

# Service Fraternel d'Entraide ~ Laos

## Newsletter ~ November 2013



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

This autumn, France welcomed for the first time the Lao President. This rather discreet visit happens 60 years after the recognition by France of the Independence of Laos, and one year after the French President's visit in Laos at the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). This reminds us of the historical ties that bind our countries. During the visit in France the two Heads of State evoked among others their common attachment to the action of NGOs and civilian society. It is true that Laos continues its efforts as regards to reduction of poverty within the framework of the objectives of the millennium fixed by the United Nations, yet the disparities between urban and rural areas, regions or even ethnic groups remain blatant. 80% of the population is living in very remote areas.

Recently a typhoon has devastated the Philippines, and heavy rains have hit Laos causing flooding whereas it should be the beginning of the dry season.



These disturbed meteorological conditions represent a potential risk for the teams of SFE, since they journey regularly and frequently to distant villages in order to reach out to the poorest and the most isolated people. It is the case for example, of the team working to detect and do the follow up of tuberculosis in the Province of Sekong. The team goes to remote, almost inaccessible villages...



This action ending next April will be shifted by a strengthening program to the Provincial Hospital which is looking for training courses for its staff. A nurse is already preparing this transition by teaching English as a language as well as medical training courses for nurses. In the same province, the activity centered on the de-



velopment of the silk sector in the district of Thateng has led to the self-reliance of families from now on managing themselves the production. The SFE team is pursuing its action with a community agricultural development project that has been started last August. 6000 villagers of the district of Tatheng can benefit of training, material as well as technical support. The expected result will be the improvement of agricultural production, the access to water supply and the development of small husbandries. Various activities will enable families to ensure their self-reliance and food security. Two expatriates together with 11 local employees (staff) are carrying out all these activities and the beginnings are promising.







In the Province of Attapeu (South), the Community Health Development Project is continuing with a second phase concerning 13 new villages. During the first phase, 2010-2013, the percentage of people suffering of



intestinal parasites (worms) has been reduced from 62% to 32%, these rates are to be put in parallel with the fact that 94% of the families are using toilets versus 3% in 2010. To be noted also, that more than 67% of the population knows how to treat diarrhea versus 27% in 2010.

The training of health volunteers in each village is a major point of our engagement on the ground. One of the teams is responsible for the construction of toilets, installation of water filters and water supply systems, and the two others are in charge of all what concerns primary healthcare and agricultural development.

In the Province of Savannakhet, SFE has been supporting the ophthalmologic hospital since 2003. The general objective



is to reduce eye diseases and to prevent blindness. This activity includes mobile clinics, training of medical staff, improvement of the eye drops production as well as of the optical laboratory. The team of the hospital is going to remote areas to detect, treat and operate patients. The activity focuses on the training of the local staff, notably the health volunteers of the 66 centers dispatched in 15 districts. There also has to be place for innovating so as to make treatments affordable to the poorest. Therefore, for the Christmas Action 2013, we would like to submit to you the project of ophthalmology. We need 8400€ to support, among others, the mobile clinics that go to the villages to provide eye care to the poorest.



Thanking you in advance for the interest you are taking in SFE's work.

Dr. Philippe Klopfenstein  
Chairman of SFE



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