**GOMAD Project Report – Learn with Changnoy**

**Project Title:** Learn with Changnoy – Empowering Rural Youth through Soft Skills  
**Project Leader:** Miss Souphonesili Khammany & Miss Phimmachanh Senekham  
**College:** UWC Mahindra College, India and UWC Robert Bosch College  
**Dates of Project:** 30 June – 4 July 2025 (Phase 1), 7 – 11 July 2025 (Phase 2), 14 – 18 July 2025 (Phase 3), 21 – 15 July 2025 (Phase 4), and 12 – 14 August 2025 (Additional/Special Phase).  
**Location:** Phonmee Village and Vientiane Capital, Laos

**Half-page Summary**

Our project, Learn with Changnoy, aimed to provide free soft skills workshops to underserved youth in rural Laos. With the support of a $1,600 GoMakeADifference grant, we delivered a five-week program reaching **100 students** (ages 13–18) across Vientiane Province and Vientiane Capital. We successfully engaged **59 rural students** from four schools in Vientiane Province—Phonmee, Parkjaeng, Thipphakone, and Sengsavang—as well as **41 students from public spaces**, including nine from other rural areas, mostly Huaphanh Province.

The program was implemented in **four phases of identical workshop sessions**, each covering:

* **Identity & Relationships** – Personal values, mental health, and communication skills.
* **Design Thinking & Goal-Setting** – IKIGAI framework, SMART goals, and public speaking skills.
* **Opportunities & Inspiration** – Scholarships, volunteerism, and UWC experiences.
* **Community Impact & Entrepreneurship** – Turning ideas into action using SDGs and case studies.

Through these workshops—combined with mentorship and guest speakers—students developed confidence and practical life skills.

Several students went beyond participation. The fifth phase was **initiated not by us as project leaders, but by students from the first phase**, showing ownership of the program. **Nine students from Phonmee School established a school club in Vientiane Province and became mentors for their peers.** In addition, **three students from Huaphanh Province are now being mentored by the Phonmee school club members** to establish their own clubs.

**Full Report**

**How we made a difference**

**➡ To the Community**

* Youth who joined the workshops gained practical soft skills in communication, leadership, and goal-setting that continue to serve them in school and community life.
* Several participants transformed from learners into leaders: clubs formed at Phonmee School and in Huaphanh Province are now youth-led spaces that sustain peer mentorship beyond the project.
* Students applied knowledge to real opportunities — from winning competitions to securing volunteer placements — proving the skills have immediate, lasting value.

**➡ To Us (as project initiators)**

* We gained firsthand insight into the real barriers Lao youth face: not just lack of skills, but low confidence and limited support networks.
* Seeing students take ownership reinforced our belief that youth empowerment must focus on building agency, not just delivering content.
* The experience helped us grow as facilitators and mentors, strengthening our own communication, leadership, and adaptability skills.

**➡ To the Project Team**

* We learned how to adapt plans under real constraints: when schools in Vientiane Province weren’t available, we pivoted to public spaces without compromising quality.
* Team collaboration improved as we managed logistics, coordinated guest speakers, and supported one another in unfamiliar settings.
* Most importantly, we witnessed the project evolve into something larger than our team: students became co-creators, proving that sustainability lies in handing over ownership to the youth themselves.

**What we are proud of**

What made us especially proud was seeing how the nine students from Phonmee School took the lessons from our workshops and turned them into real action. Instead of only learning, they created a school club, mentored their peers, and even guided students from Huaphanh Province to start their own clubs. This transformation reminded us of what we had dreamed at the beginning — that the young people we worked with would emerge not just with new skills, but with new confidence, full of dreams and hope for Laos and the world. Seeing them step into leadership proved that the workshops were not just theory, but a spark that could inspire lasting change in their schools and communities.

**What the enduring successes of the project have been**

* **1. Student-led Continuation:** Clubs founded by Phase 1 participants at Phonmee School continue to thrive without our facilitation, turning students into mentors.
* **2. Peer-to-Peer Mentorship Network:** The Phonmee mentors are now guiding Huaphanh students to set up their own clubs — showing the program has seeded a self-sustaining ecosystem.
* **3. Lasting Confidence and Aspirations:** Even after the sessions ended, participants reported higher self-esteem and a willingness to pursue passions despite pressure or limited resources.
* **4. Replicable Model:** The four-phase workshop structure is now tested and proven, ready to be scaled by other youth groups in Laos.

**Where the money was spent**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Details** | **Total** |
| **Transportation** | |
| Vientiane Captital city to Phonmee school | $156 |
| Within Phonmee and Parkjaeng schools | $69 |
| Within Vientiane Capital City | $92 |
| Total transportation | $317 |
| **Food** | |
| Total Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner and Coffee break | $860 |
| **Renting a place** | |
| Phonmee school's meeting hall | $61 |
| Guesthouse | $229 |
| Total rental price | $290 |
| **People** | |
| Guest speakers | $68 |
| School Principals | $28 |
| Total | $96 |
| **Materials** | |
| Hand sanitizers, A4, A0 papers, etc. | $37 |

**Grand Total $1600**

**Lessons learned**

We learned that planning in rural areas requires extra time, as travel and school coordination often took longer than expected. Due to distance and limited budget, we were unable to expand to Vangvieng, and instead used resources strategically to maximize outreach. For the final two weeks, after difficulties coordinating with schools in Vientiane Province, we shifted to public spaces in Vientiane Capital, where we successfully engaged 41 participants — including nine students from rural Huaphanh Province.

At the same time, we discovered that student motivation was strongest when they were given real ownership of the program. For example, nine students from Phonmee School (Phase 1) returned to help us lead the next round of workshops at Parkjaeng School (Phase 2). Later, participants from Phase 3 in Vientiane Capital supported us in leading Phase 4 sessions in the same location. Most notably, the nine Phonmee students went even further by establishing a school club in their province and becoming mentors for their peers. They have since guided three students from Huaphanh Province (Phase 3 participants) in forming their own clubs, showing how leadership roles not only deepened engagement but also created a ripple effect of impact.

Finally, we realized that partnerships with schools and teachers were vital, as their support gave legitimacy to our project and ensured sustainability beyond our direct involvement. What makes this lesson meaningful is not just that we observed it, but that we acted on it. By translating learning into concrete action, we were able to move from idealism to practice — living the UWC value of compassion and service, a sense of idealism, personal challenge, and action and personal example. Thanks to the GoMakeADifference grant, this project showed us that even small initiatives can inspire systemic change when young people are trusted with responsibility.

**What we would do differently**

If we were to run this project again, we would begin the process of engaging schools much earlier, allowing more time to build trust and confirm participation. We would also allocate a greater portion of the budget to transportation, which would make it possible to reach more remote areas such as Vangvieng without compromising other activities.