

### **Day 1, October 25, 2008: Arrive Luang Prabang**

Sabaidee! Welcome to the spiritual capital of Laos. The 66 temples city! Upon your arrival, you will be met at the airport and transferred to the hotel.

Luang Prabang – considered the gem of Southeast Asia – is an UNESCO World Heritage Site, filled with beautiful French colonial architecture mixed with ancient to modern temples. Outside the hotel are wonderful cafes, tea houses and restaurants for you to enjoy the rest of your day at leisure.

In the evening, walk through the hill tribe market where the Hmong people and other tribes come to town each evening to sell their textiles, crafts and goods.

Dinner & overnight in Luang Prabang.

### **Day 2, October 26, 2008: Luang Prabang**

After a delicious breakfast at the hotel, we will meet our guide and learn more about this town registered on the World Heritage Patrimony List since 1995. Although this is a full day tour, you have the option of only joining us for a half day – either in the morning or the afternoon if you desire free time on your own.

Our city tour begins at the former **Royal Palace**, now the National Museum. We will continue walking to **Wat Mai**, a temple renowned for its golden bas-relief. During Pimai, the Lao new year, the Prabang normally housed in the Royal Palace Museum is brought and put on public display in this temple. Next our walk will take us to **Wat Sensoukarahm**, build in 1718 with its beautiful dazzling golden façade. Finish with the morning visit by the most photographed temple: **Wat Xieng Thong**. Located at the end of the peninsula, close to the **Mekong**, this temple was erected in 1560 by King Setthathirat while the library was added in 1828.



In the afternoon, we begin with **Wat Visoun**, the holiest temple of the city, entirely rebuilt after being destroyed in 1887 by the invading Black Flags from Southern China. In the courtyard of Wat Visoun stands the **Watermelon Stupa** shaped like the fruit it takes its name from. We will continue by **Wat Aham** where we can find the altar of the 2nd genius of Luang Prabang and then go to **Wat That** where the ashes of King Sisavang Vong are interred inside the large central stupa.

Visit the **Pra Bat Thai** to enjoy the sunset and finish our day by climbing the 328 steps to the top of **Mount Phousi** to enjoy a panoramic view of the city and the surrounding countryside and return to your hotel by the evening **hill tribe market**.

Dinner & overnight in Luang Prabang

### **Day 3, October 27, 2008: Vientiane**

**Optional:** For early-risers (05h30) there is a very special dawn visit to witness the long lines of orange-robed monks leaving their pagodas to receive offerings of food from Luang Prabang residents. Return to the hotel for breakfast.



Enjoy a free morning at leisure before we transfer to the airport. Flight to Vientiane is scheduled at 12:20pm, arrival in Vientiane at 1:00pm. Please note that changes can occur without prior notice.

Upon arrival in Vientiane we will transfer to a local restaurant for lunch and if time permits, check into our hotel before meeting with UNFPA at their offices.

Afternoon: Meeting with UNFPA Field Representative Mieko Yabuta and her colleagues, to be briefed on UNFPA's work in Laos.

Welcome Dinner with UNFPA staff and invited guests.

Overnight in Vientiane.

#### **Day 4, October 28, 2008: Vientiane**

After breakfast we will engage in a full day of meetings with government officials and site visits to UNFPA projects.

This day is especially important because it is an opportunity for our delegation to be helpful to UNFPA. By meeting with local government officials and stating our support for UNFPA, local officials will understand that although our government does not support UNFPA, Americans do! These meetings have been especially requested by UNFPA in Laos and hopefully our show of support can serve to strengthen their efforts through advocacy and local media coverage.

In the afternoon we will visit the Vientiane Youth Centre that UNFPA has supported since its inception. Vulnerable young people are a special focus for UNFPA-Laos, in particular bar girls and commercial sex workers in Vientiane, and rural youth in the outer provinces. Interventions with these young people include advocacy, training and counseling on adolescent reproductive health; improvement of existing information and behavior change communication materials; and peer education. Partners on the project include CARE International and Health Unlimited, as well as the Lao Youth Union.

Overnight in Vientiane

#### **Day 5, October 29, 2008: Vientiane – Pakse-Salavan-Tad Lo**

Rise and shine! After breakfast, we will depart on a 6:30 AM flight for Pakse in southern Laos. We arrive at 7:45am. Please note that changes can occur without prior notice.



Upon arrival in **Pakse**, we will be met by 4WD vehicles and depart for UNFPA programs close to Salavan.

In many rural areas in Lao PDR, early marriage (at less than 18 years of age) is a social norm. Access to sexual and reproductive health (RH) information and services is difficult due to language constraints, as 47% of the total population is composed of ethnic groups other than Lao, many of whom do not speak the Lao language. Unmarried youth have especially limited access to RH services in the public health system. Increasing migration from rural to urban areas or to Thailand raises exposure to sexually transmitted/HIV infections, unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions, especially for young women.

Given the large proportion of young people in Laos (31% of the population is between 10 and 24) entering into reproductive life, their behavior and practice will shape the future of the country in terms of population growth, health status and socio-economic development.

UNFPA supports a project to provide appropriate sexual and reproductive health information to young ethnic minorities, using a peer education model. In addition, the project works with district health staff to improve the delivery of youth-friendly services, specifically in the area of reproductive health. Mobile teams provide information and medical services to remote villages that do not have close access to health centres. The project coordinates with other UNFPA-supported projects in the South through RH Coordination Committees, chaired by the Provincial Governor or Vice Governor.

By the end of the day, we will be close to the Tad Lo **waterfalls**. Tad Lo features three waterfalls - the nearest is **Tad Hang** that could be seen from the bridge. **Tad Lo** is the second one. But the most impressive waterfall is the third, **Tad Suong**, with a stunning fall. That one is located 10km upriver.

Overnight and dinner in Tad Lo

#### **Day 6, October 30, 2008: Tad Lo – Bolovens – Tad Fane**



After breakfast we will continue our site visits. Gaps in reproductive and sexual health care account for many illnesses and premature deaths among Lao women of reproductive age, especially among the poor and/or ethnic minority groups living in rural or remote areas. These women lack access to quality services including modern contraception, emergency obstetric services and services for the prevention and management of sexual transmitted infections (STIs). About 40% of all couples remain under-served, especially in terms of family planning. More than 75 percent of births in the last five years received no antenatal care and less than 25 percent were attended by health professionals. Improving access to reproductive health care and knowledge can not only reduce mortality and illness among women, it can reduce gender inequality and help sustain a balance between population, resources and socio-economic development. UNFPA is working to strengthen

the healthcare infrastructure in Laos to provide better access to these services. As a hallmark of their success, between 1997 and 2004, the percentage of women of reproductive age receiving family planning services at government facilities increased from 5.8% to 28%. Clearly there is still much work to be done in this area.

Lunch at a local restaurant.

Continue our afternoon with visits to UNFPA projects in the **Bolovens Plateau**. During our visits we will also be able to observe the local daily life of this beautiful area.

The route to Bolaven Plateau (or Boloven) is through a mountainous region and in several areas along the road, of the most famous Laos is cultivated almost Plateau by around 20,000 in cool fresh air. The tribes such as Lavens.



there are coffee plantations. One coffees in the world, coffee in exclusively on the Bolovens families who live in 250 villages Plateau is also home to the hill

At the end of our day, we where we will spend the night. Tad Fane Waterfalls is located at the door of the Bolavens Plateau and **Dong Hua Sao protected area**, just 38km from Paksé. The twin 120m waterfalls done by the **Champy** and **Pak Koot rivers** emerge from the dense jungle and thunder down into a deep gorge.

will visit the **Tad Fane** waterfalls

Dinner and overnight in Tad Fane.

### **Day 7, October 31, 2008: Tad Fane - Pakse**

Today, we will pursue our journey in the Plateau before returning to Pakse where we will end our time in Laos.

Accurate information is an important element in accessing reproductive health care (RH) and understanding gender equality. UNFPA enhances knowledge and awareness of RH, reproductive rights and gender equality among women, men and adolescents. The strategy takes into account the needs of various ethnic groups from a socio-cultural perspective. UNFPA also aims to strengthen the capacity of its local partner, the Lao Women's Union, in implementing community-based reproductive health awareness interventions.

Through the work of village volunteers (typically one female and one male), the project reaches villagers and disseminates information on basic RH issues through participatory methodologies. Information, education and communication materials have been developed on subjects such as family planning, prevention of HIV/AIDS, reproductive rights and safe motherhood to aid village volunteers in their task of raising awareness. In addition, radio programs addressing key gender and RH messages are broadcast in ethnic languages in target provinces.

On the confluence of the Mekong and the Sedone river, Pakse is the most important town in uppermost Southern Laos. Pakse is also the home a large Vietnamese community.

Pakse is an interesting small town with colonial and Chinese buildings and a huge local market in the downtown to buy some fresh food



Dinner and overnight in Pakse.

**Day 8, November 1, 2008: Pakse – Siem Reap, Cambodia**

After breakfast, you will have free time at leisure before our transfer to the airport for our flight to Siem Reap (FT 636, 10:30am/11:20am). Please note that changes can occur without prior notice.

On arrival in Siem Reap we will transfer to our hotel to check-in and have lunch.

After lunch we will receive a briefing on UNFPA in Cambodia and visit the Cambodia Women's Crisis Center (CWCC). Founded by *Americans for UNFPA International Award for the Health and Dignity of Women* recipient Ket Noeun, the Center helps victims of domestic violence to find shelter and safety for the duration of their legal proceedings. CWCC provides counseling, vocational training, legal support and education to build survivors' skills and prepare them to create a more rewarding life. With help from UNFPA, Noeun and CWCC offer start-up capital to enable women leaving the center to start small businesses and become financially independent.

Noeun's success in empowering women, girls and the authorities has attracted negativity and threats from perpetrators, but this has not slowed her pursuit of women's right to lead safe, peaceful and financially stable lives

Dinner on your own, and overnight Siem Reap.

**Day 9, November 2, 2008: Angkor Wat Temple Complex, Siem Reap**

Today you will start at dawn and visit the legendary Angkor Wat Temple Complex. You will have a full morning tour of the temples. After lunch, relax and enjoy the afternoon at leisure and then return to Angkor Wat to watch the sunset.

Tonight we will have a celebration dinner to culminate our adventure together.

Overnight Siem Reap

**Day 10, November 3, 2008: Return to USA (Just in time to VOTE!).**

Check out of the hotel and transfer to airport for your return flight to the USA.