

MEDIA RELEASE

AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY VIENTIANE



25 November 2014

Australia supports an end to violence against women

The Australian Embassy and CARE International today launched a campaign entitled “*Standing Up, Speaking Out: Lao men saying no to violence*” a program targeted at initiating cultural change to eliminate violence against women.

White Ribbon Day, or the *International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women*, is a poignant reminder of the devastating impact that violence has on the lives of women, children and communities across the globe.

Australian Ambassador John Williams said violence against women was a major problem in Australia, the Lao PDR and in every country, and a barrier to national socio-economic development.

“An estimated one in five women in Laos experience physical violence within the home, with one in three experiencing emotional violence. This is a staggering statistic that must be addressed,” he said.

The Australian Embassy will partner with CARE International to engage men and boys to become agents and activists for change.

The project will identify and support 16 men to become *Standing Up, Speaking Out (SUSO)* champions. These champions will mobilize communities to end violence against women by sharing key messages, hosting web-based interactions and holding workshops on the topic of violence against women in three different locations across Laos.

“The most common causes of violence against women are that their spouse was drunk, or had money or work-related problems. Many women seek assistance from family or authorities but are often counselled to go home and reconcile with their husband in order to maintain family harmony” Williams says.

“Changing the attitudes and behaviors, among men and women, that perpetuate, justify, excuse and fail to counter such violence, will be a vital part of any solution”.

The SUSO campaign will aim to significantly change the mindset of acceptance of violence against women, and encourage men and boys to challenge views that see violence as a part of manhood. This change in mindset is critical to achieving greater equality between women and men.

Ambassador Williams said employers everywhere had a role in promoting a zero tolerance approach to violence against women, and helping change community attitudes.

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