

# Service Fraternel d'Entraide ~ Laos

## Newsletter ~ March 2015



### Women and men working alongside the people of Laos

#### Laos, a country on the move,

As evidenced by a few numbers of the tourism sector: 4.15 million people visited Laos in 2014, an increase of 10% compared to the previous year. Laos has been designated as the 8th "country to be visited" for 2015. The city of Luang Prabang, the former royal capital has been elected "best tourist town" for 2015 by the readers of the British magazine Wanderlust.

Attapeu, a city where SFE has been established since 1998 is also in this framework of development. There are now a bridge over the Sekong River (at the spot where in the past you had to take a boat to cross), a road that leads to the east coast of Vietnam and an international airport in construction a few miles away from the town. These infrastructures have enabled a more rapid connection between the remote villages that we support.

#### Update on SFE's 17 years of presence in Attapeu :

The NGO's involvement has progressively moved from the hospital towards the target villages of the province by initiating community healthcare work which revolves around three program areas (with 3 teams): healthcare training, agriculture (primarily practical lessons and the follow up of the projects) and construction work (water systems, latrines and water filters). This involves a considerable amount of planning in the earlier stages as well as reporting once back home.

But rather than going into technical details, here are two stories told by one of our expatriates:



logistical preparation is needed for the trips of a few days to remote villages

*"In the mountain village of Dakliam the people are hard-working, open and eager to learn.. Last year we helped the villagers to construct a water system and toilets. As soon as the water system was finished, it felt as if the whole village had begun with spring-cleaning. Everything was washed and cleaned as never before. And this just because all of a sudden there was sufficient clean water and concrete surfaces to do so."*

Right at the beginning of the new phase of the project we chose 6 volunteers as village development workers.



They were given an intensive training during each of our monthly visits. The training mainly concerned the prevention of benign diseases and also agricultural themes. These model-families, who put what they learned into practice, are examples for the entire village. The aim of this second year of the current phase is the transfer of knowledge and know-how to the other families by these model-families. Each model-family has to visit 5 other families with a questionnaire once a month.







They receive a new questionnaire once they have visited the families 3-4 times.

*“But now what happened in Dakliam: the 6 model families sat together after two rounds of checking their families and decided that they would visit the individual families in the village together rather than doing their visits individually. They said a person alone would not be taken as seriously as 6 people conducting the activity together at the same time would be.”* These model-families have improved our technique according to their perception of village life. This is one experience, among other encouraging ones, that shows us that our work bears fruit that will continue beyond the end of the project.



healthcare training in the evening

In this context, your financial support of last December meant for improving the hygiene by installing a tap outside the latrines to wash hands almost covered the actual cost (3005€ of the 3500 needed). We are really thankful for your generosity and sincerely thank you for having made this addition to the initial project possible.

## Some news of the other projects

### Tatheng :

**The community agricultural development project** described in length in the previous letter continues with motivated teams who ventured into remote areas near the Vietnamese border, where during the dry season at 8°C, one lives without heating, double glazed windows and appropriate clothes! A new agronomist will replace the actual project manager who will return at the end of May after 6 years of involvement in this project.

### Thateng:

**Education: a pilot project** will be launched in this field in two villages. We are confident to pursue in this direction because of the recent declarations of the Minister of Education who identified 4 main obstacles, which may prevent Laos from reaching its millennium objectives in matters of education. These are: a poor rate of enrolment in the first year of primary school, school repetition as well as the rate of dropouts (10000 students have abandoned their courses during this school year, notably due to lack of means to pay their tuition fees) and the frequent incompleteness of schooling.

### Sekong :

The courses for head-nurses are ongoing and at the same time English courses are also given. Two doctor/midwife couples are thinking about joining the team of expatriates. This would reinforce the involvement within the hospital in order to optimize the training of the existing teams.

I would like to thank all of you for your interest in Laos  
Kindest regards,

Dr Philippe Klopfenstein, for the SFE team

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