

**Survey Research on e-Learning
in Asian Countries - Fiscal Year 2002
(Country Specific Report - Lao P.D.R.)**

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1. Market: Market Trends of e-Learning

1.1 Status of IT Promotion (Centered on the Internet)

1.1.1 Outline of the Internet

Laos is said to be one of the least developed countries in ASEAN with regard to the information technology field. Laos adopts a cautious attitude toward the inflow of information from foreign countries via the Internet. In 2000, the National Internet Management Committee issued an administrative order regarding the use of the Internet. According to this administrative order, which covers all individuals, organizations, and Internet service providers (ISP), violators will be punished based on domestic laws.

According to the statistics of ITU (2001), the number of Internet users in Laos was about 10,000, which means that the Internet diffusion rate in this year was as low as about 0.19%. Internet users in Laos connect to the Internet mainly via dial-up connections. The ITU survey in 1999 showed that the number of Internet users was about 2,000. Comparing this number with about 10,000 Internet users in 2001, it can be said that the number of Internet users in Laos has been growing rapidly.

The main cities in Laos have Internet shops (Internet cafes) in which Internet access is available. It is estimated that there are approximately 50 Internet cafes in and around Vientiane.

1.1.2 Outline of ISP

In Laos, there are three ISPs: Lao Telecom, LaoNet (GlobeNet), and PlaNet Online. In addition, the Science, Technology and Environment Agency (STEA) provides e-mail service only. Because communication provided by Laotian ISPs is unstable, many foreigners staying in this country use Thai ISPs by way of international calls.

Country-code top-level domain name for Laos is ".la". The right to use this domain name was bought from Laos by Sterling Holdings Ltd., which runs a domain name business in Hong Kong. Japan's e-Lux Corporation obtained the exclusive right to sell this domain name in Japan and started a registration service for ".la" in May 2001. Thus, caution is required in that a website with the domain name ".la" is not always representing a Laotian organization.

Table 1-1 Main ISPs

ISPs	Overview
Lao Telecom http://www.laotel.com/	Laotel (Lao Internet Service Center, Lao Telecommunications Co., Ltd.) started an ISP business in August 1999 jointly funded by Lao government and Thai investor. This company provides Internet services in cooperation with Singapore and provides 64kbps connections to SingNet of Singapore.
LaoNet (GlobeNet) http://www.laonet.net/ http://www.laonet.net/globenet/	Globe Telecom, a Philippine company providing a service called GlobeNet, started an ISP business in Laos in August 1998. International communication is provided via satellites. E-mail addresses provided in this service are "...@laonet.net". This company provides a wireless broadband service to more than 50 companies in Vientiane.
PlaNet Online http://www.planet.laopdr.com/ http://www.planetonline.laopdr.com/	This company was established as PlaNet Computers, and started an ISP business in Laos in February 2000. Initially, only a limited number of lines were used, but the number was increased to 128 in 2001. This company uses a fiber optic cable connected to Thailand.

Source: Multiple reference materials

1.2 Status of Education and Training System

1.2.1 Higher Education

In 1995, 10 higher education institutions in Laos were integrated into the National University of Laos (NUOL), the first and only national university. NUOL is under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Unlike in other countries, the university in Laos has not been playing a role of promoting IT yet.

The university curriculum consists of two years of foundation studies followed by three to five years (depending on the faculties) of professional studies.

Lectures in NUOL are provided in Lao, but the materials such as textbooks in Lao are few. So, many materials written in Thai are used. This university has interactions with foreign universities, including Japanese universities such as Nagoya University, Meiji University, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.

NUOL has PCs provided by foreign governments, and has a LAN environment. Internet connections, however, are limited and mainly used by teachers and staff.

With the aid of Japanese government, the Lao-Japan Human Resource Cooperation Center was established in NUOL campus. It was established with the objectives including promotion of Internet utilization and computer education, as well as "developing human resources of economic practices", "providing Japanese language education", and "promoting cultural exchange".

1.2.2 Vocational Education

The objectives and programs of vocational schools differ greatly according to the needs judged by the responsible government agencies and the priorities determined by the responsible provinces or regions.

Vocational schools provide vocational training courses of various lengths. Different government agencies such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health are involved in the establishment and operation of these schools. The main role of the Ministry of Education over these vocational schools is to organize the curricula and learning process developed by these government agencies.

The target of technical education in Laos is to foster mid-level and advanced engineers with skills equivalent to those acquired in colleges, and university level engineers. All contents to be taught in higher technical schools are supervised by the Ministry of Education only. Other government agencies are in charge of all operational aspects such as facilities, money, and personnel management of the schools under their jurisdictions.

1.3 IT Human Resources Required

Laos has a shortage of human resources in all IT related fields.

IT related staff from governmental and private sectors study in foreign countries such as Malaysia and Singapore, with the financial aid of foreign governments.

NUOL has recently started providing a course of computer science through which the first graduates were turned out.

In addition, according to the report of ITU in March 2002, Cisco Systems, Inc. of the US is discussing with the Lao government, UNDP, and educational organizations regarding a plan to bring the Cisco Networking Academy Program (CNAP) into Laos.

1.4 E-Learning Market Trends

Information unavailable.

It seems that nothing exists in Laos that can be called an e-learning market.

2. Technology: Trends of e-Learning System (Synchronous & Asynchronous)

There is no information regarding e-learning activities independently operated by Laotian organizations.

As part of the "SOIASIA Project", promoted by Keio University, NUOL had been used as one of the receive-only earth stations to receive lectures delivered via satellite based Internet. Faculty of Engineering and Architecture of the NUOL received this course, and the teachers of the computer related majors attended. Although the campus LAN was partly connected to the Internet, the attendees sent questions and reports using a chat system via dial-up connections to the Internet.

3. Advanced Activities

Information unavailable.

4. Government Policy and its Vision (Mid- and Long-term Direction)

4.1 Status of IT Policies

In December 2001, "ICT Guideline" was announced as a national ICT strategy.

The main contents of the guideline are as follows:

- Utilizing ICT for national strategies for social and economic development
- Utilizing ICT for improving the economy, culture, society, and national defense
- Improving the ICT infrastructure
- Developing human resources for ICT utilization and development

In ASEAN, project plans (i.e., "Telecommunications framework", "Domestic ICT master plan", "Legal structures for ICT", "Action plan for developing ICT human resources") for developing ICT sectors in Indochina countries are being prepared, and donor countries are going to be asked to support these projects.

4.2 E-Learning Related Measures as Part of IT or Educational Policies

Information unavailable.

4.3 Laws Regulating Rights for Intellectual Property and Personal Information in e-Learning

Information unavailable.

4.4 Vision

Information unavailable.

4.5 International and National Conference

Information unavailable.