



# Australian Volunteers Program Laos

**Australian volunteers have supported partner organisations in Laos to achieve their development goals since 1986. The Australian Government's Australian Volunteers Program continues this rich history.**

The Australian Volunteers Program develops long-term, mutually respectful partnerships with organisations across the Pacific, Asia, and Africa to contribute to locally-led change and the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The program aims to:

- Support partner organisations to progress their development objectives
- Increase program participants' cultural awareness and build stronger connections across countries
- Increase key stakeholders' appreciation of the value of volunteering



## Our work in Laos

Australian volunteer Elyse Moore discussing a media and communications strategy with Director, Ms Palaybanh Keonakhone, at the Vientiane Women and Youth Centre for Health and Development. Photo: Teagan Glenane

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Mr Bouasay, Head of the Library at the University of Health Sciences in Vientiane, and Australian volunteer Librarian Mentor Nancy Lane. Photo: Teagan Glenane

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Dr. Phoudalay Lathvilayvong and Australian volunteer Soil Agronomist Stephen Lang check the soil quality on a farm in the province of Savannakhet. Photo: Teagan Glenane

Our team in Laos works closely with our partners to understand their priorities and objectives. Together with our partners, we identify how the program can support them and how that support might change over time.

The program provides support across a range of development priorities in Laos, including:

- Education
- Human resource development
- Health
- Trade
- Natural resource management
- Wildlife conservation

In Laos, we partner with organisations working in a broad range of sectors, including agriculture development, education and health. Program partners are mainly government or academic institutions.

Most volunteer assignments are with partners in Vientiane, with some in Luang Prabang. The program also supports partners in more remote locations, such as northern Laos, through remote volunteer assignments.

The program facilitates opportunities for partners to connect with each other, exchange knowledge and share experiences. For example, partners participate in online and face-to-face workshops that focus on specific sectors or topics such as disability inclusion, gender equality and safeguarding.

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*With the support of Australian volunteers, Souphanouvong University's Faculty of Education has improved the English language skills of its teachers, enhancing the overall quality of their classes. Staff have also improved their research capacity, secured scholarships and published English journal articles."*

*Mr Thavone Panmanivong, International Relations Office - Souphanouvong University*



Since 2018  
the program  
in Laos has  
supported

**30+**  
partner  
organisations

**60+**  
Australian  
volunteers

**65+**  
in-country  
volunteer  
assignments

**15+**  
remote  
volunteer  
assignments

**4**  
small  
grants



## Small grants

Through the Impact Fund, we provide small grants of up to AUD\$10,000 to our partners to support their vital work and progress towards achieving their development objectives.

The Impact Fund has supported over 200 partners to deliver hundreds of projects. Projects have been across a range of thematic areas including gender equality, disability and social inclusion, climate action, organisational strengthening, and COVID-19 response and recovery.

## Australian organisations

We also partner with Australian organisations who share our commitment to locally-led change. We support existing partnerships between overseas partners and Australian organisations and identify opportunities for new partnerships. Australian partners contribute to skills and knowledge exchange and support volunteer recruitment.

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Australian volunteer Jack Dorries and researchers from the Faculty of Forestry at the Laos University: Vansy Phengthajaim, Khorethong Soukphaxay and Phouluang Chaunlumouny. Photo: Teagan Glenane

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"I feel privileged to be part of the Australian Volunteers Program in supporting my government partner organisations to achieve our development goals. This is exceptional because the program's locally-led approach means we work towards the country's development goals as the government sees appropriate, but we collaborate in a cross-cultural context on this together."

Phetdavanh Sounthonnang, Country Program Manager – Australian Volunteers Program, Laos

## About our volunteers

Our program is all about people – volunteers, partners and the communities in which they live and work.

We value volunteers who are open to mutual learning and skills exchange, and who are committed to contributing to partners' priorities in support of locally-led change.

We are committed to ensuring that international volunteering is inclusive and accessible to Australians from a range of backgrounds, with diverse perspectives, identities and abilities. We recognise the

unique strengths and skills that people with diverse backgrounds and experiences offer, and we work with volunteers to remove barriers they may face.

Each volunteer assignment requires specific skills and experience. Australian volunteers work in a broad range of sectors including community and social development, health, science, engineering and architecture, skilled trades, education, disaster and emergency management, gender equality and child protection.

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FaTong Yang and Australian volunteer Veterinarian Katherine Adriaanse working together at Free the Bears, outside of Luang Prabang Province. Photo: Teagan Glenane

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Naly Yoysaykham, Aly Luangsamath, Mimeo Chanthalongsu and Souksan Southivong at the Vientiane Women and Youth Centre for Health and Development working on educational resources. Photo: Teagan Glenane



### In-country

International volunteering is an incredible experience. It's an opportunity for volunteers and partners to share their skills and culture, while making a tangible difference to communities.



### Remote

Through remote volunteering Australians are supporting organisations overseas to achieve their development goals anywhere, anytime.



### Hybrid

By combining remote and in-country phases, hybrid volunteering offers our partners and volunteers flexibility while still allowing for genuine connections and meaningful skill sharing.

# Spotlight on VWYCHD

The Vientiane Women and Youth Center for Health and Development (VWYCHD), a partner of the Australian Volunteers Program for over a decade, provides comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services to young men and women in Laos.

The Center is the only organisation in Laos providing services of this kind to young people, meaning their services are vital.

One of the organisation's key goals is to reduce the rate of teenage pregnancy and reduce the rates of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS among young people in Laos. The Center has several operational streams – a fully equipped clinic and mobile clinic, a counselling hotline and an outreach program and daily talk-back radio shows, all of which are supported by a social media strategy.

Australian volunteer Kim White completed two remote volunteering assignments and one in-country assignment with VWYCHD working as an English Language Proficiency Trainer. With Kim's support, staff felt more confident when communicating in English, including in international conferences and meetings. Kim also helped prepare a key journal article for publication and reviewed funding proposals and VWYCHD's social media posts. Kim also supported the Center in applying for an Impact Fund grant from the Australian Volunteers Program, which they were successfully awarded.

Thanks to staff's improved capability in English, VWYCHD's services are now more accessible to English-speaking clients. This has led to the organisation attracting a wider range of stakeholders, including local partners and international organisations. Key highlights include the Center receiving more funding from the United Nations Population Fund.

Staff valued Kim's support and appreciated her expertise and collaborative approach and Kim found all three of her assignments highly rewarding.



## The Australian Volunteers Program is guided by principles that ensure we



Support locally-led change



Grow strong relationships and partnerships



Value volunteering



Evolve good practice and embrace innovation



Enhance diversity and inclusion



Ensure accountability and value learning

**Australian**  
Volunteers

**Australian**  
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