**The follows are answers of the questions:**

1. Are you aware of any restrictions for persons with visual disabilities to attend to regular schools? Please detail whether they exist in laws or policy, or if they exist only as a result of social barriers.

**Yes, most of students with visual disabilities stop going to school when they finish grade 9 because they know well that even they get higher education, they will not be employed to work in any organizations. Most of the blind and visually impaired (BVI) eventually engage themselves to work on traditional massage for their income generation. Consequently only few of them graduated at the high school level and presently the National University has no idea to provide any upper education for these secondary school graduates.**

2. Does your country have or is currently developing a program or plan to promote inclusion of children with visual disabilities in regular schools and discourage education in special schools or social institutions? If so, were persons with visual disabilities and their representative organizations, and other disability related organizations directly involved in the design and application of said program or plan? Please, briefly describe the program (no more than 500 words).

**Yes, Lao Association of the Blind (LAB) contributed a lot of inputs to work with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) and finally the Government approved the National Policy on Inclusive Education as well as the National Strategy and Action Plan on Inclusive Education 2011-2015.**

**The national policy and strategy focus on eradication of illiteracy amongst the educationally disadvantaged groups of such as girls, women, ethnic groups, people with disabilities and people with socio-economic vulnerabilities. The national policy and strategy also emphasize on the improvement of the quality and relevance of educational system at all levels and creating enabling environments that facilitate effective learning for all and promotion of the involvement of learners, families, schools, communities and society as a whole in education.**

**The expected results are supporting all Lao people, regardless of their ethnicity, race, language, religion, sex, age, ability or socio-economic status to receive universal quality education, equally and appropriate to individual capacities in accordance with educational aspects to have knowledge, capacity and necessary skills to support themselves and their families.**

**Though the policy and strategy were issued but the execution of the policy and action plan still need more time to materialize as MOES is working hard on creating its manpower to deal with the inclusive education at all levels.**

**In order to facilitate the materialization of the policy and action plan mentioned; recently LAB supported 9 decision makers of educational institutes under MOES with study tours in Thailand so as to learn some actual know-how from educational institutes providing inclusive education for students with visual disabilities. Erelong LAB will summon a meeting with these people on the purpose to set up a plan to create a number of special teachers for assisting BVI students at all levels. The plan will consist of providing necessary training courses to support teachers with some skills for helping BVI students to get access to knowledge easier.**

3. Is the Ministry of Education the only ministry in charge of education or other ministries (e.g. Health and Social Affairs) are involved when it comes to persons with visual disabilities? Please describe how other ministries get involved and specify if their involvement results on the denial of access to mainstream schools. (no more than 250 words).

**No, the Ministry of Education and Sports is not in charge of education of children with visual disabilities but the Ministry of Public Health, because initially overseas donors focused on medical treatment for people with disabilities; therefore, the first blind school was established under the National Rehabilitation Centre in 1993 and the second blind school was founded under the Ophthalmic Centre in 1995 as the both medical institutes are attached to the Ministry of Public Health.**

**The students with visual disabilities in these 2 blind schools start their education for 2-3 years with Lao Braille and all are sent to get inclusive education at primary schools and secondary schools nearby. Lacking of updated devices to support the inclusive education such as notebook, synthetic voice software, etc. students with visual impairments cannot get access to full teaching from classes that results negative quality of BVI students’ knowledge perception.**

**In order to ease learning process of BVI students in the future, LAB with supports from Mr. David Holladay, the team leader and his dynamic Duxbury team improved Lao Duxbury Program for translating Lao text into Lao Braille to publish Braille books with embossers. In the beginning of September 2013, with assistance of the Christian Foundation for the Blind in Thailand; 2 technicians will fix all 5 embossers in Vientiane Capital used by 2 blind schools, 1 secondary school and LAB’s Infocentre.**

4. Does your country have effective mechanisms to successfully claim in case of rejection of students with visual disabilities from mainstream schools? if so, do those Mechanisms guarantee for reasonable accommodation when services or support needed are not in place? Please provide information on good practices.

**At only 2 blind schools in Vientiane Capital as mentioned above; besides they provide special education for young kids, they also maintain accommodation for BVI children from provinces to ensure that the children will be sent to get inclusive education at local primary and secondary schools near these 2 blind schools.**

5. Are you aware if your country is involved in international cooperation programmes related to the promotion and implementation of inclusive education systems? If so, is your organization involved in any such programme?

**At this moment, LAB and MOES will be representatives of Laos to become the 6th members of ICEVI Program introduced by Mr. Larry Campbell. The strategic and action plan will be made for developing the inclusively educational system in Laos.**

6. Is there any additional information you wish to provide? **No.**