

MEDIA RELEASE

AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY VIENTIANE



3 June 2014

Australia helping more Lao children get to school

The Australian Ambassador today reiterated Australia's commitment to continue to improve the learning environment for Lao children at an International Children's Day event in Vientiane Capital.

On 3 June, Ambassador John Williams opened new water, sanitation and hygiene facilities at Viengkeo School in Vientiane's Saythani District, launching the latest phase in Australia's programs to improve access to quality basic education in the Lao PDR.

"Australia is proud to be supporting the Lao Government, in partnership with UNICEF, to improve water and sanitation facilities in primary schools in some of the country's most disadvantaged regions," Williams said.

"This new facility at Viengkeo Primary School will enable more children to go to school and to stay in school. It is the first of 400 such facilities to be built in primary schools in 56 districts across the country. Fifty communities will also be provided with safe drinking water."

The Australian Ambassador said the Viengkeo project was a tangible example of how better school environments were vital in enabling children to succeed at school.

"This is an important issue to highlight on International Children's Day, as is the importance of an inclusive approach to education to make sure no children are left behind."

The model water and sanitation facilities at Viengkeo School are designed to be accessible for all boys and girls, including those with disability and those from rural and remote areas.

Education on best practice in hygiene will also be provided to improve the health and wellbeing of students.

Education is the cornerstone of Australia's \$56 million annual aid program in the Lao PDR.

Australia's water, sanitation and hygiene work with UNICEF is a \$10.5million four-year partnership to address critical needs in schools.

Mr. Williams highlighted the contribution of UNICEF expertise in delivering this program.

"With support from quality partners like UNICEF, Australia will continue to invest in education to support the Lao Government's development priority of ensuring more Lao boys and girls complete a quality basic education."



Ambassador John Williams together with H.E. Mr Lytoun Bouapao, Vice Minister of Ministry of Education and Sports to open new water, sanitation and hygiene facilities at Viengkeo School in Vientiane's Saythani District

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