# UN-University Volunteer in Lao PDR

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UN - Habitat

# The Champa Land

The champa flower, which we also call plumeria, is the national flower of Laos. In this rarely known country, we can find this little white flower everywhere. The 6 months-long UNV assignment in Laos is not only a chance that allows us to work in the United Nations, one of the biggest and most influential organizations in the world. It is also an once-in-a-lifetime experience for us to explore Laos, a country that looks completely different yet so similar to Hong Kong.

## Why is Laos so different from Hong Kong?



### 1) The Transportation

There is nearly no official public transportation in the country (Except "TukTuk" and a few newly developed bus lines). In most of the cases, people will buy their own motorbike and car to travel around. For people like us who don't have any driving licences, we have to learn how to bike if we want to go further.
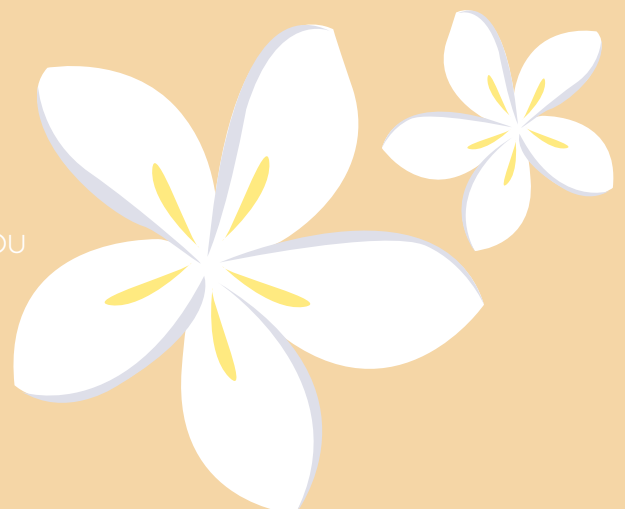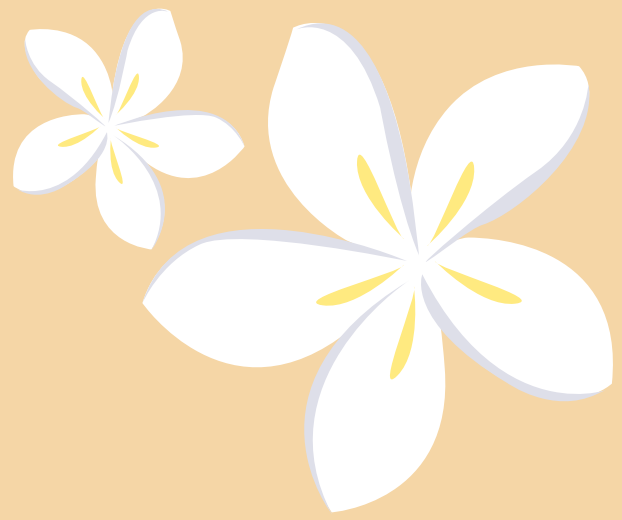
### 2) The Weather

The monsoon season is the most prominent characteristic in Laos. From May to October every year, a downpour will always strike the country for at least a few hours in a day. I have to say this is the biggest challenge of my life in Laos, especially when you have to bike under the heavy rain!





### 3) The Religion

Buddhism is the primary religion of Laos. Nowadays, the Laos are still very devoted to their religion. If you can wake up in the early morning, you can still join the alms giving every day.
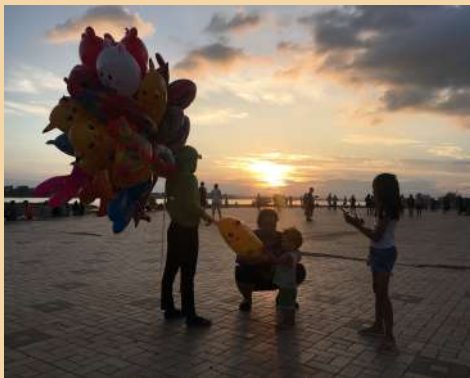
# The Champa Land

## 4) The Animals

The animal to human ratio in Laos is surprisingly high, even in the city area. You can see dogs and cows laying down in the middle of the roads. And It seems to be a culture that they will pet something at home. (My apartment's family own 6 cats in the house) But I was so shocked when I saw my colleagues collecting leftover food for her chicken at home. Though they told me it is super normal to pet chickens in the city.
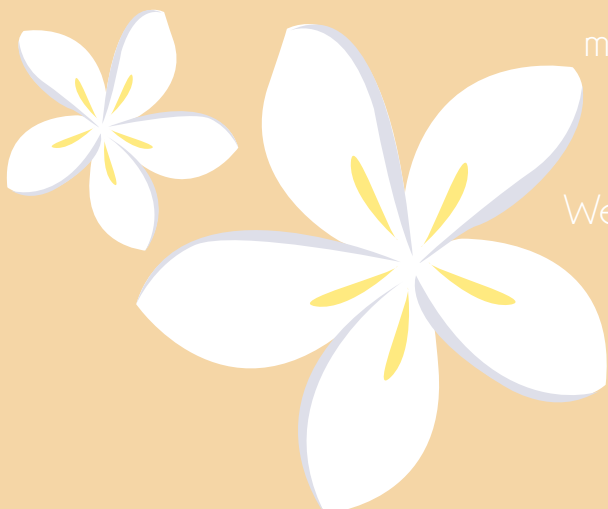
## 5) The Simplicity and Slow-Paced Life

Living in a metropolitan that upholds materialism and efficiency for more than 20 years, I am totally enchanted by the simplicity of Laos. . It is a place with no distractions. People enjoy life with little things. With no luxurious malls and exciting entertainments, they simply spend their holidays at home with family, or just have a walk next to the Mekong.
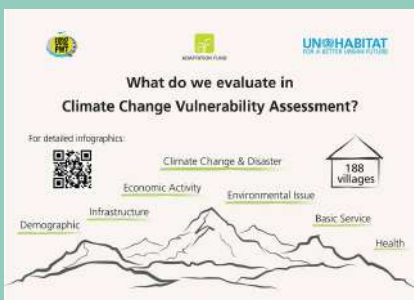
## Something Similar...

"How many people are there in Hong Kong?" Everytime when I first meet a laotian and when they ask me this question, my answer will always surprise them with no exceptions. They never expect Hong Kong, a small spot in the world map, has the same population as they do. We all have actually 7 million people living in our land!

# Life in the UN House

## UN-Habitat

UN-Habitat is a UN agency that advocates for better quality of life in human settlements. In Laos, UN-Habitat puts the focus on climate resilience construction. During my term as a UNV in programme management and communications, I worked for the funding reports and knowledge management tasks of two water infrastructure projects that aims to ensure a clean and steady water supply for the vulnerable communities living in the rural areas.





I am truly grateful that I was sent to this agency. A team working on water infrastructure project in underdeveloped rural areas is definitely something that I could never join in Hong Kong.  . For a person like me, who is coming from a journalism background, handling with all the technical knowledge and design principles is certainly an eye-opening experience.

The great diversity in the office also inspired me a lot. Though we are all coming from different countries and different academic backgrounds, we work well together for one single project.

# Life in the UN House

I also joined the cross-agency communication group in the UN House. We together organized the UN day celebration and discussed communication strategies as a whole. While as part of the UNV team, I was also able to join the International Volunteer Day (IVD) to promote volunteerism in Laos together with many other volunteer organizations in Laos.

Lunch With the Office



UN Day Celebration



International Volunteers Day