



STRATEGIC PLAN 2024

Friends Without A Border (FWAB) currently supports a single undertaking, Lao Friends Hospital for Children (LFHC), a free pediatric training hospital in Luang Prabang, Lao People's Democratic Republic. Accordingly, FWAB's strategic plan focuses on the operations and development of LFHC.

Objective 1: Primary Objective

Build strong and sustainable Lao medical and administration teams at Lao Friends Hospital for Children by continuing/enhancing the training of our Lao staff to provide compassionate, quality medical care in a low-resource setting for children under 15 years old with the objective of gradually turning over the management of LFHC to the Lao staff and completing the turnover by the year 2034.

Extend current 10-year MOU expiring in 2024

Ministry of Health, Luang Prabang Provincial Health Department and FWAB / LFHC agreed in a meeting in June 2023 to extend the current Memo of Understanding (MOU). The Lao Ministry of Health would like us to continue our work and expand our training for an additional ten years. This new MOU has three sections: scope of work with the national ministry, the provincial health department, and the National University of Health Sciences. This tri-pronged approach reflects the level of impact that LFHC is making on national and educational policies throughout Laos.

The Prevention of Malnutrition Project was postponed due to the pandemic, but a Director of Prevention arrived in September 2022 to complete the final piece of our quality care/ training/ prevention commitment in our original MOU. She has just completed a comprehensive baseline survey of the two districts where the program will be implemented.

Improving the quality of health care on district level (district hospitals and health clinics) in Luang Prabang Province is our first priority.

To accomplish this, we will implement new quality control measures as described in a section below.

Continue to promote Lao clinicians and administrators until hospital is Lao managed by 2034.

Look for additional and independent funding sources, which will be sustainable after 2034.

Training program specifics

LFHC continues an extensive internal education program with emphasis on interdisciplinary training, designed by the education department.

Additionally, LFHC provides external education, which consists of several activities:

- LFHC will have continuously 2 pediatric residents from the national medical school's pediatric program, staying for 2 months each.
- In 2023 LFHC will extend the collaboration for the pediatric program and train all second-year interns in pediatrics for one year with the focus on pediatric intensive care, neonatology and nutrition. LFHC will continue to train nurses, midwives and medical assistant students for clinical rotations. The reactivated program of improving quality care at district level will include several training activities. The amount and content will be planned in collaboration with the Luang Prabang Provincial Health Department.
- In 2023, LFHC was asked by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with UNICEF to develop a set of training guidelines to be used in all 14 provinces. Additionally, we were asked to hold training sessions for each province, as well as to develop national protocols for a network of milk banks.
- Collaborating with the Ministry of Health and the University of Health Sciences, LFHC provides national training based on the national curriculum for physicians and nurses.

Quality control strategies

Quality improvement and quality control are central topics in all development work done at LFHC. This work will:

- Provide a venue for clinical and non-clinical staff to process and analyze data and use these for decision-making and planning more development in LFHC.
- Generate stream of knowledge through evidenced-based practices, which can be shared within LFHC as well as wider institutions in Laos.
- Utilize all data generated to influence policymaking and creation of local and national guidelines and protocols, which improves clinical care services being provided.
- Feed all data collected at LFHC to the national data collection system (DHIS2).

Lao promotion strategy

Promoting a strong Lao leadership is essential to give the best conditions for sustained high-quality care after the planned turnover in 2034.

Training and developing leadership is a long-term project and has been given high priority since early 2022. The first Lao Nursing Director was appointed in February, as well as 6 medical managers, 6 nursing managers and 2 administrative managers. In 2023, two more Lao clinicians were promoted to Medical Director and Medical Education Director. All Lao leaders have received internal and external management training.

Besides promoting individuals for future leaders, LFHC also considers it to be essential to create a strong leadership structure, which is not dependent on specific individuals. LFHC changed the structure of its Executive Team (which by now consists of 9 Lao and 4 expat members) to meet internal and external challenges in an agile and dynamic way.

Compassionate care training

Our vision is to provide compassionate care to all patients and their families coming in contact with LFHC. This needs to be re-emphasized on a regular basis. As LFHC has grown in the last years with new staff members, LFHC will provide a half-day training in compassionate care for every staff member working at LFHC, focusing on their own experiences of being compassionate and what this means in their daily work.

Official HAU opening for care enhancement

In July 2022, LFHC opened an Intensive Care/ High Acuity Unit (HAU) with 4-5 beds. To date, 325 patients have been admitted to the unit. The mortality rate is around 20%, reflecting the severity of patients admitted to the unit. The unit's reputation has spread to other provinces in Laos: During 2022, approximately 25% of all admissions were from other provinces, referred to LFHC because the provincial hospitals didn't know how to handle these cases. This has been acknowledged by the Lao Minister of Health, who recently requested LFHC to become a referral hospital for all complicated cases in northern Laos.

Objective 2: Reducing Mortality Rate

Help the country of Laos reduce their child mortality rate by training local clinics/ clinicians to provide quality medical care at their facilities, as well as by developing a prevention program focusing on the first 1000 days of a child's life.

Outside training specifics

The focus of our outside trainings will be on improving quality of care at district hospitals and health clinics. The training performed by LFHC during early 2022 is now evaluated by a survey and exam of all participants from the district hospitals.

LFHC has also prepared a questionnaire for clinical and administrative staff at district hospitals, to find out what kind of support they get at the moment and what they consider they would need in future to help LFHC identify how to provide support and training in an efficient way. This draft survey has been sent to Luang Prabang Provincial Health Department, and LFHC is waiting for confirmation to use it. LFHC will also survey patients to assess why families from other districts prefer coming all the way to LFHC, instead of going to the closest health clinic or district hospital, where most of the cases should receive adequate treatment.

We will enhance our partnership with UNICEF and Ministry of Health for a program that would improve the quality of Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition services of the entire country, as well as scaling up preventive and curative nutrition interventions.

Training at LFHC for external clinicians

Collaborating with the Ministry of Health together with UNICEF, LFHC implements a 5-day training program for doctors and nurses from all provincial hospitals in the country, as well as from the three large pediatric hospitals in Vientiane, on inpatient care of children with severe acute malnutrition.

Prevention program and basic thinking behind 1000-day program

Malnutrition is still a major attributing factor to child mortality in northern Laos. Prevention of malnutrition is complex, and existing evidence underlines two aspects as being crucial in any prevention work:

- The program needs to be adapted to the local circumstances, and close collaboration with stakeholders on all levels (national, provincial and district) is necessary.
- Malnutrition in children begins in utero and many factors contributing to malnutrition can be identified already during pregnancy. For this reason, antenatal work must be part of any prevention program.

Globally, the concept of “The First 1000 Days” has been the base of malnutrition in countries comparable to Laos. This approach includes prenatal work (270 days of pregnancy) and the first two years of life (730 days). The Director of Prevention will develop the LFHC program and will mentor and be supported by a Lao Project Manager. The prevention program will complete our original commitment to complete a quality care/training hospital with a community prevention component.

Objective 3: Integration

Continue to build relations with the Ministry of Health and the Luang Prabang Provincial Health Department, in order to integrate LFHC training programs, creating fluidity among clinical settings.

After the pandemic, the Lao Ministry of Health has implemented major changes both within the organization of the health sector, as well as the structure and licensing of health profession educations. LFHC has built up a close collaboration both with the Ministry of Health and Luang Prabang Provincial Health Department in the last years. LFHC will participate in meetings and discussions on the future structure of the health system in Laos.

LFHC also has a close collaboration with the University of Health Sciences and the three major pediatric hospitals in Vientiane. During 2021, LFHC has been active in promoting discussions between these hospitals to align the guidelines with each other and to facilitate work when staff members or students move between the different hospitals. LFHC will continue this collaboration.

We believe that the quality of pediatric care in Laos also has improved due to these discussions.