

Health Poverty Action promotes and protects the health of the world's poorest people. Founded 25 years ago by young British doctors, it began delivering basic health services in the conflict zones of southern Afghanistan during the Soviet war. Since then it has worked in places where conflict, oppression and poverty are threatening people's lives and health.

It specialises in providing medical care and health education to communities cut off from the outside world that almost everyone else has forgotten. It builds health services from scratch and trains health workers to provide care. It also tackles the diseases of poverty: HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB as well as diarrhoea, measles and pneumonia.

Public education also plays an important part in promoting good health and preventing the spread of disease. For individual mothers, fathers, friends and children, all these things can be the difference between grief and loss, or lives spent sharing, experiencing and growing old together. Health Poverty Action now works in 12 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America delivering life-saving healthcare and education to millions.

Your medical elective Laos is one of the least developed countries in the world. Situated between Thailand and Vietnam in South East Asia, it has made progress in reducing poverty during the past decade but there is a long way to go.

Attapeu province is a poor and remote region in the south of the country. 50% of children aged under 5 suffer from chronic malnutrition and communities have insufficient food for 4-8 months per year. As a consequence, infant and maternal mortality rates are very high. The indigenous communities in this area have been re-settled by the government from the highlands to the less remote lowlands, and are unfamiliar with their new environment and how to manage it as a sustainable source of food to eat and to sell.



The lowlands, which are rich in farming and forest resources, are an important source of food and livelihood but are threatened by destruction. We have worked in Attapeu province since 1994, developing primary health care services and training health workers and volunteers in remote villages. We have developed expertise in helping indigenous communities to obtain equal access to healthcare despite their remote locations and minority languages. We are also working to reduce the destruction of the environment and illegal harvesting of its resources.

This occurs because of a lack of awareness of the value of the environment and the need to manage it sustainably. The project is reducing hunger by improving the reliability of the food supply; reducing child deaths due to malnutrition and preventable illnesses; improving people's health, reducing poverty, and better preparing communities to deal with natural disasters such as floods and droughts. It is also benefiting the environment by reducing the pressures put on it.

What you can get involved with



Community health days, where we go into villages with basic health services like immunisation, malaria testing and diagnosis, and pre- and postnatal care

Monitoring malnourished children; therapeutic feeding if required

Health education on family planning and preventing and managing disease

Training Traditional Birth Attendants on safe delivery methods