

Growing tourism in Laos: TUI Care Foundation launches green financing initiative to boost sustainable tourism development

- *TUI Futureshapers Laos aims to strengthen 200 MSMEs and 100 young entrepreneurs through small grants and technical support*
- *It establishes a Small Matching Grants Programme to help scale up production, adoption and promotion of green products, services and solutions for the Laotian tourism value chain*
- *Project complements the Lasting Laos project - funded by the European Union under the SWITCH-Asia programme*
- *Launch is part of TUI Care Foundation's Tourism for Development Month, which focuses on projects that empower Least Developed Countries through sustainable tourism development*

TUI Care Foundation
Pariser Platz 6a
10117 Berlin

www.tuicarefoundation.com

Berlin, 17 September 2025. *Tourism is a key driver of the Laotian economy, contributing over 10% to national GDP before the COVID-19 pandemic and supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs. As a Least Developed Country, Laos relies heavily on this sector for income and employment. However, the pandemic severely disrupted tourism, leading to widespread business closures and rising poverty in the country. MSMEs, which account for 99.8% of all enterprises in Laos, remain under-resourced and largely informal. They face limited access to finance, in particular green financing, and low capacity for sustainable practices makes it difficult for them to meet international standards. Young entrepreneurs, especially women, encounter additional barriers to growth and innovation.*

In response, the TUI Care Foundation, in partnership with Plan International Laos and in alignment with the EU funded Lasting Laos project, has launched TUI Futureshapers Laos, a targeted initiative to support MSMEs and young entrepreneurs in building a greener, more resilient tourism economy. The project introduces a Small Matching Grants Programme - a green financing instrument that provides small grants to help businesses develop and implement sustainable products and services. The initiative focuses on four key tourism destinations in the country: Vientiane Capital, Vientiane Province, Luang Prabang, and Champasak.

Over the course of the project, 200 MSMEs and 100 young entrepreneurs - 50% of whom will be women - will receive technical support, including training in sustainable business practices, financial management, and product development. MSMEs are also engaged and supported to achieve the Lasting Laos sustainability certification, ensuring alignment with national green growth strategies and international standards.

A total of 80 businesses will be awarded grants through the programme. These grants will serve as seed funding to pilot and scale environmentally responsible innovations. The project is expected to support approximately 2,000 livelihoods, including employees of the participating businesses. To foster long-term investment and visibility, the project will also organise an investor familiarisation trip in its third year. This event will bring

international investors and mentors to Laos to meet high-potential enterprises, explore funding opportunities, and build lasting partnerships.

TUI Futureshapers Laos complements the EU funded Lasting Laos programme, which promotes sustainability certification, green product development, and access to green finance. Together, these efforts aim to strengthen the tourism value chain, promote circular economy practices, and build a more inclusive and sustainable future for Laos.

The initiative is part of the global TUI Futureshapers programme which empowers people to turn social challenges into entrepreneurial opportunities in holiday destinations. It includes projects in Greece, Portugal, Sweden, Dominican Republic, Albania, North Africa, Colombia, Cape Verde, Tunisia, Egypt, Zanzibar and Namibia,

The TUI Care Foundation's 'Tourism for Development Month' is a month of activities dedicated to projects set in Least Developed Countries. Through a series of project launches and educational activities, it focuses on how sustainable tourism can increase the capacity of destination communities and empower them to improve their livelihoods, conserve and regenerate nature, and create market-based solutions that benefit tourism destinations. The projects are supported through the TUI Care Foundation's Tourism for Development Fund, which commits €10 million by 2030 to empower Least Developed Countries, a joint pledge of TUI Care Foundation and UN Tourism.

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About the TUI Care Foundation

Building on the potential of tourism as a force for good, the TUI Care Foundation supports and initiates projects which create new opportunities and contribute to thriving communities in tourism destinations all over the world. Connecting holidaymakers to good causes, it supports education and training opportunities for young people; drives the protection of natural habitats and the marine environment; and helps local communities to thrive sustainably and benefit from tourism. The TUI Care Foundation builds on strong partnerships with local and international organisations to create meaningful and long-lasting impact. The independent charitable organisation was founded by TUI, one of the world's leading tourism businesses, and is based in the Netherlands.

About Plan International Laos

Plan International has been working in Laos since 2007 and is delivering integrated programmes in Bokeo, Champasak, Luang Prabang, Oudomxay, Saravane, Vientiane Capital and Vientiane provinces, and working through partners in other provinces. Plan Laos' 2020-2027 Country Strategy takes a life cycle approach and focuses on supporting children, especially girls to access their rights to public health & nutrition, education & skills, adolescent development and participation, and skills & opportunities for youth employment and entrepreneurship. Plan International is globally mandated to provide humanitarian assistance in the event of an emergency taking place in Lao PDR.

Plan Laos is a leading INGO in Laos and participates in a number of civil society and government sectoral working groups, regional and global networks. We work closely with the Ministry of Health; Ministry of Education and Sports; Ministry of Agriculture and

Environment; Ministry of Industry and Commerce; UN and civil society partners in accordance with the principles of aid effectiveness, promoting the child rights, especially girls. Our work includes community-based action, partner strengthening, and policy influencing and advocacy. Our values-based feminist leadership principles underpin our work. Plan Laos is committed to the principles of being locally-led, globally connected.

Globally, by 2027, Plan International wants to have impacted the lives of 200 million girls.

Contact:

TUI Care Foundation

Manuel Ferreira

Head of Programme Management and External Communications

+44 7471 260915

manuel.ferreira@tui.com

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Pariser Platz 6a
10117 Berlin

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