

Terms of Reference

International Consultancy Mutual Recognition of Skills Capacity Building for Lao People's Democratic Republic (18 March – 31 May 2024)

Background

ASEAN has a population of over 660 million people with the third largest labour force in the world, and by 2050, the ASEAN region is expected to rank as the fourth-largest economy in the world. ASEAN has been “facilitating movement of business persons, skilled labour and talents” as a critical priority under the pillar of “a single market and production base with free flow of goods, services, investment and skilled labour”¹. To implement some of these actions the development of a “*mutually recognized skills framework*” became critical as the mutual recognition of skills (MRS) can smooth out the path in the negotiation between nations and facilitating the freer movement and employment of qualified and certified personnel, essentially being a key instrument for skilled labour mobility in ASEAN.

The ILO MRS initiative has been well underway, since 2015, aiming to provide recognition opportunities for migrant workers with middle-level skill sets as well as to support ASEAN Member States (AMS) as they worked to strengthen their national systems to meet the requirements of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF). The initiative began with nearly 4 years of capacity building activities with a focus on Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar to enhance their readiness for MRS pilot implementation. The pilot implementation also aimed to provide a blueprint for the procedure and platform for MRS so that over time workers in many more skills areas could achieve ASEAN-wide recognition². As such, MRS will increase transparency, support mutual trust, and consequently, facilitate the transfer and the mutual recognition of the skills and qualifications of workers through the acceptance of broad equivalence or comparability of outcomes of national qualifications. Table 1 provides the steps in the *Roadmap* of the MRS in ASEAN process.

Table 1. Steps in the roadmap on the pilot implementation of the MRS in ASEAN

Step 1.	Identifying areas of skills for mutual recognition
Step 2.	Benchmarking national (or regional) competency standards
Step 3.	Defining and benchmarking the qualification
Step 4.	Checking the assessment and certification arrangements
Step 5.	Reviewing quality assurance of training, assessment and certification arrangements
Step 6.	Drafting the migrant skilled worker profile
Step 7.	(7a) Assembling and submitting the portfolio of evidence (7b) Level-to-level reference of selected qualifications between the NQF and AQRF (and the NQF of receiving Member State)

As the ASEAN Chair in 2024, Lao PDR has determined the theme of “ASEAN: Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience” and is committed to intensify cooperation under the three community pillars; promoting infrastructure connectivity; narrowing development gap; promoting greater economic integration and people-to-people exchanges; and further strengthening ASEAN's relations with external partners.³ Lao PDR is committed to developing a human-centred approach in preparing ASEAN workers' ability to adapt to the

¹ Recommendations of the High Level Task Force (HLTF) on ASEAN Economic Integration contained in the Bali Concord II.

² Lythe, David. *Assessing the Pilot Implementation of the Mutual Recognition of Skills in ASEAN*. 2021

³ Theme - ASEAN LAO PDR 2024 (laoschairmanship2024.gov.la)

transformative changes as stipulated in the ASEAN Labour Ministers' Joint Statement on the Future of Work: Embracing Technology for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth, the ASEAN Declaration on Human Resources Development in the Changing World of Work and its Roadmap, and the ASEAN Declaration on Promoting Competitiveness, Resilience, and Agility of Workers for the Future of Work.

The Lao PDR national skills and competency standards for bricklaying and plastering was recently approved and will be promulgated hereafter in the country. With the promulgation of the competency standards, which provides a necessary condition for MRS process, Lao PDR has requested assistance from the ILO on the preparation for the MRS pilot implementation with the view to completing the MRS in bricklaying and plastering with Thailand.

With support from the ILO/Korea Partnership Programme, the ILO will provide MRS capacity building assistance to Lao PDR, which once successful, will pave the way for the next steps along the MRS Roadmap for the MRS process between Lao PDR and Thailand (Table 1).

Objectives

The overall objective of the assignment is to provide capacity building support to Lao PDR to enhance their national skills standard and certification system in bricklaying and plastering. The enhanced skills standards and certification system will increase the readiness of Lao PDR to implement MRS pilot implementation with Thailand with a focus on bricklaying and plastering.

Scope of work & expected outputs

The consultant will closely work with the ILO Senior Specialist on Skills and Employability to deliver the following outputs:

Deliverable 1: A work plan identifying the technical assistance activities to be provided to Lao PDR

Deliverable 2: A 4-day workshop in Lao PDR comprising of the following activities:

- A shared interpretation of all units of competency for bricklaying and plastering in all approved levels among all the members who formulated the competency standards;
- Trainers and curriculum developers are clear on the training design and formal-school based curriculum development based on the approved competency standards;
- Trainers and certification officials are clear on the standard procedures that will define the credibility of the competency certificates issued for Lao nationals on bricklaying and plastering as aligned to approved competency standards;
- Gap analysis and identification of similarities and differences on skills/competency standards, assessment procedure and testing between Lao PDR and Thailand completed;
- Action Plan for the way forward and the further steps along the MRS Roadmap.

Deliverable 3: Final report comprising of recommendations on the follow-up activities

Deliverables and time schedule

It is anticipated that the assignment will be carried out from 18 March to 31 May 2024.

The consultant must deliver the deliverables according to the schedule below:

- **Deliverable 1:** Workplan identifying technical assistance to be provided by **Friday 22 March 2024**
- **Deliverable 2:** Participation in a 4-day workshop in Lao PDR by **Friday 19 April 2024**
- **Deliverable 3:** Final report with recommendations of follow up activities by **Wednesday 15 May 2024**

Requirements

Experience

- A minimum of 10 years of professional experience in the field of skills development and recognition in Southeast Asia is required.
- Experience working with skills recognition frameworks, such as MRA, AQRf and MRS, is required.
- Experience working with an international or intergovernmental organization is required. Previous work experience with the UN is an advantage.
- Experience working with ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN bodies and ASEAN Member States on issues related to skills development and recognition is an advantage.

Skills

- Demonstrated knowledge of the thematic areas of education and skills development, and gender equality.
- Sound knowledge of ASEAN particularly on skills and competency developments and skills mobility issues.
- Capacity to work independently with minimal supervision.
- Personal commitment, efficiency, and flexibility.
- Gender-sensitive, culture-sensitive, and ability to work with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds.
- Excellent English writing and communication skills, including facilitation of discussions.

Competencies

Values

- Inclusion and respect for diversity:** respects and promotes individual and cultural differences; encourages diversity and inclusion wherever possible.
- Integrity and transparency:** maintains high ethical standards and acts in a manner consistent with organizational principles/rules and standards of conduct.
- Professionalism:** demonstrates ability to work in a composed, competent and committed manner and exercises careful judgment in meeting day-to-day challenges.

Core Competencies – behavioural indicators

- Delivering results:** produces and delivers quality results in a service-oriented and timely manner; is action-oriented and committed to achieving agreed outcomes.
- Accountability:** takes ownership for achieving the Organization's priorities and assumes responsibility for own action and delegated work.
- Communication:** encourages and contributes to clear and open communication; explains complex matters in an informative, inspiring and motivational way.

Travel required

The assignment requires travel to Lao PDR to facilitate and participate in the MRS capacity building workshop.

Deadline of submission and contact information

The deadline for the submission is 21 March 2024.

It should be submitted by email to rskills@ilo.org.