

# Module Two Experiential Project Learning

## Laos & China



## Uncovering the Stories behind Laos-China Railway through People-to-people Exchange

In an increasingly interconnected world, regional connectivity is more than an economic necessity — it is a strategic tool for peace, cooperation, and shared prosperity.

The China Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is one of the most ambitious infrastructure and connectivity projects in modern history, spanning over 140 countries, primarily in Asia. The Laos-China Railway (LCR) is a BRI project reshaping the entire region physically, economically, and politically.

However, the LCR is surrounded by competing narratives. Supporters view them as engines of development and regional integration, while critics raise concerns over debt dependency, opaque governance, and undue influence. These diverse perspectives influence how governments align, how communities respond, and how individuals engage with geopolitics across the region.

Our action-learning project invites participants beyond the headlines and into the lived realities of people connected with the LCR to reflect diverse perspectives and explore the complexities of regional integration, offering a rich, unbiased story.

Understanding both the human and strategic dimensions of regional cooperation is essential for navigating Asia's rapidly evolving landscape and unlocking new development opportunities, driven by human connection.

### Why Laos?

Laos provides a rare opportunity to study the Belt and Road Initiative in real time. Its rapid shift from landlocked to land-linked makes the impacts of the Laos-China Railway particularly visible, offering clearer links between infrastructure and transformation.

Thanks to its shared border, Laos is also highly permeable to cultural and political influence. This enduring closeness with China places Laos in a unique role within the BRI, not just as a recipient, but as a key player in regional change.

There is no better way to understand today's world and its transformations than by sending your best and brightest talents to discover an infrastructure that shifts regional power dynamics, realigns diplomatic priorities, and redefines state-society relations.

The ALP cohort will have the unique opportunity to contribute to people-to-people exchange through the **collection of untold stories in a photo essay collection**, offering a balanced and insightful portrayal of the human impact and local perspectives of cross-border infrastructure projects.

# Weaving the Narrative of Change in Trade, Culture, and Education through the LCR

As part of the experiential learning module, participants will conduct site visits and interviews with stakeholders from government offices, businesses, and communities. Areas of consideration include:

- 1 Economic Transformation and Trade Expansion**  
Examine how the LCR enhances cross-border trade, broadens consumer access to goods, and creates new commercial opportunities for local businesses in previously isolated regions.
- 2 Cultural Influence and Dynamics**  
Explore how communities are navigating evolving cultural identities as the LCR dissolves physical barriers between nations and discover the new dynamics between cultural preservation and transformation.
- 3 Education and Human Capital Development**  
Investigate how the LCR facilitated knowledge and skill transfer to local workers while opening up educational pathways for eager youths to pursue better academic opportunities, career paths, and social mobility.

## Visit Highlights: Discovering the Laos-China Railway

Your journey will take you from the historic charm of Luang Prabang to vibrant border towns linking Laos and China. You will explore key railway hubs along the track, meet local communities impacted by LCR, and explore border points where goods, cultures, and opportunities now flow faster than ever.

### What Participants Will Learn

- Learn how to communicate with powerful, human-centric narratives that inspire, influence, and drive action, using real-world insights and visual storytelling.
- Gain clarity over the complexity of regional cooperation and competing tensions between stakeholders to unlock fresh perspectives and opportunities for your industry.
- Access frontline insights into 21st-century challenges, trends, and innovations that can be applied to your industry, ensuring your organisation remains resilient, adaptable, and future-proof.

