

# PADETC



ten years in balance



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Participatory Development Training Center

[www.padetc.org](http://www.padetc.org)

Organization History

Mission and Objectives

Sustainable Development Models

# PADETC is a not-for-profit Lao organization, registered under the Department of Private Education in the Ministry of Education, Lao PDR

PADETC grew out of a group of five Lao development workers who had spent over ten years working on agriculture and participatory processes in rural areas throughout Laos. During that time they carried out their work on a project basis, with support from international NGO's. In late 1996, the Lao government approved an application by the group to establish the Participatory Development Training Center (PADETC) as an independent not-for-profit organization, aimed at strengthening human resources for sustainable development. Since then, PADETC has grown into an organization of over 50 staff, all of whom are Lao nationals, and assisted by nearly 2000 young volunteers all over the country. The publication "PADETC: ten years in balance" summarizes PADETC's history, it's mission, development philosophy, and experiences.

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# PADETC history in short

**P**ADETC started life as the RIFS (Rice-based Integrated Farming System) Project back in 1980. The main focus of its work was in the area of food security for poor rural communities in the aftermath of the Vietnam war. With a team of 5 staff, the RIFS project trained farmers, students, teachers, and agriculture extension workers in integrated farming and promoted use of low-input techniques such as organic fertilizers and green manure to improve existing subsistence practices. All these techniques were complemented with the provision of handbooks and training of development volunteers, especially women.

By 1992, the number of staff working in the RIFS Project had increased to eight people. Their work had expanded from improvement of agricultural techniques to support of bottom-up multi-sectoral rural development planning.

At the end of 1996, more than ten years after the RIFS project was first started, RIFS requested to be recognized as an official training institution and PADETC was formally set up. PADETC with its extensive grass-root development experience began to streamline its work with human resource development for sustainable development and poverty reduction as its mandate.

Since then, PADETC has grown, both in size and quality. Now it mainly plays the role of facilitator, trainer, model-builder and advocator for poverty reduction and, more importantly, poverty prevention. Its programs are all interlinked and highly synergistic. Its number of employees now exceeds 50, assisted by hundreds of enthusiastic young Lao volunteers. The total annual budget in 2006 was nearly 800,000 USD. Presently, PADETC's main funding partners include the Dutch-based Novib/Oxfam (over 50% of PADETC's 2006 budget), the European Union, Sida, and several other smaller sponsors which support specific development activities. PADETC has gained recognition for its work and has received several prestigious regional and international awards.



# Interview with PADETC Director Mr. Sombath Somphone

*It takes a while for an outsider to fully grasp the work scope of the Participatory Development Training Center (PADETC). Why? Because there are so many components it has explored over its ten years of development work in Laos.*



The center, which is entirely staffed by Lao people, has its fingers in many pies: from the production of fuel-efficient stoves, to fish farming promotion, recycling, media, young volunteers in schools, and even to teacher training.

“We had to try out different things over the years, to find an entry point into what we really want to achieve,” says Sombath Somphone, founder and director of PADETC. “So everything we did were like little pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, which we have developed and pieced together. Now after ten years, a picture is slowly taking shape.”

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**PADETC’s quest can be summed up in four words:**

**EDUCATION FOR  
SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT**

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Imagine a house with four pillars, built on sturdy foundation. This is PADETC’s model of sustainable development, which is built on a strong base of good governance and education, while upheld by four pillars of economic development, environmental

harmony, promotion and preservation of culture, and lastly the spiritual well-being or heart of the people. All these work together to support the roof (or ultimate goal) which is Genuine National Happiness, a concept of joyful living inspired by the Bhutanese idea of Gross National Happiness.

**“And for us, education of the heart, should be the heart of education.”**

*Sombath Somphone*

It seems old-fashioned to speak of spirituality in the 21st century, but PADETC believes that modern-day education and development models have ignored this crucial element. Societies are highly skilled but sorely lacking in qualities like compassion and social responsibility.

In the model, good governance sits at the bottom of the house and will determine how shaky or firm the building is. For PADETC, a government is only as good as the people who run it, which is why education is stacked together with good governance.

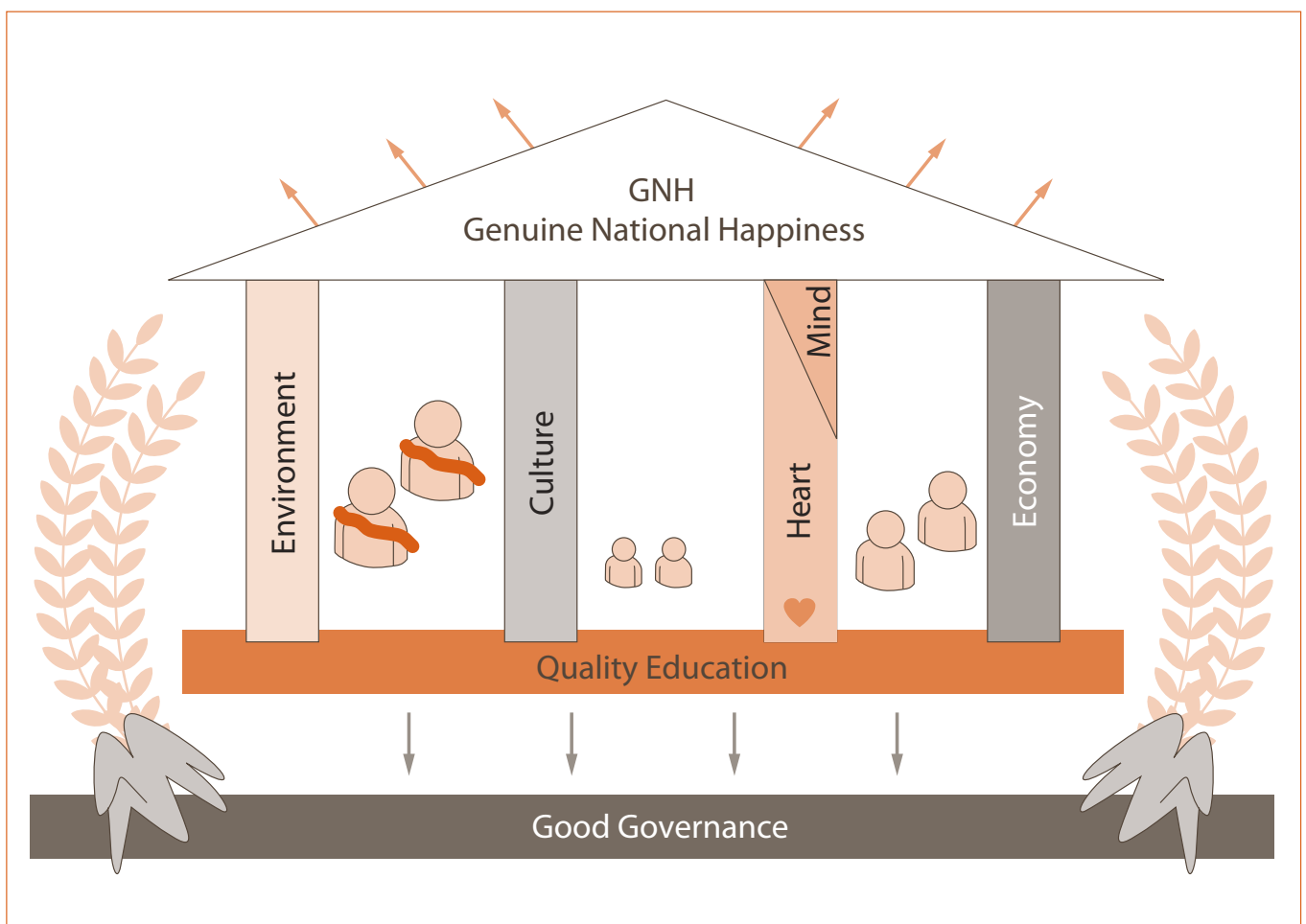
“So education is at the center of the sustainable development model. Unless we have a good education system, we will not have good governance,” says Sombath Somphone. “And for us, education of the heart should be the heart of education.”





## **PADETC is a training center promoting participatory processes for sustainable development :**

development with a balance between social development, economic development, and environmental harmony



# Early days

*In 1981, long before the establishment of PADETC, Sombath Somphone began working in sustainable agriculture techniques, using a participatory bottom-up planning approach. But he was constantly stonewalled by people who were not open-minded enough to accept new ideas and skills.*

**A**fter 15 years of hard work, I came to realize that the root of the problem lies in the human component. Human attitude can be changed more effectively only when they are still young and the window of learning opportunities are still open," Sombath says. "So I changed my approach and started training university graduates to promote sustainable development techniques in our rural development program." This was in 1997, a year after



PADETC had registered as a not-for-profit Lao institution to build human resource for sustainable development.

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**But Sombath soon realized that training university graduates was too late as well, as they were "already too old to learn certain new skills."**

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So it went further down the education chain to reach primary and secondary school children. In 1998, the center introduced recycling and organic farming at some schools in Vientiane; teaching a range of skills while ensuring joyful learning.

"For example, through raising earthworms with kitchen waste, the children learnt about biology, the environment, and also the discipline of taking care of another life form. They also learnt to organize and work in teams".

The children recruited to take part in its activities in turn imparted their knowledge to oth-

ers during monthly community service in villages. Year after year, the network of young volunteers grew and the activities diversified to include storytelling, drama, and drug prevention awareness campaigns.

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**At the same time, PADETC made forays into small businesses, encouraging villagers to try out environmentally-friendly and sustainable appropriate techniques.**

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There were some hits and misses, but those that worked has helped villagers to have better income and employment. Today, villagers are earning more money producing fuel-efficient stoves, weaving better quality silk, and selling green tea from mulberry leaves.

PADETC hopes such successes might persuade more Lao youth to stay home to develop local industries instead of migrating to the capital or to other countries in search of employment.





Already, there has been increasing numbers of Lao youth lured abroad as cheap labourers in human trafficking scams. "In whatever we do, we have to

foster self-reliance and reduce dependence on outside assistance. So PADETC tries to transfer the knowledge to enable Lao communities that are ready and able, to care for their own, now and into the future."

In recent years, the organization has begun to streamline its work, to focus much more on youth development and economic enterprises. These two initiatives have the potential to build a new generation of citizens who are socially responsible, and yet possess the entrepreneurial spirit to make good use of the rich resources and indigenous knowledge Laos offers.

Together they would form the four firm pillars of economic development, environmental harmony, culture and spiritual well-being, referred to in PADETC's model of sustainable development.

PADETC knew early on that it had found a winning formula working with young children. It believed that it was building a future generation of leaders that had character, self-esteem, responsibility and civic-mindedness (leaders with heart). It was keen to introduce its activities nationwide, but the time was not right. The government was cautious, and was doubtful of the young volunteers' abilities. At the same time, it advocated schools to include life skills and cultural traditions so that Lao children would be better prepared for life outside the classroom.

"When the schools teach the children, they don't teach about 'the heart' which is the source of decision making. They only teach the facts," says Phoxay Chantavongsa, who heads PADETC's Youth Development Unit. He recounted the early years of advocacy as "painful and difficult."

Finally in 2003, the tide began to turn as the work of young volunteers gathered momentum. The Center's 300 young volunteers were officially recognized by the Ministry of Education and the network grew dramatically. By the end of 2006, 56 groups had been formed in 13 provinces, totalling 1800 volunteers.

It was at this time that PADETC began to move forward in a few ways. In 2004, it was able to launch its pilot Quality School project at 10 primary schools in Vientiane capital. It helped teachers to prepare lesson plans based on the national curriculum, trained them in child-friendly teaching methods, and placed older volunteers called Youth Leaders to assist in extra-curricular classes. It even roped







in monks to teach meditation and dhamma (Buddhism) to the primary school students twice a week.

Communities and authorities saw that the children at the 10 schools enjoyed coming to school which now included Lao dance, Buddhism, aerobics, English, storytelling, drama, gardening and indigenous skills. This was the 'heart' of education that PADETC was talking about, and it was finally being accepted. The teachers became motivated, having learnt how to use discovery-based learning to engage their students - a skill they picked up from the Youth Leaders. Most importantly, the Quality Schools reported higher school attendances and better examination results, at a time when truancy was escalating elsewhere.

In 2006, PADETC was allowed to expand the Quality Schools project to another 100 schools. It scored another coup in 2007, when officials nationwide gathered to discuss how they could

follow in PADETC's footsteps to engage young volunteers to carry out extracurricular activities with positive impact on communities.

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### **"We started from zero 10 years ago**

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with no tools, no network, no human resources, to now becoming accepted into the mainstream," says Phoxay, almost with an air of vindication. "We have begun to understand the government better in the last two, three years and the reverse too. So there is much more synergy now. I'm really happily surprised that we have won them over and have become close partners now. I'm also glad that the Ministry of Education now appreciates and recognizes the strength of the youth networks and what the young people can do."

PADETC's network of young people with 'heart' can be a powerful and positive social force to encourage other young people to use their time meaningfully, and steer clear from tempta-

tions such as drugs, alcohol and prostitution. In fact, one of its latest projects relies on 500 students to spread the word on drug prevention through forum theatre. In just 14 months, this group reached out to 98,000 students and villagers.

The home grown organization is not resting on its laurels: it already plans to develop packages of multimedia teaching and learning tools to support teachers and volunteers; and to train more volunteers to prevent a drop in quality as the project widens its coverage.

"So the picture emerging from the jigsaw puzzle is the 'house' of sustainable development, and with it, education of the 'heart.' With it, we can help communities practice good governance and find genuine happiness. We want to popularize this model not just in Lao PDR but also in the region," says Sombath Somphone.

An ambitious plan but as the last ten years have shown, hard work and passion can reap some surprising rewards.



# PADETC's Main Program Objectives

- Youth leadership

To **support** a new generation of community leaders by providing training for youth in leadership skills, concepts of sustainable development, and critical thinking.

- Rural development

To **provide** training and technical assistance to subsistence communities throughout Laos on appropriate technologies for food production, resource management, and income generation.

- Micro-enterprise development

To **promote** appropriate small-scale enterprises that can provide income to rural households and add value to local Lao produce.

- Training

To **develop** and utilize training modules and tools which promote participatory and real life learning.

- Local government capacity building

To **assist** local government institutions to develop bottom-up planning and management systems which support integrated and holistic development with full participation of its stakeholders.

- Media

To **promote** long distance learning and non-formal education, through using participatory media to promote sustainable development and environmental protection in the Lao PDR.



# PADETC's organizational structure and management

*PADETC is managed and operated by all Lao nationals.*



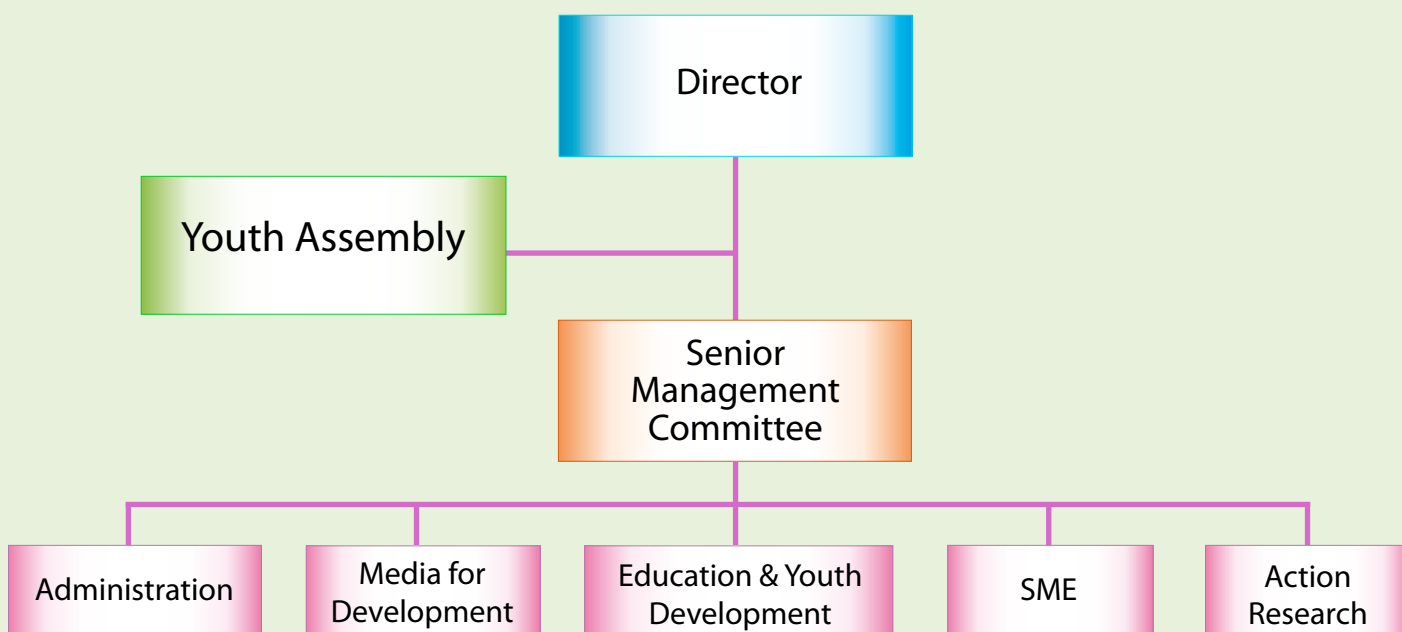
At present it has over 50 staff. It is divided into five units: Education and Youth Development, Small and Medium Enterprises, Action Research, Media for Development, and Administration and Finance.

It is supervised by a management committee, which is headed by the Director, Mr. Sombath Somphone. The unit heads are members of this management

committee and meet regularly. Each member of the committee is given specific management tasks. All major activity plans and strategies are presented for committee approval. Once approved, the assigned units are responsible for implementation and reporting back to the management committee. The Director is in charge of setting policies, guiding strategic options,

and resource mobilization. Apart from the management committee, each unit organizes its own monthly meetings to review progress and adjust plans. Every three months PADETC conducts a half day all-staff meeting. And at the end of each year all staff participate in a three-day retreat to review achievements and challenges of the previous year and strategize for the following year.

Each year, PADETC produces an annual report and its operations are subjected to an annual external audit. Every three to four years, or at the end of a planning cycle, its programs are externally evaluated. The evaluation report, the annual reports and the auditor's reports are available upon request by interested parties.





# PADETC's Quality School Program

*Launched in Vientiane in 2002, PADETC's Quality School Program aims to raise the standard of education in Lao primary schools and to bring out the best in every Lao child.*

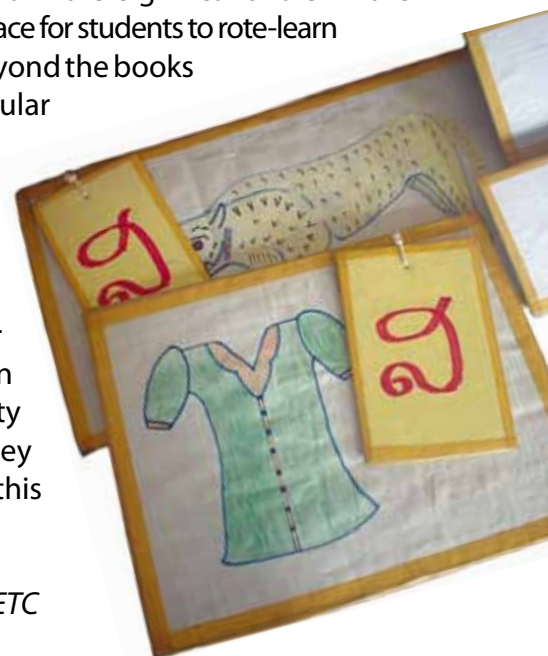
Complimenting the existing national curriculum, the Quality School Program uses field-tested sample lesson plans, locally produced teaching aids, and child-centered teaching methods to make learning fun and relevant. To broaden the learning experience beyond the confines of textbooks and the classroom, the Quality School Program stresses "experiential learning" through introducing a whole range of extra curricular activities. These extra-curricular activities not only engage students but also involve parents, teachers, monks, and other members of the local community.

- A child-centered approach to learning and teaching
- Strengthening the capacity of teachers
- Community participation in children's education



"I believe that schools should play a more significant role in the community. A school should not be a place for students to rote-learn but a place to encourage learning beyond the books and to get involved in extra curricular activities. Parents, guardians, monks and the community must participate in educating our younger generation. Their participation will form a treasure trove of experiences and history for our children to draw on and this can only benefit the students, community and Lao society. This is a long journey but I am excited that we have taken this important step."

*Sombath Somphone, Director of PADETC*



“Quality School” is the name of a PADETC-supported program to promote participatory learning at primary school level and implemented in cooperation with the Vientiane Education Service (VES).

The program started in 2001, when some PADETC’s youth volunteers went to some schools around the capital city to volunteer their time to help teachers in organizing extra-curricular activities for children as part of their youth volunteer practical training program. These Youth Volunteers whose ages mostly ranged from 14-19 used “edutainment” skills learned through youth camps to organize activities in art, drama, singing, folk dancing, sports, and hygiene and environment education for children after school and during weekends. The schools initially welcomed the assistance from the volunteers seeing them as a resource to relieve the overworked and underpaid teachers. Later, the teachers became much more appreciative of the participatory and child-

centered techniques used by the volunteers to engage children. The teachers also saw absenteeism in their classroom declined and the confidence levels, leadership skills and creativity of children who actively participated in the extra-curricula activities improved.

PADETC seized the opportunity of the positive response from the school principals and teachers to organize informal training sessions for the teachers to promote skills in using more child-centered and participatory learn-through-play techniques to chip away the teachers’ conservative and out-dated methods of “teacher-talk and children-listen” mode of teaching. Through such in-roads, teachers were taught child-led story-telling techniques to promote reading and writing; setting up school libraries/learning corners; setting up school garbage collection banks to encourage garbage recycling; use of recycled materials to produce teaching and learning materials; setting up school gardens



to promote learning of bioscience and simple agriculture production techniques; inter-class and inter-school quizzes and competitions to promote team work and individual excellence, etc. In all these activities, the Youth Volunteers continue to play a critical role as facilitators to break down the age and hierarchical barriers between teachers and students.

After more than one year, the school principals and teachers were so pleased with the results that they requested PADETC to expand and systematize their support to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

In 2002, with approval of the Vientiane Education Services, Education Project Management Committees were established at district and provincial levels, the Quality School Program Design was reviewed and approved. For a start, ten primary schools (including a number of the schools where the Youth Volunteers had been active) which met the selection criteria were selected as “Pilot Quality Schools” to implement the program.

A systematic program of training workshops on the child-centered teaching methods were conducted during 2003-2004 and







attended by teachers and education officials of the Vientiane Education Services (VES). This teaching curriculum promoted by PADETC was formally endorsed by VES and put into its Education Development Plan as a priority for the academic year of 2005-2006. Since then, it has been widely and effectively used.

Besides the training of teachers in child-centered teaching and learning approaches, teachers also indicated that they need assistance in lesson planning. Most teachers were exposed to lesson planning from their pre-service or in-service teacher training days. However, much

of what they learned was theoretical, not very user-friendly, and out-dated. Many teachers also did not have the necessary pedagogical background and experience to improve the quality of their lesson planning. To address this critical barrier identified by teachers, PADETC brought in experienced teacher educators from neighboring countries to work with the teachers and systematically went through the curriculum guides, syllabus, and textbooks used in all the primary grades and drafted, and field-tested sample lessons plans which now incorporated the new teaching techniques that teachers were trained in. Simple "standardized" lesson plans for Grade 1 to Grade 5 covering subjects of Mathematics, Lao Language and the "World Around Us" were produced. These lesson plans were first used in the 10 pilot schools, but they proved to be so popular with teachers that for the school year of 2006/2007, the lesson plans were sent to 80 new target schools in Vientiane Capital and 54 schools in Xiengkhouang and Sayabouly provinces to be shared with teachers to guide their teaching. Conscious of the fact that parents



and key members of the community, including the temples are the keepers and holders of indigenous knowledge, culture, and history of the community and region, PADETC has always looked for practical ways to engage parents and members of the community to enrich and expand the horizons and learning of children beyond the school walls. The Quality School Program therefore introduced the concept of involving monks from the local temple to regularly come into the classroom to teach respect, tolerance, understanding, and ethics through telling stories related to the Buddha and his teachings. The monks also organize temple festivals and events to raise public awareness of the importance of education and to mobilize funds for schools – a major shift from past practices when funds mobilized through such events went only to the building and renovation of temples.







To further link schools and communities, PADETC through the Quality School Program is already working with local community experts to develop local curriculum materials as the basis for streamlining “indigenous knowledge” into the school curriculum. Although the Quality School Program has been introduced not so long ago, many encouraging changes can now be observed in schools and in the communities around the school.

**These positive changes include:**

- Improvement in teaching and learning leading to higher rates of student enrolment and attendance and grade progression.
- Children from the Quality Schools consistently took the top prizes at provincial examinations.
- High demand from principals and teachers of non-project schools to be included into the program.
- Many schools now have learning corners and school gardens and recycling banks to encourage experiential and project-based learning.
- Parents, community members, and monks are more engaged in school affairs and school management and education improvement.
- Youth Volunteers who assist in the Quality Schools have gained social recognition from the schools and communities with corresponding boost to their self-confidence and self-esteem.
- The Quality School multi-prong approach of promotion of child-centered learning and teaching with a focus on local expertise and resources, including involvement of Youth Volunteers, Buddhist Monks, and community expertise is increasingly recognized and endorsed by the Education Authorities at all levels.





# PADETC's engaged Buddhism for educating the heart

*With increasing pace of globalization and modernization, Lao society is confronted with a new and more complex set of social and economic challenges, such as widening income gaps, increasing problems of drug abuse, environmental pollution, rural to urban migration, HIV/AIDS, and cross-border trafficking. These problems threaten the social stability and harmony of Lao families and communities.*



Some Lao monks believe that these problems can be mitigated through the teaching of the Buddhist concept of development which places emphasis on self-awareness, sufficiency, harmony, solidarity, and respect of all living things.

## **Teaching Buddhist ethics of physical and spiritual well-being and happiness.**

To promote this concept, monk groups in many communities around Laos have set up a movement called Dhamma Sanchon, meaning “mobile ethics teachings”. Their goal is to enhance the capacities and roles of the monks in contributing to societal development through teaching Buddhist ethics of physical and spiritual well-being and happiness. Special focus

would be on school-going children in order to develop future “human resources with high morality”. The “Mobile Dhamma Team” commenced its activities in 2003.

## **“Mobile Dhamma Team”**

Seeing the importance of this movement in helping to build a strong moral base for children, PADETC together with the Vientiane Education Service (VES) invited the “Mobile Dhamma Team” to be involved in the Quality School Project by giving monks time to teach Buddhist ethics in the 10 pilot Quality Schools. The Dhamma Team with support from PADETC designed an ethics curriculum for three different primary school grades following the principles of child-centered learning.





To make learning more interactive, the team also produced video films, booklets, stories, songs and poems to teach basic moral concepts of Buddhist ethics.

The response from schools to the involvement of monks in teaching was so positive that by 2006-2007, Dhamma Sanchon expanded to cover 52 primary schools reaching some 6,000 school children.

Dhamma Sanchon also encourages communities to contribute to improving their local schools and education by organizing village and temple festivals to raise funds for school repair, maintenance and school materials. In 2007, about 400,000 million kip (around 40,000 US\$) was raised in this manner.

Dhamma Sanchon is gaining momentum and spreading to many more schools and valued by the teachers, parents, and the education authorities as they see the need to give children a moral and spiritual base for their development and education.



- *Because of greed, jealousy, and pride, the economy will never become strong enough to ensure that every person has access to the basic necessities of life.*
- *Our modern education should include spiritual matters. We should teach our young to help others as much as possible, or at least refrain from harming others.*

## To enjoy work and life

- **BE IN THE PRESENT MOMENT**  
focus on what is right now.
- **LEARN FROM THE PAST**  
learn from it and do things better today.
- **CREATE YOUR OWN FUTURE**  
imagine your own wonderful future.  
Make a realistic plan.  
Start working on that plan today.

*The value of a person depends on his or her own accomplishment.*

*And a person's accomplishment depends on his or her own action.*

*Ajan Saly Khantasiro*





# Youth for development

*The programs undertaken by PADETC's Youth for Development Unit can be considered the core of the vision and mission of PADETC as an organization that focuses on educating (in the broad sense) Lao youth. The ultimate goal of this Unit is to prepare Lao youth to become responsible adults with strong understanding and appreciation of their Laotian roots and culture.*

The program is designed to supplement the learning gained by children and adolescents through the formal schooling system with leadership training and experience in community service and practical projects to prepare them for responsible adulthood and the world of work. It also aims to tap into the creativity and energy of children and young people to use their free time in a more meaningful way and promote the spirit of "volunteerism" and contribution to society from a young age.

The Youth for Development program targets children and youth and are organized around four main age and activity groups:

- Children Cultural Centers
- Young Volunteers
- Youth for the Environment (Green Ants)
- Development Volunteers



The CCC (Children Cultural Centers) initiated by Mme Dara Kanlaya are now found in various provinces. PADETC organizes extra-curricular activities at the CCC for primary and secondary school children who come to the centers after school hours and during weekends to learn games, dance, songs, drama, and to read, tell stories, draw, etc.

The Young Volunteers are targeted for children from secondary schools with ages from 13 to 18 years old. When they join the program, they learn skills (relevant to their age) in helping others and contributing to their community. These skills include leadership, team work, writing, public speaking, helping and teaching younger kids, social interaction, Lao culture, and gender awareness. After being trained in these skills, the Young Volunteers then learn to lead, plan and implement community service activities. They use the process of participatory "edu-tainment", which basically means "having fun while learning". Their activities involve going to schools and communities to train and entertain younger kids, members of the communities, and sometimes teachers too.





Young Volunteers also write children's books, dub cartoon films into Lao Language, and produce plays in response to relevant development issues.



In some provinces, these young volunteers are even producing their own radio programs.

**Youth for the Environment** who call themselves "Green Ants" are university students who form volunteer groups specifically focused on understanding the natural environment. They promote organic products, and production of chemical-free vegetables and other food items.

They also promote garbage separation and recycling of waste. The Green Ants have their weekly radio program targeting their peer groups through songs and



promoting their causes. In addition they also lead youth camps and conduct action research. Their research findings feed into their news reports and radio programs.

**The Development Volunteers** are composed mainly of recent university graduates who follow a four-month on-the-job training course conducted by PADETC. Staff members of PADETC take turns conducting these training courses in their area of specialty. After the initial theoretical training, the participants select a program area of their liking and work on an issue of their choice for three months to gain field experience. Then they are assigned to relevant trainers to design and implement a small project.

At the end of this training, the Development Volunteers would have gained basic skills and concepts in participatory and sustainable development. They would also have been exposed to some practical experience to back up their qualifications when seeking their first jobs.



• A good healthy mind is the first priority

• Protecting the environment is the second priority

• Economic development is the third priority



# Some Examples of PADETC's "best practices"





# Locally-produced organic fertilizer gives high yields



**P**ADETC has demonstrated that locally produced fertilizer known as BE (bio-extract) can increase yields just like other modern chemical fertilizers. In addition the BE has other advantages: it is cheap; it does not contaminate the soil, and it improves the soil structure. It can also be produced locally by farmers using locally available materials, and the resulting produce are safer to eat, taste better and have longer shelf life.

Mr Champa, a farmer in Na Hai village in Hatsaifong district, Municipality of Vientiane, had been using chemical fertilizer and pesticide for years on his 1.2 hectare-size paddy field. His harvest had never reached more 45 bags or rice (or 1.7 ton/ha). Since he changed to using BE organic fertilizer he now produces 70 bags (or 2.6 ton/ha). His investment for BE is only 100,000 kip (around US\$10), compared to his earlier investment of 700,000 kip for chemical fertilizer. So by switching to using BE, Mr. Champa not only gets a better yield, he is also saving money and improving his soil.

Many other farmers in the village are following Mr Champa's example. There are also similar stories from other districts of other provinces where BE has been successfully adopted. To take this to scale PADETC staff worked closely with the Lao Youth Union to promote the use of BE through the youth networks all over the country.

*Like in many other countries chemical fertilizers and pesticides are not only expensive but also harmful to the health of people and the environment.*







# Sericulture: silk production and weaving



*Laos is known for its tradition of producing highly sophisticated silk textiles. Lao women learn to weave intricate designs from a very early age. They are also actively involved in all stages of production - from the planting of mulberry trees, raising silkworms, harvesting of the silk, reeling and dyeing the yarn, to the complex methods of designing and weaving.*

Over 60% of all women engaged in textile production are home-based workers, producing textiles either for subsistence-based trading or on sub-contracts for larger producers. Most of the silk are for the domestic market. Only a small percentage of weavers are actually making good income. Most women

The potential for sustainable poverty reduction through sericulture and production of Lao silk textiles for rural households, and especially women, is good given the expanding demand for high quality silk products. This is provided the Lao silk industry can be more systematically integrated linking the various processes of silk production,



weavers lack marketing and negotiation skills, knowledge of the segmentation of the textile trade, and the ever-changing styles and demand of the market. These factors put many women weavers at a disadvantage and consign them generally to producing low quality and low-priced products which trap them into a life of subsistence production and poverty.

designing, and weaving to marketing. To address this issue, PADETC initiated a sericulture project. The project is aimed at contributing to the empowerment of poor rural women engaged in Lao textile production by incorporating them into a support network that helps them to improve their system of production, quality control, management, and marketing.



The idea is to support these women to develop, promote and brand their handcrafted textile, particularly Lao silk, as an integrated cottage industry with potential for export into the international market.

The strategy used is to first establish a cooperative consisting of a network of specialized production groups. The different production groups include mulberry growers, silk worm farmers, threaders and weavers. Weaver groups are assisted by linking them up to wholesale traders in Laos and abroad. The aim is to get the production groups to progressively gain access to an assured market at home and abroad at fair prices. At present the project is implemented in a number of poor villages in Khamkert and Borikhan Districts with technical support from PADETC and a local weaving enterprise based in



Vientiane. Currently some 78 families are engaged in raising silkworm and producing high quality natural silk, 28 families are cultivating plants for production of natural dyes, and 66 skilled weavers have formed themselves into weavers groups to produce high quality and high-priced silk products. The

project is still at an early stage of development but has potential to expand to many more communities and offer alternative employment opportunities to the rural young, especially women, while at the same time continue the valuable silk tradition of Laos.





# Low-cost water filters to reduce diarrhea and cholera



*Diarrhea is the second most important cause of childhood illness and death, after malaria. The cause of diarrhea is contaminated drinking water and poor hygiene practices. Despite huge amounts of money spent on hygiene education and public health campaigns, diarrhea continues to be rampant in the rural areas, especially during the rainy season.*



**T**o resolve this problem, PADETC in 1999 started working with Cama Craft, a Canadian enterprise, and introduced the use of a simple and low-cost water filter that filters out organic contaminants.

**Each water filter costs about US\$13, a relatively affordable technology even for the poor.**

During the initial phase of the project, acceptance in the use of the water filter was not high, especially among the villagers along the Mekong River. PADETC then introduced the technology to rural communities living in the mountainous areas along the tributaries of the Mekong in Xieng Khouang Province where diarrhea and cholera outbreaks occur annually. The response from these communities was most encouraging.

At the end of the initial pilot, 44 out of 45 families in Muang Ngam village in Xieng Khouang province only drank filtered water using the water filter columns. The local paramedic confirmed that water-borne diseases decreased significantly.

**Use of the water filters spread quickly into 2 other districts in Xieng Khouang Province with 500 or more families using the system.**

The water filter system is also introduced to 7 hospitals and 15 schools in Xieng Khouang. The introduction of the water filter system was expanded to two other provinces, Houaphan and Vientiane Province.



# Aerobic dance for healthy living & keep youth away from drugs

*Young people have so much energy and they have much free time and they love to show off and love to dance to music.*

To keep them busy, interested and entertained, the young volunteers from PADETC organized aerobic dances in schools as well as in public places. The young volunteers trained young trainers to lead the aerobic dance and then organized aerobic classes on a regular basis at different venues around the city.

The young volunteers also made a video (VCD) to sell to people who prefer to exercise in the privacy of their homes.

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**To add variety, the young volunteers incorporated traditional Lao dance and music to the aerobic routines.**

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The project started in 1999, and three years later there were over 200 young dancers leading daily aerobic dancing in 5 schools and 2 public parks, where more than 600 people participate on a daily basis. The aerobic dancing provides an alternative to hanging around beer shops or experimenting with drugs after school.





# Fuel efficient stoves for rural women



*Gathering of firewood is a daily chore for women and girls in rural areas throughout Laos. With the depletion of forest cover women have to travel further and spend more time to collect wood for their use.*



It is estimated that on average Lao villagers use between one to two cubic meters of firewood per person per year.

**To help women reduce their workload and protect the forests from further destruction**



PADETC successfully introduced the production and application of fuel efficient stoves, called "Hor Por". Now there are a number of family enterprises in seven provinces (Vientiane, Savannakhet, Champassak, Luang Prabang, Oudomxay, Sayabury and Xieng Khouang) producing these "Hor Por" stoves.

Action Contre la Faim, an NGO working in Sekong province, adopted the stove project with very positive results.



# Participatory Media for sustainable development



*Participatory media is a key area of PADETC's work. PADETC sees it as an important forum for the sharing of ideas and dissemination of knowledge and debate on development and environmental issues.*

The Media Unit of PADETC began operating a Media for Development Program since 1992 to push for space for people to have more meaningful inputs into an essentially state-controlled media institution.

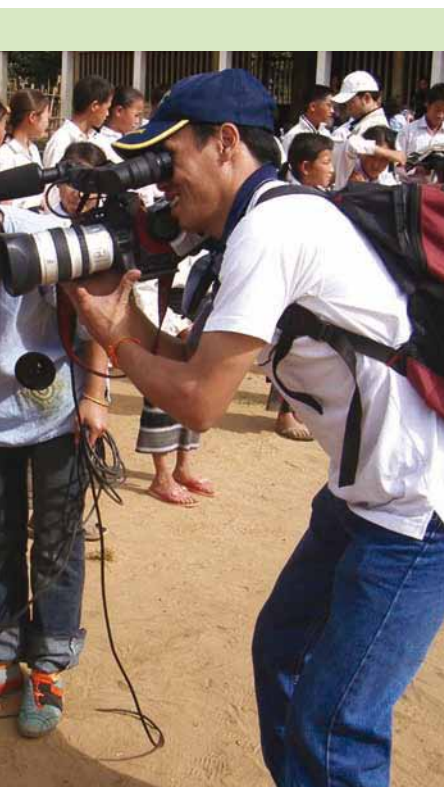
Needless to say this has not been an easy task given its political sensitivity. However, as PADETC is a Lao-based organization, it has been able to build trust with the media institutions by working in a non-threatening way and support the building of capacity of the staff of the state media institutions to produce more interesting programs to attract more audience. After many years of hard work it has successfully made inroads into the state-controlled media through the following activities covering all sectors of the media.



- Training of government media officials on objective reporting, interviewing and presentation techniques; community participatory film production, reporting and live interviews
- Training of children and youth in the Youth Leadership Program to produce their own television programs, radio programs and write articles for children's columns.
- Training of young people on writing their own story books and editing their own publications.
- Production of video films on sustainable development in cooperation with local communities and local officials. Most of these films target local socio-economic issues like agriculture, the environment, education, health, and youth issues.
- Translation of selected international films into Lao language in cooperation with TVE (Television Trust Fund for the Environment)
- Reproduction and sharing of films available in Lao language with television stations throughout the country, schools and interested development agencies
- Making advertisements, TV and radio spots for locally produced products supported by PADETC.







Agreements have been made with the main broadcasting stations to air all audio and video materials produced by PADETC to complement their media programs.

PADETC has a catalogue of many different video titles in the Lao language covering topics, ranging from the environment, agriculture, forestry, development, education, health, and handicrafts. These are in the form of documentaries, dramas and cartoons (animation). Most of the media products are in Lao with a few in English.

### **Catalogue of films produced and/or translated by PADETC**

Apart from film/video materials, PADETC, over the years, has also produced a range of training handbooks in the Lao language. These books are simple to follow and can be used in schools, development projects, and by anyone working at the village level.

*For more information please contact PADETC at:  
phone/fax (21) 215 909 or e-mail: [padetc@etllao.com](mailto:padetc@etllao.com)*



# PADETC's small & medium enterprises

*PADETC's Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) program involves identification, testing, adaptation, and promotion of appropriate technologies. Technology which is "appropriate" is defined as that which adds value to existing local produce, reduces labour and provides increased income for rural communities, and encourages cultural and environmental sustainability.*

The PADETC SME technical team is continually identifying and developing new technologies or improved technologies to promote environmentally sustainable and cost effective rural products for the market. Once a potential product is identified, it undergoes testing and adaptation to best fit the local conditions. Its marketability is field-tested prior to organizing training of interested producers to improve their production. Network of interested producers are then assisted to form SMEs to expand their production for the market and also promote the technologies to other communities or development agencies.

Some appropriate technologies and micro-enterprises that PADETC has developed with varying degree of success include:

- Agriculture**
- Organic farming using bio-extracts and organic fertilizers
  - Processing of local organic produce, including sun dried products (bananas, pineapples, berries, and fish)
  - Promotion of mulberry green tea, brown rice, fermented fish, and fruit drinks and fruit wines

- Energy**
- Promotion of fuel efficient stoves
  - Safe electricity use
  - Solar energy

- Health and sanitation**
- Waste management
  - Water filters
  - Garbage separation and recycling

- Handicrafts**
- Bamboo basketry
  - Natural silk and cotton





# PADETC's fish farming project



*The model of public-private society partnership to promote development has met with success in many countries in generating jobs for rural communities. PADETC used this approach to promote fresh water fish farming.*

Lao PDR has abundant and good fresh water resources from ponds, lakes and rivers which are under-utilized for fish production. The Mekong, for example, is known to host more than 3,000 varieties of fresh water fish. These traditionally provide a good source of food for local subsistence farming and fishing communities living along the banks of the rivers. With increase of population and growth of urban centers, natural fish stocks are increasingly being fished to supply the urban markets, while at the same time commercial fish farming is very under-developed. Commercial fish farming is believed to have a great potential to boost the local economy, create jobs and income for a large number of rural people, and also reduce depletion of natural fish stocks from over fishing.

PADETC decided to facilitate the establishment of a public-private partnership for the promotion of a small scale Lao

fishery industry aimed to create jobs and income for rural communities and promote the conservation and protection of natural fish stocks. Its strategy is to set up a chain of production, processing, and marketing networks to support the fish production system. In 2004-2006, with assistance from the US-based McKnight Foundation, PADETC was able to build up a pilot system of fresh water fish production from feed production, fish breeding, fingerling production, fish-raising and marketing.

The chain of production to support the fish raising industry includes:

**Fish feed production:** This is an important link to successful and economically viable fish production. Many small producers are reluctant to get into fish-raising because of the high cost of fish feed which largely come from Thailand. To reduce costs and risks of fish farming, especially for small producers, PADETC





tested the use of local materials to produce fish feed and trained small scale fish farmers to make their own fish feed. The results have been encouraging with the homemade fish feed much cheaper than the imported feed.

**Fish breeding and fingerling production:** Another important link to the fish production chain is fish breeding and fingerling production. Like in the case of fish feed, most of the fingerlings used by Lao fish producers are imported from Thailand because low-cost technology of fish breeding was not available. To address this issue, PADETC invested in learning of fish breeding techniques and experimented in the setting up of a low-cost fish hatchery. After several years, the hatchery is now able to produce fingerlings for sale to fish farmers. While the production capacity is still limited, the potential for expansion is good, but it will need greater investment in higher level technologies and management capacities.

**Fish production groups:** PADETC facilitated the establishment of fish production groups with groups specializing in the raising of the fingerlings supplied by the hatchery to sell to the other groups who raise the fingerlings to marketable size. These groups are linked to the fish feed producing groups.



Although the number of groups in the various links of the production chain is still quite small, the industry has the potential to grow as demand for fish is high and profitability of the business good.

The program does not only focus on production, but it also focuses on educating the network of producers and communities to conserve and

protect the endangered species of Mekong fish. Currently this approach of promotion of commercial fish production combined with fish stock conservation and protection spans at least 20 communities in three provinces and involves at least 100 full-time and 500 part-time fish farmers.



# Household waste recycling

*Waste management is a relatively new concept to most Lao people. In the past with the majority of people living in the rural areas and engaged in subsistence livelihoods, there is little waste, and what waste there was had been largely organic.*

However, with the rise of urbanization and increase in urban population, there is increased access and consumption of imported processed and manufactured products. At the same time, investment in public systems for waste disposal and management has been limited, resulting in many urban households having to dispose of their waste mainly by burning, burying, or dumping into rivers, ponds or unoccupied land.

In the past, these practices did not cause major environmental damage as most of the waste was organic and bio-degradable. However, with the rapid increase in plastics and other toxic chemicals in the waste, these practices have become increasingly harmful, both to the urban environment and health of its residents.

To address this issue, the Government, with external assistance, has set up solid waste management systems in five main urban centers of the Lao PDR. Although the waste collection and management system is comparatively professional, waste collection coverage in Vientiane City, for example, is only around 40%. This



means that, of a total of an estimated 235 tons of waste generated in the city each day, only 100 tons are collected and disposed. With population increase and a corresponding increase in household waste, this waste management problem will become more serious. This is especially so in parts of the cities inhabited by urban poor where road access is poor and waste collection services un dependable or unaffordable.

Based on PADECT's assessment of the average composition of garbage produced, a substantial amount of the garbage is recyclable comprising around 30% vegetable matter, 13% plastics, 6% paper, 6% glass and ceramics.





“youth volunteers for the environment” to campaign at communities and schools and demonstrate how to correctly separate garbage. They also promoted the setting up of neighborhood “waste recycling banks”, initially using the sites of 6 primary schools. To make this venture successful, it must receive

materials from these banks. The pilot project attracted the attention and interest of several international agencies, and Japan provided funds to the Vientiane City Government to expand the PADETC’s model of garbage recycling to other

Against this background, in 2001, with cooperation of the local government in Vientiane and a number of private sector groups and schools and communities, PADETC designed and implemented a waste management model appropriate to the Lao environment.

The project called “Keep Vientiane Clean” project was executed with funding from the Royal Netherlands Embassy. The project aimed at raising awareness among urban families and schoolchildren on appropriate ways to handle and dispose household waste, stressing concepts of “reduce”, “reuse” and “recycle”.

An innovation of the project is PADETC’s deployment of its

the cooperation of all sectors of the community, including the local administration office, the village authorities, school directors, children, parents and monks from the local temples. Each community contributed towards the construction of the waste storage site. A revolving fund was set up and grants were provided the local community to manage the recycling operation, with a pricing system set up to purchase the different categories of waste that the people bring to deposit in the recycling site or recycling bank. The project also made agreements with private waste dealers or recycling agents to buy recyclable



districts of Vientiane City, with PADETC as a partner for public awareness mobilization. In 2004, the project was officially handed over to the Vientiane City Administration for continuation.







As part of the initiative to promote waste management and recycling in Vientiane, PADETC also established the Lao Chalern Recycling Center, a commercial enterprise, located 8 kilometers from the city center. This was done in collaboration with Wongpanit Company from Thailand. The center collects plastic, metal scrap, waste paper and cardboard from waste collectors and itinerant waste buyers, community waste banks, and municipality waste collection crews.

The Lao Chalern recycling enterprise is now the largest recycling center in the country with its business reporting 30% annual growth.





# Social marketing

*PADETC not only provides training to farmers and villagers in appropriate agriculture techniques to improve production, but it also links the producers to the market by organizing a system of marketing based on principles of fair-trade to promote local production and generate income for farmers.*

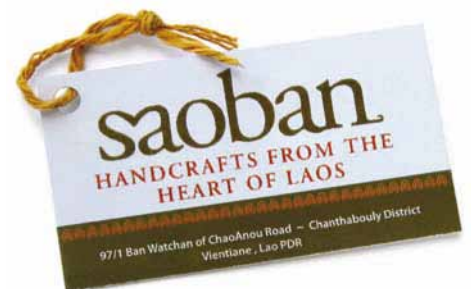


Linking rural producers to the market is crucial for encouraging the scaling up of production and helping them break out of their subsistence existence and participate in the market economy. To do this, PADETC has facilitated the setting up of small businesses in rural areas and helped train and organize rural communities to produce a number of local products and handicrafts to sell in the local markets.

To promote the villagers' produce, PADETC initiated the organization of monthly weekend farmers' fair in cooperation with the Ministry of Industry and Handicraft. Through these weekend farmers' fair, local products are promoted and marketing contacts are established between producers and consumers.

Through such activities, rural producers can now sell their products directly to their local vendors near them, or sell them through a retail store called Xao Ban or Farmer Shop in Vientiane. The Xao Ban Shop was also initially supported by PADETC, which provided the owner with

a small start-up capital and some management training. The Xao Ban Shop serves as a retailing outlet as well as a distributor for farmers' products at fair prices in Vientiane and to other cities throughout the country.







## P A D E T C

PADETC, the acronym of Participatory Development Training Center in English has been purposefully chosen to sound like the Lao term Pa-Dèc (ປາແດກ), which means fermented fish. Pa-Dèc (ປາແດກ) has a very distinctive flavour and is ubiquitously found in every Lao kitchen and universally used in everyday Lao cooking. Just as Pa-Dèc is uniquely Lao and an indispensable ingredient in Lao food, PADETC, too, as an indigenous all-Lao organization rooted in Lao culture and society, is committed to make a unique and distinctive contribution to the development of Laos.