

April - May 2026 Mission

One of the objectives of this mission was to continue supporting the development of the recently established eye care dispensary at Yor d'Ou in Phongsaly Province, one of the most remote regions of northern Laos. Although our team was unable to travel to Yor d'Ou during this mission, we delivered basic ophthalmic equipment including trial lens set and remained in close communication with the local staff. Through these exchanges, we provided guidance on the use of the equipment and discussed practical aspects of refraction and basic eye care. The trial lens set is an essential tool for measuring refractive errors and prescribing eyeglasses, enabling the local ophthalmic nurse to provide more accurate vision assessments and improving access to quality eye care in an area where specialized ophthalmic services remain extremely limited.

In Vientiane, we expanded our collaboration with our long-standing French partner, Santé-France-Laos, by donating a new portable electrocardiogram (ECG) machine. This equipment will support the screening and evaluation of children with suspected congenital heart disease. The ECG findings, together with clinical records and echocardiographic studies when available, will help prepare medical dossiers for review by specialist cardiac teams in France, where selected children may become eligible for life-saving corrective surgery. Early diagnosis is essential, as congenital heart defects remain a significant cause of childhood illness and mortality in many low-resource countries.

Our work then continued in Houn District, Oudomxay Province, where we have been helping develop a basic eye care clinic over the past several years. We installed a new binocular examination microscope, allowing clinicians to safely remove corneal and conjunctival foreign bodies—a common injury among farmers, construction workers, and others engaged in agricultural and manual labor. Prompt treatment of these injuries helps prevent infection, corneal scarring, and permanent vision loss.

To further enhance the clinic's diagnostic capabilities, we replaced a failing lens meter and also installed a modern visual acuity display system with remote control. The system includes optotypes designed specifically for non-literate patients, enabling accurate vision testing regardless of reading ability. Integrated with the phoropter previously donated by the Foundation, this equipment significantly

improves the quality and efficiency of eye examinations while making care more accessible to all members of the community.

While in Houn, we were pleased to observe the completion of the reconstructed retaining walls surrounding the land designated for the future Houn Eye Care Clinic. The original walls, built the previous year, had collapsed following exceptionally heavy monsoon rains that caused widespread flooding and soil erosion throughout northern Laos. The new reinforced retaining walls now provide greater stability to the site and represent an important milestone toward the eventual construction of a modern, purpose-built eye care facility. Once completed, the new clinic would replace the current dispensary and significantly expand the capacity to provide quality ophthalmic services to the people of Houn District and surrounding communities. The realization and timing of this project will, of course, depend on the success of LRF's fundraising efforts and its ability to secure the necessary financial support.

Before concluding our visit to Oudomxay Province, we toured Houn District Hospital to assess several aging wards and patient care areas. Many sections of the district hospital have deteriorated after decades of continuous use and are in need of renovation. Our evaluation focused on identifying practical improvements that could enhance patient comfort, safety, and the working conditions of healthcare staff.

Although modest in scale, each mission builds upon the progress of previous years. By working closely with our Lao colleagues and responding to locally identified needs, the Lao Rehabilitation Foundation continues its long-term commitment to improving healthcare services, transferring knowledge, and supporting sustainable medical development in some of Laos' most underserved communities.