STARTING EARLY, STARTING SMART:
EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT
IN NORTHERN LAO PDR

Early childhood (between 0-8) is the most important phase in life. It determines the health, well-being, behavior and professional achievements of adults. In Northern Lao PDR, many challenges impact children’s early development.

STUDY SNAPSHOT
Baseline data collected from

- 7,520 children aged 2-5 years old
- 5 provinces
- 14 districts
- 376 villages in Northern Lao PDR

NUTRITION

- 50% of children are stunted

Stunting is largely irreversible and can have negative consequences in later life, such as poor motor and cognitive skills. Good nutrition is essential for children’s survival, healthy development and growth.

EARLY LITERACY

- Only 12% were able to recognize and name a letter of the alphabet
- Only 41% were able to open a book correctly
- Only 39% were able to count to 3

Hmong and Khmu children had poorer development than Lao-Tai children and without these basic skills they will not be ready for school.

HEALTH AND EDUCATION

- Only 25% of children attend some form of early childhood education
- Only 22% of children received some form of health services in the past month

Access to quality health care and early education promotes good child health and prepares children for continued learning at school.

HOME STIMULATION

- 82% of caretakers had not played games with their child in the past week

A nurturing home environment that provides safety, love and actively provides opportunities to learn and play is essential for healthy child development.

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) project, supported by the World Bank, aims to improve the development and school readiness of children aged 2-5 in disadvantaged villages by:

- Building 250 pre-primary classrooms
- Establishing 71 community child development groups
- Promoting community awareness campaigns
- Providing school meals