

Youth entrepreneurs & leaders speaker series

Young diversity and inclusion experts return to Laos

The Youth Entrepreneurs and Leaders Speaker Series, run as part of Australian public diplomacy program *Australia now* with the Australian Embassy, will be returning to Laos from November 25 – 27 for a finale project with youth, civil society and business leaders. Mikhara Ramsing, recently recognised as one of Australia's top 100 most influential women, has been selected by the OzTalk Laos team to tackle the emerging topic of diversity and inclusion in Laos. She will be supported by curator Elise Stephenson to deliver 12 events over 3 action-packed days, designed to collaborate meaningfully with Lao audiences over the core most important challenges in society.

After the enormous success of our previous events in Laos, including visit by former Mental Health Commissioner Nicole Gibson to talk about youth mental health and relationships, this program will build on local connections being forged between Australian and Lao youth to tackle issues across diversity, social enterprise and inclusion.

This return visit to Laos brings Mikhara Ramsing, an award-winning social entrepreneur from Brisbane, Australia, for a series of talks, workshops and events. Mikhara runs two social enterprises in the human rights space: Miks Chai, which sells ethically sourced, environmentally sustainable chai to create connections through sitting down to tea and storytelling; and Ethnic+, a national website providing a safe place for members of the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) LGBTIQ+ community to share their stories. She believes stories save lives and has travelled around Australia in a self-built tiny home connecting with rural youth over topics including mental health, the future of work, and social inclusion.

Mikhara says of the program, "I am honoured to be invited to Laos to talk about matters close to my heart. As a queer women of colour, I know how important it was hearing stories I could see myself in. Therefore, I know how important it is going to be to facilitate open conversations about LGBTIQ+ issues in Laos. I hope that by doing so, we can foster greater inclusivity and knowledge about these sensitive matters. I believe stories save lives and am humbled to hear the stories of Lao youth in the LGBTIQ+ and social enterprise space."

Working closely with the Australian Embassy in Laos, this program will include events such as workshops, talks, and radio interviews with organisations ranging from government agencies, advocacy groups for diversity, gender equality and LGBTI+ communities, to non-profits and NGOs including Proud to be Us, LaoPHA, Care International Laos, etc. Workshops will include topics from negotiating for outcomes across civil society, social media influencing for business, advocacy for gender equality, women's leadership, and men's inclusion in the path to gender equality. The largest youth government organisation in Laos, the Lao Youth Union, will be running a workshop in cooperation with Australia Now speakers to motivate and inspire young future leaders to increase their involvement in community development. The workshops will also support Lao civil societies to learn about social campaigns for change. Two radio talks with Lao Youth Radio will cover topics of using social media for social enterprise, with Mikhara Ramsing, and another on gender-based violence prevention, with Elise Stephenson.

Elise says of the events, "this delegation to Laos is our third and final delegation part of the Youth Entrepreneurs & Leaders Speaker Series with Australia now. It is also one which is incredibly meaningful - diversity and inclusion of a wide range of voices is so important to the future of Laos, which is rapidly developing and has enormous opportunity to create an inclusive, pioneering society of the future. In my experience, when we have multiple voices at the table - young people, people of different ethnicities, genders and sexualities - we have the strongest chance of a bright future."

This program is funded by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and curated by [Social Good Outpost](#). The Speaker Series is being run across a selection of locations from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), having already held events across Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, and aims to celebrate and showcase youth as well as cement long standing ties between nations.

For more information on the program and for all event updates visit:
<https://socialgoodoutpost.com/Australia-now/>