

Project Summary

Water for Disadvantaged Hill Tribes, Laos



An Akha hilltribe village in Northern Laos in the area being served by the Water project.



02 8918 4109



PO Box 193, North Sydney 2059



support@jesuitmission.org.au



www.jesuitmission.org.au

Overview

Jesuit Mission is supporting the Jesuits in Laos to implement a project that brings water to the most disadvantaged communities in Northern Laos. This is a new project in 2023 with the intention to continue reaching more communities in future years.

Laos has a population of just over 7.5 million people and is ranked 103 out of 191 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI). Laos had made remarkable progress in reducing poverty over the past 25 years however, the impact of COVID-19 on the Lao economy drastically undermined this progress.

Large scale investment in mining and hydropower has failed to support job creation and there has been a gradual economic slowdown. Inflation reached 30% over the 12 months to September 2022.

Malnutrition continues to be a critical issue affecting people's physical and cognitive development, with stunting affecting over 30% of children under five. Water borne diseases impact remote and disadvantaged communities that have no easy access to clean, portable water.

The project is being implemented in Northern Laos which is a mountainous area, home to ethnic minorities such as Kh'mu, H'mong, Akha, Lu, Dao, La-med. They live in small clusters and build houses on the mountainside. The most urgent and essential need of the people is clean water.



Residents rely on dirty river water for their daily needs.

In recent years, forest trees have been further cleared affecting water run-off and absorption, and decreased availability of underground water sources. In the rainy season, there is water for use, but in the dry season when water is scarce, the community members must fetch water from the stream. They have great difficulty carrying water from the stream because their houses are built on high hills.

The communities have expressed a great need for bore water wells and a common water tank to store clean water for the whole village to use. Access to clean water will improve health and wellbeing to participate in other spheres of life such as work and schooling that impact the communities' future opportunities to break free from poverty.

What will the project achieve?

The project aims to bring new water systems and clean water to six villages in Bokeo and Vientiane provinces, with a combined population of 2,000 people.

This will be achieved in each village via the installation/drilling of two wells and pumps that will fill newly installed 5,000 litre water tanks. By installing two wells (instead of a single well), there is less risk of the pumps becoming overloaded. Having two locations also means the wells and tanks will be more easily accessible to different households across each village.

As agreed with communities, a water meter will be placed at each household to monitor usage and calculate the household's contribution to electricity and maintenance costs which will be shared by all users.

Vietnamese Jesuits working in Laos are collaborating with the local Church and the local government that has asked the Church to help their villages with access to clean water.

The table below provides details on the communities we seek to reach:

Village name (and ethnic tribe)	Location	Population	Status of water supply
Sibunhuong (Kh'mu people)	Hui-xai district, Bokeo province	57 families (305 people)	Main water source is rainwater and river water. In the dry season, the villagers have to carry water daily from the spring to use and they often buy water from other places as the spring dries up.
Donphao (La-med)	Hui-xai district, Bokeo province	77 families (338 people)	Residents mainly use rainwater and river water for daily life. In the dry season, villagers fetch water daily from the river to use. The river water is not clean, and greatly impacts health of villagers.
Bolek (La-med)	Hui-xai district, Bokeo province	40 families (200 people)	The people here mainly use rain water and river water for daily life. In the dry season, villagers fetch water daily from the river. The river water is not clean, and causes water-borne illnesses.
Sidonmi (Akha)	Tonpheung district, Bokeo province	55 families (214 people)	The people of Sidonmi mainly use rainwater in rainy season and non-potable river water in dry season.
Phonenguen (Kh'mu)	Phon-Hong district, Vientiane province	45 families (185 people)	Most residents rely on rainwater and accessing clean water is their biggest concern in daily life.
Nonsombun (Kh'mu)	Phon-Hong district, Vientiane province	120 families (768 people)	Most of the residents use rain water and spring water for daily living. The main water source is 3-4 km from the houses.

Conclusion

This project aims to reach an additional 2,000 people in Laos with easy and reliable access to clean water in their villages, providing improved health and wellbeing now and into the future.