



# Women's Empowerment



## BACKGROUND

In 2020, the US State Department's Trafficking-In-Persons (TIP) Report upgraded Lao PDR to Tier 2 (i.e. while it does not fully meet minimum standards for the elimination of TIP, the government is making significant efforts to do so). This status was maintained in 2021, due to the government's increasing progress, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which heightened challenges to safe migration.

The Asia Foundation's work on TIP seeks to build on recent achievements by the Government of Lao PDR and partners, while filling

important gaps in terms of prosecution, protection, and prevention of TIP.

To address the underrepresentation of women in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, a scholarship was established in 2011, to grow the capacity of women to join the workforce in these fields and occupy leadership roles in the future.

To empower more women to assume leadership roles within justice system institutions, the Foundation works to increase the number of graduates completing their professional legal qualifications.



## Countering Trafficking in Persons

In partnership with a range of government and non-government actors working to address TIP, the Foundation seeks to increase effectiveness of sub-national networks to identify TIP survivors and assist them in pursuing legal remedies in Lao PDR. Project activities will strengthen the ability of community, sub-national, and national actors (such as law enforcement, community leaders, and TIP shelters) to identify TIP survivors and refer them to support and legal services, as well as strengthen the ability of local legal service providers to support prosecutors and TIP survivors in holding TIP perpetrators to account.

## The Asia Foundation Scholars

The Women's Scholarship for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics [STEM] studies through the National University of Laos addresses chronic unemployment of university graduates and the low number of Lao women working in STEM, by providing financial and academic support, including English, IT, and soft skills training over the four years of study. In this additional support a strong focus is placed on preparing students for academic and professional success. Scholarships are given to young women from underprivileged backgrounds from throughout Lao PDR and has been in place since 2011; a total of 84 women have graduated from the program and new cohorts comprising 42 scholars began in 2020 and 2021.



## Legal Aid and Access to Justice

In collaboration with the National Institute of Justice, the Foundation provides scholarships for female law graduates to complete the practical legal training component of their studies so that they can become lawyers, prosecutors, and judges. The Foundation will also provide stipends to aspiring lawyers for internships to cover living expenses while they complete their unpaid work experience.

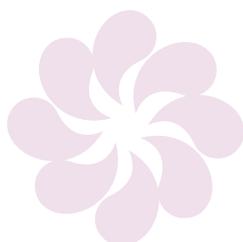
2021



**18** women received scholarships to pursue the courses required to become qualified lawyers.

**84** young women have graduated through the STEM scholarship since 2011

**42** new scholarships began in 2020 & 2021



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