Life in all its fullness for every child

World Vision Laos
Lao PDR

Lao PDR is a landlocked country with a diverse population of almost seven million people, including more than 49 official ethnic groups and four major languages. Economic activities include rice cultivation, mining of tin, copper, and silver, and agricultural and tourism-related industries. Lao PDR has made great progress economically with GDP growing at approximately 5.5% per year for the past 20 years. However, Lao PDR continues to be one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world.

Lao children are among the most malnourished in the region and starting is a serious issue. Many rural families rely on rice as their main source of food and income. If they do not grow enough then they will not have enough to eat during the year and many struggle to be able to afford to educate their children beyond primary school. This leaves children few options for the future and makes them vulnerable to being trafficked to neighboring countries.

World Vision is working to address these issues through our health, livelihoods, education, and child protection programming.

World Vision Laos focus areas

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World Vision Laos is focused on improving the lives of vulnerable children by bringing lasting changes to their communities. We do this by working with communities to find long term solutions to poverty. This includes addressing malnutrition, improving education opportunities, assisting parents and caregivers to increase family income and ensuring children are protected, know their rights and can participate in the decisions that affect them.

World Vision is currently working in five provinces in Lao PDR - see map for locations of our programmes.

Improving education is a major focus of World Vision's work in Laos PDR, to enable children and youth to reach their potential and transform their lives, their communities and their country.
World Vision values

We are Christian

We value people

We are committed to the poor

We are stewards

We are partners

We are responsive

World Vision is an international Christian development, relief and advocacy organization working to improve the well-being of children. World Vision works in nearly 100 countries globally and is one of the largest development organizations in the world with around 40,000 employees. Inspired by our Christian values, we are dedicated to working with the world’s most vulnerable communities and serve all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

World Vision first started working in Lao PDR in 1968. Our initial programming focused on building and repairing infrastructure including schools, hospitals, roads and water systems as well as providing emergency relief supplies. We then expanded our work to include health and education programmes. World Vision is now one of the largest development organisations in Lao PDR.
Education

Elderly care is important and World Vision has helped the elderly by providing medical care and creating support networks. This has improved the quality of life for the elderly.

Examples of how World Vision is helping the Lao government achieve the Millennium Development Goals

Maternal health

MDG 6 aims to reduce maternal mortality rates and World Vision is working with the Lao government to achieve this. World Vision is supporting communities to ensure women have healthy and safe pregnancies by providing them with regular check-ups, advice on nutrition and postnatal care.
Child sponsorship – creating connections to bring about lasting change for children

World Vision’s work is largely funded through our child sponsorship programme which allows people in more developed countries to help children who live in poverty. Child sponsors make monthly contributions that provide World Vision with the funding we need to deliver programmes that take a long term view of community development. Our programmes typically run for 10 – 15 years and involve a broad range of activities that have a lasting effect on children’s lives.

The programme also enables communication between countries as the child sponsor receives regular updates from their sponsored child. Sponsored children act as ambassadors for their community and ensure information is provided to the donor on how their money has been invested and the impact it is having on the community.
Improving maternal and child health

World Vision believes that every child deserves a good start in life and to achieve this we must ensure both the mother and baby are healthy.

Child malnutrition levels continue to be among the highest in Asia and as a result, children continue to die from preventable illnesses such as diarrhea and malaria. World Vision is working to improve child nutrition by promoting breastfeeding and good hygiene and increasing access to clean water and sanitation. We run intervention programmes that aim to rehabilitate malnourished children and to teach communities about proper nutrition.

World Vision works with communities and government counterparts to improve access to healthcare. We support immunisation programmes and train local volunteers to be village health workers who help their community to manage childhood illness and communicable disease. We also help pregnant women access basic healthcare and provide them with advice about good nutrition during pregnancy.

Cun was pregnant with her first child when World Vision started running mother and child health courses in her village. She had left school early and was married by the age of 15. Cun knew very little about what happens during pregnancy. From the course Cun learnt about pre and postnatal care and how to take care of a baby. She was also taught about family planning and how to access available health services in her district. She has put her knowledge to good use and her daughter is a very healthy and happy six-month-old baby. Cun is now helping World Vision to promote the benefits of breastfeeding to other new mothers in her village. Her advice is welcomed as many of them want their baby to be as healthy as Cun's.
Ensuring children are well educated

Education is central to poverty eradication. It was identified as a key focus area in the Lao Government’s National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy. Education is not only a powerful tool in providing improved job and income earning opportunities, it also improves health and social wellbeing.

Keeping children in school is a major challenge in Lao PDR. Often parents cannot afford to send their children to secondary school or do not see the value of ongoing education. Many Lao children leave school after completing primary school. World Vision is committed to addressing this and is working closely with communities and governments to find ways to help children stay in school. This includes helping parents increase their income and promoting the value of education to communities. World Vision is also committed to improving the quality of education received by Lao children. We provide teacher training and classroom equipment, distribute books and improve school buildings.

Many children in Lao PDR have to drop out of school as their families cannot afford for them to continue with their education. This happened to Pouneng but after attending a meeting organised by World Vision about the importance of education, his father agreed to let him return to school. His father received a job so that he could secure extra income to cover the costs. World Vision gave Pouneng a school bag, books and a new uniform. Pouneng is relieved to be back at school and hopes one day to become a teacher.
Strengthening income generation

Subsistence farming remains the main source of income for families in poor areas of Laos. Most families grow rice but often do not have any surplus to sell for much needed income. World Vision is working with communities to improve yields of existing crops and to also diversify the crops being grown. We are supporting communities to access market so they can sell their surplus harvests.

World Vision also provides livestock such as goats, pigs, cows and chickens to communities and teaches locals how to breed and raise these animals. Many of the animals are provided via an animal bank system where a breeding pair of animals is given to a family and then returned after the animals have produced offspring. The breeding pair is then provided to another family. In addition, World Vision funds veterinary services and provides animal vaccinations.

In conjunction with the government, World Vision has improved local infrastructure including building roads and bridges and providing facilities that allow communities to process their produce into forms that do not spoil quickly.

Koung has five children and worried that they were not getting enough to eat. He was not able to grow enough rice on his small plot of land to feed his family or generate much needed income. To help him improve his situation, Koung received goats from World Vision Laos’ animal bank. Koung was taught how to breed the goats and tend to the animals. Once the offspring are old enough he will return the adult goats to the bank and they will be pass on to another family. Koung will use the extra income to feed his family and also to save up to build a better house.
CHANDHY was trafficked to Thailand at age 13. As the oldest in her family, she felt a responsibility to earn money for her parents and four siblings. She was taken to Thailand where she worked long hours as an unpaid domestic maid. Her employers lied about her salary being paid directly to her family. When she found out, she escaped and was helped to return to Laos by World Vision and the Lao government. Chandhy is now married with a child and World Vision helped her to set up a small business.

World Vision’s mission is to improve the lives of children and keeping children safe lies at the heart of this. Impoverished children in Laos PDR are at risk of being trafficked to neighbouring countries to work in inhumane conditions.

World Vision’s anti human trafficking programme works across a number of countries in the region to ensure there is a coordinated approach to tackling the issue. The programme focuses on reducing the factors that contribute to human trafficking, including working with at-risk communities to raise awareness about the dangers of unsafe migration and trafficking. The programme also works with victims of trafficking to help them to return to their country and rebuild their lives there. Underpinning both of these streams of work are our efforts to advocate for policy changes that will stop trafficking while providing more support to victims.

In addition to this work, we also invest in promoting child rights to communities and government counterparts and encourage the participation of children in decision-making about their community’s future.

Protecting vulnerable