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme Asia (MIP Asia) 2014-2020, which serves as the main framework for EU regional cooperation in Asia. The main initiative under this specific objective is the regional ARISE Plus Programme, of which ARISE Plus - Lao PDR is the national component, focusing on trade in goods under the framework of the AEC Blueprint 2025. The overall objective of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint 2025 is the further integration of the ASEAN Member States and establishment of the right regulatory and policy environments fostering investments and trade, alongside increased efficiency in regional supply chains. AEC Blueprint 2025 provides a solid basis for trade related technical assistance in the region, and ARISE Plus Lao PDR contributes to its main priorities by addressing specific regulatory constraints in the implementation of ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) and other AEC Blueprint 2025 commitments.

Through an emphasis on improving efficiency in engaging with regional agreements, the proposed action has also advocated for the need to focus on reducing disparities and improve capacity building and skills development services under target value chains and products (coffee and wood – processing). The action also provides the ministry of industry and commerce with greater involvement in many useful and beneficial activities, focusing on capacity development to enhancing the capacity of stakeholders regarding export regulations of EU and regional market.

For further detail also see methodology and intervention logic in the Description of Action.

1.2 Stakeholders of the Intervention

Stakeholders in the action mainly consist of the Lao administration, the private sector, and development stakeholders, which are detailed as following:

- The Lao administration – The main Ministry concerned by the project is the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MoIC), within which the Department of Planning and Co-operation (DPC) has the responsibility to coordinate technical assistance provided to the Ministry. A National Implementation Unit (NIU) supports the DPC and serves as the implementing government agency for ongoing government-executed projects such as the Trade Development Facility 2 (TDF-2), Lao Competitiveness and Trade Project (LCT), funded by a multi donor trust fund, including the EU, and overseen by the World Bank. Also the WTO/EIF Tier II project and the World Bank's Access to Finance projects are led by the NIU. In addition NIU oversees two GIZ projects, namely RELATED (completed in 12/2020) and the IAI initiative, as well as the USAID LUNA II project, becoming the Business Environment (BE) project in 2019.

The Foreign Trade Policy Department (FTPD) within the MoIC is in charge of ASEAN and WTO integration serves as the focal point of several technical assistance projects. The Department of SME Promotion (DOSMEP) is responsible for the development and promotion of the Lao SME Development Plan, spanning productivity and innovation, access to finance, business development services, access to markets, business environment for SMEs, entrepreneurship creation and tax exemptions for SMEs. The Department of Trade Promotion (DTP) is tasked with supporting market information and development for priority export sectors. The Department of Import and Export (DIMEX) houses the Trade Facilitation Division (which also hosts the Trade Facilitation Secretariat), with the Department of Foreign Trade dealing with transport, export, customs, NTMs and the implementation of the trade facilitation action plan/roadmap. The Department of Industry and Handicraft (DIH) will also be an important actor for the expected Result 3, especially for the value chain work in agro-products and processed wood

MoIC is aware of the challenges and constraints the country is facing, including a worsening rank (from #139 of 190 countries in 2017 to #141 in 2018) according to the World Bank Ease of Doing Business survey. It also understands well the potential positive benefit of technical assistance, and co-operates fully with donors in programming and implementation of technical assistance activities.

- In addition to the MoIC, other line ministries will be involved, especially for activities pertaining to the establishment of a business-enabling environment and increased trade and participation in global value-chains. These include the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) (for wood-based products and agro-based products), and its different departments such as the Department of Technical Extension and Agro Processing. Also the Ministry of Planning and Investment, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance and its Customs Department, the Ministry of Science and Technology and its Department of Standardization and Metrology (DSM), the Ministry of Health, and the Prime Minister's Office will be closely involved in the project implementation. Other specific stakeholders in the Government will include a wide range of government-specialized agencies in the capital, the provinces and the districts – including the Provincial Offices of Industry and Commerce (PoIC) linked to MoIC.
- The private sector – Both foreign and local business associations in Lao PDR are relatively weak and their ability to advocate and provide services to private sector operators is limited. The Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI) is the main organization representing the private sector and has access to the Lao government at the highest level. Most sectoral business associations are inactive, with some exceptions such as the Lao Furniture Association (with 4 staff and 90 members) and the Lao Wood Processing Association. Both associations have an opportunity to develop with the recent ban on non- and semi-processed wood exports (Order No. 15/PM). Nevertheless during conversations with different stakeholders it was suggested to also directly approach SMEs and not only go through the respective associations in order to reach a diverse group of private sector representatives. The European Chamber of Commerce and Industry to Lao PDR (ECCIL - EuroCham-Lao PDR), supported by the EU under an ICI+ funded project, was

established in 2011 and is developing an advocacy role for European businesses in Lao PDR. Its capacity to participate in policy dialogue with the Government of Lao PDR (GoL) is increasing, working closely with LNCCI, and should be further exploited under the project. For the agro business sector, the Lao Farmers Net-work and the Lao Farmers associations at provincial and district level are the ones which need to be approached when working on the different value chains. Furthermore there is an active Organic Farmers Association in Lao PDR. It is important to note that producers and exporters of some commodities are better organized than others. For example, the coffee sector has an association whereas the tea sector doesn't. It is important to keep this in mind when addressing the 'private sector'. Small business such as Xao Ban and AgroAsie are players at the Vientiane market and can provide information on the private sector landscape of the agribusiness sector. For the wood processing sector, Burapha is the biggest company with an office in Vientiane and a plantation sight near Vang Vieng. Their expertise but also vision for the sector is quite developed and aspects of it may be taken into consideration for the ARISE Pus sector strategy.

- Development stakeholders – Recent Trade-Related Technical Assistance (TRTA) is being implement in Lao PDR by the following development partners with different levels of engagement: Australia - DFAT, Germany – GIZ & KfW, USA - USAID, Japan - JICA, France - AFD, European Union - European Forest Institute (EFI), Switzerland –SECO/HELVETAS and international and regional organizations namely WBG, FAO, and ADB.

Australia (DFAT), the EU, Germany (GIZ), Ireland (Irish AID), the World Bank, USA (USAID), were co-financing partners for the TDF-2, administered under a Multi-Donor Trust Fund by the World Bank, which ended in 30 September 2018. The successor project is the Lao Competitive and Trade Project (LCT) which runs from 2018 to 2022. The EU is no longer co-financing this project.

In addition to the multi-donor trust fund, DFAT also has projects in the area of forestry and agro-based products. The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) has a big forestry program in Lao PDR which covers a broad spectrum- from production (agroforestry and tissue culture) to pest management to enhanced wood processing. These projects work with smallholder plantations and the big plantation companies including Burapha, Stora Enso and Mekong Timber. Local partners include NAFRI and the universities.

The USAID-funded Lao PDR-United States International and ASEAN Integration (LUNA I and II) projects have been operating since December 2007. LUNA II completed in 23 March 2019. Currently USAID is implementing a Micro-Enterprise (ME) project (2018 to 2023) at Xiangkhouang province and is going to implement a Business Environment (BE) project at national level starting in 2019. GIZ implemented the Regional Economic Integration of Lao PDR into ASEAN, Trade and Entrepreneurship Development (RELATED) project since 2014, with a second phase agreed in 2017, which ended in 12/2020 (with a sectoral focus on tourism, transport and logistics, coffee and cross-cutting work on developing institutional capacities to deliver integration). There are more ASEAN related pro-jects coming up, e.g. GIZ Agritrade.

AFD is supporting different projects, namely the coffee sector in Laos (project implement by MAF), geographical indications (GI), especially Khao Kai Noy (small chicken rice), however this is a regional project, focal point in Laos is MoIC; the Tea sector and especially two initiatives in Meung District (Bokeo Province) and Saysathan District (Xayaboury Province) partner ministry is MAF, as well as the Bamboo sector (through GRET).

UNCTAD supported the "Train For Trade" project to build the capacities of Cambodia and Lao PDR, in the fields of international trade, investment, competition policies, trade and environment, and trade- facilitation from 2003 to 2011.

From 2014 to 2017, the International Trade Centre (ITC) implemented the “Enhancing sustainable tourism, clean production and export capacity in Lao PDR” project funded by SECO as one of four UN Cluster agencies. Lao PDR is also one of the six beneficiary countries of ITC’s “Enhancing Export Capacities of Asian LDCs for Intra-Regional Trade”, which run from 2014 to 2018, supporting Lao PDR’ SME export competitiveness to China. ITC also provided support to the WTO accession process as part of the “LDC fostering business support to the WTO assess in process programme” from 2010 to 2014.

- Within the Commission, INTPA, TRADE, TAXUD, and the EEAS and its Delegations in Vientiane, Bangkok and Jakarta are stakeholders of the regional ARISE Plus programme and are involved in the implementation, together with EU Member States.

For more details see also sections on external synergies and coherence with other interventions in Description of Action.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION ASSIGNMENT

Type of evaluation	Mid-Term Evaluation
Coverage	ASEAN Regional Integration Support – Lao PDR Trade Related Assistance
Geographic scope	Lao PDR
Period to be evaluated	01/11/2018 to 31/04/2021

2.1 Objectives of the evaluation

Systematic and timely evaluation of its programmes and activities is an established priority² of the European Commission³. The focus of evaluations is on the **assessment of achievements**, the **quality** and the **results**⁴ of Interventions in the context of an evolving cooperation policy with an increasing emphasis on **result-oriented approaches and the contribution towards the implementation of the SDGs**.⁵

From this perspective, evaluations should **look for evidence of why, whether or how these results are linked to the EU intervention** and seek to **identify the factors driving or hindering progress**.

Evaluations should provide an understanding of the **cause and effect links** among: inputs and activities, and outputs, outcomes and impacts. Evaluations should serve accountability, decision making, learning and management purposes.

² COM(2013) 686 final “Strengthening the foundations of Smart Regulation – improving evaluation” - http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/docs/com_2013_686_en.pdf; EU Financial regulation (art 27); Regulation (EC) No 1905/2006; Regulation (EC) No 1889/2006; Regulation (EC) No 1638/2006; Regulation (EC) No 1717/2006; Council Regulation (EC) No 215/2008

³ SEC (2007)213 “Responding to Strategic Needs: Reinforcing the use of evaluation”, https://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/docs/com_2013_686_en.pdf; SWD (2015)111 “Better Regulation Guidelines”, http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/docs/swd_br_guidelines_en.pdf; COM(2017) 651 final “Completing the Better Regulation Agenda: Better solutions for better results”, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/completing-the-better-regulation-agenda-better-solutions-for-better-results_en.pdf

⁴ Reference is made to the entire results chain, covering outputs, outcomes and impacts. Cfr. Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 “Laying down common rules and procedures for the implementation of the Union's instruments for financing external action” - https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/financial_assistance/ipa/2014/236-2014_cir.pdf

⁵ The New European Consensus on Development ‘Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future’, Official Journal 30th of June 2017. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2017:210:TOC>

The main objectives of this evaluation are to provide the relevant services of the European Union, the interested stakeholders and the wider public with:

- an overall independent assessment of the past performance of the ARISE Plus – Lao PDR, paying particular attention to its intermediate results measured against its expected objectives, the reasons underpinning such results, and the synergies between the Lao PDR component and the regional component of the ARISE+ regional programme;
- key lessons learned, conclusions and related recommendations in order to improve current and future Interventions;
- Provide recommendations towards future strategy of intervention in the sectors concerned and programming of the cycle support;
- Identify key learning points that may influence the next cycle of the European Joint Programming (JP) 2021-2025, particularly in Trade Private Sector Development and the trade priority outcomes in the 9th NSEDP 2021-2025.
- In particular, this evaluation will serve to understand the performance of the targeted action, its enabling factors and those hampering a proper delivery of results as to inform the planning of the future EU interventions and actions in the same sector.

The proposed evaluation detailed methodology, to be undertaken for this assignment, will be presented by the evaluation expert with the inception report, which will have to be endorsed by the EU Delegation.

The evaluation expert will describe how their proposed methodology will address cross-cutting issues mentioned in section 2.1. This will include the specific recommendation for actions to ensure these are effectively taken into account across the interventions.

The main users of this evaluation will be the EU Delegation to Lao PDR and the Lao government agencies, in particular the Ministry of Industry and Commerce.

2.2 Requested services

2.2.1 Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation will assess the Intervention using the five standard DAC evaluation criteria, namely: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. In addition, the evaluation will assess one EU specific evaluation criterion, which is:

- the EU added value (the extent to which the Intervention brings additional benefits to what would have resulted from Member States' interventions only);

The definition of the 5 DAC + 1 EU evaluation criteria is contained for reference in the Annex VII.

The evaluation expert shall furthermore consider whether gender, environment and climate change were effectively mainstreamed; the relevant SDGs and their interlinkages were identified; the principle of Leave No-One Behind and the rights-based approach methodology was followed in the identification/formulation documents and the extent to which they have been reflected in the implementation of the Intervention, its governance and monitoring.

2.2.2 Indicative Evaluation Questions

The specific Evaluation Questions as formulated below are indicative. Based on the latter and following initial consultations and document analysis, the evaluation expert will discuss them with the Evaluation Manager⁶ and propose in their Inception Report a complete and finalised set of Evaluation Questions with

⁶ The Evaluation Manager is the staff of the Contracting Authority managing the evaluation contract. In most cases this person will be the Operational manager of the Action(s) under evaluation.

indication of specific Judgement Criteria and Indicators, as well as the relevant data collection sources and tools.

Once agreed through the approval of the Inception Report, the Evaluation Questions will become contractually binding.

- The extent to which the design of project is appropriate to the political, economic and social context of the Lao PDR
- The extent to which the project's outcomes are being achieved and synchronized with the European Joint Indicative Programming Document for Lao PDR 2016-2020; the National Social Economic Development Plan 2016-2020
- Key recommendations for the EU to reflect in the direction of the next cycle of the European Joint Programming (JP) 2021-2025, and the 9th NSEDP 2021-2025
- The extent to which the project responds to the key needs and challenges that the government as well as private sector is facing, given the current economic development conditions in Lao PDR, including the export roadmaps of targeted products (coffee and wood-processing), studies and other recommendations
- The extent to which the activities and outputs of the project remain consistent with attaining the overall objectives of the project, as well as the broader expected outcomes of the government and development partners
- The extent to which the ARISE+ Lao component contributes to the objectives of the ARISE+ regional programme, and benefits from the regional component of this programme
- The extent to which the structure of project team is being responsive and effective to the MOIC and EU Delegation to Lao PDR
- The extent to which the project has synergized/ collaborated with other development partners/organizations, and external synergies active in Lao PDR
- The extent to which the outputs, outcomes and results are achieved or likely to be achieved
- Non-achievement (or likelihood of non-achievement) of outputs, outcomes, and results
- The extent to which the project's activities are cost-efficient in relation to results produced
- The extent to which the effectiveness of time used to achieve objectives
- The extent to which the project has the ownership, capacity and resources of the relevant government to implement the designed intervention
- The extent to which the project was able to adjust and produce the intended outcomes in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The appropriateness of strategies and measures taken/planned to assure sustainability, as well as the likelihood of achieving sustainability
- The appropriateness and adequacy of project monitoring and supervision

2.3 Phases of the evaluation and required outputs

The evaluation process will be carried out in four phases

- Inception
- Desk and Field
- Synthesis
- Dissemination

The outputs of each phase are to be submitted at the end of the corresponding phases as specified in the synoptic table in section 2.3.1.

2.3.1 Synoptic table

The following table presents an overview of the key activities to be conducted within each phase and lists the outputs to be produced by the expert as well as the key meetings with the Contracting Authority and the Reference Group. The main content of each output is described in Chapter 5.

Phases of the evaluation	Key activities	Outputs and meetings
<u>Inception Phase</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial document/data collection • Background analysis • Inception interviews • Stakeholder analysis • Reconstruction (or as necessary, construction) of the Intervention Logic, and / or description of the Theory of Change (based upon available documentation and interviews) • Methodological design of the evaluation (Evaluation Questions with judgement criteria, indicators and methods of data collection and analysis) and evaluation matrix 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Kick-off meeting with the Delegation with ARISE Plus – Lao PDR project’s team and government counterparts</i> • Inception report including the proposed detailed methodology (max. 10 pages) • Slide presentation of the Inception Report •
<u>Desk and Field Phase</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth document analysis (focused on the Evaluation Questions) • Methodological design of the field phase. • Conduct interviews of relevant stakeholders (key departments in Ministry of Industry and Commerce and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and private sector involved in the activities) • Qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis • Gathering of primary evidence with the use of the most appropriate techniques • Data collection and analysis whenever relevant • Conduct a total of a maximum of 5 days of field visits, in two provinces of Lao PDR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note of key findings of the desk (max 20 pages) • Overview of field phase design/planning • Initial meetings at country level with relevant stakeholders • Face to face Briefing and Debriefing with the Reference Group/Stakeholders • Intermediary report in the end of desk and field phase summarizing of key findings (max 25 pages)
<u>Synthesis phase</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final analysis of findings (with focus on the Evaluation Questions) • Formulation of the overall assessment, conclusions and recommendations • Reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Final Report • Executive Summary according to the standard template published in the EVAL module • Final Report (max. 25 pages + annexes) • Slide presentation • Meeting with Reference Group

Phases of the evaluation	Key activities	Outputs and <i>meetings</i>
<u>Dissemination phase</u>	Organisation of the final presentation seminar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Final presentation seminar</i>

2.3.2 Inception Phase

This phase aims at structuring the evaluation and clarifying the key issues to be addressed.

The phase will start with initial background study, to be conducted by the evaluator from home. It will then continue with a kick-off session in Vientiane, Lao PDR between the EU Delegation, ARISE Plus - Lao PDR project team and evaluation expert. Half-day presence of evaluation expert is required. The meeting aims at arriving at a clear and shared understanding of the scope of the evaluation, its limitations and feasibility. It also serves to clarify expectations regarding evaluation outputs, the methodology to be used and, where necessary, to pass on additional or latest relevant information.

In the Inception phase, the relevant documents will be reviewed (see annex II)

Furthermore, based on the Intervention Logic, the evaluators will develop a narrative explanation of the logic of the Intervention that describes how change is expected to happen within the Intervention, all along its results chain, i.e. Theory of Change. This explanation includes an assessment of the evidence underpinning this logic (especially between outputs and outcomes, and between outcomes and impact), and articulates the assumptions that must hold for the Intervention to work, as well as identification of the factors most likely to inhibit the change from happening.

Based on the Intervention Logic and the Theory of Change the evaluators will finalise i) the Evaluation Questions with the definition of judgement criteria and indicators, the selection of data collection tools and sources, ii) the evaluation methodology, and iii) the planning of the following phases.

The methodological approach will be represented in an Evaluation Design Matrix⁷, which will be included in the Inception Report. **The methodology of the evaluation should be gender sensitive, contemplate the use of sex- and age-disaggregated data and demonstrate how actions have contributed to progress on gender equality.**

The limitations faced or to be faced during the evaluation exercise will be discussed and mitigation measures described in the Inception Report. Finally, the work plan for the overall evaluation process will be presented and agreed in this phase; this work plan shall be in line with that proposed in the present ToR. Any modifications shall be justified and agreed with the Evaluation Manager.

On the basis of the information collected, the evaluation expert should prepare an **Inception Report** content is described in Chapter **Error! Reference source not found.**

2.3.3 Desk and Field Phase

This phase is a combination of desk and field phase and starts after approval of the Inception Report by the Evaluation Manager.

⁷ The Evaluation Matrix is a tool to structure the evaluation analysis (by defining judgement criteria and indicators for each evaluation question). It helps also to consider the most appropriate and feasible data collection method for each of the questions,

The desk phase is when the document analysis takes place. The analysis should include a brief synthesis of the existing literature relevant to the intervention. Please refer to the list of documents in Annex II.

The analysis of the relevant documents shall be systematic and reflect the methodology developed and approved during the Inception phase.

During this phase the evaluation team shall fine-tune the evaluation tools to be used during the Field Phase and describe the preparatory steps already taken and those to be taken for its organization, including the list of people to be interviewed, dates and itinerary of visits, and attribution of tasks within the team.

Before starting the field phase, the Desk note should be prepared; its content is described in TOR Part B.

If any significant deviation from the agreed work plan or schedule is perceived as creating a risk for the quality of the evaluation or not respecting the end of the validity of the specific contract, these elements are to be immediately discussed with the Evaluation Manager and, regarding the validity of the contract, corrective measures undertaken.

In the first days of the field phase, the evaluation expert shall hold a briefing meeting with the EU Delegation to Lao PDR and the ARISE Plus – Lao PDR project team.

During the field phase, the evaluation expert shall ensure adequate contact and consultation with, and involvement of the different stakeholders; with the relevant government authorities and agencies. Throughout the mission the evaluation expert will use the most reliable and appropriate sources of information, respect the rights of individuals to provide information in confidence, and be sensitive to the beliefs and customs of local social and cultural environments.

At the end of the field phase, the evaluation expert will summarise its work, analyse the reliability and coverage of data collection, and present preliminary findings in a meeting with the EU Delegation, the Reference Group.

At the end of the Field Phase an **Intermediary Note** (max. 25 pages) and a Slide Presentation will be prepared; its content is described in Chapter 5.

2.3.4 Synthesis Phase

This phase is devoted to the preparation by the contractor of **two distinct documents**: the **Executive Summary** and the **Final Report**, whose structures are described in the Annex III; it entails the analysis of the data collected during the desk and field phases to answer the Evaluation Questions and preparation of the overall assessment, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.

The evaluation expert will present, in a single Report with Annexes, their findings, conclusions and recommendations in accordance with the structure in Annex III; a separate Executive Summary will be produced as well, following the compulsory format given in the EVAL module (see Annex III).

The evaluation expert will make sure that:

- Their assessments are objective and balanced, statements are accurate and evidence-based, and recommendations realistic and clearly targeted.
- When drafting the report, they will acknowledge clearly where changes in the desired direction are known to be already taking place.
- The wording, inclusive of the abbreviations used, takes into account the audience as identified in art. 2.1 above.

The evaluation expert will deliver and then present in Vientiane the **Draft Final Report** to the Reference Group to discuss the draft findings, conclusions and recommendations. One day of presence is required of – as minimum – the expert.

The Evaluation Manager consolidates the comments expressed by the Reference Group members and sends them to the evaluation expert for the report revision, together with a first version of the Quality Assessment Grid (QAG) assessing the quality of the Draft Final Report. The content of the QAG will be discussed with the evaluation expert to verify if further improvements are required, and the evaluation expert will be invited to comment on the conclusions formulated in the QAG (through the EVAL Module).

The evaluation expert will then finalise the **Final Report** and the **Executive Summary** by addressing the relevant comments. While potential quality issues, factual errors or methodological problems should be corrected, comments linked to diverging judgements may be either accepted or rejected. In the latter instance, the evaluation expert must explain the reasons in writing. After approval of the final report, the QAG will be updated and sent to the evaluators via EVAL Module.

2.3.5 Dissemination phase

The approved draft Final Report will be presented and discussed at a dissemination workshop, gathering relevant stakeholders (max. 50 persons + interpreters), to be held in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Comments that will be judged relevant will still need to be taken into account in the Final report. For the seminar, 5 hard copies of the report have to be produced and delivered to the EUD.

All documents will be written in English. The length of the final main report should not exceed 50 pages including the Executive summary. Additional information should be included in the annexes.

The Final report will be provided only on a non-editable digital version (USB key support), and will include the report the executive summary in English and translation into Lao and all annexes, in 5 units.

To present deliverables to Management group meetings and in the context of the workshop, relevant visual support will be prepared by the evaluation expert. The costs of organising the workshop (venue, lunch, refreshments; materials, translation and other logistics) should be part of the offer.

2.4 Specific Contract Organisation and Methodology (Technical offer)

The invited Framework Contractors will submit their specific Contract Organisation and Methodology by using the standard SIEA template B-VII-d-i and its annexes 1 and 2 (B-VII-d-ii).

The evaluation methodology proposed to undertake the assignment will be described in the Chapter 3 (Strategy and timetable of work) of the template B-VII-d-i. Contractors will describe how their proposed methodology will address the cross-cutting issues mentioned in these Terms of Reference and notably gender equality and the empowerment of women. This will include (if applicable) the communication action messages, materials and management structures.

By derogation of what is specified in the standard SIEA template B-VII-d-i, the maximum length of the specific Contract Organisation and Methodology is 7 pages, written in Times New Roman 12 or Arial size 11, single interline, excluding the framework contractor's own annexes (maximum length of such annexes: 3 pages), additional to the Annexes foreseen as part of the present Specific ToRs. The timetable is not accounted and may be presented on an A3 page

2.5 Management and Steering of the evaluation

2.5.1 At the EU level

The evaluation is managed by the Evaluation Manager of the EUD; the progress of the evaluation will be followed closely with the assistance of a Reference Group consisting of members: EU Delegation

Management and cooperation section; representative from the EU Delegation in Bangkok, trade section and representatives from key stakeholders and other relevant beneficiaries.

The main functions of the Reference Group are:

- To define and validate the Evaluation Questions.
- To facilitate contacts between the evaluation expert and the EU services and external stakeholders.
- To ensure that the evaluation expert has access to and has consulted all relevant information sources and documents related to the Intervention.
- To discuss and comment on notes and reports delivered by the evaluation expert. Comments by individual group members are compiled into a single document by the Evaluation Manager and subsequently transmitted to the evaluation expert.
- To assist in feedback on the findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations from the evaluation.
- To support the development of a proper follow-up action plan after completion of the evaluation.

2.5.2 At the Contractor level

Further to the Requirements set in the art. 6 of the Global Terms of Reference and in the Global Organisation and Methodology, respectively annexes II and III of the Framework contract SIEA 2018, the contractor is responsible for the quality of: the process; the evaluation design; the inputs and the outputs of the evaluation. In particular, it will:

- Support the expert in its role, mainly from a team management perspective. In this regard, the contractor should make sure that, for each evaluation phase, specific tasks and outputs for each team member are clearly defined and understood.
- Provide backstopping and quality control of the evaluation expert's work throughout the assignment.
- Ensure that the evaluator is adequately resourced to perform all required tasks within the time framework of the contract.

3 LOGISTICS AND TIMING

Please refer to Part B of the Terms of Reference.

3.1 Planning, including the period for notification for placement of the staff⁸

As part of the technical offer, the framework contractor must fill in the timetable in the Annex IV to be finalised in the Inception Report. The 'Indicative dates' are not to be formulated as fixed dates but rather as days (or weeks, or months) from the beginning of the assignment (to be referenced as '0').

Sufficient forward planning is to be taken into account in order to ensure the active participation and consultation with government representatives, national / local or other stakeholders.

4 REQUIREMENTS

Please refer to Part B of the Terms of Reference.

5 REPORTS

For the list of reports, please refer to Part B of the Terms of Reference.

⁸ As per art 16.4 a) of the General Conditions of the Framework Contract SIEA

5.1 Use of the EVAL module by the evaluators

It is strongly recommended that the **submission of deliverables** by the selected contractor **be performed through their uploading in the EVAL Module**, an evaluation process management tool and repository of the European Commission. The selected contractor will receive access to online and offline guidance in order to operate with the module during the related Specific contract validity.

5.2 Number of report copies

Apart from their submission -preferably via the EVAL Module-, the approved version of the Final Report will be also provided in 5 paper copies and in electronic version at no extra cost.

5.3 Formatting of reports

All reports will be produced using Font Arial or Times New Roman minimum letter size 11 and 12 respectively, single spacing, double sided. They will be sent in Word and PDF formats.

6 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

6.1 Content of reporting

The outputs must match quality standards. The text of the reports should be illustrated, as appropriate, with maps, graphs and tables; a map of the area(s) of Intervention is required (to be attached as Annex).

6.2 Comments on the outputs

For each report, the Evaluation Manager will send to the Contractor consolidated comments received from the Reference Group or the approval of the report within 14 calendar days. The revised reports addressing the comments shall be submitted within 10 calendar days from the date of receipt of the comments. The evaluation expert should provide a separate document explaining how and where comments have been integrated or the reason for not integrating certain comments, if this is the case.

6.3 Assessment of the quality of the Final Report and of the Executive Summary

The quality of the draft versions of the Final Report and of the Executive Summary will be assessed by the Evaluation Manager using the online Quality Assessment Grid (QAG) in the EVAL Module (text provided in Annex V). The Contractor is given – through the EVAL module - the possibility to comment on the assessments formulated by the Evaluation Manager. The QAG will then be reviewed following the submission of the final version of the Final Report and of the Executive Summary.

The compilation of the QAG will support/inform the compilation by the Evaluation Manager of the FWC SIEA's Specific Contract Performance Evaluation.

7 PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Please address any request for clarification and other communication to the following address:

delegation-laos-cris-fwc-offers@eeas.europa.eu

ANNEXES TO TOR - PART A

ANNEX I: SPECIFIC GLOBAL PRICE TECHNICAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

SPECIFIC GLOBAL PRICE TECHNICAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Request for Services n. OPSYS: RFS-SIEA-2018-3322

FWC SIEA 2018 - LOT 2: Infrastructure, sustainable growth and jobs

EuropeAid/138778/DH/SER/multi

1. TECHNICAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Contracting Authority selects the offer with the best value for money using an 80/20 weighting between technical quality and price⁹.

Technical quality is evaluated on the basis of the following grid:

Criteria	Maximum
<i>Total score for Organisation and Methodology</i>	50
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding of ToR and the aim of the services to be provided	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall methodological approach, quality control approach, appropriate mix of tools and estimate of difficulties and challenges	25
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Technical added value, backstopping and role of the involved members of the consortium	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organisation of tasks including timetable	10
<i>Score for the expertise of the proposed individual expert</i>	50
OVERALL TOTAL SCORE	100

2. TECHNICAL THRESHOLD

Any offer falling short of the technical threshold of 75 out of 100 points, is automatically rejected.

3. INTERVIEWS DURING THE EVALUATION OF THE OFFERS

During the evaluation process of the offers received the Contracting Authority reserves the right to interview by phone one or several members of the proposed evaluation teams.

⁹ For more details about the 80/20 rule, please see the PRAG, chapter 3.3.10.5 - https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/about-funding-and-procedures/procedures-and-practical-guide-prag_en

ANNEX II: INFORMATION THAT WILL BE PROVIDED TO THE EVALUATION EXPERT

- The European Joint Indicative Programming Document for Lao PDR 2016-2020;
- The next cycle of the European Joint Programming (JP) 2021-2025;
- The National Social Economic Development Plan 2016-2020;
- Addendum no. 1 to contribution agreement No ACA/2019/407-542
- Progress report / Inception phase report 1 November 2018 – 4 January 2020
- Progress Report / Annual Work Plan 5 January 2020 – 31 December 2020
- Finance Agreement of ARISE Plus regional programme
- Description of Actions of ARISE Plus Lao PDR
- Coffee Export Roadmap, Wood – Processing Export Roadmap, Foreign Trade Negotiation Roadmap, ATIGA gap analysis, the study on Trade implications of Lao PDR's graduation from LDC status, data collection efforts on the priority sectors, regulatory assessments in the transport & logistics sector and tourism sectors, document of trainings, workshops and other relevant documents of ARISE Plus Lao PDR project activities implemented.

Note: The evaluation expert has to identify and obtain any other document worth analysing, through independent research and during interviews with relevant informed parties and stakeholders of the Intervention.

ANNEX III: STRUCTURE OF THE FINAL REPORT AND OF THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The contractor will deliver – **preferably through their uploading in the EVAL Module - two distinct documents**: the **Final Report** and the **Executive Summary**. They must be consistent, concise and clear and free of linguistic errors both in the original version and in their translation – if foreseen.

The Final Report should not be longer than the number of pages indicated in Chapter 6. Additional information on the overall context of the Intervention, description of methodology and analysis of findings should be reported in an Annex to the main text.

The presentation must be properly spaced and the use of clear graphs, tables and short paragraphs is strongly recommended.

The cover page of the Final Report shall carry the following text:

“This evaluation is supported and guided by the European Commission and presented by [name of consulting firm]. The report does not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the European Commission”.

Executive Summary

A short, tightly-drafted, to-the-point and free-standing Executive Summary. It should focus on the key purpose or issues of the evaluation, outline the main analytical points, and clearly indicate the main conclusions, lessons to be learned and specific recommendations. It is to be prepared by using the specific format foreseen in the EVAL Module.

The main sections of the evaluation report shall be as follows:

1. Introduction

A description of the Intervention, of the relevant country/region/sector background and of the evaluation, providing the reader with sufficient methodological explanations to gauge the credibility of the conclusions and to acknowledge limitations or weaknesses, where relevant.

2. Answered questions / Findings

A chapter presenting the answers to the Evaluation Questions, supported by evidence and reasoning.

3. Overall assessment (*optional*)

A chapter synthesising all answers to Evaluation Questions into an overall assessment of the Intervention. The detailed structure of the overall assessment should be refined during the evaluation process. The relevant chapter has to articulate all the findings, conclusions and lessons in a way that reflects their importance and facilitates the reading. The structure should not follow the Evaluation Questions, the logical framework or the evaluation criteria.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.3 Lessons learnt

Lessons learnt generalise findings and translate past experience into relevant knowledge that should support decision making, improve performance and promote the achievement of better results. Ideally, they should support the work of both the relevant European and partner institutions.

4.1 Conclusions

This chapter contains the conclusions of the evaluation, organised per evaluation criterion.

In order to allow better communication of the evaluation messages that are addressed to the Commission, a table organising the conclusions by order of importance can be presented, or a paragraph or sub-chapter emphasizing the 3 or 4 major conclusions organised by order of importance, while avoiding being repetitive.

4.2 Recommendations

They are intended to improve or reform the Intervention in the framework of the cycle under way, or to prepare the design of a new Intervention for the next cycle.

Recommendations must be clustered and prioritised, and carefully targeted to the appropriate audiences at all levels, especially within the Commission structure.

5. Annexes to the report

The report should include the following annexes:

- The Terms of Reference of the evaluation
- The names of the evaluators (CVs can be shown, but summarised and limited to one page per person)
- Detailed evaluation methodology including: options taken, difficulties encountered and limitations; detail of tools and analyses.
- Evaluation Matrix
- Intervention logic / Logical Framework matrices (planned/real and improved/updated)
- Relevant geographic map(s) where the Intervention took place
- List of persons/organisations consulted
- Literature and documentation consulted
- Other technical annexes (e.g. statistical analyses, tables of contents and figures, matrix of evidence, databases) as relevant
- Detailed answer to the Evaluation Questions, judgement criteria and indicators

ANNEX IV: PLANNING SCHEDULE

This annex must be included by Framework Contractors in their Specific Contract Organisation and Methodology and forms an integral part of it. Framework Contractors can add as many rows and columns as needed.

The phases of the evaluation shall reflect those indicated in the present Terms of Reference.

		Indicative Duration in working days ¹⁰		
Activity	Location	Team Leader	Evaluator ...	Indicative Dates
Inception phase: total days				
•				
•				
Desk and Field phase: total days				
•				
•				
Synthesis phase: total days				
•				
•				
Dissemination phase: total days				
•				
•				
TOTAL working days (maximum)				

¹⁰ Add one column per each evaluator

ANNEX V: QUALITY ASSESSMENT GRID

The quality of the Final Report will be assessed by the Evaluation Manager (since the submission of the draft Report and Executive Summary) using the following quality assessment grid, which is included **in the EVAL Module**; the grid will be shared with the evaluation team, which will have the possibility to include their comments.

Intervention (Project/Programme) evaluation – Quality Assessment Grid Final Report

Evaluation data			
Evaluation title			
Evaluation managed by		Type of evaluation	
Ref. of the evaluation contract		EVAL ref.	
Evaluation budget			
EUD/Unit in charge		Evaluation Manager	
Evaluation dates	Start:		End:
Date of draft final report		Date of Response of the Services	
Comments			
Project data			
Main project evaluated			
CRIS/OPSYS # of evaluated project(s)			
DAC Sector			
Contractor's details			
Evaluation Team Leader		Evaluation Contractor	
Evaluation expert(s)			

Legend: scores and their meaning

Very satisfactory: criterion entirely fulfilled in a clear and appropriate way

Satisfactory: criterion fulfilled

Unsatisfactory: criterion partly fulfilled

Very unsatisfactory: criterion mostly not fulfilled or absent

The evaluation report is assessed as follows

1. Clarity of the report

This criterion analyses the extent to which both the Executive Summary and the Final Report:

- Are easily readable, understandable and accessible to the relevant target readers
- Highlight the key messages
- The length of the various chapters and annexes of the Report are well balanced
- Contain relevant graphs, tables and charts facilitating understanding
- Contain a list of acronyms (only the Report)
- Avoid unnecessary duplications
- Have been language checked for unclear formulations, misspelling and grammar errors
- The Executive Summary is an appropriate summary of the full report and is a free-standing document



Strengths	Weaknesses	Score
Contractor's comments	Contractor's comments	

2. Reliability of data and robustness of evidence

This criterion analyses the extent to which:

- Data/evidence was gathered as defined in the methodology
- The report considers, when relevant, evidence from EU and/or other partners' relevant studies, monitoring reports and/or evaluations
- The report contains a clear description of the limitations of the evidence, the risks of bias and the mitigating measures





Strengths	Weaknesses	Score
Contractor's comments	Contractor's comments	

3. Validity of Findings

This criterion analyses the extent to which:

- Findings derive from the evidence gathered
- Findings address all selected evaluation criteria
- Findings result from an appropriate triangulation of different, clearly identified sources



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When assessing the effect of the EU intervention, the findings describe and explain the most relevant cause/effect links between outputs, outcomes and impacts The analysis of evidence is comprehensive and takes into consideration contextual and external factors 		
Strengths	Weaknesses	Score
Contractor's comments	Contractor's comments	
4. Validity of conclusions		
<p>This criterion analyses the extent to which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conclusions are logically linked to the findings, and go beyond them to provide a comprehensive analysis Conclusions appropriately address the selected evaluation criteria and all the evaluation questions, including the relevant cross-cutting dimensions Conclusions take into consideration the various stakeholder groups of the evaluation Conclusions are coherent and balanced (i.e. they present a credible picture of both strengths and weaknesses), and are free of personal or partisan considerations (If relevant) whether the report indicates when there are not sufficient findings to conclude on specific issues 		
		
Strengths	Weaknesses	Score
Contractor's comments	Contractor's comments	
5. Usefulness of recommendations		
<p>This criterion analyses the extent to which the recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are clearly linked to and derive from the conclusions Are concrete, achievable and realistic Are targeted to specific addressees Are clustered (if relevant), prioritised, and possibly time-bound (If relevant) provide advice for the Intervention's exit strategy, post-Intervention sustainability or for adjusting Intervention's design or plans 		
		
Strengths	Weaknesses	Score
Contractor's comments	Contractor's comments	

6. Appropriateness of lessons learnt analysis (if requested by the ToR or included by the evaluators)

This criterion is to be assessed only when requested by the ToR or included by evaluators and is not to be scored. It analyses the extent to which:



- Lessons are identified
- When relevant, they are generalised in terms of wider relevance for the institution(s)

Strengths	Weaknesses	
Contractor's comments	Contractor's comments	
Final comments on the overall quality of the report		Overall score

ANNEX VI: LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX (LOGFRAME) OF THE EVALUATED ACTION(S)

Result chain		Indicator		Baseline	Target	Results achieved during inception phase 1 Nov 2018 - 31 December 2019	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
Overall objective: impact	To contribute to inclusive economic growth, increased climate change resilience, mitigation of vulnerability (especially due to dependence on a limited number of sectors and markets) and job creation in Lao PDR.	1	GNI per capita	GNI per capita at US\$ 2,450 in 2018	GNI per capita at or higher than US\$ 2,520 by 2022	Too early to report	UNCTAD LDC Report EU Arise Plus regional programme reports WB and ITC Data ASEAN Stats-IMTS and FDIS databases Lao official statistics ILO surveys Project surveys and reports World Bank: World Development Indicators. GNI per capita, current \$US, Atlas method.	The political and security situation remains stable in Lao PDR and the Lao PDR Government remains committed to implement the NSEDP 2016-2020 and the 10 Years Development Strategy (2016-2025). The Government agrees to deploy budget and resources towards education, health and other development areas to show its commitment towards a long-term sustainable development strategy.
		2	GDP growth	6.2% p.a. in 2018	Average of not less than 7.5% p.a.	Too early to report		
		3	Annual growth and contribution to GDP of specific sectors	no baselines available for specific sectors; detailed production data not available	Growth in supported sectors exceeds that of economy/exports/ FDI as a whole by 2022	Too early to report		
		4	Economic vulnerability index – general	37.1 in 2014	Level required for graduation from LDC status by 2022	Too early to report		
		6	Number of jobs created	Labour force 3.8 million (2015 est.); no baseline available for specific sectors	Increase in employment in sectors covered by 2022	Too early to report		

Result chain		Indicator		Baseline	Target	Results achieved during inception phase 1 Nov 2018 - 31 December 2019	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
Specific objective(s): Outcome(s)	a. to improve the business environment in targeted sectors with a focus on regional economic integration (ASEAN);.	7	Number of recommendations on ATIGA and AEC Blueprint 2025 related trade policy and regulatory measures for which a consensus was forged with the support of this Action	0	8 recommendations of measures for which a consensus was forged by 2022	Too early to report	UNCTAD LDC Report WB and ITC Data ASEAN Stats-IMTS and FDIS databases Lao official statistics ILO surveys Project surveys and reports UNCTAD FDI database ITC Trade Map (mirror data, reported by ASEAN)	The political and security situation remains stable in Lao PDR and the Lao PDR Government remains committed to implement the NSEDP 2016-2020 and the 10 Years Development Strategy (2016-2025). The Government agrees to deploy budget and resources towards education, health and other development areas to show its commitment towards a long-term sustainable development strategy. The regional economic integration process
	b. to increase trade and participation in global value-chains in targeted sectors	8	Value of Laos' wood processing and coffee exports to ASEAN (in USD)	Exports to ASEAN in 2013: Coffee: \$20.5 million; Wood: \$7.1 million. Exports to ASEAN in 2018: Coffee: \$68.5 million; Wood: \$9.5 million Trend: Coffee +234%; Wood +34%	Increase of exports to ASEAN in wood processing and coffee by 2022	Too early to report		
		9	Value of Laos' wood processing	Exports to the EU in 2013:	Increase of exports to EU in wood	Too early to report		

Result chain		Indicator		Baseline	Target	Results achieved during inception phase 1 Nov 2018 - 31 December 2019	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
			and coffee exports to the EU (in USD)	Coffee: \$39.3 million; Wood: \$ 76,000 Exports to the EU in 2018: Coffee: \$22.6 million; Wood: \$ 17,000 Trend: Coffee - 42%, Wood - 78%	processing and coffee by 2022			(AEC 2025) maintains its current momentum and GoL is determined to ensure good faith implementation of its ASEAN commitments The commitment to reform from the Ministries responsible for shaping trade and investment policies and practices continues to hold with support from the Lao Prime Minister (including measures to effectively enhance the management of forestry, timber businesses, timber exploitation, timber industry and the
		10	Value of Laos' wood processing and coffee exports to China (in USD)	Exports to China in 2013: Coffee: \$175,000; Wood: \$ 9.0 million. Exports to China in 2018: Coffee: \$2.6 million; Wood: \$ 19.9 million Trend: Coffee +14757% (there were almost no exports in 2013),	Increase of exports to China in wood processing and coffee by 2022	Too early to report		

Result chain		Indicator		Baseline	Target	Results achieved during inception phase 1 Nov 2018 - 31 December 2019	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
				Wood +121%				sale-purchase of timber such as Order No. 15/PM)
		1 1	Value of Laos' wood processing and coffee exports to RoW (in USD)	Exports to RoW in 2013: Coffee: \$26.6 million; Wood: \$17.6 million. Exports to RoW in 2018: Coffee: \$25.9 million; Wood: \$33.1 million Trend: Coffee - 2.6%; Wood +88%	Increase of exports to RoW in wood processing and coffee by 2022	Too early to report		
Outputs	1. Increased regional economic integration by addressing specific constraints in targeted sectors through support for the implementation of	1 2	Number of recommendations produced in order to implement ATIGA and related AEC Blueprint commitments in sectors with intraregional export growth potential, with the	0 (no review of the implementation of ATIGA commitments in place)	10 recommendations produced	Too early to report	ASEAN reports (where available) Project reports TRTA Projects reports in country where available	Idem Commitment on the part of Lao PDR public and private institutions to (i) nominate suitable staff to participate in technical assistance and training, (ii) secure

Result chain		Indicator		Baseline	Target	Results achieved during inception phase 1 Nov 2018 - 31 December 2019	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
	measures contained in the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) and other commitments under the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025.		support of this Action.					tenure of relevant staff and (iii) follow up on studies, trainings and implement actions as required Availability of time and resources of key public and private institutions to engage in analysis, consultations, drafting of relevant documents, training/ advisory/ information activities, and participation to all required events and activities
		13	Number of ATIGA and related AEC Blueprint 2025 gaps identified	0	15 gaps identified	Too early to report		

Result chain		Indicator	Baseline	Target	Results achieved during inception phase 1 Nov 2018 - 31 December 2019	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
		14	Number of national standards adopted, harmonised, promoted with the support of this Action	0	At least 3 standards	Too early to report	
		15	Number of policy makers/private sector representatives reporting increased knowledge on trade policy/trade facilitation/quality related issues	0	At least 300 stakeholders , including a minimum of 25% of women	Too early to report	
		16	Number of conformity assessment bodies strengthened	0	At least 2 conformity assessment bodies strengthened	Too early to report	
	2. Increased awareness on trade preferences for exports, including to the European	17	Number of national trade policy/negotiation document developed with the support of this Action	0	1	35 bilateral consultations organized with public and private stakeholders about the Foreign Trade Negotiation Roadmap	EU and Lao official trade data Trade surveys Project reports Participa

Result chain		Indicator		Baseline	Target	Results achieved during inception phase 1 Nov 2018 - 31 December 2019	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
	Union, with greater use of Everything But Arms (EBA), and on the requirements for placing products on the EU market; advanced preparation of Lao PDR to shift to a new trade preference scheme (post-EBA).	18	Number of publications about export markets	0	3	3 (1 Export Potential Assessment ; 1 infographics about specialty coffee; 1 infographics about wood processing)	nt surveys Online resource s/ publications?	and political will to apply the skills provided through the project Sufficient numbers of entrepreneurs are ready and willing to benefit from the assistance provided
		19	Number of exporters reporting increased knowledge on export management	0	300 (by 2022)	Too early to report		
		20	Number of public and private sector stakeholders reporting increased knowledge of the benefits of the EBA scheme	0 stakeholders reached	150 relevant public and private sector stakeholders (of which at least ¼ of stakeholders represented by women)	Too early to report		
		21	Number of stakeholders confirming understanding of key quality related market requirements and standards for the priority sectors	0 stakeholders aware of EU and regional quality requirements	At least 10 quality champions qualified and trained; 10 awareness raising activities for a total of at least 100 individuals on EU and regional quality	Too early to report		

Result chain		Indicator		Baseline	Target	Results achieved during inception phase 1 Nov 2018 - 31 December 2019	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
					requirements organised (by 2022)			
		2 2	Availability of online tool with information on regional and EU quality requirements	0	1 online tool with information and guidance related to regional and EU quality requirements operational	Too early to report		
		2 3	Options for future preferential access to the EU market assessed	0 options assessed	At least 3 activities on future options organised, all relevant public and private sector stakeholders reached (2022). At least 1 future preferential market access option assessed (2020)	Too early to report		

Result chain		Indicator		Baseline	Target	Results achieved during inception phase 1 Nov 2018 - 31 December 2019	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
	3. Strengthened support services (especially for smallholders and SMEs, with a focus on women), reduction of supply-side constraints, and trade and investment promotion in targeted sectors (e.g. wood processing and agro-based products).	24	Number of Sector export strategies updated	0	2 (by 2022)	2 pre-engagement consultations on specialty agriculture and wood processing sectors organized 1 consultation for the drafting of the wood processing roadmap organized 1 roadmap for the wood processing sector drafted 30 bilateral consultations with sector stakeholders	EU and Lao official trade data Trade surveys Project reports Participant surveys Reports from DOSMEP	Idem
		25	Number of wood processing companies having made changes to their operations after receiving training on Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS), design and technology and quality management (disaggregated)	0	At least 25 (assuming total number of SMEs the project works with directly is 50) enterprises reporting enhanced competitiveness through TLAS, design and technology training	Too early to report		

Result chain		Indicator	Baseline	Target	Results achieved during inception phase 1 Nov 2018 - 31 December 2019	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
		ed by sex of training participant)					
		2 6 Number of agro-based companies and suppliers having made changes to their business operations for increased international competitiveness as a result of training and/advisory support in areas such as standards compliance, climate resilience, quality management and marketing (disaggregat	0	120 (by 2022)	Too early to report		

Result chain		Indicator	Baseline	Target	Results achieved during inception phase 1 Nov 2018 - 31 December 2019	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
		ed by sex of training participant)					
		27 Number of enterprises having made changes to their business operations for increased international competitiveness as a result of the project's support (disaggregated by sex of training participant).	0	100 (at least ¼ represented by women) (by 2022)	Too early to report		

Result chain		Indicator	Baseline	Target	Results achieved during inception phase 1 Nov 2018 - 31 December 2019	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
		28	Percentile share of enterprises supported by this Action that are owned, operated and controlled by women reporting improved international competitiveness as a result of the project's support	0	25% (by 2022)	Too early to report	

ANNEX VII: THE EVALUATION CRITERIA

The definition and the number of the DAC evaluation criteria has changed following the release (10 December 2019) of the document “Evaluation Criteria: Adapted Definitions and Principles for Use” (DCD/DAC(2019)58/FINAL).

The evaluators will ensure that their analysis will respect the new definitions of these criteria and their explanatory notes. Reference and guidance documents are being developed and can be found here: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

Unless otherwise specified in the chapter 2.2.1, the evaluation will assess the Intervention using the six standard DAC evaluation criteria and the EU added value, which is a specific EU evaluation criterion. Their definitions are reported below:

DAC CRITERIA

- **Relevance:** the “extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries’, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.”
- **Coherence:** the “compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.”
- **Effectiveness:** the “extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.”
- **Efficiency:** the “extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.”
- **Impact:** the “extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.”
- **Sustainability:** the “extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.”

EU-SPECIFIC CRITERION

- **EU added value:** the extent to which the Intervention brings additional benefits to what would have resulted from Member States' interventions only in the partner country. It directly stems from the principle of subsidiarity defined in the Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/7/the-principle-of-subsidiarity>).

TERMS OF REFERENCE – PART B

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Benefitting Zone

Laos

2. Contracting authority

The European Union, represented by the European Commission, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium.

3. Contract language

English

LOCATION AND DURATION

4. Location

- **Individual expert:**
 - Normal place of posting of the specific assignment: Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR
 - Mission(s) outside the normal place of posting and duration(s): Maximum of 5 days of field visits, in two provinces to be agreed during the inception phase.

5. Start date and period of implementation

The indicative start date is 20/05/2021 and the period of implementation of the contract will be 184 days from this date (indicative end date: 20/11/2021).

REQUIREMENTS

6. Expertise

For this assignment, one individual expert must be proposed for each position.

The expertise required for the implementation of the specific contract is detailed below.

- **Individual expert:**
 - General description of the position: To evaluate the mid-term evaluation of ARISE Plus Lao PDR
 - Expert category: Cat. I (>12 years of experience)
 - Qualifications and skills required:
 - o Advanced university degree (minimum Master) in Economics, or International Trade or relevant social sciences disciplines such as Public Policy, International Development Studies
 - o Data collection and analysis skills
 - o Research and analytical skills
 - o Critical analysis skills
 - o Good communication skills

- General professional experience:
 - o Experience in project evaluation using the 5 DAC criteria
 - o At least 12 years professional experience in the trade and/or private sector development sectors
- Specific professional experience:
 - o Experience engaging in the EU development cooperation programmes/projects
 - o Experience in projects demonstrating knowledge in EU programme;
 - o Knowledge/experience in trade facilitation, regional integration and supply global value chain;
 - o A minimum of two experiences in the formulation, management and/or evaluation of trade or economic projects (project approach) related to Generalized System of Preference (GSP) scheme or Everything But Arms' (EBA) scheme or sanitary and phytosanitary measure or customs or other relevant trade barriers;
 - o Experience in evaluations of EU projects in the field of trade and private sector development;
 - o Previous working experience in ASEAN countries is an advantage;
 - o Experience in Lao PDR is an advantage
- Language skills: Fluent in English (level C2)
- Minimum number of working days: **25** days

7. Incidental expenditure

No incidental expenditure provided for in this contract.

8. Lump sums

No lump sums provided for in this contract.

9. Expenditure verification

No expenditure verification report is required.

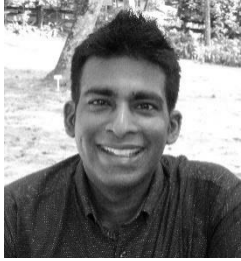
10. Other details

No other details provided for in this contract.

REPORTS AND DELIVERABLES

11. Reports and deliverables requirements

4.2 ANNEX 2: PROFILE OF EVALUATION TEAM



Mr. Channa Gunawardena has over 22 years' experience in **monitoring and evaluation of development results**. Much of his experience has been in the Asian region.

He has experience with the EU, USAID, UK Government, UN System, World Bank and Asian Development Bank initiatives. His EU experience includes over 25 EU-Asia projects with **FPI**, ICI, and DEVCO.

He has undertaken over **35 monitoring and evaluation (M&E) assignments** and led several **large scale and complex evaluations**.

Relevant experiences include: Team Leader EU Philippines Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Policy Support Component, Team Leader Mid-term Evaluation EU FPI Gateway | Business Avenues Programme (Japan, Korea, China, ASEAN countries), Team Leader Retrospective Ex-ante Evaluation of US-ASEAN Policy Support programmes USAID, Team Leader USAID Mid-term evaluation of the sustainable Value Chains for Rural Development project Myanmar, SNKE / Deputy Team Lead EU Malaysia SCP Policy Support Project, Team Leader UNDP UNDAF Outcome evaluation for Bhutan, Lead M&E expert for FPI EU China Partnership Facility, Lead M&E Expert for Enhancing Security Cooperation in & with Asia funded by EU FPI, France, Germany (Japan, Korea, Indonesia, India, Singapore, Vietnam), Lead M&E expert for EU-ASEAN Arise Plus Regional Trade Integration programme. He holds a PhD in Management Sciences, from Lancaster University, United Kingdom on management, monitoring and evaluation of development projects in Asia.

4.3 ANNEX 3: LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

#	Document Title
1	The European Joint Programming Document for Lao PDR, 2016-2020
2	Team Europe Strategy in the Lao PDR 2021-2025
3	The 8 th National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2016-2020
4	Inception phase report, 1 November 2018 – 4 January 2020
5	Progress Report / Annual Work Plan, 5 January 2020 – 31 December 2020
6	Progress Report, 1 January 2021 – 30 June 2021
7	Description of Actions of ARISE Plus Lao PDR
8	Wood Processing Sector Export Roadmap (2021-2025)
9	Coffee Sector Export Roadmap (2021-2025)
10	Foreign Trade Negotiation Roadmap (FTNR) (2021-2025)
12	The study on trade implications of Lao PDR's graduation from LDC status
13	Action Document of the ARISE+ Lao PDR Programme, of the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action programme in favour of the Asia region for 2018 part 2
14	Roles and Responsibilities of the ARISE+ Lao PDR Project
15	ARISE+ Lao PDR E-Commerce Guide
16	EU – Regional Multiannual Indicative Programme, Asia 2014-2020
17	ARISE+ Lao PDR project formulation document
18	Mission Report: Trip to Pakse, Laos, July 1-4, 2020 (second consultation workshop for the coffee sector export roadmap – Activity 3.1
19	Various project activity reports
20	Quality Champions Workshops Reports 1-6
21	Mission Report on Conformity Assessment
22	Export Potential in Lao PDR: Processed Wood and Specialty Agriculture
23	Communication working group TOR and meeting minutes
24	Export Potential Assessment Report
25	ITC – 2020 Performance Appraisal by UN Resident Coordinator
26	Lao Investment Potential Report
27	Minutes of PEC Meetings, various issues
28	Reports of Project Review Committees, various issues
29	Trade, Private Sector, Value Chains and Tourism – Background Paper
30	Lao PDR DTIS Update – Feb 2021
31	Report on Lao LDC Graduation – final 2020.08.06
32	1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd and 4 th PRC Minute of the ARISE+ Lao PDR project
33	Trade Implications of Lao PDR's Graduation from LDC Status
34	Project Communication and Visibility Plan
35	EU Report: Gender Analysis of Lao PDR, 2016
36	Lao PDR – UN: Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022-2026
37	WTO: Trade Policy Review – Lao PDR, 2019
38	WTO: Trade Facilitation Agreement – Implementation Status – Lao PDR
39	WTO: Market Access for Products and Services of Export Interest to LDCs
40	ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA)
41	ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025
42	Lao PDR's Vision 2030
43	Lao PDR: Trade Facilitation Roadmap of Lao PDR for 2017-2022
44	Lao MOIC: Diagnostic Trade Integration Study 2012
45	Lao MOIC: DTIS Action Matrix of Projects and Technical Assistance
46	Lao MOIC: Trade Facilitation Strategic Plan for Lao PDR 2011-2015
47	World Bank: Doing Business, Lao PDR 2021
48	World Bank Non-Tarif Measures Survey
49	World Bank: Lao Country Gender Action Plan 2017-2021
50	EU: Economic and Trade Report – Lao PDR, August 2017
51	EU: Trade Between Lao PDR and EU
52	OECD. Investment Policy Review for Lao PDR, 2017

53	ITC. Support SMEs through Trade Facilitation Reforms: Toolkit for Policymakers
54	9 th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (Near Final Clean)
55	Draft Progress Report / Annual Work Plan, 5 January 2021 – 31 December 2021
56	Project website: https://www.intracen.org/arise-plus-laos
57	MOH. (2020). National COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan for Health 2020-2025. Vientiane. MOH
58	MPI. (2021). COVID-19 Risks and Vulnerabilities in Lao PDR. Vientiane. UNICEF Lao PDR
59	Final Report, USAID/Laos COVID-19 Assessment, August 2021
60	Project Facebook group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/ariseplus

4.4 ANNEX 4: LIST OF PERSONS CONSULTED

Mid-term Evaluation of the ARISE+ Lao PDR Project: Virtual Meeting Schedule conducted by second team leader

27 September – 26 November 2021

(The time in the schedule refers to the Vientiane time, unless specified otherwise)

Interviews with **green fill** are those where data was available to the third team leader.

#	Date/Time (Vientiane Time)	Organization/Institution	Meeting with whom (including position and email addresses)	Evaluator and Other Team Members
1. Inception Phase				
1	28 Sept. 2021 18:00-19:30	Introductory meeting with EUD, Lao PDR	Thavonsouk Souphaphone (Amy); Evaluation Manager, EUD	Wenguo Cai, Team Leader Eros Radaelli Aspasia Meioteri Michela Bramardi
2	29 Sept. 2021 9:00-10:00 15:00-16:00 (GVA time)	Skype Call with ITC Manager	Emilie Dairon, Project Manager, ITC, responsible for the ARISE+ Lao PDR project	Wenguo Cai, TL
3	30 Sept. 2021 9:00-10:00	Introductory Meeting with MOIC and ITC	Mr. Sengphanomchone Inthasane, DDG, MOIC Mr. Sengxay Phousinghoua, Advisor, NIU Ms. Sodavanh Souvannaphoum, Director, ITC Programmes Emilie Dairon, Manager, ARISE+ Lao PDR Khankeo Moonvong, National Coordinator	Wenguo Cai, TL
4	1 Oct. 2021 18:00-19:30	Meeting with the ARISE+ team from Geneva and Vientiane	Emilie Dairon, Manager, ARISE+ Lao PDR Khankeo Moonvong, Coordinator, ARISE+ Lao PDR	Wenguo Cai, TL
5	4 Oct. 2021 15:00-16:00 (GVA time)	WeChat Call with the ITC Chief, Asia-Pacific Division	Xuejun Jiang, Chief, Asia-Pacific Division International Trade Centre, Geneva	Wenguo Cai, TL
2. Desk/Virtual Field Phase				
Monday, 11 October 2021				
6	18:00-19:00	Interview with LNCCI	Mr. Phouxay Thepphavong, Secretary General, LNCCI	Wenguo Cai, TL 22 Oct. at 7:00 Vinata Sayawong
7	14:00-15:00 (GVA time)	Interview with the ITC Experts	Jean-Sebastien Roure, Senior Officer Vidya Nathanie, International Consultant	Wenguo Cai, TL 11 Oct. at 8:00 (Ottawa time)
8	15:00-16:00 (GVA time)	Interview with the ITC Management	Marie-Claude Frauenrath, Country Manager	Wenguo Cai, TL 11 Oct. at 9:00 am
Tuesday, 12 October 2021				
9	9:00-11:00 am	Interview with the EUD Task Manager	Thavonsouk Souphaphone, Task Manager EU Delegation to Lao PDR	Wenguo Cai, TL 11 Oct. at 10 pm
10	16:00-17:00 (GVA time)	Interview with the ITC Expert	Julia Spies, Senior Market Analyst	Wenguo Cai, TL

#	Date/Time (Vientiane Time)	Organization/Institution	Meeting with whom (including position and email addresses)	Evaluator and Other Team Members
				12 Oct. at 10:00 am
Wednesday, 13 October 2021				
11	17:00-18:00	Interview with CPC farm exporting coffee to EU as introduced by Mr. Phouxay	Khamphanh Keothavy, Deputy Manager	Wenguo Cai, TL 13 Oct at 6 am Vinata, Assistant
12	18:00-19:00	Interview with Lao Furniture Association	Ms. Souphavanh Thiengchanchxay Deputy Chief Operation Officer	Wenguo Cai, TL 13 Oct at 7 am Vinata, Assistant
13	19:00-20:00	Interview with McCullagn, Laos Co, Ltd.	Mr. Khanti Southichack, Managing Director	Wenguo Cai, TL 13 Oct at 8 am Vinata, Assistant
14	16:00-17:00 (GVA time)	Interview with former Senior Programme Coordinator	Anne-Katrin Pfister, former Senior Coordinator	Wenguo Cai, TL 13 Oct. at 10:00 am
Thursday, 14 October 2021				
15	8:00-9:00 am	Interview with EU program officer	LEROY Cecile (EEAS-VIENTIANE)	Wenguo Cai, TL 13 Oct. at 9:00 pm
16	17:00-18:00	Interview with Lao Wood Processing Industry Association	Mr. Thongsavanh, President	Wenguo Cai, TL 14 Oct at 6 am Vinata, Assistant
17	19:00-20:00	Interview with local coffee producer, Duangdee Coffee	Ms Phangsi (owner)	Wenguo Cai, TL 14 Oct at 8 am Vinata, Assistant
18	14 Oct 2021 20:00-21:00	Interview with Gaia Vita Co., Ltd	Ms. Nouanenipha Phonphosy, Manager	Wenguo Cai, TL 14 Oct at 9 am Vinata, Assistant
Friday, 15 October 2021				
19	8:00-9:00	Interview with the EU Program Officer	SENEKHAMTY Inpone (EEAS-VIENTIANE)	Wenguo Cai, TL 14 Oct. at 9:00 pm
20	18:00-19:00	Local farmer in Champasak Province	Ms. Chansamone LASAVONG, organic coffee grower	WC, 15 Oct at 7 am Vinata, Assistant
21	19:00-20:00	Volcafe AG in Champasak Province	Ms. Latda PHUTHAPHA, organic coffee	WC, 15 Oct at 8 am Vinata, Assistant
22	16:00-17:00 (GVA time)	Interview with an ITC management team member	Ms Ha Vu, Programme Assistant Financial matters	Wenguo Cai, TL

#	Date/Time (Vientiane Time)	Organization/Institution	Meeting with whom (including position and email addresses)	Evaluator and Other Team Members
				15 Oct. at 10:00 am
Saturday, 16 October 2021				
23	8:00-9:00 am	Interview with Lao Coffee Association, Champasak Province	Mr. Sivixay, Chief Officer, Lao Coffee Association	Wenguo Cai, TL Oct. 15, 9 :00 pm Vinata, Assistant
24	18:00-19:00	Interview with a local coffee shop owner	David Viron DamDam Coffee	Wenguo Cai, TL
Monday, 18 October 2021				
25	8:30-9:30 am	Interview with Department of Trade Promotion	Xaysomphet Norasingh, DG xaysomphet.n@laomoic.org Sonephet Sihapanya, Deputy Director xaysomphet.n@laomoic.org	Wenguo Cai, TL Sunday, Oct. 17 9:30-10:30 pm Vinata, Assistant
26	3:00-4:00 pm (GVA time)	Interview with ITC expert	Ms. Margareta Funder Learning Systems Officer	Wenguo Cai, TL 9:00 am
Tuesday, 19 October 2021				
27	8:30-9:30	Interview with the NIU, Department of Planning and Cooperation	Mr. Sengphanomchone Inthasane, DDG Ms.Sodavanh Souvannapoum, ARISE+ Coordinator Mr. Sengxay Phousinghoua, Senior Advisor	Wenguo Cai, TL 18 Oct 9:30 pm
28	6:00-7:00 pm	Interview with the ITC management team	Ms. Kinnaphone Sounthongdeng	Wenguo Cai, TL 7:00 am
Wednesday, 20 October 2021				
29	8:30-9:30 am	Interview with Foreign Trade Policy Department	Mr. Saysana Sayakone, Director General	Wenguo Cai, TL Oct. 19 @ 9:30
30	9:30-10:30 am	Interview with the Department of Agriculture, MOAF	Thatsanaly, DDG	Wenguo Cai, TL Oct. 19, @10:30 pm
31	14:00 -15:00 (Geneva time)	Interview with ITC expert	Derek Carnegie, ITC expert	Wenguo Cai, TL Oct. 20 at 8 am
Thursday, 21 October 2021				
32	8:30-9:30 am	Interview with the Department of Industry and Handicraft	Dr. Buavanh Vilavong, Director General Mr. Syviengnguen Bounlutai, Deputy Chief, Statistics,	Wenguo Cai, TL Oct. 20 at 9:30 Vinata, Assistant
33	9:30-10:30 am	Interview with the Department of Forestry	Dr. Somvang Phimmavong, Deputy Director Peter Thavone, Planning and Cooperation Office	Wenguo Cai, TL Oct. 20 at 10:30
34	19:30-20:30	Interview with ITC Expert	Vitton Gmail, ITC Consultant	Wenguo Cai, TL

#	Date/Time (Vientiane Time)	Organization/Institution	Meeting with whom (including position and email addresses)	Evaluator and Other Team Members
	(Bangkok time)			Oct. 21, @ 8:30
Friday, 22 October 2021				
35	8:30-9:30 am	Interview with Department of Import and Export	Mr. Sonemala Nouanthesing, Deputy Head of Trade Facilitation	Wenguo Cai, TL Oct 21 at 9:30 pm
36	14:00-15:00 (GVA time)	Interview with the ITC Experts	Alex Kasterine, Strategy Programme Officer Karla Solis Raiz, Senior Advisor	Wenguo Cai, TL @ 8:00 am
Monday, 25 October 2021				
37	8:00-9:00 pm	Interview with a Professor of National University of Lao PDR	Khamtan Phonetip, National University of Lao PDR	Wenguo Cai, TL Oct. 25 @ 9 am
38	16:00-17:00 GVA time	Interview with the ITC expert	Peter Viebeck	Wenguo Cai, TL Oct. 25 @ 10 am
Tuesday, 26 October 2021				
39	9:00-10:00 am	Interview with the Head of Cooperation of EUD	Vincent Vire, Head of Cooperation (EEAS-VIENTIANE)	Wenguo Cai, TL 25 Oct @ 10 pm
40	8:00-9:00 am US Pacific Time	Interview with the BAF II Project funded by WB, USAID and DFAT	Nicholas Freeman Team Leader, BAF II	Wenguo Cai, TL @ 11:00 am Via skype call
Wednesday, 27 October 2021				
41	18:30-19:30	World Bank Group	Melise Jaud mjaud@worldbank.org Khampao Nanthavong	Wenguo Cai, TL Oct 27 @ 7:30 am
Thursday, 28 October 2021				
42	8:30-9:30 am	GIZ, Germany	Frank Tibitz	Wenguo Cai, TL Oct 27 @ 9:30 pm
43	7:00-8:00 pm	Interview with the Department of Food and Drug, MoH	Viengxay Vansilalom, Deputy Director General, Food Safety	Wenguo Cai, TL Oct.28 @ 8:00 am
Friday, 29 October 2021				
44	8:30-9:30 am	AFD, France	Khonesavanh Xaymoungkhoun Phengkhouane Manivong	Wenguo Cai, TL Oct 28 @ 9:30 pm
Tuesday, 2 November 2021				
45	17:00-18:00	DG Trade Official in Bangkok	Isabelle de Stobbeir	Wenguo Cai, TL 2 Nov @6 :00 am
Wednesday, 3 November 2021				
46	20:30-21:30	Interview with CBI Home Textile Laos Project	Jim Tersteeg, International Expert Stephane Sivily	Wenguo Cai, TL 3 Nov. at 9:30 am
Thursday, 4 November 2021				

#	Date/Time (Vientiane Time)	Organization/Institution	Meeting with whom (including position and email addresses)	Evaluator and Other Team Members
47	9:00-10:00	Interview with EuroCham (ECCIL)	Thiane Khamvongsa, Executive Director Lounglavanh Vongxay, External Relation Officer	Wenguo Cai, TL 3 Nov @ 10 pm
48	15:00-16:00 (Geneva time)	Interview with EIF Coordinator for Lao PDR	Hang T Tran, EIF Coordinator, Lao PDR	Wenguo Cai, TL 4 Nov. @ 9 am
Friday, 5 November 2021				
49	17:00-18:00	Interview with USAID	Cullen Hughes, chughes@usaid.gov Somsangouane Keovilay (Som)	Wenguo Cai, TL 5 Nov @ 6:00 am
Wednesday, 10 November 2021				
50	15:00 – 16:00 (Geneva Time)	NIU Director EIF Coordinator	Lattanaphone Vongsouthi Director, NIU, MOIC	Wenguo Cai, TL 10 Nov @ 9 am
Friday, 12 November 2021				
51	8:30 – 9:30	Interview with ERIIC	Thipphavong Viengsavang, DDG	Wenguo Cai, TL 11 Nov. @ 8:30
Wednesday, 17 November 2021				
52	3:00 – 4:00 pm GVA time	Meeting with the ITC Management	Emilie Dairon, Project Manager ARISE+ Lao PDR project	Wenguo Cai, TL 17 Nov at 9:00 am
Thursday, 18 November 2021				
53	9:00 – 10:00 am	Department of Standards and Metrology, MOIC	Latdavanh Sivongxay, Director	Wenguo Cai, TL 17 Nov @ 9 pm
Friday, 26 November 2021				
54	9:00-11:00 am (Vientiane time)	Consultation Workshop	Selected Stakeholders and Beneficiaries (List of Invitees prepared and sent to EUD)	Wenguo Cai, TL 25 Nov at 9 pm – 11 pm

Additional Interviews conducted by 3rd Team Leader Dr Channa Gunawardena

1	04 February 2022 16:00-17:00	Introductory meeting with EUD, Lao PDR	Thavonsouk Souphaphone (Amy); Evaluation Manager, EUD	Channa Gunawardena Eros Radaelli
2	15 February 2022 10:00-11:30	Key informant interview	Thavonsouk Souphaphone (Amy); Evaluation Manager, EUD	Channa Gunawardena
3	25 March 2022 17:00-18.30	Key informant interviews ARISE+ team from Geneva and Vientiane	Emilie Dairon, Manager, ARISE+ Lao PDR Khankeo Moonvong, Coordinator, ARISE+ Lao PDR	Channa Gunawardena

4.5 ANNEX 5: EVALUATION MATRIX

EQ1: To what extent did the ARISE+ Lao PDR project design, areas/activities selected, and the outcomes respond to the needs and challenges of the Lao government and private sector under the current economic development conditions of the country, as well as with the EU strategy and policy objectives?				
Rational and coverage of the EQ	One of the DAC evaluation criteria – linking the ARISE+ Lao PDR project design with the needs and priorities of the beneficiary country, as well as the EU country strategy and programming in Lao PDR, and in the ASEAN region (MIP 2014-2020)			
Evaluation criteria covered	Relevance			
Judgement criteria (JC)	Indicators	Data sources		Data Collection Methods/Tools
		Primary	Secondary	
JC 1.1 – The project responds to the needs and priorities of GoL identified in the 8 th and 9 th NSEDP as well as in DTIS and ATIGA/AEC	I.1.1.- number of areas covered from ATIGA/AEC for assistance	Survey data	Official documents (NSEDP, ATIGA, AEC Blueprint,) Annual plans, progress reports; Action document	Document review Survey questionnaire
	I.1.2 – Alignment between project support and priority areas from NSEDPs	Questionnaire data Interview notes	Progress reports, including the list of participants	Document review Survey questionnaire
	I.1.3 – Positive feedback from government stakeholders	Interview notes Survey	Progress reports Case studies	Document review Survey questionnaire; KIs
JC 1.2 – The project responds to the needs for support from the private sector, particularly the coffee and processed woods	I.2.1 – sectors prioritized (coffee and wood processing)	Survey data Interview notes	Document review Sectoral case studies	Document review Survey questionnaire KIs
	I.2.2 – number of support measures in coffee and wood sectors	Survey data	Document review Case studies	Document review Survey questionnaire
JC 1.3. The project is consistent with the EU strategy and programming in Lao PDR and in ASEAN) as per European Joint Indicative Programme Document for Lao PDR (2016-2020) and the European Joint Programme (2021-2025)	I.3.1 – # of areas covered by the project consistent with those in the country strategy paper and the European Joint Programmes	-	Document review on country strategy paper and MIP; Joint European programming doc.	Document review
EQ2: To what extent are the activities and outputs/outcomes of the ARISE+ Lao PDR project coherent, compatible and complementary with the interventions of other development partners, including those of the EU Member States??				
Rational and coverage of the EQ	One of the DAC evaluation criteria – examining the consistency and compatibility of the ARISE+ Lao PDR programme with the interventions of other like-minded development partners			
Evaluation criteria covered	Coherence			
Judgement criteria (JC)	Indicators	Data sources		Methods / tools

		Primary	Secondary	
JC 2.1 – The effects of the project and the effects of the interventions of other like-minded development partners are likely to reinforce (or contradict) each other.	2 1.1. – positive synergy between the expected effects of ARISE+ Lao PDR and those projects funded by other development partners	Survey	Donor matrix compiled and updated	Document review Survey questionnaire
	2 1.2 – efforts of the project team to collaborate with other partners on joint activities; quality of collaboration	Interview with ITC and EUD, Survey	Document review/progress reports	Document review Survey questionnaire; Interviews;
EQ3: To what extent have the ARISE+ Lao PDR project activities been implemented in cost-effective, time-efficient and well-managed manner?				
Rational and coverage of the EQ	One of the DAC evaluation criteria – examining the value for money, the roles of key players. and time management from a cost-effective perspective			
Evaluation criteria covered	Efficiency			
Judgement criteria (JC)	Indicators	Data sources		Methods / tools
		Primary	Secondary	
JC 3.1 – The project is cost-effective and presents good value for money	3 1.1 – Actual expenditure against the original budget	Interview notes with ITC and EUD	Progress reports, workplans Financial figures calculation	Document review KIIs
	3.1.2 – expenditure breakdowns to examine main expenditures on priority areas/activities	Interview notes with ITC and EUD	Progress reports, workplans Financial figures calculation	Document review KIIs
	3 1.3 – remaining budget vs the remaining time for project implementation	Interview notes with ITC and EUD	Progress reports, workplans Financial figures calculation	Document review KIIs
JC 3.2 – The project implementation shows clear stakeholder coordination, timely activity implementation and results-oriented management	3.2.1 – roles of key players in project management	Interview notes Survey results	Various documents including progress reports and PRC meeting minutes. Interview notes Survey results	Document review Survey questionnaire KIIs
	3.2.2. – timeliness of activities and outputs by the project team, taking into account the impact of COVID pandemic	Interview notes Survey results	Various documents including progress reports and PRC meeting minutes. Interview notes Survey results	Document review Survey questionnaire KIIs
	3.2.3 – quality of reports and monitoring	Interview notes Survey results	Various documents including progress reports and PRC meeting minutes. Interview notes Survey results	Document review Survey questionnaire KIIs

EQ4: To what extent is ARISE+ Lao PDR likely to achieve the expected outputs, outcomes and results of the project, particularly in capacity development of public agencies and private sector and in the contribution to the objectives of the ARISE+ Regional Programme for the ASEAN economic integration?				
Rational and coverage of the EQ	One DAC evaluation criteria – Assessing the actual results (outputs and outcomes) against the original expected results of the project. This should be the most important part of the mid-term evaluation of the ARISE+ Lao PDR programme			
Evaluation criteria covered	Effectiveness			
Judgement criteria (JC)	Indicators (Ind)	Data sources		Methods / tools
		Primary	Secondary	
JC 4.1 – Trade capacity of MOIC and other government agencies for trade preference in goods (ATIGA)	4.1.1 – number of ATIGA measures implemented that were supported by ARISE+ Lao PDR		Progress report of ATIGA implementation, Project progress reports; activity reports, mission reports, etc	Document review
	4.1.2 – Number of trained officials with increased knowledge on trade preference for LDCs		Project progress reports; activity reports, mission reports, etc	Document review
	4.1.3 – More trade officials with enhanced skills to deal with trade policy & FTA negotiations	Survey results	Project progress reports; activity reports, mission reports, etc	Document review Survey questionnaire
JC.4.2 – Export readiness and potential in the target sectors (coffee and processed woods)	4.2.1 – increased exports in targeted sectors (value or %)	Survey results, interviews	Document review	Document review Survey questionnaire, KIIs
	4.2.2 – usefulness of the sector roadmaps reported by exporters	Interviews with private sector exporters and business associations	Document review	Document review Survey questionnaire KIIs
	4.2.3 – EBA/DFQF utilization rate by Lao exporters, particularly the targeted sectors	Interviews with private sector exporters and business associations	Document review	Document review Survey questionnaire KIIs
JC.4.3 – Readiness for the LDC graduation (EBA, DFQF, GSP and GSP+)	4.3.1 – understanding of the impact of the LDC graduation (no DFQF/EBA) for Lao PDR; Needs for GSP, GSP+ & FTAs with other countries	Survey results	Project progress reports Activity reports, mission reports Satisfaction surveys	Document review Survey questionnaire
	4.3.2. – Capacity for FTA negotiations after the graduation of Lao PDR from LDC status	Survey results	Project progress reports Activity reports, mission reports Satisfaction surveys	Document review Survey questionnaire
EQ5: To what extent has the ARISE+ Lao PDR project generated early effects on the trade policy capacity of the government and on the export potentials of the targeted sectors (i.e. coffee and wood processing)?				
Rational and coverage of the EQ	One of the DAC evaluation criteria – Examining the early effects of the project, particularly relating to the trade-related capacity building for government and private sector, and the support for the export development in the targeted sectors (coffee and processed wood). In the original TOR, the impact assessment was not required in the mid-term evaluation of ARISE+ Lao PDR.			

	After the consultation with the EUD, the evaluation team has decided to include the preliminary assessment of the early signs of impact by the project.			
Evaluation criteria covered	Impact			
Judgement criteria (JC)	Indicators (Ind)	Data sources		Methods / tools
		Primary	Secondary	
JC 5.1 – The government shows a capacity increase in conducting trade policy and trade negotiations related to the support provided by the project	5.1.1 – # of government officials with increased trade capacity in conducting trade policy and trade negotiations	Interviews with officials Survey results	Project progress reports PRC reports	Document review Survey questionnaire KIIs
JC 5.2 – The targeted sectors show an increase in exports of products to EU and international markets through the support of the project	5.2.1 – Volume or value of the increased exports of the targeted sectors/products	Survey results Interviews with private sector participants	Project progress reports Assessment of the roadmaps	Document review Survey questionnaire KIIs
JC 5.3 – An increase in the exports of the sectors/products targeted by the project is likely to generate income for those people benefited from the project, leading to poverty reduction	5.3.1 – Number of people with the increased income from the interventions of the project activities (difficult to gather the data)	Interviews and survey results	Progress reports Case studies	Document review Survey questionnaire KIIs
EQ6: To what extent has the ARISE+ Lao PDR project taken or planned strategies and measures to ensure sustainability or to increase the likelihood of achieving sustainability of the targeted government agencies and private sector institutions after the completion of the project?				
Rational and coverage of the EQ	One of the DAC evaluation criteria – assessing whether the results and benefits of the project can be sustained after the completion of the activities of the ARISE+ Lao PDR project			
Evaluation criteria covered	Sustainability			
Judgement criteria (JC)	Indicators (Ind)	Data sources		Methods / tools
		Primary	Secondary	
JC 6.1 – Institutional and financial sustainability mechanisms to continue the results and benefits of the project	6.1.1 – number of officials of the targeted institutions (MOIC in particular) trained with increased knowledge and skills	Interview notes Survey results	Project progress reports Activity reports	Document review Survey questionnaire KIIs
	6.1.2. – number of technical staff (standards, metrology and SPS) trained with increased skills in the targeted institutions	Interview notes Survey results	Progress reports Activity reports	Document review Survey questionnaire KIIs
JC 6.2 – Policy and procedural sustainability mechanisms to	6.2.1 – number of roadmaps continuing to provide guidance to exporters and policy makers	Interview notes Survey results	Roadmap reviews Progress reports	Document review Survey questionnaire KIIs

continue the results and benefits of the project				
	6.2.2. – number of standards that will continue to be adopted and used by stakeholders and private sector	Interview notes Survey results	Progress reports Activity reports	Document review Survey questionnaire KIIs
EQ7: To what extent has the ARISE+ Lao PDR project demonstrated the EU added value in the design and implementation of various project activities?				
Rational and coverage of the EQ	One evaluation criterion required for EU-funded projects – measuring the added value and/or benefits of the project funded by EU to what could have been delivered by interventions funded by EU Member States			
Evaluation criteria covered	EU Value Added			
Judgement criteria (JC)	Indicators (Ind)	Data sources		Methods / tools
		Primary	Secondary	
JC 7.1 – Exclusive rights and authority of EU on trade-related matters on behalf of EU Member States	7.1.1 – number of trade-related projects supported by EU vs by EU member states in Lao PDR	-	Country strategy paper, Joint European Programming, project progress reports	Document review
	7.1.2 – coordination mechanism between EU and MS on trade-related technical assistance	-	Country strategy paper, Joint European Programming, etc	Document review
EQ8: To what extent has the ARISE+ Lao PDR project design and implementation contributed to highlighting and bridging the gender gap and other cross-cutting issues in the country?				
Rational and coverage of the EQ	Gender equality and other cross-cutting issues are very important for EU and the Government of Lao PDR. These cross-cutting issues are required to be covered in the mid-term evaluation of the project according to the TOR.			
Evaluation criteria covered	Gender Equality and Other Cross-Cutting Issues			
Judgement criteria (JC)	Indicators (Ind)	Data sources		Methods / tools
		Primary	Secondary	
JC 8.1 – equal participation of men and women in project activities, management, and decision-making process and a gender mainstreaming approach	8.1.1 – number breakdown (or percentage) of gender in participation in project activities	-	Project progress reports List of participants from activities Other document reviews	Document review
	8.1.2 – gender mainstreaming in coffee and wood roadmaps	Survey results	Roadmaps, progress reports	Document review Survey questionnaire
JC 8.2 – promotion of positive impact of trade on environment/ climate change and the mitigation of the negative impact of project activities	8.2.1.- environmental impact implications of the selected sectors (processed wood in particular)	Survey results	Project documents Documents of other donors on environment Examination of the environment linkage with trade	Document review Survey

	8.2.2.- # of mitigating measures for negative environmental impact by the project	Survey results Interviews notes	Project documents Documents of other donors on environment Examination of the environment linkage with trade	Document review KIIs Survey
EQ9: To what extent has the ARISE+ Lao PDR project improved EU visibility through the design and implementation of various project activities?				
Rational and coverage of the EQ	EU attaches great importance to the EU visibility which is mandated for all EU-funded project during the evaluation process. This will assess whether the project results have been communicated to the stakeholders and they have increased the awareness of the EU-funded projects and their results in the country. EU visibility was not originally included in the TOR. The evaluation team has suggested to include it.			
Evaluation criteria covered	EU Visibility			
Judgement criteria (JC)	Indicators (Ind)	Data sources		Methods / tools
		Primary	Secondary	
JC 9.1 – adherence to the EU visibility guidelines	9 1.1 – existence of the EU visibility strategy and communication plan prepared by the project	Interview notes	Project visibility strategy and communication plan Project progress reports Visibility data and statistics Communication tools	Document review KIIs
	9.1.2 – number of visibility activities/events (including social media) conducted with the increased awareness of the project outputs and results	Interview notes	Project visibility strategy and communication plan Project progress reports Visibility data and statistics Communication tools	Document review KIIs
	9.1.3. – number of stakeholders and participants who visited the project website and received more project information, etc	Interview notes	Project visibility strategy and communication plan Project progress reports Visibility data and statistics Communication tools	Document review KIIs

4.6 ANNEX 6: LIST OF RELEVANT PROJECTS IN LAO PDR

Table 4.7.1: Trade-related Projects Funded by EU and EU Member States in Lao PDR (as of November 2021)

Donor	Project	Main Coverage	Amount	From-to	Implementing Partners
EU	ARISE+ Lao PDR Programme	Business environment, regional integration, global value chains in the targeted sectors (coffee and processed woods)	€4,867,000	2018-2022	ITC MOIC
EU	SUTOUR Laos	Tourism sector, sustainable tourism, tourism supply chain	€2,223,857	2021-2024	Plan International MOIC/LNCCI
EU	Systematic Mechanism for Safer Trade (SYMST) Project for Lao PDR & Vietnam	Food safety, plant health and pesticide, fruits and vegetables, market access	€2,000,000	2018-2022	ITC DoA/MOAF
Germany	Support to the Initiatives for ASEAN Integration	CLMV integration with ASEAN, implementation of trade agreements on free flow of services, investment and skilled labour in ASEAN	€1,500,000	2016-2018	GIZ TFPD
Germany	Promotion of Competitiveness within the Framework of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (COMPETE)	Removal of barriers to trade in services, more effective regimes for a common and viable market in CLMV	€1,000,000	2018-2021	GIZ MOIC
Germany	GIZ-RELATED	Capacity building for business sectors; opportunities and challenges for AEC integration	€15,000,000	2013-2020	GIZ
Germany	Support regional economic cooperation in Asia, SRECA	Regional programs, covering CLMV in the framework of ACFTA and focusing on agricultural products	€135,000	2019-2022	GIZ MOIC
AFD France	PRCC Coffee North Laos Project	Coffee development strategy, capacity building of LCA, development of the North Lao coffee sector, coffee-related research, training and education	€3,150,000	2021-2025	DoA MOAF
AFD France	Mekong Tea Project	Lao National Tea Strategy, creation of the tea alliance platform, market access to EU	€1,500,000	2019-2022	DoA MOAF
AFD France	Promotion and Recognition of GI in Cambodia, Lao PDR	National legal framework on IP, creation of the GI platform, market access to EU	€3,000,000	2019-2022	DIP MOIC

	and Myanmar (GI Regional Project)				
The Netherlands	CBI-Home Textiles Project in Laos	Home textiles, value chains, market penetration to EU	€1,400,000	2019-2024	CBI MOIC

Source: information provided by NIU, ITC, EUD and other development partners

Table 2: Trade-related Projects Funded by Other Like-Minded Donors in Lao PDR (as of November 2021)

Donor	Project	Main Coverage	Amount	From to	Executing Agencies
ADB	Second PSD and SME Development Program	SME competitiveness, business climate, product quality and branding	\$4,628,000	2013-2018	DOSMEP MOIC
UNDP	Brand Lao for Better Livelihoods	Lao brand for ethical, organic and high-quality products, income generation	\$490,000	2017-2021	LNCCI, DPC/MOIC UN
Australia, Ireland, USA, WB	Lao Competitiveness and Trade Project (LCTP)	Business regulations, trade facilitation, firm-level competitiveness via a matching grant facility, mitigate impact of COVID-19 crisis and support economic recovery	\$19,500,000	2018-2025	MOIC
EIF	EIF Tier II	Export competitiveness of three Northern provinces, handicrafts, rice, maize and tea products	\$1,800,000	2019-2022	MOIC
UNCTAD	Land-locked commodity into the regional and global value chains	Formulation and implementation of strategy and policy in selected agricultural sectors	\$118,500	2019-2021	UNCTAD MOIC
USAID	USAID LUNA II	Trade facilitation, ASEAN integration, WTO capacity building	\$8,500,000	2014-2019	Nathans Associates
USAID	Lao Business Environment Project – LBE	Business enabling environment, private sector development, SMEs, economic growth, employment and income generation	\$8,807,000	2019-2024	IBI MOIC (Key Government counterpart)
World Bank	MSME – A2F ESR	Access to finance for MSMEs in the context of COVID-19 crisis and recovery	\$40,000,000	2021-2025	MOIC
World Bank	SME A2F	Line of credit, SME financing, SME banking, SME policy and capacity building for SMEs via business development services support	\$20,000,000	2014-2019	MOIC
World Bank	Agriculture Competitiveness Project (ACP)	Agricultural value chain development	\$25,000,000	2018-2024	MOAF MOIC

IFC	Lao Investment Climate Reform Project	Investment policy and promotion, business regulatory reform, and trade facilitation	\$1,715,000	2018-2023	Customs Department, MoF MPI
SDC Switzerland	Support of Lao MSMEs in response to COVID-19	SME, access to financial services, covid-19 related information, business services	€800,000	2021-2022	ILO MOIC/LNCCI
GCF	Market Preparation for Industrial Energy Efficiency in Lao PDR	Energy efficiency, policy gaps, enabling environment, investment in industrial energy efficiency	\$299,457	2021-2022	GGGI MOIC

Source: information provided by NIU, ITC, EUD and other development partners

4.7 ANNEX 7: RESULTS OF SURVEY

Section 2: Project Design, Relevance and Coherence 30

1: To what extent do you think that the ARISE+ Lao PDR project activities are relevant to address the needs of the Government of Lao PDR and private sector in the process of ASEAN/global economic integration?

Do not know/ not applicable	Irrelevant	Partly irrelevant	Partly relevant t	Relevant	Highly relevant
1	0	1	6	28	29
<p>Please add your comments below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For MSME promotion, information regarding markets and export procedure are not well aware among MSMEs In full alignment with the 9th NSEDP In full alignment with ASEAN integration efforts It is very important and would be better if the representative from businesses can participate in the training then they will easily access to the ITC website that you distributed the information needed. They will realize that the export potential of each product is still available and encourage them to produce more. This is possibly the best preparation for Laos to link its economy with ASEAN and the rest of the world Laos is going the land link country and we are looking for opportunity to import and export goods to international or region The project has maintained a close connection with different government offices, so that we can quickly obtain their inputs on relevant topics, as well as identify significant issues to develop well-reasoned solutions in time. Just a person point of view, I found that partly relevant. Hence, Laos is a member of ASEAN, so it is a need to make the balancing between trade and investment, including import-export, etc The project covers elements to strengthen regional integration, increase awareness of trade preferences, and provide support for trade and investment promotion – which are all relevant for achieving the overarching goals of sustainable development and growth; and now overcome the negative impacts of this pandemic. Further the nature of support provided – covers the wide range – from working with policy makers to formulate evidence based trade policies, to working with the government departments to implement, and with businesses/private sector to help them benefit from the policies/frameworks in place. It is very relevant to the trade policy in economic integration and private sector development Yes as both Government, private sectors are need to know all details and information of Eu and other countries around the world in order to understand there needed and market. The capacity building activities for Wood and Coffee (delivered under ITC's Green To Compete project) are fully aligned to the two Roadmaps developed for the sector and thus responding to the expressed needs of the govt and private sector. Highly relevant: in the case of forestry, the project helps reformulate the timber product export strategy which is very important for Laos to have to concrete mandate on exporting timber products as well as for outsider to understand the situation, condition and standards of Lao timber products. the coffee sector is one of the top 5 export earning for Lao PDR and there is significant interest on Lao coffee in ASEAN and global markets ARISE+ is an accessible project for all stakeholders in the region with a visibility at each social and decisional stage to build up coherent governance. We can say that this program is a bridge for Laos and Lao businessmen exporting Lao made products to Eu Based on The project's activities have developed the Lao People's Democratic Republic Coffee Sector Export Roadmap (2021 to 2025), the Investment Profile for the Coffee Sector and EU EBA business guide and build the capacity of coffee and processed wood companies to upgrade their processing capacities and help to growing market opportunities whilst meeting commitments on sustainable sourcing. These activities corresponds to the outcome of the Government of Lao PDR which focuses inclusive economic growth, climate change resilience, mitigating vulnerability, integration of Lao PDR's economy in global production chains and job creation in the Eight National Socio-Economic Development Plans (2016-2020) In my view I think all activities under ARISE+Lao PDR project especially capacity building are very helpful for Lao government because Laos is developing country so our weakness is lack of potential human resource Very relevant to use the existing and partly unused potential of the forest and wood processing sector for a sustainable development of the country promoting and facilitating regional integration. This particular sector opens possibilities for strengthening economical ties with neighbouring ASEAN countries, in particular Thailand, Vietnam and also China (all of them strong timber processing hubs). As the support more focus on support ASEAN harmonization activities like MRA implementation I think ARISE + Lao PDR can help the SMEs in Lao to meet the best way to access to the market requirement in the future 					

- Being a landlocked country, developing trade is crucial for Lao PDR's growth. Arise + seeks to enable the country to create and leverage trade opportunities and is thus, highly relevant to the needs of the government and the private sector. The priority sectors are well defined and their selection is well argued on the basis of qualitative (export potential) and qualitative factors (environment, social, etc.)
- Strong interest from the government on e-commerce, an e-commerce strategy was mentioned specifically. This can be something to consider for the future
- The ARISE+ Lao PDR project responds to key needs and challenges faced by the GoL and businesses. It also responded well to the changing circumstances in the international and domestic environments, particularly in terms of the growing importance and opportunities for private sector-led export growth in the region and global economy.
- The project is working in constant cooperation with the Government of Lao PDR and with representatives of the private sector (LNCCI, sector associations) to ensure the coherence between the activities and the identified needs of the Laotian stakeholders.
- The ARISE Plus Project totally responds to the needs of the Government of Laos and private sector especially under the 8th and 9th NSEDP as both plans clearly stated that inclusive economic growth and human resource development because the project under ARISE Plus in exporting coffee and wood processing can truly benefit the government and private sector in boosting the country's economy as well as providing improvement for the government officials in terms of technical skills. In addition, it helps SMEs to strengthen their businesses which allow local people to benefit in terms of job creation at the same time.
- The project could help increasing regional economic integration. I used to participate in the ASSIST (ASEAN Solutions for Investments, Services and Trade) which is a very good consultative mechanism to find solutions to problems encountered by the ASEAN private sector to interact with ASEAN Governments directly and the ATR (ASEAN Trade Repository) which could provide transparency on the trade and customs laws and procedure of all ASEAN Member States. This could totally help connecting private sector and ASEAN government in terms of trade much easier.

2: To what extent are the activities and outputs/outcomes of the ARISE+ Lao PDR project coherent, compatible and complementary with the interventions of other development partners, including those of the EU Member States?

Do not know/ not applicable	Not coherent	Partly not coherent	Partly coherent	Coherent	Highly coherent
6	0	1	9	35	14

Please add your comments below:

- ITC has worked closely to coordinate with other development partners e.g. France (coffee) and GIZ (wood). The Green To Compete (GTC) activities in Coffee and Wood complement their efforts rather than duplication, for example by focusing on export development activities as evidenced by the training modules in processed wood.
- GIZ projects RELATED (closed 2020) and COMPETE are both in full alignment with the ARISE Plus Lao project
- GIZ FLEGT project has acknowledged the usefulness of the wood process export roadmap and is building their upcoming activities on the findings of the roadmap.
- AFD support to the coffee sector is in full alignment with the ARISE Plus efforts in the coffee sector, as acknowledged in the coffee export roadmap
- As stated of partly coherent because the ARISE+ Lao PDR is more on export to EU. However, if the product not in good quality or meet the demand is also another obstacle for Laos to exceed
- Coherent: because the project outputs line with the government policy for export.
- Efforts are always taken to check on the activities being undertaken by other development partners in the country, to ensure that there are synergies built between the project activities and the work complements each other.
- It is not always easy to get this information, however – which is why we initially prepare concept notes setting out the activities, and then discuss with the government departments to obtain their views, and discuss what else is going on in this areas – and thereby ensure that the efforts are meaningful and do not replicate existing activities.
- We've seen the EU member states representatives present in Laos, notably France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the likes.
- We are not aware of other development partners' project in Lao PDR
- The UE sponsors this project and encourages import-export by easing logistics costs and creating a new market platform. However, the market reality will focus on the ASEAN region first for geographical and cultural proximities, especially with the strengthened bilateral agreements between China and Lao.
- Yes, It conforms to the Lao government policy to grow the economic buy pushing its businesses conductor to the high price markets, and benefit the nation.

- The Lao People’s Democratic Republic Coffee Sector Export Roadmap has been designed based on synergies and collaboration with other development partners/organizations active in the Lao PDR especially GIZ, AFD
- In particular coherent with FLEGT / VPA, FAO FLEGT activities, ProFEB and ACIAR
- The project benefitted form a very efficient and visionary project manager with strong focus on synergies and complementarities
- I think ARISE + Lao PDR can help the SMEs in Lao to meet the best way to access to the market requirement in the future
- All development partners support the Lao Government according to the socioeconomic development as fixed.
- Highly coherent. In the process of developing both the coffee and wood processing roadmaps, development partners were regularly consulted (exchanges, bilateral meetings and participation in consultations) to ensure alignment and avoid duplication of interventions.
- The activities supported under the ARISE+ Lao PDR all followed proven approaches in their respective fields. The project gears towards improving the country’s overall business environment and increasing its participation in global value chains in wood processing and coffee.
- Since its inception, the project has developed dialogue with development partners, including entities under EU Member States (AFD, GIZ). The project is participating actively in the UN Country Team meetings

Section 3: Efficiency and Effectiveness

3: To what extent do you agree that the actual results (outputs and outcomes) were achieved under the ARISE+ Lao PDR project with the most efficient use of resources/inputs such as project funds, expertise, time and administrative costs, etc?

Do not know/ not applicable	Disagree completely	Partly disagree	No agree or disagree	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree
2	0	5	6	41	11

Please add your comments below:

- Somewhat Agree: So far, I can see the draft of the strategy of exporting timber products from Lao PDR. However, recently I have not received any information on this regard.
- The project is constantly monitoring its resources (funds, expertise, time) and has adopted a proactive approach towards ensuring efficiency and effectiveness.
- Efforts are always taken to ensure that the results are achieved with the most efficient use of resources/inputs.
- The project has been implemented, carefully taking into account the value for money by making effort to look for economic offers from local vendors, select meeting participants and travellers to make sure they are the best candidate to benefit from the project activities.
- To date, I think we are still in the neutral way of doing things to achieve the outputs and outcomes toward ARISE+ Lao PDR project. Unless, we put into account and applying all the technical and approaches right away
- ARISE Plus Lao PDR supports many activities which is important and relevant to the need of Laos, capacity building and others.
- Of course there are instances when activities have taken longer than anticipated, or had to be restructured while in the process of application. The covid 19 pandemic also required us to adjust plans, adapt to new (unfamiliar) situations. It was all a learning curve – but each experience has helped to make the next stage better.
- I agree, and some do not, such as capacity building for academics, see that it is not yet widespread and that administrative budgets, etc., still do not fit the needs of the current situation.
- Don’t know how much /costs for each outcome/output
- The GTC intervention in coffee and wood took steps to design the training in close cooperation with local stakeholders, utilizing local expertise and devolving as much of the management and leadership to the local office. For example, the wood training was led by national consultant Khamtan Phonetip (based at the National University) with international support from Peter Viehbeck
- Given the travel restrictions, online workshops and trainings are very resource efficient
- It’s the first time hearing about such initiative in Lao. We truly lack of real experts in various professional domains. Most of the time, some improvised experts are hired due to the lack of community efficient projects, hence low attraction to feasible projects.
- The outputs and results achieved in the ER2 and ER3. Significant progress has been made on enabling the GoL to develop the coffee export roadmap, coffee investment profiles and EBA business guidelines. Project activities were generally efficient in their implementing modalities, composition of inputs and interaction with beneficiaries
- Efficiency of time used to achieve objectives

- Resource management of project funds have been attributed the project in implementation the activities of project efficiently
 - Agree, but I think project duration is quite short and costs for some activity is limited
 - The achievement of the goals was obviously delayed by the corona pandemic and should be promoted as soon as possible through increased on-site activities.
- Expertise knowledge is quite great but for the funding and expenses I don't know
- I see great and exceptional efficiency and effectiveness at project team level both in Lao PDR and Geneva. I also felt the work related to the sector roadmaps was impressive. On the quality side, we have greatly benefited from the good relationship with LNCCI and related national institutional anchoring. I'm less involved and cant really comment on other areas
 - I think the outputs/outcomes of each activity of the ARISE + Lao PDR is suitable for EU members
 - I agree. However, the current context – pandemic crisis – has posed additional challenges to the implementation of activities. This is not only related to travelling, but also to new priorities the government suddenly has had to manage. The project team, notably, has acted quickly and in a flexible manner to adapt and adjust activities.
 - Agree because the teacher who came to teach explained well and there was a lot of exchange of ideas
 - I don't know much about the detail of the fund about how relevant sector actually using it but for the time efficient manner, from my perspective the project implementation unit is working well on it. I also joined the Project Review meeting a few months ago and I could pretty good progressive despite the COVID-19 outbreak period. I would like to suggest for more expertise from the EU to work closely with the government agencies so that the government officials could learn from them as much as possible until the end of the project and could finally bring sustainability to the project.
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4: To what extent has the ITC team been effective in improving the capacity of the Government of Lao PDR and the private sector in addressing their needs and priorities in the trade sector for the ASEAN economic integration?

Do not know/ not applicable	Very ineffective	ineffective	Somewhat effective	Effective	Very effective
1	0	0	21	27	16

Please add your comments below:

- See also PRC and PEC reports
- Very effective: So far, I can see the push from the project to the government and private sector to work on what is important and necessary for Laos e.g., the strategy and try to bring both government and private sector to the training.
- We haven't been able to go and work with the companies yet in the Quality Champions programme
- Our project core team members and experts possess a strong connection with the government agencies as well as the private sector. By constantly interacting to obtain their input (e.g. inputs/feedback and validation from the ministries to complete the Foreign Trade Negotiations Roadmap; or select candidates from private sectors for quality management training and collect their feedback across the training programme)
- I am optimistic that the ITC team has provide its effectiveness to the project in order to improve the capacity of the government and private sector in addressing their needs and priorities. But yet, in the very effective position, since they are still needs lot of effort to handle this with a good mechanism with sustainability way
- ITC team works in various field of works in term of Trade so it is really good opportunity of Laos to connect to the ASEAN economic integration. Unless ITC team start to open the international door of Laos to the world
- As I am a QC being trained by ITC, I feel I learn something that is important and related to the capability of Lao exporters to penetrate its products in the EU market.
- I think the ICT team has been working hard enough that I could see effective in improving the capacities of MOIC and other government agencies as well as private sector in addressing their needs a lot. I could see there's development in the government officials who are taking part in the project but of course there's still a long way to go to improve their capacities but I'm pretty sure it would be much better in the end of the project.
- The feedback from public and private sector is very positive. All the feedback received is considered as constructive and is being "digested" and integrated in the next activities.
- ER1 is dedicated to strengthening regional integration – and the ATIGA gap analysis and policy recommendations in this regard are all targeted towards building capacity in Lao PDR to better leverage the opportunities of the ASEAN framework.
- Thus far, the engagement of the private sector has been quite limited in the ATIGA exercise – some consultations were held, and they were invited to participate in the introductory and validation workshops.
- Under Activity 1.3 – further activities could be undertaken to better engage the private sector in this regard
- Due to Covid 19, many workshops / trainings have not been held or have been held online, which are not effective as expected. The following activities are important for each capacity building activity

- Need more advertisement and let people know about Arise Laos, as mentioned there are more people out there.
- The focus of the GTC training in coffee and wood has largely been with respect to the development of EU markets. However, it has also explored some of the key regional markets eg VN and China during the course of the trainings and one to one support.
- Coffee roadmap is identified by the Lao government as their priority
- the capacity trainings were organized based on consultation with private sector
- Wait and see. ITC has provided a great communication involving a lot of participants with a certain visibility and possible reliability on results.
- All the team are in high qualified and share good experience and knowledge.
- Strengthening knowledge transfer and skills of MOIC departments such as building capacity of public sector officials to deliver trainings on the EBA Business Guide/Training for private sector traders
- Developing tools for government staffs to be able to continue monitoring the outputs of the project after the project ends such as Strategy Implementation Management Tool for Lao PDR Wood Processing and Coffee Sector Export Roadmaps
- Transfer knowledge and providing consultation for private sectors to build their capacities such as organising workshops and SME clinic activity
- It is very important to use it to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the implementation, as a good helper to make the implementation of the water easier and faster.
- In view of the traditional and cultural peculiarities of the Lao PDR society, successes in the area of capacity improvement are visible (policy reforms, private sector engagement and informed decision taking)
- The trainings were involved many private sector QA, conformity assessment
- We are still on this journey. I trust that we will build good long term capacity on the quality side via LNCCI as well as via the Lao Quality for Trade Platform. I'm less familiar with the capacity building/sustainability models under technical components and therefore can't really comment. This being said, I have not heard so much about long term sustainability of services under other components but it may be there
- I think the ITC team has been effective to improve Lao government and private sector as their requirement
- Maybe it is because of the non deep understand of the specific characteristic/ habitude of the Laos
- Very effective. The public and private sector has shown appreciation for ITC's activities, indicating they estimate the quality and relevance of the interventions.
- The feedback from public and private sector is very positive. All the feedback received is considered as constructive and is being "digested" and integrated in the next activities.

5: Are you satisfied with your involvement/participation in ARISE+ Lao PDR and the results from the implementation of your respective components/activities under the project?

Do not know/ not applicable	Very unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
1	0	0	12	29	23

Please add your comments below:

- Satisfied: the project is working hard by coordinating government and private sector as well as consultant to work on the strategy for the forest product export.
- We haven't been able to go and work with the companies yet in the Quality Champions programme
- As a part of the project management team at the headquarters, I have actively involved in the project implementation, interact with the country team and technical experts on daily basis, to provide support and assistance in timely manner.
- I am satisfied; however, I could not make myself fully participated in the various workshops as my original planned. Hence, the schedule of my routine work caused me getting in trouble to particip-ate. Moreover, my former organization, (Global Association for People and the Environment) had to close from Lao PDR. Covid-19 pandemic caused difficulty situation for us to implement field activities for many months. Donor decided to give-up funding and took all the remaining fund.
- I'm satisfied with my involvement in ARISE Plus Lao PDR and the results from the implementation of my respective components under the project but there still something I would like to add.
It's true that ECCIL was invited to the meeting several times but we didn't really participate much in some actual programs for instance exporting coffee to EU, we were only invited to the meeting to listen to the mid-year result something like this in some projects so it would be great if we, on behalf of the European Chamber of Commerce could participate more in the program mentioned since we're under the process of establishing the "**Coffee Advocacy Working Group**". Joining the program mentioned will allow us to know and understand more detail about it which could bring great benefit to the working group in the future.
- As a QC, I have broadened my knowledge and know I will be able to help Laos business enterprises sell their products in the EU market.
- Training has happened better remote than I could have imagined in my wildest dreams a year ago

- Satisfied as Arise Project giving us more than what we expect. We learned more thing and know more people to exchange knowledge and skill.
- The main challenge in design and delivery of the GTC training was the Covid 19 lockdown which meant ITC staff were unable to visit the country. However, after a three-month period of lockdown, ITC began its process to design capacity building through a strategy of engaging with government and private sector stakeholder via the national coordination office. We designed the training with the objective to deliver it online and in hybrid format. The latter worked well with the training in wood at the National University. The online trainings were also well attended (e.g. 70 for the organic coffee May 2021) and 55 for the processing wood (Oct 2021). This demonstrated that the online format has made capacity building MORE accessible for many people. The potential risk however is that those participants without internet access could be excluded from the process. More work is needed to understand this “digital divide”.
- Despite the challenges, significant progress has been made in implementing the activities. The process has been slowed down due to the constraints faced with the travel restrictions and lockdowns – but as we become more familiar to the new normal, both ITC and the stakeholders in Lao PDR are adopting to the new changes and working together in this regard.
- It's still too early to answer. It's inspiring but measures and actions are to be seen, experienced.
- I gained a lot of knowledge form the program. I applied the knowledge at my University, especially for my students on quality control for wood processing
- In terms of involvement/participation of DTP in the project, the project has built ownership for DTP in decision making for the concept of the activities before implementing and DTP and ITC team have consultation consistency for planning the project activities. DTP has contributed human resources that have a strong capacity to carry out the work with ITC team.
- The coffee export road map was developed and had launching in a timely manner. Initially there were delays due to COVID 19 outbreak but finally the roadmap was launched officially. However, the project has not yet organise training for using strategy management implementation tool for DTP staffs. This tool will help DTP to monitor the progress of activities that are consolidated in the roadmap. In addition, EBA business guide and coffee investment profiles are in progress in terms of training and promotional activities
- If the project has the above objectives, I would be happy to implement it.
- My participation suffers to some extent from the prevailing restriction to work directly with stakeholders in the country
- Still ongoing for activity for Food safety not yet implemented
- It was initially an unexpected challenge to move all of our training online using a mix of hybrid models with a national facilitator on site and other trainers online as well as full online as covid requirements got stricter. Due to the time differences we also had to move to half day courses which extended the overall timeline (more than one event per month was difficult for participants). Overall things worked out well as we kept adapting and learning.
- I'm impressed with the involvement of LNCCI and also by the fact that Phouxay himself is a very committed quality champion (and very impressive visionary personality). The journey ahead will focus on the development of sustainable national services by QCs via LNCCI and I feel that we are on track to getting there. Parts of the Lao Quality for Trade Platform will soon be taken over by LNCCI and we will soon start the first round of enterprise improvement projects hoping that COVID will allow.
- I'm very happy to join all activity that ARISE+ Lao PDR has from the beginning, especially quality champion that is the best activity to improve and enhance the capacity building
- Some activities for coffee sector were jointly collaborated between Arise plus and RECoSeL- AFD funded project with success.
- Very satisfied, being the technical lead for the wood processing roadmap has been a valuable experience. The government and the private sector participated actively in consultations. They have also shown great interest in the roadmap post-endorsement (implementation), which shows that the document is of high relevance.
- Satisfied with the knowledge of organic coffee growing
- I satisfied with participation in ARISE+, but not yet have results from the implementation.
- All the participants and teams have shown great flexibility and adaptation capacities to adapt to the new mode of delivery under COVID.

Section 4: Impact and Sustainability

6: To what extent do you think that the ARISE+ Lao PDR project has generated early effects on the trade-related capacities of the Government and the private sector, particularly on export potentials of the targeted sectors (i.e. coffee and wood processing)?

Areas Contributed	Do not know/NA	Not achieved	Little achieved	Somewhat achieved	Achieved	Fully achieved
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(a) trade-related capacity building	3	1	6	24	25	6
(b) coffee exports	7	1	5	22	25	5
(c) processed wood exports	10	3	7	23	17	5

Please add your comments/examples below:

- We haven't been able to go and work with the companies yet in the Quality Champions programme
- Currently, the timber export development plan has been approved by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. However, due to the outbreak of Kovi-19, the official launch of the development plan has been postponed, leaving no plans for activities and activities, especially those related to the processing and handicraft industries. Therefore, it is not yet possible to assess whether the overall picture of the implementation of the development plan has met the targets and targets. But overall, the activities set out in each of the strategies are aimed at diversifying and promoting the wood processing industry for export, if those activities are implemented there is a good chance of achieving the set targets and targets
- I now understand better about what are required to comply in order for Laos to export its products to the EU market.
- The project has been developing the Coffee and Wood processing sector export roadmap, to define the enhancements and future orientations for the sector in view of increasing export performance and social dividends. The targets of these publications are to offer a guide to strengthening quality management systems within government bodies and compliance with international standards, foster dynamism in the sectors and connect it to global opportunities. Small producers and firms, in particular, will benefit from sections on capacity building, sector organization, trade information, quality management, and other vital areas.
- I think this project would enhance the capacity of both government and private sectors, off course it needs some time to tackle and move forward to achieve and fully achieve in the future. If we all put this into practices and become best practices for Lao Coffee Products and Processed Wood before exports with good Quality Control
- I could see the project could generated pretty much on export potentials of the targeted sectors because at least I could see an update on the roadmap of exporting coffee to the EU so that we know there's actually some progresses regarding export potentials.
- Capacity building has not yet been seen, coffee exports are limited to Dao Heuang Group, with most producers still only selling domestically to major capitalists.
- building capacity has not seen his times, coffee exports are a group of companies marigold sent out for most manufacturers also see that only sold within capitalist large majority for processing exports now that the business was ceased to be largely due to order No. 19 / PMO makes activities such growth and raw materials such as wood to be cooked so far limited.
- Recently Coffee Export to EU are reducing due to Local market are more attractive than Export Market...Coffee Export to Eu and worldwide are reducing more than 50% compare to the past.
- Given the GTC capacity building has only been running during 2021 it is too early to tell whether its effects have been translated into tangible outcome such as increased exports. Analysis of feedback forms and follow up monitoring is required in this respect. Feedback from participants including both govt and private sector has been highly positive giving early indication that the training is effective.
- The strategy and the training for government and private sector
- For the effects on sectors, the impact of COVID-19 has to be taken into account. More information will be provided in the LogFrame
- Again, it's too early to say. Promises have been shared from ITC. The pandemic is a game changer. Knowing the intention feels positive but it will be more reliable once being really supported with training, production and distribution.
- What we are trained is not focused on these topics
- All the QC members are a great resource for the Lao government to boost the Lao business products quality for EU markets. Especially in Wood products.
- It is too early to associate any changes in the trade performance and export indicators with the project's implementation. This is because the Lao export roadmap and the guidelines had just been launched and the activities of dissemination and promoting have not yet been implemented
- The ARISE + Lao PDR Project helps us see the importance of boosting and promoting domestic production to become a standard export product
- Not too many early effects due to delayed implementation of planned activities.
- But I think it need to include the fruit and vegetables exporters as coffee exporters only good in exporting coffee but the fruits and vegetables are regular exporters
- Many project activities are still ongoing
- I think in the near future the private sector can export coffee and wood products to other countries more and more according to the standards to meet market requirement
- The very good positive impact maybe will be occurred in moyen term and long term

- Lao PDR's government and private sector have increased their capacities on trade as well as on targeted sectors in virtue of capacity-building, technical advice and guidance, and identification of targeted markets and products where the country has more potential.
- Can be achieved especially in the field of coffee exports

7: To what extent do you think the institutional and human capacities strengthened and supported by ARISE+ Lao PDR project activities will be able to continue after the completion of the project in two years?

Do not know/ not applicable	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Uncertain	Somewhat likely	Very likely
2	0	0	10	27	26

Please add your comments below:

- Yes possible as Laos still need help from Arise Laos to learn and understand more about what market in EU needed
- We have not only provide technical support but also in process to build the implementation tracking tools and compile the technical insight into guidebooks and online platform to centralize and help the beneficiary easily keep the momentum of the activities.
- QC training program seems to be among the preparation.
- To make it more effective, a close monitoring and collaboration from the EU are required.
- The GTC training have been well attended and the feedback positive, indicating a desire for this type of knowledge transfer and more vertical one to one support. To maintain access to that transfer of knowledge the project plans to place the training material on ITC's SME Trade Academy /Green to Compete platform so that Lao stakeholder can access the material (both in English and Lao languages). This will contribute to the sustainability of the work to date. However it is desirable that resources are made available to continue one to one targeted support to build on the momentum created
- Uncertain: This is because there are shuffling staff around within departments, ministries, etc., The one who get better knowledge, skill, trained, experience, etc., will be getting more chance to be appointed new task, new challenge and new position (probably promotion)
- The individuals trained under the project are likely to continue implementing their knowledge and know-how in two years.
- Wherever possible in the activities – efforts are taken to integrate the officials within the public and private sector – so as to ensure that there is capacity built within the departments to carry forward activities even after the project concludes.
- For instance, we have run/are running ToT sessions on multilateral and regional trading arrangements and the EU EBA scheme – and then working with these trained officials to deliver trainings to other stakeholders. Similarly for the e-learning course, we are doing our best to build up capacity within the LNCCI to be able to administer the course (although there have been challenges to get this up and running). Hopefully these efforts will convert to developing sustained capacity within the agencies to continue even after the project ends.
- the trainings should have long-lasting effects on their capacities
- Personally, I think what the project has been provided on the capacity building being sufficient. I think it's a time for the QC to apply all their skills and knowledge gained from the project into the reality and see how they can apply fully or not. Then, the project can assess on the other approach of skills improvement. Cross-checking on what else that still need more inputs from the project. Rather than provide only training courses, but no real field practicum
- If we have guarantee ARISE+ will keep surveying after the completion of the project with at least all participants, it would be relevant
- In addition to lock training / capacity building, a number of activities that have facilitated longer term planning and provided tools that will outlast the project will have a lasting effect
- Yes, I am not sure for other QC, but for myself, we can continue after the completion of the project in two years.
- In terms of institutional capacity strengthened, the project have supported the department's activities in trade promotion in steering coffee and process wood sectors which are potential sectors to integrate EU and region markets
- Human capacities strengthened: The roadmap, guideline and profile have been developed which, along with training provided to officials in order to be able to continue training public and private sectors in the future and provide the tools for monitoring especially the roadmap. In addition, working with ITC experts through coordination, meeting and discussion have developed knowledge and experience for government staffs and create a platform of learning which they can take all lessons to adjust into their working and it can lead to successful Institute in trade promotion services
- Due to the epidemic of Quito 19, the implementation of activities was delayed and did not go according to plan. Therefore, in order for the implementation to be successful, it was agreed to continue the project
- If all planned activities can be implemented in close cooperation with national stakeholders, I expect a continuation of the efforts to achieve economic integration and an increase in export of value added products.

- The commitment of Lao government and national stakeholders manifests in the efforts with FLEGT/VPA implementation
- Need more deep training , Need to work hard, responsibility and cooperation of key agencies and funding support of the government
 - By investing in national human resources/training of trainers, institutional anchoring as well as online and offline tools that will remain beyond the project, I feel that quality related support services /training and coaching of SMEs) will remain beyond the project. I don't have enough insights to comment on other technical areas.
 - I think the institutional and human capacities strengthened should be supported by ARISE+ again
 - It needs the continuous supports for a good period of time
 - Likely. The project has had a strong component on building the capacity of stakeholders and information sharing. As part of the roadmap development, national staff from MOIC were coached in value chain development and strategy design.
 - Because the demand for the product in the market is high, so the project should be continued for the next generation to learn.
 - Capacity building across a broad spectrum of topics is vital to both the GoL and the private sector to enable them to acquire the necessary information, knowledge, and expertise with which to take advantage of trading opportunities and effectively participate in trade negotiations. It also contributes to enhancing export competitiveness and addressing critical linkages between trade and the macro-economy, sectors, and industries as well as poverty reduction, the environment and the country's socio-economic development

Section 5: EU Value Added, EU Visibility and Cross-Cutting Issues

8: Is there any evidence of consideration of the EU added value in design and implementation of the ARISE+ Lao PDR project?

Do not know/ not applicable	Negligible	Little	Modest	Moderate	Substantial
14	0	1	11	20	19

Please add your comments below:

- By virtue of the huge market of the EU, stakeholders in Lao have strongly engaged with the two sets of capacity building. The participation of the EU Delegation both at Ambassador and Advisor level has contributed strongly to ensuring the engagement of both the govt (e.g. MOIC) and private sector.
- EU Delegation's guidance and support to our project implementation are crucial, therefore the project officers have been keeping EUD well-informed about our workplan or upcoming events.
- It seems that EU consumers begin to know more about agricultural products from Laos, especially those of agricultural ones such as coffee, rice, and the likes.
- Improve quality of products at aim to compliance with certificate
- Export strategies (processing wood and coffee) with adding value of target products to meet the requirements of market
- Awareness raising of trade preferences (GSP and EBA) at the aim of use the schemes effectively
- From what I'm able to judge, EU financing the project gives a feeling for companies & QCs that there is interest from EU to trade with Lao companies
- The EU Delegation was very active in the design of the project. In its implementation, the EUD is participating in most of the events and providing guidance on components.
- We can see this from the added requirements needed to export goods and the assortment of goods in particularity which makes clear information for each type of product.
- Should note that ER 2 of the project relates to increasing awareness of trade preferences including the EU – and activities are being undertaken to increasing awareness of the EU EBA, and build this into the components
- the coffee exports have priority target at EU markets
- ຂ້າພະເຈົ້າບໍ່ສາມາດປະກອບຄໍາເຫັນໃນຂໍ້ນີ້ໄດ້ ຍ້ອນບໍ່ໄດ້ເຂົ້າຮ່ວມ ແລະ ເຂົ້າເຖິງການສະໜັບສະໜູນຂອງໂຄງການເທົ່າທີ່ຄວນ.
- I'm not sure. Apart from project sponsorship, we could have tested the UE support on site yet due to the pandemic too.
- The 15 weeks of training course is ongoing, and I cannot see how much the value added is.
- Adding value to the QC team by building them the Lao quality champion. QC tools and knowledge is applied to NUoL student via QC participants from the faculty of Forest Science.
- Participation of DG Trade from the European Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Lao PDR (ECCIL), Trade of the European Commission to be a speaker in EBA Business Guide Launch event and

- p+9 participation of staffs from ECCIL in a training of trainer workshop is to be conducted for selected public and private sector officials EU EBA Business Guide
- There is the cooperation of Government-ITC -EU and national/local partners to deliver on the project goals. For example, EU participation for being speaker, guest and trainee to Launches, workshop and meeting of the projec6
 - Lack of lessons learned from abroad
 - EU standard and conformity assessment were aware that Lao PDR exporter need to comply
 - I was not involved in the design of the project at EU level so I can't comment
 - In terms of implementation of events and publications, etc, we are always highlighting the EU as a donor and I have noted the presence of the EU at a number of projects events and clearly adding value
 - I think the evidence to show off that ARISE+ Lao PDR is to train QCs to be coaches, help government on roadmap of coffee and wood processing
 - We can see this from the added requirements needed to export goods and the assortment of goods in particularity which makes clear information for each type of product.
 -

9: To what extent do you think that ARISE+ IPR is likely to make a difference in terms of the cross-cutting issues such as (a) gender equality; (b) environmental protection, and (c) good governance, human rights and/or leaving no one behind, etc.?

Areas Contributed	Do not know/ Not applicable	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely
(a) gender equality	5	0	3	14	29	14
(b) Environmental protection	4	0	3	12	29	17
(c) Governance/ Human Rights	7	0	5	18	22	13
(d) Social inclusion/ leaving no one behind	6	0	5	11	30	13

- Please add your comments/examples below
- I remember a discussion with QCs based on one example they brought to workshop in one10of the homework assignments:
 - (Me: "How is the production target set for the process?"
 - (QC: "Manager gives a daily target to assistant manager who is responsible for the process (In this example packaging of products) "
 - (Me: "What happens if daily target is not met?"
 - (QC: "For the first time assistant manager gets a warning and if it happens again the person gets fired"
 - As evidence but not limited to, there are more women involved in our QC training program. Seem to be more women are holding important position in the working places.
 - The project is great, it could totally help in terms of the cross-cutting issues but to reach "Very Likely" level, it requires much more things rather than just waiting for the donor for instance collaboration from the government agencies and local people themselves and etc...
 - As ITC is a UN agency, the project followed closely the Sustainable Development Goals, in which Gender equality, environmental protection and human rights are all key accelerators.
 - To some extents, I can see that the number of female participants were more than males. This shown on how they considered about Gender Equality issue, whilst the others I am not sure if these were being considered as well or not.
 - An other comment was that we need to analyze the race of people who are doing the work in the process in order to understand something. That point of view was also very unexpected. What we are training QCs to do is to improve a process and not to blame on people...
 - It is possible if agreed activities are implemented with TA and funding from the project
 - The activities of the project are promoting quality, environmental standards (mandatory and voluntary) for exporting to the EU, and good governance and inclusion in company management. The gender aspect is also likely to enhanced: a large numbers of project participants are women and the coffee sector is one of the agriculture sectors where women participate the most.
 - I am assuming this question relates to the Lao PDR project. The trade policy components currently do not have a specific gender/governance/environmental protection focus – as it relates to overarching policy and regulatory reform.
 - The main focus of cross cutting issue as this is one area that intersects with value chain development for example through meeting sustainability standards. The project has not altered social dynamics so can be said

- a priori to affect gender relations although the project has been fully inclusive in terms of participation by men and women
 - the coffee trainings focus on organic farming
 - Uncertain. These are general topics that have been run by most NGOs and international organizations for decades. If ARISE+ is recognized by the local authorities and work hand in hand, everyone still have hope and scepticism at the same time. Guaranteed to maintain and achieve what's been agreed would most likely be appreciated
 - They are many women involve the program, but the program does not include topics related to gender in the target industry (Wood and coffee industry). I agreed that the program benefited to the environment, human right and also on social section because the program use almost the ISO standards during the program. And ISO standards always care for Environment, human right and social issues
 - In most of the activities, gender equality is manifested by participation of women and there is no indication that women play a significant role in determining any area of relevance to gender programmes
 - Environmental protection: the project raised awareness for processed wood entrepreneurs to focus on the on environmental sustainability of wooden products through introducing the model of FSC (Forest Management and Chain of Custody) certification scheme and CoC management systems
 - Coffee and processed wood sectors are potential sectors which has created employment and generate revenue in rural locations
 - In my opinion it will be better if the project could support more for Environmental protection activity
 - Engagement in the forest and timber sector is predestined to positively impact on gender and the environment based on the character of work in this sector
 - Very important areas
 - I agree on that ARISE+ Lao PDR can help and improve the gender equality, environmental protection, good governance, human rights and/or leaving no one behind
 - The project has had a specific and strong focus on environmental protection in line with, for example, FLEGT process for wood processing, and leveraging on environmentally friendly standards and certifications, such as organic for coffee.
 - Each person has different opinion and way of thinking, it need time to of practice and educate.
- Gender equality is possible in part because it is a program that promotes women entrepreneurs
- Environmental protection has not yet seen the project implemented widely
 - Human rights management is not yet prominent
 - Social participation is also seen in remote or urban areas, but there is also social overlap
 -

10: To what extent do you think that the ARISE+ Lao PDR project has improved EU visibility through the implementation of various project activities and the means of communications of the project results?

Do not know/ not applicable	Negligible	Little	Modest	Moderate	Substantial
3	0	0	9	24	29
Please add your comments below:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Probably enough because this is the first time I have answered a questionnaire See facebook group, website, media coverage EU logo on all project outputs Participation in major events such as the Lao Business Forum, chaired by Prime Minister and the Trade and Private Sector Working Group, co-chaired by Minister, EU and Australia – with presentation of project outputs – for example Trade implication study of LDC graduation I would mark on Moderate, since April this year, I had no chance to participate in any other activities provided by ARISE+ Lao PDR. But to recall in the past, I would say yes for myself. Not sure for the others The ARISE Plus Project could totally improve EU visibility through the design and implementation of various project activities, I could see more people are talking about EU more and more people tend to realize many projects of the EU. Of course, before this the EU was already been talk of the town for many people but nowadays, I could see many people around me talking and interested about the EU much more than before, people know this or that project was funded by the EU We have been following closely the EU Communication and Visibility guidelines, to promote each and every project activities and achievements under EU flag, through many possible channels (ITC social media, UNRC, Ministries etc.) It is difficult to answer definitively given that we have not been able to travel to Lao PDR due to the travel restrictions. References are made to EU support for the ARISE Plus Lao PDR project in all relevant documentation. We merely know about the UE projects in Lao. ARISE+ is one the rare ones that have involved various individual and entity profiles. I do not know well other activities of the project other than Quality Champions 					

- Yes, from problem analysis, Qc tools and also the excellent exercises provided by the trainers.
- Lao coffee sector is potential sector that has generated income for national economy and rural thus, the coffee export roadmap will enhance Lao coffee sector to integrate in regional and global coffee trading
- Raised awareness for relevant public and private sectors in terms of using benefits from
- duty-free, quota-free access for all products (except arms and ammunition) to the EU market under the EU's EBA scheme, applicable to least developed countries (LDCs) which the project has been developed The EU EBA Business Guide for Lao PDR to support Lao businesses to better understand and make use of the opportunities available under the EU market
- The EU visibility, due to implemented and well communicated project and activities, has risen over the last years. National stakeholders consider the EU as a reliable strategic partner in their development efforts. The EU communication regarding the results in general is ok, but could be more sector specific using results of pilot projects.
- The training is one but implementation is another thing difficult
- Yes, I think so, after implementation some activities it showed that some which one can be changed and improved according to mid-term review of the project
- Sometimes, it needs the utilization of the usual ways of communication or hybrid to reach all concerning stakeholders
- In Lao PDR, and particularly among sector stakeholders, the role of EU as a funding partner was stressed through each communication material and consultative meeting.
- Several root causes of problems related to the wood processing industry have been identified and solutions have been identified.

Section 6: Open-Ended Questions

12: In your opinion, what are the major lessons learned from the design and implementation of the ARISE+ IPR project?

Lessons Learned:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is an exchange of knowledge and experience with the countries that produce coffee and engage in coffee business. • Should open call the new projects under annual budget plan within MOIC department/institute for sending proposals • Should involve SMEs in the designing of the project • For an ease of administrative-related project operation, I will propose to have close relationship with UNDP office, to take advantage of the existing service contracts with local vendors • Time availability and flexibilities by each individual participant that was not allowed to participate fully. • Online training caused some difficulty due to the connection problems even within country for those who could not participate at the training venue in Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR. • More field practicum in applying all skills and knowledge gained from various training courses would be a great asset • DOF consider how it can support an assessment of the implementation of the Wood Processing Sector Export Roadmap at an appropriate future time as a learning for any further EU projects in the wood processing arena in Laos or elsewhere. • We have just had the approval of the MAF TOR that the responsibility for the wood processing sector including agriculture and forest resource processing industries has been transferred back to MAF from MOIC. I guess this will not affect the staff reallocation of the two ministries. We at the Department of Forestry just have a final draft of mandate and responsibility which includes the new Division of Forest resource and NTFP Enterprise Management. The wood processing industry will be in this new division and the mandate of this new division is to manage, promote, and develop the wood processing sector to produce domestic goods and export. So, all the work by ARISE+ IPR project till now will be useful for this sector. • There are many regulations and standard that Lao PDR has to follow and adapt to make sure that Lao PDR will be able to export or import goods from EU market • The projects themselves are already great both the design and implementation but personally I think it needs to be promoted more for instance the training on ASSIST and ATR which I used to participate and every participant agreed on the same thing that the websites are very useful and informative. Without the invitation to the training, I wouldn't have known that there are such websites available • I have learnt many useful tools that are crucial for market trend analysis. After finishing training, I can use the knowledge I have learnt to improve my everyday work as a lecturer. I shared it with my 4th year students for their thesis writing. • Understanding more on how to be prepared and be compliance with such as quality management, GMP, GHP, HACCP, and the likes.

- The implementing partner has rich operational capacity to deliver the program activities on the ground, despite the COVID-19 crisis.
- Continue collaboration/communication is key to achieving mutual interest
- Continue using experienced Laotian facilitators
- Continue empowering the Project Coordination Office based in Vientiane, which is doing a great job for organisation / logistics, coordination, coherence and dialogue
- I have learnt many useful tools that are crucial for market trend analysis. After finishing training, I can use the knowledge I have learnt to improve my everyday work as a lecturer. I shared it with my 4th year students for their thesis writing.
- The project should consider to support the private sector in implementation of roadmaps of the two sectors and ensure their sustainability, in term of monitoring and evaluation.
- There is a strong need to base the design in thorough consultations with all value chain actors including the govt and private sector. This was successfully achieved through the Roadmap process supporting by ITC technical teams. For a new phase it would be desirable to revisit the Roadmap with govt and private sector counterparts to further identify priority areas and build on work to date for example taking the build capacity on market requirements and exposing companies to buyers. Once the lockdown is over , this is feasible
- As mentioned in the weakness, the project (one project) covers too many aspects and many sectors (ministries) which will be difficult to coordinate as a result. If one project covers only one aspect, one department, the coordination and implementation will be better.
- Involve more private sectors who will directly or indirectly benefit from the project.
- Remote training is possible, but it has its limitations
- Good local facilitator for online activities as well as understanding the local context is crucial & helping to overcome a small language barrier in some cases
- **It's an interesting project because the project designer and the project implementer are the same organization, but it is basically done well.**
- Good so far but need more improve some part
- Implementation has been delayed due to coordination.
- Budget and technical support are not clear and clear, leading to challenges to attract relevant business and private sector stakeholders.
- The activities should provide to line agencies who shall take a part for the projects
- Focus more on the priorities products that Laos can be produced
- Involvement of many stakeholders
- Lessons learned are a good project in the development of the country's economy and increase the potential of personnel to be aware of the economic transformation to keep up with the current situation.
- Learned to know more about what other people from other countries doing. In some part we can start to apply to in our region and some part put as practice.
- Trainer have the ability to transfer knowledge to participant.
- Training was very good from the project.
- As I was not involved in early stages of project, it would be hard for me to say in terms of design. But, I would say that some activities are dependent on previous activities, and when this is the case, we should ensure that deliverables associated with dependent activity follow a timeline that is coherent with the previous
- Need more brainstorming and consultation with various stakeholder for selecting the appropriate methodology or focus point
- Nothing at the moment
- This is a good project with multi-sectoral supports and participation in Lao PDR.
- Would like to recommend the Project to improve the project's relevance to suite the actual context
- **Try to learn what I get from the training to adapt it to be able to use it in my business. /**
- **I'll try to access more programs because in the past it was not possible to access the projects as much as it should, even though my business is sending goods directly to the EU.**
- Hope, potential, communication, assistance.
- Clearly separating project design from project implementation could be considered for the next project.
- Allocate more resources to project design and provide options for having multiple implementing agencies for different intervention areas could enhance project efficiency and effectiveness.
- Project's workplan is well implemented
- It is a need that field visit and field practices are important for effective training.
- From an early stage, clear and consistent messaging on project goals and scope is critical in both building support and managing expectations
- QC knowledges
- QC Tools
- ISO standards (ISO 9001, ISO 54001, ISO 22000.....)
- Focus on the activities that related with techniques such as: Training, workshop...
- In addition, the Project is designed to be more for organizational /functional build-up and the capacity building of the government staffs and the private sector

- Parallel to SME capacity building and awareness raising about accessing EU market, The project also supports the relevant institutions in improving their service delivery, and developing technical documents
- Sector Collaboration, there are multiple issues that cannot be solved by individual actors, issues that require sector collaboration which the project's activities are designed to involve relevant MOIC departments' roles to implement the activities simultaneously and connectivity
- There should be a clear timeline for the implementation of each activity in each task, as well as evaluation and evaluation of the implementation to identify strengths, weaknesses, shortcomings and recommendations from experts
- In my view, I think the design and implementation of the project is good, but it's will be better if we can add more activity to follow up the previous related activities example: follow up training, seminar ...etc, and provide more advertisement about the project output or achievement.
- The scope of the roadmap seems to enfold a wide field of objectives and topics, many of them without the possibility of active participation in achieving the defined goals
- Laos is long way to go, I know even there are number of trainings, workshops, capacity buildings, etc. There are still on the paper and on screen, the people need to go into the field, utilize what they learned into practice which we have not yet seen that, mostly due to COVID19 situation. This will drag the project and the real outcome of the project will definitely delay.
- I see room for more connections across ARISE Plus projects and potentially more common elements and building blocks. I'm not very sure how much this was considered at the design stage.
- The inception phase was very long (about a year I think) and it took time before most of us started technical work. That time would now have been badly needed to complete our commitments. Perhaps the inception phase should not have been part of the project timeline. I hope a time extension will be granted (ideally one year).
- The lesson learned from the project relates to the other institutional that improving their knowledge on wood processing if we compare to Vietnamese. The main capacity building is about the polytechnic school should have the laboratory to test the chemical in furniture that Laos imports or exports.
- Human resource for working in some fields of technical assistance.
- Participation of all categories of stakeholders (coffee)
- Due to the covid19's pandemic, the Project period can be extended to ensure the accomplishment of the Project activities.
- Focus on the real needs of the stakeholders and the sector.
- Gather all of the stakeholders' categories to involve in the project activities' implementation
- Forestry Department and the Department of Agriculture to participate in implementation activities of the project, the Department of Livestock and Fisheries of us that are involved in the implementation activities of times, if possible in the future Department of Livestock and Fisheries, we wanted to contribute to the activities of the project because the current policy we have been negotiating with China to export beef products, meat and meat processing to China, talks with Vietnam to send the pigs and birds to the country.
- Designation of a specific focal point from the relevant departments was extremely helpful to maintain an active engagement of the ministry in the elaboration of the roadmaps.
- Material and presentations should be available in both languages. English is not mastered by gov or private sector stakeholders.
- Gain knowledge on how to grow organic coffee as well as how to care for coffee trees, know how to access information
- The involvement is significant to ensure the expected outcomes.

13: What are your main recommendations for the remaining period of the project implementation (i.e. priority activities under the current project), as well as after the completion of the ARISE+ Lao PDR project (i.e. potential areas for interventions under the next trade project)?

Recommendations for the remaining period:

- Continue to organize outstanding activities to be implemented in an appropriate manner and to ensure a certain level of development.
- Get more involve with DOF especially during the establishment of new wood processing industry Division under DOF in term of capacity building, data collection of wood industry enterprises in Laos in order to have training and develop this sector.
- To complete the activities under the project
- Involve key counterparts in the project implementation as much as possible for sustainability
- **Increase the synergy with other EU funded projects in Lao, to jointly organize trainings, workshops, events. From administrative point of view, this combination will help to optimize the logistic preparation (venue hire, travel arrangement etc.), which means reducing cost for all projects**
- I have no any ideas to share, since I am no longer participate in any other course afterward since April 2021.

- Focus on the remaining activities and some activities to elaborate such activities.
- Encourage good performing departments to carry project activities
- The more the project allow government agencies to participate in the process of doing it, the more chance it will provide sustainability for the project, it will also strengthen the government official capacities especially in terms of technical skill
- Allow an extension, so the project can efficiently implement its remaining activities
- In 2022, brainstorm about a possible continuation of the activities under a phase 2 of ARISE Plus Lao PDR, to ensure follow-up and increased impact
- Continue support for implementation of the ATIGA;
- Foreign trade negotiations efforts – capacity to be built up in the country
- Investment related support – particularly in terms of addressing regulatory/policy constraints which may currently be impacting investment into areas such as coffee and wood processing
- Preparation for graduation from LDC status – including preparing for negotiating deeper GSP access; changes anticipated from loss of S&D benefits and regulatory reforms required in this regard, etc
- Organize more training for the related officials and representatives of the enterprise.
- **Promote capacity building for the public and private sectors to launch pilot projects to see the realities**
- Provide more trainings on implementing outcomes/outputs of the project, the management of the project for government officials, private sectors who directly involve in the project so that they can manage the project afterwards.
- **It is necessary to continue to push activities to be able to go according to plan, despite the impact of the star lock engine of the Quito 19 outbreak**
- Also should study visit or study tour on each subject.
- Need to visit the company or SME who run the business related each topic that we learn. Need more share experience from company who success and fail.
- Show more picture and visualize technic, participants can see and follow easier.
- The export development plan of the wood processing industry of Lao PDR 2021-2025 has been approved and preparations are underway for an official opening ceremony. However, there are still many activities related to budget and technical. Therefore, to facilitate development and promotion of these activities has been implemented and results as set in developing this proposed project with partner development has the potential to continue to assist the management training to strengthen the base for a carpenter in the short term and long term, creating experimental research and research new materials, especially wood raw material with lesser known (Lesser known species), the support materials and equipment to upgrade technology in industrial processing.
- **Build capacity to cope with and adapt the transport, agriculture, and trade sectors to the quarantine-19 outbreak**
- **Clear communication and information**
- Due to COVID 19, the project should focus on the priority's activities
- Find the gaps on the activities
- Organize more training for the related officials and representatives of the enterprise
- Focus on consistent communication, being flexible both on ITC end as well as stakeholder end, in order to implement as effectively as possible given the remaining timeframe
- Focus on WTO initiatives / implementation of regional agreement such as RCEP
- Digitalization of private sector
- **Increase trade preferences for exports, including exports to the European Union, with greater application of the Emerald Privilege (EBA)**
- Organize more seminar or activities
- **I think that the project has to focus on implementing of practice all the activity.**
- The GTC training for wood and coffee have provided participants with introductory through to advanced level of capacity building on sustainability practices and market requirements for the two sectors. The second phase of the work has begun and will continue to October 2022 in which one to one support to a selection of companies will be rolled out e.g. the SME Clinic for wood. This will focus on problem solving and identifying market opportunities.
- Need to create more awareness of result , progress and even remaining challenge that need to be resolved
- **Please kindly look at the priorities of each company to help them achieve their target, in order to reach the project goal**
- **First of all, companies that used to export to the EU and still export regularly. What restrictions are there? How many problems are there? what help do they need? /**
- **Then, which businesses have export potential, to promote them.**
- **Next, look for new companies that want to export**
- Establishing guarantees of project follow up over completion
- Finding training alternatives to keep the project active during the pandemic
- Looking for a possible extension of the project in another phase

- Conduct an update of the result framework and assess the likelihood of achieving project objectives and possibly reprioritize the remaining activities for achieving main project objectives
- **For the on-going project activities prior to the completion or uncompleted activities due to some reasons, the project may be considered to extend for the certain period**
- Invite only trainers who are experienced on the training topics
- Strengthening capacities to continue making use of project tools and outputs after the end of the project
- Pay more attention on to promote Lao Products to EU markets
- Capacity building for Lao official in both central and local level
- In order to further develop the project activities successfully, expect the multiplier effects and also increase efficiency of using resources, collaboration with various donors would be essential.
- There is the coffee roadmap and guidelines that have been developed which, along with training provided to officials, should put the government in a stronger position to further develop and expand its programmes and services in different areas and also need advertising in widely
- Several workshops of capacity building for Lao coffee and Processed wood entrepreneurs and exporters were organised, however, the project should have monitoring activities time to time, we may visit their companies or make a questionnaires to follow up how can they apply the lessons from attending the workshop for developing their companies. This can help us to design or develop proper materials or concepts of training along with their situation
- To ensure that the coffee roadmap's activities are continued and implemented after the project ends, probably the project should provide some fund for some activities to enhance collaboration with partners
- **To evaluate, evaluate and determine the time frame for the implementation of each activity in order to achieve the set goals.**
- Focus on few specific topics (e.g. strengthening of the wood processing sector based on pilot projects)
- More direct engagement of consultants
- Activities to increase exposure of companies and government offices to international competitive environments
- **More practical activities**
- Put as much as real life case study, example of the failure, example of the success trade agreements
- **Ensure sustainable quality related support services (training and coaching) for SMEs:**
 - Complete qualification of Quality Champions
 - Implement first round of quality improvement projects in enterprises and generate & success cases
 - Anchor tools and methodologies to LNCCI for long term use, launch short courses by LNCCI for the business community and finalise related business model
 - Ensure full national ownership of the Lao PDR Quality for Trade Platform by training of LNCCI staff to manage key areas
 - In case of a time extension: support selected enterprises to implement HACCP and ISO9001 and initiate this type of service offer at LNCCI
 - In case of a time extension: implement a second round of quality improvement projects and training in the coffee district and for additional enterprises in the coffee and wood sectors
- A sustainable fund (from the Government or the contribution of the stakeholders themselves) is needed to pursuit the activities

Continue to implement activities that have not yet been completed.

- **Monitor and evaluate lessons learned in the implementation of the project in the past.**
- Knowledge transferred should be strengthened
- Require more involvement of private sectors in many activities
- Focus more on ASEAN topics such as negotiation in AFTA issues
- Continue having a flexible approach and adjust as needed the timelines of activities as needed, in case they were impacted by Covid-19
- **I would like to help coordinate with the relevant staff on the rules or procedures for membership of any cooperative that aims to export organic coffee, and also want the project to suggest which websites should be more factual and credible or more useful to find a useful Facebook page**
- The project should consider to support the private sector in implementation of roadmaps of the two sectors and ensure their sustainability, in term of morning and evaluation

Recommendations After ARISE+ Lao PDR

- I would suggest the donor who providing fund for the project to monitor closely with relevant sector especially the government agencies in order to ensure the sustainability of the project
- I would say that some activities are dependent on previous activities, and when this is the case, we should ensure that deliverables associated with dependent activity follow a timeline that is coherent with the previous projects
- Continue to monitor the activities of the project that have been implemented on a regular basis.
- Support a bit of funding for the trainees to keep on doing the research according to the lessons they have learnt from the project.

- **Hand over the knowledge and database built during the project timeline to the local stakeholder, ensure their ownership and provide clear guidance on how to maintain and monitor these resources**
 - **Assist DOF,MAF will manage, promote and develop the wood processing industry in order to produce products to supply to the domestic and international markets through practical training on wood science and technology, building regional training centre for wood processing industry**
 - Distribute the results of the research to society and the community to be a tip for enterprises when they produce goods and export.
 - Continue support for implementation of the ATIGA;
 - Prepare some post-implementation supports to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the activities
 - **The project should be continued with supports of Lao Govt and Private sector by adding value for markets access and competition of Lao products in order to improve Lao economic**
 - Foreign trade negotiations efforts – capacity to be built up in the country
 - Investment related support – particularly in terms of addressing regulatory/policy constraints which may currently be impacting investment into areas such as coffee and wood processing
 - Preparation for graduation from LDC status – including preparing for negotiating deeper GSP access; changes anticipated from loss of S&D benefits and regulatory reforms required in this regard, etc
 - **Continue to assist and provide effective projects for Lao PDR**
 - **Provide some fund for partners to keep implementing the outcomes/outputs of the project especially the monitoring of the project implementation.**
 - **Support QCs to conduct a second project for companies**
 - **Expand to other sectors**
 - **Thorough evaluation of the efficiency and visibility of the project**
 - **Support LNNCI to develop the service offering by QCs to be sustainable in the long run**
 - **Anchor training of future QCs to a suitable institution (University)**
 - Some activities and programs that the project has developed to help after the end of the project think that it is still necessary to find other sources of funding to continue to implement, as well as to strengthen the business sector
 - **To continue support in other areas such as Intellectual Property, business environment (digitalization for SMEs).**
 - **Supporting the TA of WTO FTA should be considered as one of the focus areas of the future project.**
 - **Provide support for women entrepreneurs, education and promotion of domestic agricultural products;**
 - **Extending the project.**
 - An updated assessment of the level of capacity of value chain actors on their competitiveness to enter major markets is desirable as well as cross cutting issue like climate change, gender and social development. Follow up capacity building on building this two aspects (climate resilience and competitiveness) through a combination of broad knowledge transfer and targeted support to companies and their suppliers.
- More specifically on wood**
- Preparation of pilot studies / case studies introducing and testing the applicability of existing regulations, e.g. on supply chain control and input-output monitoring (scale sensitive). Fostering regional / bilateral trade with Vietnam and Thailand (both VPA countries) focusing on particular products such as plywood / semi-finished products with significant value added and manufactured in SME group schemes (process specialization, cooperative procurement strategies, access to legal raw materials).
- More specifically on coffee**
- Farmer support services delivery / technology transfer (inputs, agronomy, climate change resilience etc) to include also integration into the business model of sustainability requirements from market perspective such as women empowerment, Certifications management (ability to manage and implement multiple) Processing management for value addition, innovation, improved quality and efficiency Quality control and improvement, Business management skills such as inventory control, traceability, budgeting, P&L and cashflow management, financing, business diversity and local market opportunities, Coffee trading and risk management, logistics and contract management, Marketing skills and customer relationship management, market intelligence
 - **Look at the Social-Economy Developing Plan especially on the trade area.**
 - Market and buyer linkages including through internet/e-commerce based trading platforms
 - **Need to refresh training by summary all the key messages from each subject related QC.**
 - Support a bit of funding for the trainees to keep on doing the research according to the lessons they have learnt from the project.
 - Distribute the results of the research to society and the community to be a tip for enterprises when they produce goods and export
 - **Need more support on coaching during field work or practice sessions**
 - Need to create more awareness of result , progress and even remaining challenge that need to be resolved for various parties that may have not been involved

- **I want the project to continue to grow because in the past my company did not have access to as much help as it should, and would like to get help from the project to push my business to grow and to be more sustainable**
- **Real follow up and support**
- **Reminding previous agreements with local authorities**
- **Production and value chain emphasized by visits between Lao and UE with the various stakeholders**
- Conduct project completion evaluation before making decision on the next phase of the project.
- **Upon the completion of project, there may be an unit following up with the project supporting activities from time to time to ensure the high results**
- **There should be a pilot project on coaching of SME after the training**
- Digital economy and e-commerce are promising areas for future work, given the remaining untapped potential in these areas and need for reform at the policy level
- **Keep advisable when necessary or needed**
- **Try to find funding support from both internal and external to continue project**
- **Evaluate the project achievements and select best examples for expansion**
- In order to enhance the activities in the coffee roadmap are implemented, we should have some budget for collaboration with other agencies to implementing some activities
- The Project should has 2nd phases as we would like to suggest the project to focus on promoting selected target Business Exporters to coach them to be able to access the European market
- Continue to evaluate and evaluate the results of implementation
- **The project should continue on capacity building support: technical training and expert or consultant as well**
- **Hardware support**
- Follow up, another session of evaluation? How the project goes, meet the indicators set
- Extend the sector scope eg add more product market combinations to Lao Quality Compass (part of Lao PDR Quality for Trade platform and raise awareness around those quality requirements (LNCCI and sector associations).
- Implement second generation Quality Champions involving strongest first generation QCs and focus on additional sectors. New services could be anchored in LNCCI and the new sector associations.
- Roll out training and coaching services by Quality Champions/LNCCI more widely to more SMEs (with some but much less project support).
- Potentially offer follow up support and guidance to the initially assisted enterprises
- Involve QCs to support implementation of specific standards eg SO9001, ISO 22000, HACCP up to certification and consolidate these services in LNCCI
- Potentially support the development of a national quality association connected to LNCCI
- Use parts of the QC programme as well as adaptations and possible additions to develop courses at university level in order to also reach the next generation and create a quality culture
- **Overall, the project is considered important and necessary to the relevant sectors, and if possible the project should be continued**
- Sustainability should be taken into account
- Ownership must be the Lao side with clear commitment and based on existing resources
- Many projects should be continued to support the line agencies
- Strong interest from the government on e-commerce, an e-commerce strategy was mentioned specifically. This can be something to consider for the future
- **Want to have this program again**
- Plan a phase 2 of the project, including consolidating current sectors and possible new sectors (Tourism? Tea? Agri-food products)
- Further support high effective and benefit broader public activities
- **Continue to support Lao PDR to reach the target of import and exporting to EU market**
- Need more follow-up on the key success and the way how to improve the next phrase better