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Laos



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Country snapshot

Population:	6.8 million**
Achieved Independence:	1949
Life expectancy at birth:	64.6 years
Adult literacy rate:	72.7%
Access to improved water source:	60%
Under five mortality rate:	83 per 1000 births
Maternal mortality rate:	405 per 100,000 live births***
HIV prevalence:	0.2%****

*Source: United Nations Human Development Report 2009

**Source: CIA World Factbook 2001

***WHO 2009

****UNAIDS 2007

Program overview Laos is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in South-East Asia, with 65 per cent of the total population comprised of different ethnic groups. Although complex, there is a strong link between ethnicity and poverty, particularly in the upland areas of Laos.

Since 1993, CARE has provided a number of long-term development programs in Laos. CARE's focus is on improving livelihoods, food security and community development in remote rural areas; preventing the spread of avian influenza and other emerging infectious diseases; and supporting vulnerable women and girls.

Food and Livelihood Security

CARE works in some of the most remote and mountainous parts of Laos, which are also some of the country's poorest communities. CARE's rural development projects in Laos are working to increase and diversify agricultural production and provide villagers with alternative sources of income. CARE is working with rural communities to build irrigation systems, provide training on wetland rice cultivation, establish tea plantations, commercialise Lao wild tea, provide animal vaccination and treatment, and set up small business which produce and sell animals and produce.

CARE is also developing road networks in remote areas to improve access to markets and government services. Communities are learning new skills and building capacity through scholarships, training and study tours on livestock-raising, road maintenance, agricultural production.

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De-mining and Development

Over two million tonnes of explosives were dropped in Laos between 1964 and 1973, leaving it as one of the most contaminated unexploded ordnance (UXO) countries in the world. CARE is working with ethnic communities to reduce physical risks and constraints on earning an income associated with UXO contamination. Through identifying and supporting people to pursue alternate opportunities to earn money, CARE is helping to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life for ethnic communities.

Health

Pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria and malnutrition become life-threatening when combined with poverty. Good health allows people to work, learn, earn more, look after themselves and their families, and live full and active lives. CARE promotes health education in the remote mountainous areas of Laos to support the reduction of poverty.

CARE is working with communities to prevent disease and improve access to health services by building water supply systems, improve sanitation, distribute water-borne disease prevention kits, and support mobile clinic visits to remote villages.

Pandemic flu

CARE is working to raise awareness and reduce the risk of pandemic flu in Laos. CARE approaches pandemic flu not only as a critical public health issue, but also as a crisis that could push millions of people into extreme poverty. CARE is working with the government of Lao PDR to prevent the spread of pandemic flu by teaching people how to recognise the symptoms, how to reduce the risk of contracting the virus, and what to do in the

case of an outbreak. These initiatives encourage people to watch for and report the diseases, working with the local government to ensure pandemic preparedness plans are in place.

Emergency Response

Laos is also often affected by small scale disasters; drought, pests and floods can take communities many years to recover from. CARE provides immediate relief through material and food distribution when needed. CARE works in close partnership with the National Disaster Management Office and local authorities to prepare remote communities for disaster, and reduce their risks when disaster occurs.

Major donors

Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), Bundesministerium fuer wirtschaftliche zusammenarbeit (BMZ), Centre For Disease Control (CDC), European Commission (EC), Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), and various private and corporate donors.

CARE International members supporting current programs CARE Australia, CARE Oesterreich, CARE Deutschland & Luxembourg, CARE USA

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