University Scholarship Programme - Laos
Alumni Report 2018
WHY: Our alumni are important contributors to our strategy

Objectives - University Scholarship Programme

Our Higher Education programmes aim at creating pathways for leaders and specialists who work towards the development of their countries (as highlighted here on the right in our vision and strategy).

One of these programmes is our University Scholarship Programme which started in 2006. Since then we have granted full scholarships for university studies to 429 Myanmar, Cambodian and Laotian students at the time of this report.

We here summarize our annual updates collected from our Laos alumni. Our March-April 2018 survey had a response rate of 100%.

Child’s Dream Vision, Mission & Strategy

Vision

Empowered people responsibly shaping their communities

Mission

Improving health and education for sustainable development

Strategy

We design, implement, and partner to support interventions for children and young adults. We address current and future needs in Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand related to:

- Basic or essential health
- Relevant and quality education
- Responsible leaders and qualified specialists
- Values of peace and justice
- Environmental sustainability
HOW: Guiding Principles – University Scholarships

- Promoting the development of the countries from which the individuals come
- Supporting the development of the educational system in the country of origin
- Prioritising students who aim to have a positive multiplier effect (i.e. teachers, social workers, public health workers, communicators, policy makers)
- Prioritising studies who will have a direct impact in their countries after graduation and when entering the labor market
- Prioritising students who study in their country of origin, acknowledging that some students might be required to study abroad due to factors such as lack of education facilities or quality of education
- Promoting social reconciliation; addressing unbalanced ethnic, gender, and/or class issues
- Being as objective as possible in the selection of future leaders and change makers according to clear criteria
Current Programme Status

Currently there are 63 Laotian students (36 men and 27 women) studying, 10 Laotian alumni who studied in Thailand on master level, 42 alumni who studied on bachelor level in Laos, and 12 students who either stopped studying based on their own decision, or whose scholarships we discontinued since 2009. The graduation rate in our programme stands at 81%, meaning that more than 8 out of 10 scholars have graduated.

Three students dropped out
1. Marriage
2. Resettlement to the US
3. Received better scholarship opportunity

The reason why we ourselves discontinued scholarship support for 9 students was that they did not perform to our own defined minimum standards (GPA below 2.75).
# IMPACT: Programme Indicators

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alumni response rate</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Percentage of alumni who answered our survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drop-out rate</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Percentage of students who either discontinued their studies, or who lost our scholarship</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(students dropped x 100 / total scholarships awarded)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduation rate</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>Percentage of students who successfully graduated</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(graduates x 100 / (total scholarships awarded – current students))</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alumni unemployed</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>Percentage of alumni currently unemployed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alumni living in Laos</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>Percentage of alumni living in Laos</td>
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## Gender equality

Although our selection is gender neutral, there are more male than female alumni. Our experience shows that women are more likely to drop out. We are aware of this situation and aim to improve it over time.

![Alumni gender chart](chart.png)

- **Male**: 34
- **Female**: 18
IMPACT: Programme Indicators cont.

Alumni employment analysis
More than 90% of alumni are productive and working in various positions. Most of our alumni are employed in junior positions because most of them graduated recently. Roughly 30% of alumni work as teachers or in other government positions. We believe that the impact on the development of their country will increase as our alumni gain more experience and exposure.

Our first Laotian bachelor students graduated in late 2015. It can be observed that alumni often find employment two years after graduation, as many employers require applicants to have a minimum of two years of working experience. Rural students who just graduated from university do not yet have two years of working experience.
Key Challenges

We started the Laotian University Scholarship Programme in 2010 and over the last eight years and three rounds of graduations we have identified the following challenges of the programme’s objectives:

- **Bureaucratic system** - The government in communist Laos is extremely hierarchical. We used to rely on key officials and school principals because this was useful, but often proved ineffective as officials did not adequately spread around application forms, collect them, or pass them back to our team.

- **Rural schools have too low overall quality** - Resources of our rural target schools are limited, and opportunities for interactions with other schools are lower due to budget limitations and physical distance. We were limited to recruiting very financially needy, but academically deprived students, despite being among the top of their respective classes. Despite this, we still wanted to try to include these rural youth in our higher education initiatives.

- **Choosing majors is difficult** – Although education in Laos is almost exclusively state-run, the systems at different levels do not integrate well. Students suffer from a chronic lack of information.
Key Challenges cont.

- **Government quotas** – Universities and provincial governments have a complicated system of “quotas” meant to match students with proven academic ability to compatible majors, taking into account the government’s pre-defined priorities for country development. This has meant students are often obliged to study majors which are not their primary interest, and other students are not admitted to study the major for which they applied as the course has been limited in size (e.g. medicine).

- **Lack of life and work experience** – Rural students from remote areas struggle with basic tasks while studying at university such as research and study, then later struggle with connecting to a job after graduation.

- **Government jobs are perceived as the most valuable** – After graduation, alumni ideally often wish to work for the government. This is because it is often a position for life. In the official economy, the government sector is the largest by far. However, one challenge is that the government does not have enough money to continue hiring staff.
Improvements made to address challenges

We updated our strategy because we saw that the first groups of alumni had lower than anticipated employment rates as well as less relevant development impact than we had hoped. Most students still preferred to be employed by the government and were not sure about alternative options. They largely focused on themselves or their families for impact, rather than larger society.

The rationale in strategy is now on actively promoting youth to change their role to applying their knowledge and experience by taking up key positions where they are empowered to promote development in Laos. This has required several changes:

1. Student recruitment needed to be changed
2. Selection and interviews take place after the student have successfully been accepted to university
3. Creation and subsequent expansion of a new network of CBO and NGO exposing existing university students, recent alumni, and other youth to the concepts of community service, active citizenship, and the NGO sector work experiences
Improvements made to address the challenges

4. We are now both training by ourselves and also forming CBO partnerships to further train existing university students, recent alumni, and other youth in a variety of life skills to supplement what they learn at university or in high school.

5. We are currently exposing existing university students, recent alumni, and other youth to concepts of community service, active citizenship, and NGO sector work experiences by arranging community service days, internships, and NGO visit days.

6. In 2017 we started the first in a series of annual alumni conferences where we bring together our university alumni and also final year students which helps to connect new graduate to jobs, and to upgrade the skills and experiences of both.
Examples: Three Laotian alumni profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mr. Thavivanh Phommachack</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Graduated with a BA in Agricultural Sciences from Soupanouvong University, Laos in 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ After graduation editor at Aiy Nou Noi Printing House, Laung Prabang District, Luang Prabang</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ 08/2016-12/2016: worked at the Lao Travel Company, back office position, Chanthabouly District, Vientiane, Laos</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ since 02/2017: Lecturer at Faculty of Agriculture, Soupanouvong University, Luang Prabang, Laos</td>
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<tr>
<th>Ms. Khamyouly Sisoukkeochanthaboun</th>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Graduated with a BSc in Chemistry from Pakse Teacher's College, Laos in 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ After graduation volunteer teacher at Don Talad Upper Secondary School, Champasak Province, Laos</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Since 10/2017: paid government teaching position at the same school</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mr. Mone Khattiyyod</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Graduated with a BA in Agricultural Sciences from Soupanouvong University, Laos in 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ since 12/2017: Regional forestry planner at Burapha Agro-Forestry Company, Saytettha District, Vientiane</td>
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Thank you!