

CRS in Lao PDR Bi-Annual Update

APRIL 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2016

Summary

CRS began working in Lao PDR in 2007, primarily in the education sector. Since then, we have worked to solidify our relationship with the Government of Lao PDR through projects to improve the quality and access to education for all children.

CRS has been a leader in disability assistance for the victims of unexploded ordnance (UXO). Operating in Savannakhet and Khammouane provinces, CRS reaches approximately 80,000 direct beneficiaries. In July 2016, CRS launched its 2016-2021 country program strategy.

CRS' strategy in Lao PDR for the next 5 years will continue to enhance our position as a leader in the education and UXO sectors as well as leverage our global experience in agriculture and health to let pilot new projects to better serve the people of Lao PDR.

CRS is also working with local non-profit associations (NPAs) in Lao PDR to strengthen their programming capacity and management.

In September 2016, on his historic trip to Lao PDR, US President Barack Obama announced an investment of US\$27 million through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) into Lao PDR's education sector, which will enable the CRS school feeding program in Savannakhet to be extended for a further 5 years.

80,000

direct beneficiaries are reached through by CRS' Lao PDR country program



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We at CRS are honored to serve the people of Lao PDR and look forward to working with all of our partners in the months and years to come.

LEARNING AND ENGAGING ALL IN PRIMARY SCHOOL (LEAPS)



2012-2016

Supported by a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture



Project summary

Learning and Engaging All in Primary School is a project funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). LEAPS' goal is to improve food security, reduce the incidence of hunger, and improve literacy and primary education in 6 districts in Savannakhet province. Working closely with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), the University of Oregon, and Room to Read, LEAPS has reached more than 36,000 students in 308 schools in the 6 districts. LEAPS activities include serving school meals, promoting food safety and hygiene, providing grants to village education development committees (VEDCs) for priority school infrastructure projects, establishing school libraries, training teachers on classroom management strategies and literacy instruction, and building support for inclusive education.



Key achievements from April to September 2016

1. An Early Grade Reading Assessment showed that by the end of Grade 2, students enrolled in schools participating in the full LEAPS program improved sixfold in oral reading fluency (24 words per minute vs. 4) and fivefold in reading comprehension (2.1 questions answered correctly out of 5 vs. 0.4) compared to children from schools not benefiting from any LEAPS intervention.
2. LEAPS and Vice Governor of Savannakhet, Mr. Khamphoun Touphaithoun, hosted a USDA delegation visiting three villages to gain first-hand knowledge of the successes and challenges of the LEAPS project.
3. With the MoES, CRS and the University of Oregon published an inclusive education distance learning website including eight online modules in English and Lao. <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/iecollaborativelaos/>
4. Some 30 high-performing teachers and principals were recognized with an award and given the opportunity for professional development, piloting the inclusive education online modules created for LEAPS by the University of Oregon in collaboration with the MoES.
5. During the school break, LEAPS field staff participated in refresher trainings, including a cooking competition to make the most flavorful dish from USDA-provided commodities and limited additional ingredients; recipes were then presented on picture-based recipe cards to distribute to community cooks.



Main indicators	Period achievement	Overall achievement	Project target
1. Total number of schools receiving assistance	308	335	320
2. Number of school-age children receiving daily school meals	34,561	34,561	36,660
3. Number of daily school meals provided to students	1,309,553	12,282,724	20,195,826
4. Number of metric tons of food assistance provided to students	213.40	2,258.88	3,344
5. Number of take-home rations provided to teachers/cooks/storekeepers	5,337	53,064	58,329

12.28 million

daily school meals have been served to students since the beginning of the project



SIGHT, SOUND AND MOBILITY: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN LEAPS

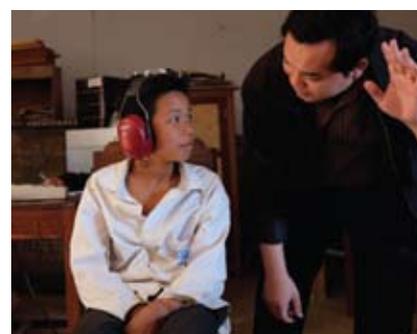
March 10, 2014 – June 30, 2016

Project summary

The Sight, Sound, and Mobility project, in collaboration with the USDA-funded Food for Education (FFE) project, Learning and Engaging All in Primary School, works in 40 primary schools and 6 incomplete primary schools in the Atsaphone district. Through this project, CRS works to identify children between the ages of 3 and 15 who have visual, hearing, and physical impairments, in order to provide them with appropriate medical support and assistive devices (ADs). The goal is that this support will promote the student's human dignity, and he or she will participate more fully in home, school, and community life. The project links children with complex and/or multiple disabilities to services at the district, provincial and/or national levels as well as with other international nongovernmental organizations to receive education and health care, including support for cleft lip and palate surgeries, cleaning of hard ear wax, and cataract surgery.

Key achievements from April to September 2016

1. As the result of cleft lip and palate surgeries, two children are now attending school after previously choosing not to go to school.
2. Three children who received cataract surgery report being able to see and learn better at school.
3. Twenty-three children and adults report that their assistive devices have helped them with learning and participating in school, working in the field and the house, and they are better able to participate in community activities.
4. Government partners at the central, provincial, and district levels report that CRS has a strong working partnership with them and that they have increased their knowledge, skills and resources about disabilities.
5. CRS conducted community-awareness sessions about hygiene promotion, inclusive education, health care, and major types of disabilities and how to treat them.



Hearing screening



Attending class after cleft palate surgery



Main indicators	Period achievement	Overall achievement	Project target
1. Number of children who received ADs	23	66	60
2. Number of children who had cleft lip and palate surgery, cataract surgery or cleaning of hard ear wax	15	30	45
3. Number of teachers, principals and village chiefs who received basic screening training	0	271	247
4. Number of children, in and out of school, who received basic screening	0	7,252	7,252
5. Number of trainings provided for 16 government staff	0	5	5
6. Number of pieces of project equipment provided to medical teams.	0	2	1

7,252

children in and out of school
received basic disabilities screening

Project summary

In May 2015, CRS and World Education signed an agreement for Inclusive Communities (IC), a two-year disability awareness and assistance award. Its goal is to improve access to quality health services, create more inclusive communities and provide economic opportunities for people with disabilities (PWD) and their families, while specifically addressing and targeting the needs of women and girls and promoting their full integration into society within Xebangfai and Xaibouathong districts in Khammouane province. Working closely with the Ministry of Education and Sports, the IC project is reaching over 55,000 beneficiaries in the two districts through three main interventions: medical screenings and services, community-based rehabilitation and inclusive education.

Key achievements from January to September 2016

200 Principals and teachers were trained on Individual Education Plans (IEP) for children with disabilities, which focused on teaching methods to better include disabled students through modifying and adapting classroom activities and producing and using teaching aids made from local materials to support the full participation and effective learning of all students.

35 Villages were provided with US\$200 cash grants to introduce or upgrade infrastructure in the school to support a more inclusive environment for children with disabilities.

24 Doctors and nurses were trained in how to conduct community-based rehabilitation (CBR) training, which helped communities to work together to support people with disabilities, so everyone is included and can be active in daily life.

6,178 Community members participated in awareness-raising sessions on disability, conducted by VEDCs as a result of CBR training, to decrease the stigma that PWDs face in their communities.

2,018 People identified with suspected impairment through community mapping.



Training in medical screening for vision



Community mapping



Training in medical screening for hearing

Main indicators	Period achievement	Overall achievement	Project target
1. Number of VEDCs and PWDs' families that received community-based rehabilitation training	269	269	269
2. Number of teachers and principals who have learned IE policy and adaptive teaching methods	200	200	200
3. Number of people screened for suspected impairment	55,711	55,711	54,000
4. Number of doctors and nurses trained in screening techniques for vision, hearing and physical impairment.	20	20	20

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS

A story from the field

Phetsamay Inthavongsa has been committed to primary education in Lao PDR since 1999 when she started her teaching career. In 2009, she was made principal of three schools, making her one of a relatively small number of women to reach this position. Her almost 400 students benefit from the LEAPS school feeding project in Xepon district. Since the start of the school meals program, she has seen an increase in enrollment and a decrease in the number of dropouts. She notes that children attend class regularly and are more attentive.

Throughout her career, she has had the opportunity to attend various trainings, but had never attended a training on inclusive education management (IEM). She was selected to travel to the University of Oregon for additional IE training, through the USDA-funded FFE project. She said that before attending the IE trainings she did not believe that children with disabilities (CWD) could learn; she thought they would create barriers for the other children and delay teaching and learning in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers had no idea how to teach children with special needs or disabilities.

“After I attended the training, I realized there were many ways to teach or assist CWD to learn. For instance, [if the child cannot speak], we know how to use a variety of pictures to communicate with CWD. I now see that it’s possible,” she said.

Since attending LEAPS trainings, Ms. Phetsamay has become an active, motivated IE trainer on the Xepon team. “I have introduced the teachers [in the three schools under my supervision] to teaching methodologies [such as] child-centered teaching methods (CCTM), pictures for communication, and giving a warm welcome to children [with disabilities] and their families, and have emphasized to teachers that they need to plan their lessons with visual aids in order to accommodate the learners.”

She also explained that she now does some things differently, “We include CWD to learn with the other children in an inclusive classroom ... we adjust the teaching techniques based on the learner and use visual aids [we can make from local items] in our daily life ... we use CCTM, like having students work in groups or pairs, and we encourage more practicing and competition.”

Of course challenges remain. “The challenge for our school is insufficient teaching-learning materials and visual aids. [Even if] the teacher produces some from recycled materials, it’s still insufficient and does not have much variety.”

She also notes that it is not enough to raise awareness about IE and CWD among teachers—communities must also understand the rights of CWD and be supportive of IE.



Ms. Phetsamay works with teachers to create homemade visual aids with locally available materials, such as bottle caps.

.....
After I attended the training, I realized there were many ways to teach or assist children with disabilities to learn. I now see that it’s possible.
.....

Lao PDR Country Program Strategy 2016-2021

GOAL: LAO PDR'S MOST VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES HAVE ENHANCED RESILIENCE



EDUCATION

Primary school age children have increased access to improved basic education.

IR1: Boys and girls in remote and poor communities have improved access to primary schools.

IR2: Boys and girls in primary school access quality literacy tools and improved literacy instruction.

IR3: Quality inclusive education structure and systems are in place at basic education level.



UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE

Vulnerable communities are safer from UXO and have reduced the long-term effects of UXO.

IR 1: Vulnerable communities apply safe behavior practices in UXO-contaminated areas.

IR 2: UXO survivors access life-saving care, support, and recovery services.



AGRICULTURE

Vulnerable households have improved food security throughout the year.

IR 1: Households adopt efficient production practices.

IR 2: Households link products to markets.



HEALTH/ NUTRITION

Vulnerable and marginalized groups in target provinces have improved health.

IR 1: Adults and children with disabilities access rehabilitation and medical services.

IR2: Vulnerable households and children adopt safe WASH behaviors.

IR3: Vulnerable households and children are utilizing more nutritious food.

CROSS CUTTING: INCLUSION OF GENDER, ETHNICITY AND DISABILITY IN ALL INTERVENTIONS.

VISION: BY SUPPORTING BASIC SERVICE DELIVERY FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE AND MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, ALL CITIZENS OF LAO PDR HAVE IMPROVED ACCESS TO BETTER SOCIAL SERVICES.

PARTNERSHIP

Continue to work closely with the Government of Lao PDR and relevant members of Lao civil society.

INTEGRATION

Seek opportunities to integrate between sectors, contributing to greater impact on beneficiaries.

CROSS-CUTTING

Particularly in the areas of disability, gender, MEAL, financial controls and efficiency.

OWNERSHIP

Promote greater ownership of projects by partners and communities to better sustain project outcomes.

RESEARCH

Invest in key research opportunities in coordination with international and local universities.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Strengthen the capacity of Lao staff across sectors.

CRS will prioritize communities in the food insecure and under-developed districts of Lao PDR. Priority will be given to Savannakhet and Khammouane provinces where CRS can leverage its existing reputation and relationships around its education and UXO programs. These provinces will serve as an entry point for the new sectors of agriculture / food security and health / nutrition, whose approaches can later be applied to other areas of the country.

CRS mission statement

CRS is the official international humanitarian agency of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. CRS' relief and development work is accomplished through programs of emergency response, HIV, health, agriculture, education, microfinance and peacebuilding. CRS eases suffering and provides assistance to people in need in more than 100 countries, without regard to race, religion or nationality.

CRS focuses on these key areas of service, taking a holistic approach to relief and development, with 10 fields of expertise:



Agriculture



Emergency Response and Recovery



Health



Water and Sanitation



Education



Justice and Peacebuilding



Microfinance



HIV Relief



Mobile Technology



Partnership and Capacity Strengthening

We strive for excellence in all that we do, ensuring the programs we support in these fields of expertise are community-based, participatory, equitable and results-driven.

CRS contact information

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