

UNV JOURNEY IN LAO PDR

#LAOS 4320



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24. WHERE IT BEGINS



After several interviews, pre-departure documentation and training, the long-awaited journey had commenced on the first of July with 3 transit flights.

Without any presumption on how my six months journey in Vientiane would be, the sole note-to-self is becoming human yet not hero.

With various experiences working in a multilateral workplace, the only concern I had was how could I contributed as the youngest member here, with barely a few year exposures in the sustainability field.

Thanks to my colleagues who created a culturally inclusive environment, invited me to have the first lunch gathering, took funny pictures on the way, introduced the Lao noodles and comprehended my expectations on my internship.

My first few days in Vientiane were quite pleasant except for one thing, bottled water would be served on almost every occasions without available water fountains.

I used to assume that environmental education is likely to aid the reduction of the single-use plastic bottles.

Thereafter my first seminar in Lao, I started to rethink the validity of my hypothesis. Some of the educated do have the mindset to be environmentally friendly, yet with the fact barely 25% of the nation can access clean water resources, imported water is the only choice.

With such surprising data, it provoked me to modify my hypothesis to the accessibility of clean water resources and effective environmental management are the key to stimulate behavior change.

120. SEMINAR IN LAO





480. MEDITATION - EMBRACE BUDDHISM

Buddhism is the primary religion of Laos with its uniqueness comparing to the mainstream of Theravada Buddhism.

To comprehend the specialty of Buddhism in this country, my roommate and I joined a meditation workshop in Wat Sok Pa Luang, a non-touristy temple located at the suburb of the capital. There we had a fruitful chat with the monks and acquired the key of meditation.

Unexpectedly the skills had become the key for me to relieve stress in Vientiane and master free-diving after my assignment.



1464. GREENING TASK FORCE ESTABLISHMENT

I would consider this as a turning page of my assignment.

Dated back to the first day of work, I was expected to facilitate disaster risk reduction and eco-tourism projects instead of formulating an environmental education project, which I am specialized in.

Massive thanks to my supervisor, who knew me well on my strength and anticipation. He is the person who encouraged me to formulate a concept note on plastic waste reduction on my first day of work.

With several discussions during our lunch gathering and his hectic work schedule, the entire proposal had been developed for escalating the behavior change inside UN House, organizing a green market in the biggest festival in Vientiane, and implementing a green map in the capital city.

I am more than grateful that the proposal has been accepted by the resident representative in UNDP and provided me a platform to present in the All Staff Meeting. Was astounded by the inclusive environment in the organization which obeys their rationale "leaving no one behind" by allowing the youngest staff member to voice out and execute my initiations.

By the end of my assignment, I could notice some transformation in the UN House by having some recycling bins and more bicycles as means of transportation.

2520. FIRST LOCAL FESTIVAL

BOAT RACING FESTIVAL



Low population density and tranquil city and passive people were how I described Vientiane in the first three months. We were thrilled by the hospitality of local people throughout the 3-days festive weekend with all of them crowded at the riverside whilst sharing food and chatting (in Lao) with a bunch of strangers, a.k.a us as UNVs.

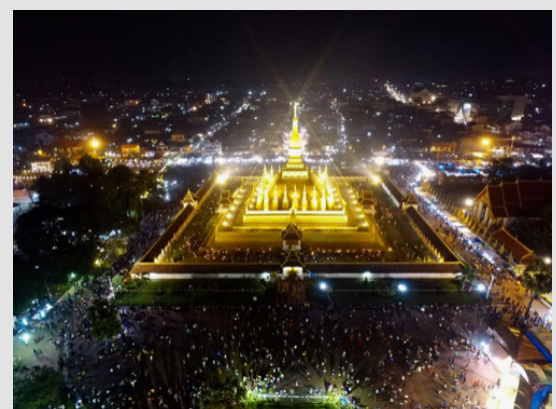
With Lao as the majority of the participants and language, this is what a local festival meant to be.

3096. THAT LUANG FESTIVAL

First Green Market in Vientiane

Inspired by the Green LNY Fair organized by EDP in Hong Kong and the prominent impression on the poor hygiene in That Luang Festival, it had become a significant project in greening task force. Our duties in a one-week worth festival consisted of setting up and monitoring recycling bins, social analysis by mapping exercise, conducting the survey and collaborating with university students for up-cycling workshops.

"Through our on-site activities, we would like to prove that university students in Lao PDR are well educated but with sufficient courage and platform to execute" Indeed I admired the passion of the local students and grateful to witness a huge transformation in the festival regarding the waste collected.





3288

SHORT GATEWAY IN VIETNAM- CATCHING UP WITH HK- UNV BUDDY

3648

COMPREHENDING VILLAGER EMPOWERMENT IN LUANG PRABANG



3888

ECOTOURISM ADVENTURE IN SAVANNAKHET

4080. LAST DAY OF WORK

I didn't expect the assignment had come to an end in a blink of an eye.

Surrounded by sincere and humble colleagues, I was able to involve in various projects and types of work, including but not limited to facilitating the formulation of Green the Blue proposals to the regional office, jotting minutes in bilingual meetings, collaborating with local university students in a local festival, analyzing in-house carbon emission and assisting operational duties. Regardless of the job duties, my weekdays constantly commenced by "sharing is caring" fruit sharing sessions and ended with "kup jai lai lai" (thank you very much) from my colleagues, until the very last day of my contract.

My initial goal to be part of the United Nations was to immerse myself in the field of environmental management and apprehend how the policymakers support the education work. Six months was hasty for me to come up with a conclusion yet it motivates me to stand firm in pursuing my goal, developed a brand new environmental education system.

"You are always welcome to visit us in the near future since you are part of us no matter what" Considering this as the most frequent convo I had on my last day, YES, I DEFINITELY WILL!



4320.

So what is 4320?



4320 hours in Lao, with some short gateway in Pattaya and Hanoi, is not sufficient for me to apprehend Lao PDR, as a developing country that revamping bit by bit. Renowned by its boredom by backpackers, Vientiane is a hidden gem where enables me to redefine the way to live life to the fullest, through deep conversations with colleagues and peers. Temples, cafe, handicraft center and, second-hand bookstore, this is literally a place for downshifting (and retirement!)

For me, volunteerism is not merely for devoting time and energy for the needy, it's all about taking responsibility and behaving as a homo sapiens (wise human).

Not having an ambitious goal at the moment (to transform the world to a greener place), but yet eschew single-use plastic, fast fashion, beef consumption whilst support the local market with certification, as simple as it can be.

Vientiane, pok gan mai (See you in a bit) !