

Australian Volunteers Program in Laos

In 2020-21 the Australian Volunteers Program in Laos supported five volunteers and four partner organisations, with a focus on developing inclusive education practices in the remote northern regions of Laos.

'The volunteer's work contributed to the process of updating the Communicable Disease Law. They also made some key connections with the legislation and policy team at the WHO's Western Pacific Regional Office.'

– Partner organisation spokesperson

In 2020-21 in Laos, the program supported:

4
partner organisations

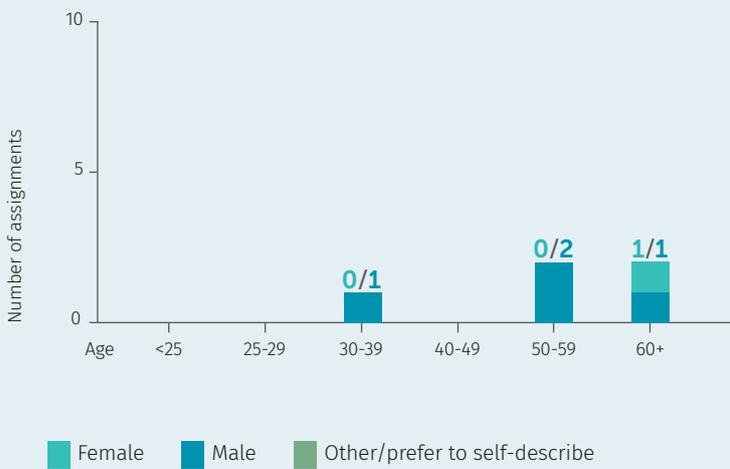
1
partner organisation with an Impact Grant

5
volunteers

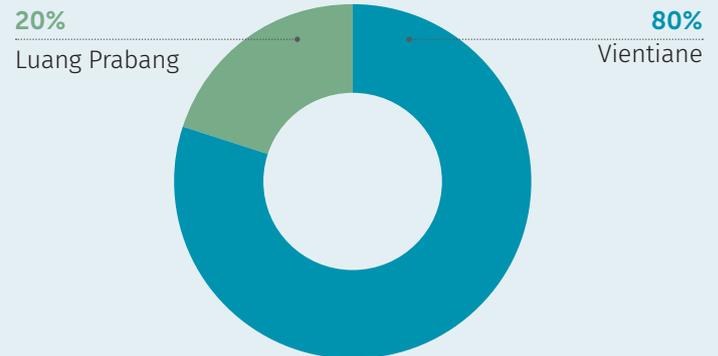
5
remote assignments

Gender and age of volunteers

Women 20% Men 80%



Location of assignments



Most common types of partner organisations



Most common professions of volunteers



In 2020-21, in accordance with Australia's COVID-19 Development Response Plan, the Australian Volunteers Program supported partner organisations in the government sector to implement their response and recovery efforts, aligned with Laos' local and national priorities.

Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, the program supported five remote volunteer assignments with four partner organisations. Three of the partner organisations were located in Vientiane and one partner organisation is in Luang Prabang, with most partner organisations working in health, education, energy policy or generation, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and industry, mining, and construction.

The program established an important new strategic partnership with the Lao Ministry of Health Centre for Disease Control (CDC), and supported the development of a remote volunteer assignment that focused on providing technical support to the Lao Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The program continued to support long-term partners such as the Ministry of Mines and Energy and Souphanouvong University, and reengaged with long-term partner, the Living Aquatic Resources Research Centre.

Most partner organisations in Laos embraced remote volunteering, which has provided opportunities for collaboration on humanitarian and development outcomes.

The Souphanouvong University's Faculty of Education received a small grant from the Australian Volunteers Program Impact Fund to provide motivational teacher training that empowers student teachers to be inclusive education role models in the remote northern regions of Laos.

The program celebrated and promoted international volunteering in Laos by sharing regular social media content with DFAT Post, including targeted content for International Volunteer Day.



Australian volunteer, Elyse Moore is discussing media and communications strategy with director, Ms (Dr.) Palaybanh Keonakhone. She is working with the Vientiane Youth Centre as a Technical Support and Media Development Officer. Her role is to assist in building the Centre's strategic communication capacity to develop and sustain societal behaviour change towards sexual and reproductive health among Lao women and youth. Photo: Teagan Glenane.

Spotlight on The Souphanouvong University

Souphanouvong University is one of the three largest universities in Laos. Its mission is to build the University as an education centre of excellence. In particular, the University wants to support staff and students to expand their international networks by improving their English language skills and assist teachers in enhancing the overall quality of their classes.

Between 2018 and 2021, three Australian volunteers from the Australian Volunteers Program supported the University. Bill Gilpin and Catherine Castan volunteered as English teachers; Dr Nancy Lane volunteered remotely as an Academic Research Mentor.

Catherine focused on improving staff and students' English-speaking skills and assisted them with the development of different English language and teaching techniques tailored to the needs of students. Bill taught English language classes, supported teachers to prepare for International English Language Testing System exams, and mentored staff to workshop different ways to improve learning outcomes.

In 2021, Nancy volunteered remotely providing training, mentoring and editorial support for researchers to produce academic articles. She also provided guidance on developing scholarship applications, assisted with a literature review of English and Lao resources to develop student training modules, and helped the University to apply for the Australian Volunteers Program Impact Fund. The funding will support Souphanouvong University Faculty of Education to develop teacher training that is more socially inclusive. This will help increase student teachers' awareness about the needs of children living with disability and empower them to provide successful learning opportunities for all students.

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