

Newsletter - November 2019



Disastrous floods in southern Laos

1999, 2009 and now 2019 will be remembered as having cruelly impacted the staple food of the Lao people. Shortly after the rice was transplanted, exceptional typhoons swallowed up the young shoots at the end of September, compromising future harvests.



SFE decided to focus on the three southern regions to address the most urgent situation in Savannakhet, Sekong and Salavan provinces. After the withdrawal of the water, it was possible to return to the villages in October, although many roads heavily damaged by the rains made it difficult to access the hospitals and health centres in which SFE works.

Our teams brought rice to the most affected villages to avoid malnutrition at least until harvest. At the time of the assessment, it is estimated that 15% of the harvest is lost. Many villagers also lost part of their livestock when African swine fever had already decimated many of the province's pigs.



Bridge in Sekong that connects district hospitals and remote health centres



In March of this year, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, appointed by the Human Rights Council, visited Laos. The report's conclusions show that the country, despite rapid progress in economic growth, has mainly increased inequality. The sale of the country's mining concessions and resources benefits part of the elite, depriving the majority of the population of vital resources.

While Laos is making progress in reducing poverty according to the criteria established under the sustainable development objectives, the impact of this progress for the poorest remains limited. In the area of health, the report underlines disparities across the country. Access to quality healthcare remains unaffordable for many people. Despite the ambitious plans designed at the national level, implementation at the local level and reality remain quite different from those expected. However, efforts are visible: the Lao government has decided this year, for example, to stop all illegal concessions in Laos.



The SFE tries to work as closely as possible with health actors at the level of 2 provincial hospitals, 3 district hospitals, 8 health centres and 16 villages thanks to the presence of expatriates who stay several years and work alongside Lao staff. The objective is to improve living conditions in Sekong and Salavane provinces through the improvement of health services.

Sekong: evaluation in progress of the 2nd phase (2018-2020) of the support provided to the province's health system

The mid-term evaluation of the project was encouraging at all levels. Here are some examples of the objectives achieved in this project:

- 75% of health personnel in health centres have improved their practical skills when examining patients and 78% have the required knowledge of the 5 most common diseases.
- The operational capacity of health centres has increased by 32%.
- 80% of households in the target villages have access to a clean water source close to their homes and 70% of them drink treated water at home. 95% of people in target villages systematically use toilets when they are in the village.

In conclusion: during the discussions conducted during the evaluation, it emerged that training, in particular activities related to quality management of healthcare and the improvement of medical equipment, had a positive impact on the staff's ability to carry out their daily tasks.



Attapeu: a page is turned

After more than 20 years of presence in Attapeu, the SFE's involvement is taking a new approach. From medical and technical support to Attapeu hospital, which started in May 1998, to district hospitals in the following years, the work of SFE has been involved over the past 10 years in integrated community work in the poorest villages of the province. These projects end in December of this year.

Nevertheless, SFE does not leave Attapeu. The authorities have asked us for help to bring the school up to the national standard in terms of teacher training, building functionality and school administration.

Another long-term project focusing on disability is in the process of being developed: it would make it possible to work in the long term on the capacities of people with disabilities, their integration into the community and a certain degree of financial autonomy. Knowing the field through the work done in the villages makes it possible to identify these people who are often left behind.



Kapeu: a page is definitely turning

After more than 10 years of presence, the Trial and Training Centre and the Kapeu Community Development Project will close their doors. This project has impacted the lives of 8,000 beneficiaries directly and 40,000 beneficiaries indirectly among the poorest communities in Thateng province, providing them with training, work and development opportunities. We are pleased that the farm and land can be handed over to Mai Savanh Lao, who is involved in fair trade and that this place continues to be a place of training and support for the villagers of the region.

Christmas action

Our wish is to empower our staff, some of whom have been part of our teams for 10 years. You can help us in this process by supporting training to enable them to write a CV, look for a job, or follow an in-depth permaculture training as many of our employees are already farmers. This curriculum would help farmers to have an overview of their agricultural production and plan the integration of techniques and strategies to fight climate change. Thank you for supporting our staff in their upcoming retraining. Your contributions will make a difference!

New water project in 2020

Next spring, if we obtain the agreement of our donors, we plan to launch a new project focusing on water filter distribution and hygiene education for the poorest people in southern Laos. We will talk more about this in our next newsletter .

I wish you a happy holiday season and I would like to thank all of you for supporting SFE's commitment in Laos,



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