



Students at Keangpham Nakhouang having school lunch which provided by LEAPS. Photos by Anoutta Vongladsamee/CRS

Learning and Engaging All in Primary School III (LEAPS III)

In September 2021, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), in collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES), initiated the third phase of the Learning and Engaging All in Primary School (LEAPS) project. Building on past successes, LEAPS III continues to provide school meals, improve literacy rates, increase access to clean water, and promote healthy hygiene and dietary practices in 302 schools of Savannakhet province.

LEAPS III is expanding its impact by incorporating local and regional procurement of commodities, enhancing early childhood education programs, and launching an agriculture pilot. Designed with sustainability in mind and in support of the Prime Minister’s Decree on School Meals (August 2022), LEAPS works to gradually transition schools to the MOES-managed National School Lunch Program to ensure long-term success.



Grade 1 students at Keangpham Nakhouang. One of the target schools of LEAPS III.



QUICK FACTS

PROJECT TYPE	Food for Education and Child Nutrition
FUNDING	USDA, \$23 million
PROJECT LOCATION	Savannakhet Province, Lao PDR Districts: Atsaphone, Phalanxay, Phin, Vilabouly, Sepon, and Nong
# OF SCHOOLS	302
PROJECT PARTICIPANTS	36,619 (DIRECT) 122,063 (INDIRECT)
TIMEFRAME	2022-2026
PARTNERS	Ministry of Education and Sports Save the Children International



School meals

30,000 students

in remote and rural schools are receiving nutritious school meals.

- Daily meals include USDA-donated commodities of rice, lentils, and vegetable oil and locally and regionally sourced soymilk, chicken eggs, and powdered sacha inchi (a protein-rich edible seed grown in Laos).
- Communities contribute by preparing and cooking well-balanced meals consisting of vegetables, meat, herbs and condiments.
- CRS trains local cooks, storekeepers, and community leaders to manage school meals. Additionally, LEAPS promotes school gardens for cultivating fresh produce for school meals.



Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

services improved in
163 Schools.



Student enjoying clean water provided by LEAPS at Kalaengkang school, Savannakhet Province.

WASH impacts student learning, health, and dignity, particularly for girls. LEAPS is committed to the best WASH practices for rural and remote Lao schools, such as ensuring access to water, handwashing, and sanitation facilities.

LEAPS includes hygiene training focused on behavior change, using the Fit for School model endorsed by MOES to promote daily handwashing, toothbrushing, and regular deworming. To support the Lao Government's aspiration to be free of open defecation by 2025, CRS works with health officials to promote latrine usage through child-friendly "nudges" and health messaging materials.



Strengthening the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)



MOES, World Food Programme, and CRS are collaborating to strengthen the NSLP through policy revisions, strategic planning, budget preparations, and national, provincial, district, and community training. In LEAPS II, 46 schools in the Outhoumphone district were successfully handed over to the NSLP. In LEAPS III, handover is agreed upon and integrated into the design, with districts transitioning to the NSLP at three points during the project and continued technical support for one year after. At the community level, LEAPS provides village education development committees with small grants to develop and implement school development funds in preparation for handover.



LEAPS III Snapshot

CRS' LEAPS III project is working with USDA and MOES at the district, provincial, and national levels to improve the educational outcomes and nutrition of school-aged children in Savannakhet Province. LEAPS partnership brings together diverse expertise to achieve this common goal, including Save the Children, WFP, UNICEF, and the Ministry of Health. LEAPS III aims to serve **8.7 million meals**, provide **16,000 books**, train **546 teachers**, improve **WASH in 163 schools**, and establish early childhood education in **35 villages**. With handover integrated into our project design, we work with MOES to strengthen the National School Lunch Program. Over the five-year project, LEAPS III is reaching **over 36,000 participants with a lasting impact**.



Inclusive Education

Children from different ethnic groups in

196 Schools

are improving how to read and write the Lao language.



Students in Grade 1 at Keangpham Nakhouang are reading a story book during Lao language class to improve their reading skill.



Literacy

When LEAPS I began, fewer than 20 percent of people in eastern Savannakhet Province could read or write. Over the years since, LEAPS schools have seen significant increases in early literacy skills such as oral vocabulary, letter knowledge, word recognition, and reading proficiency. In partnership with Save the Children (SCI), LEAPS continues this path and supports teachers in improving student-centered instruction capacity, using materials aligned with the national MOES Lao language curriculum.

LEAPS establishes and upgrades reading corners stocked with age-appropriate and literacy-level books, and disability-inclusive materials. Schools are also piloting a digital library using Action Education materials. LEAPS works with cluster, district, and provincial staff to roll out Teacher Learning Circles for ongoing professional support throughout the school year.



Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Building on the success of CRS' School Readiness Camps for ages 3-6, which showed significant increases in receptive and expressive vocabulary, LEAPS is expanding ECE in 35 schools in Phalanxay and Vilabouly. Trained and equipped community facilitators lead sessions four times a week during the school year, using the Community-Based School Readiness curriculum developed by MOES and UNICEF. These sessions take place in a community space to support early childhood development and prepare students to enroll in Grade 1.