

# SAVAN

MY UNV JOURNEY IN THIS PEACEFUL LAND - LAOS

5TH UNV-HONG KONG PROGRAMME

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LIVE  
&  
WORK  
MIND-  
FULLY

MY LIFE-LONG LESSONS IN LAOS

(SAVAN=HEAVEN IN LAO)





# IN THIS REPORT

## 01 INITIATIVES

To build sustainable habitat. To meet people. To challenge myself.

## 02 WORK

To expect the unexpected.

## 03 LIFE

Self-transformation to a better person. Learn to live independently, to give, and to set life objectives.

## 04 HIGHLIGHTS

Inspiring, beautiful, bitter and sweet.



## 01. INITIATIVES

To build sustainable habitat. To meet people. To challenge myself.

I joined the UNV programme for 3 reasons. Firstly, motivated by my passion developed during my architectural studies, I am eager to learn about ways to contribute for a better and more sustainable environment. The 6-month volunteer assignment in UN-HABITAT Laos provided me precious hands-on experience in learning about the global issues and practical solutions. It benefits me as I pursue architectural career that provides social contributions.

Secondly, apart from gaining exposure to global issues, I was looking forward to the cultural exchange and new friendships with local people, colleagues and other participants of the program. The satisfaction from service and

teamwork, and the excitement from encountering new environment have driven my keen interest in international volunteering activities. During the 6 months in Laos, I had the opportunities to work with international colleagues, and immerse in local culture, both inside and outside work.

Thirdly, as a fresh graduate, I was looking for a room, to explore my interests and career possibilities. The programme broadened my mind about possible ways to develop career and life goals, by the working experience in United Nations, the cultural exchange with people, and by challenging myself to work and live independently in a foreign place.

## 02. WORK

To expect the unexpected

I was working as University UNV in Programme Management and Communications in UN-HABITAT Lao PDR. During my 6-month duty, I got the chance to involve in an unexpected wide scope of projects and tasks of different projects. This was fruitful, meaningful, yet challenging. I am very thankful for all these learning opportunities, which shaped me into a more compassionate person and planted the seed of my interest in urban development and planning.

### OVERVIEW

Overall, my main responsibilities include providing administrative support, reports service, graphic design service, editorial service, and communication service. Apart from supporting UN-HABITAT in the office, I am grateful to have a field visit mission and provide rehabilitation assistance to the flooding. Here are more detailed descriptions of my major responsibilities in the following.



### REPORT SERVICE: RECONSTRUCTION OF HOUSING AFFECTED BY FLOOD IN LAO PDR

I provided report service in my assignment period. One major report product would be the Project Orientation Report of "Grant Aid Project from the Government of Japan for Recovery & Reconstruction of Housing in 2018 Flood affected areas of Lao PDR", generated in July 2019. This report aims to give a brief overview of the project progress, to present the discussion among different stakeholders, and to act as a foundation for discussing future actions. It

is composed of the project information, background, project summary, project objectives, and the main component - project orientation proceedings. The project orientation was a cross-level meeting, including representatives from the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation, Embassy of Japan, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, UNRCO, UNICEF, FAO, Oudumxai Province, Attapeu Province, and UN-HABITAT.

## **GRAPHIC DESIGN SERVICE: SMALL-SCALE WATER SUPPLY INFRASTRUCTURE IN LAO PDR**

I offered graphic design service for "Encouraging Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Investments through Private Sector Engagement in Decentralised Wastewater Treatment Systems (DEWATS) and Small-scale Water Supply Infrastructure in Lao PDR" project in August 2019. 22 location plan drawings, 10 of

Sekong and 12 of Attapeu Province, were completed for the Feasibility Study of the project. The location plans illustrate the water supply system in the villages, including information of pipe diameters, water storage and water source. The graphics had been revised repeatedly to test out the best presentation quality.



## **EDITORIAL SERVICE: CLIMATE CHANGE VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT FINAL REPORTS**

I provided editorial service for three Provincial Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment final reports, including Sekong, Attapeu, and Saravan Province, of "Enhancing the climate and disaster resilience of the most vulnerable rural and emerging urban human settlements in Lao PDR" project from September to December 2019. The information illustrated in the vulnerability assessment reports will allow provinces, districts, and settlements to plan for resilient development, including identifying low-risk areas for development

and identifying and prioritizing intervention that is resilient, sustainable and focused on the needs of vulnerable groups. Editing the three Provincial Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment final reports is satisfying. I am glad to see the knowledge products of Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments, which will enhance the national government's understanding of climate change hazards and socio-economic vulnerabilities and be processed to national government agencies for policy-making.

## **COMMUNICATION SERVICE: WORKING WITH UNCG AND SUPPORTING WORLD HABITAT DAY**

I was involved in communication work throughout my entire assignment. I worked closely with UNRCO Communication Group (UNCG) for my communications work. The major result generated of my communications service provided is about World Habitat Day 2019 in Lao PDR in October 2019. I supported the social media promotion of World Habitat Day 2019, aligned with UN Day social media campaign organized by UNCG Lao PDR from 7th to 24th Oct 2019, and a press release about World Habitat Day on United Nations Lao PDR website. Meanwhile, communication and event coordination of

World Habitat Day activities were also supported.

In Lao PDR, UN-HABITAT co-organized a series of World Habitat Day activities with the Department of Housing and Urban Planning (DHUP), of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT). There are 3 activities in total, Promotional Banners of “Frontier technologies as an innovative tool to transform waste to wealth”, Message from the Minister of Public Works and Transport on news-papers, and Forum on “Frontier technologies as an innovative tool to transform waste to wealth” with Lao Youth Union.



## **REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE: 2019 FLOOD IN SOUTHERN LAOS**

I assisted rehabilitation in the Participatory risk assessment and emergency kit distribution conducted in pivot cities of Urban Low Emission Development Strategies (Urban-LEDS II) project in September 2019. The targeted pivot cities include Kaysone Phomvihane, Songkhone, Pakse, Sanasomboun and Bachiangchaleunsouk. In response to the severe flooding in Southern Laos in late August 2019, Urban Low Emission Development Strategies (Urban-LEDS II) project team in Laos, funded by ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability (Southeast Asia Secretariat), proposed a field mission to the pivot cities of Urban-LEDS II project.

The main objectives of this mission are, to understand the situation and rehabilitation process for post-disaster policy response, and to provide material support to the affected people. As reported by the cities, the situation was undesirable. Many people were staying in temporary camps. The water and electricity supply were lacking. Road access was still difficult in some

areas, hindering the delivery of food and water to the affected people

On 16th September, we drove from Vientiane to Savannakhet and prepared the emergency kits. On 17th September, we visited Kayson Phomvihane city office, who is responsible for disaster response and preparedness to deliver food and rice to the affected people. On 18th September, we travelled to Pakse and met with the Mayor to understand the situation. After the office visit, we travelled to the affected villages to conduct participatory risk assessment, including on-site observation and meeting with village representatives. People started to move back home and resume school. The village temple was used as a temporary camp and a food donation center. Crops and agricultural machines were destroyed, follow-up support from the government in agricultural field is needed. On 19th September, we travelled back to Vientiane. Overall, this mission was successful in delivering emergency kits and enhancing understanding to the situation.



## **REFLECTION: LEARNING BY DOING, STAY PROACTIVE**

I was surprised by the wide scope of tasks that I involved. Some of the tasks were completely new to me, and I was not familiar to either urban development or the social conditions in Lao PDR. However, I was learning by doing and my capability expanded during the 6 months. I was lucky to have very kind colleagues who guided me throughout the journey. Staying proactive and do not be shy to ask for help and tasks are the keys to maximize the exposure in the workplace!

I am truly thankful to have different roles in multiple projects, from providing

administrative support, reports service, graphic design service, editorial service, and communication service. This exposure enriched my hands-on experience and knowledge in project management and communications. My interest in urban development and urban planning has grown from my experience in UN-HABITAT. I found it is very meaningful and satisfying to serve the community and to contribute to sustainable habitat with my profession. All the lessons I acquired in UN-HABITAT enhanced my personal growth and benefited my continuous pursuit as a compassionate social architect.







**AGE  
DOESN'T MATTER,  
GOALS DOES.**

**MY SUPERVISOR \\ UN-HABITAT**



## **03. LIFE**

Live boldly and mindfully, Reach Out.

### **Expand my Comfort Zone**

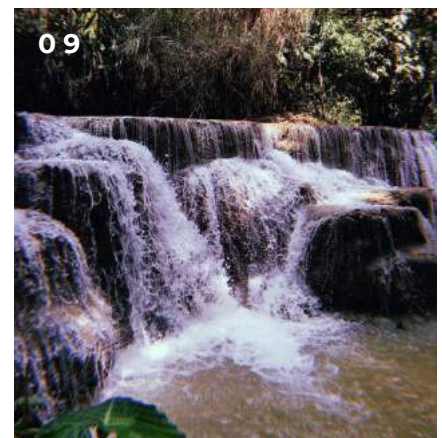
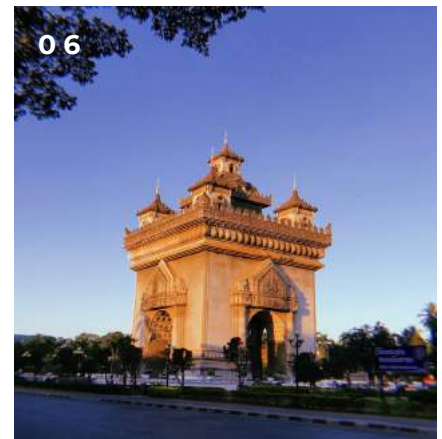
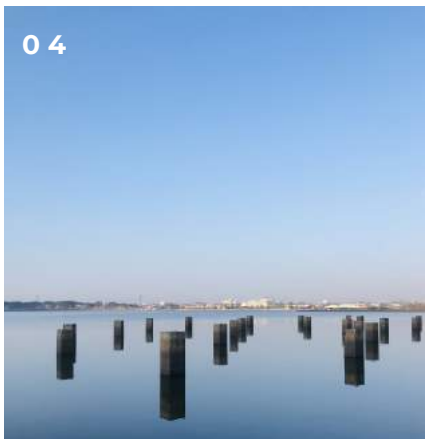
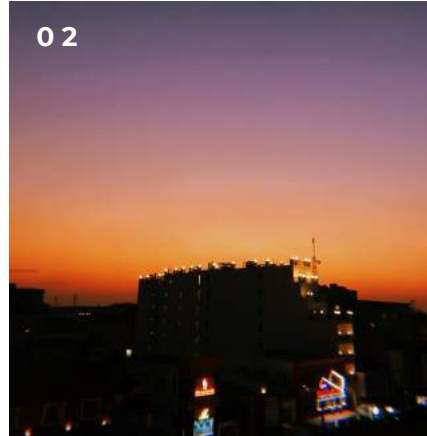
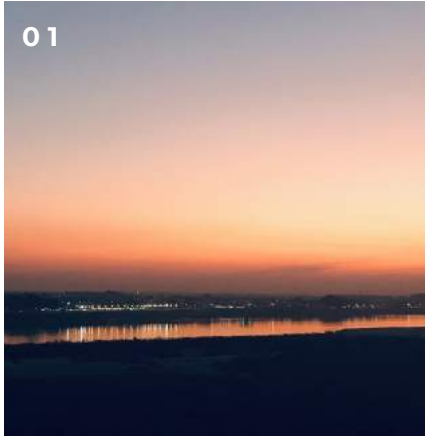
I was active to meet new people, visit new places and try new activities. I am always curious, and I want to expand my comfort zone. In the beginning, I tried a meditation class and yoga classes. I travelled around Vientiane with other UNVs from Hong Kong and my local colleagues during the weekends. We went to Buddha Park, Patuxay, Wat Si Muang Temple, Vientiane Night Market and so on. It was very exciting to explore the neighbourhood. There are nice café and restaurant in Vientiane. In later months, I usually spent my weekends in café to read or just to relax and meet friends!

### **New Hobby : Running**

I started joining the weekly interval trainings organized by Team We Run since my second Thursday in Vientiane. I was not an active sporty girl at all when I was in Hong Kong! Encouraged by my friend, I made my first step to join the training. Eventually, running becomes my stress buster and regular routine. I gained friendship, mental and physical strength through running. A running friend taught me "If you mind cannot control the body, stop running." His words remind me to live mindfully all the time. After 6-month training, I can finish a 10-km mini-marathon!

# 04. HIGHLIGHTS

Inspiring, beautiful, bitter and sweet.



01 \ SUNSET BY MEKONG RIVER, THAILAND ON THE OTHER SIDE

02 \ SUNSET IN VIENTIANE IS ALWAYS STUNNING

03 \ SWIMMING, CONQUERING MY WATER FEAR

04 \ MORNING RUN BY THAT LUANG LAKE

05 \ PEACEFUL MORNING RUN BY MEKONG IN WEEKENDS

06 \ PATUXAY, LANDMARK NEXT TO UN HOUSE

07 \ THAT LUANG FESTIVAL & FIREWORKS

08 \ WEAVING, TRADITIONAL LAO HANDICRAFT

09 \ KUANG SI WATERFALL IN LUANG PRABANG