

Service Fraternel d'Entraide ~ Laos

Newsletter ~ March 2016



Women and men working alongside the people of Laos

I had the privilege to spend ten days in Laos visiting the expatriates, the different projects as well as the local supervisory authorities. From the South to the Center of the country SFE teams are busy transmitting their knowledge and know-how by adapting it to the local context.

Attapeu Province

The city of Attapeu is expanding at a brisk pace and accelerated way. The airport built very recently 20 km from the town should become operational this month. I was welcomed by the Provincial Health Authority and what a surprise when I discovered that the new director was a former colleague at the hospital where I practiced as a medical doctor from 1998 to 2001. No need to tell you that the interview was more than cordial, my contact person mentioned SFE's good work achieved with small means whereas the results of other NGOs with bigger means are hardly visible.

It is true that our 18 years presence in this province helped gain the confidence of the inhabitants, and the Lao community health work team which emerged is very dynamic and motivated.

Here is an example to underline the very concrete help that has been well received by the population : the community health team proposed to the villagers to do a growing trial with associated crops : mountain rice (without irrigation) and beans (a legume). The advantage of that association permits a bigger harvest of rice because of the benefit of nitrogen from the beans (an essential nutrient for rice that is often lacking in traditional cultivation) and at the same time the beans provide a source of protein for nutrition. Furthermore, the beans grow faster than rice and are cut twice in order not to smother the rice. This fodder is used as green manure for the rice of the nearby field. After the harvest, the crop of a reference field without beans was compared

with the one of a field with beans. The villagers were startled to see that the field with beans produced 35% more rice than the field without beans, and this with a lower number of rice plants as part of the cultivated



a 35% higher yield in intercropping

area was used for beans.

During the period from November to February it is rather cold in the mountain villages (above 3000 feet temperatures fall to 5° celsius). Children are very often not equiped against the cold and wear sometimes just a T-shirt and underpants if no clothes at all. Our teams distribute warm clothing : we particularly mention the two suitcases of pullovers knit by a French grandmother who has a special concern for the children of these poor villages that we support in Attapeu Province and Kapeu.



rice-bean intercropping



food diversification



Sekong Province :

Kapeu : the team carries on with the community agricultural development . Villagers are very grateful for the help they receive, whether it is water supply, building of toilets, sanitary education, help to start a vegetable garden or fish farming. One example of the impact of our action : in one of the villages, we helped to start 3 fish farms. When our team went back to the village, the idea had fascinated the inhabitants so much that we found 20 small fish ponds !



large vegetable garden

Our projects are truly becoming part of the government policy. In a local newspaper of March 8th, you could read the following : "The Ministry of Agriculture and Forests wants to promote food security, foster and achieve sustainable agriculture and to lay the groundwork of modern agriculture...to permit rural development and the reduction of poverty. In 2012 agriculture represented 26% of the Gross National Product with an annual growth rate of 3,3%."



gardening - nursery

Thank you very much for your generosity in favour of the Christmas Action. We suggested that you to support the training of a Lao ophtalmologist which amounts to 4000 euros per year. Thanks to your donations, we have already collected 2490 euros. We are infinitely grateful to you for it.

Best regards,



training of the model families

Sekong : our nurse courageously carries on the trainings in Sekong Provincial Hospital as well as in 3 district hospitals and 4 health centers hard to access. To improve work conditions in one of these centers she installed solar panels. During the 2nd semester a medical doctor and midwife couple will join her in order to reinforce medical implication at the hospital.

Mid-term project

Lao « managers »

Our Lao teams (36 people all together) are changing and our expatriates are trying to implement Lao project managers, the expatriate staff having then more a role as advisers. It is one of the challenges for the future in order to make the teams more autonomous.

New project

We are planning a community health project in another province in 2017. We will be able to give you more information at the end of this year.

A Lao foundation ?

It is now over a year since we took steps to create a Lao foundation which would be capable of taking over the responsibility of some of our projects. The statutes are currently being examined by the final government authorities.

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