



Participants pose during the ceremony to launch a new drug treatment project in Vientiane. Photo Office of Vientiane Public Security

Somsanga Centre launches new drug treatment programme

Phomphong Laoin

Vientiane Security Headquarters officially launched the Drug Treatment Collaboration Project at the Somsanga Drug Treatment and Vocational Training Centre which aims to help drug users recover from their addictions utilising a collaborative approach with patients and their families.

The Deputy Head of Office at the Headquarters, Lieutenant Colonel Sengthong Keuabounlam, who is also the Director of the Somsanga centre, told Vientiane Times on Monday that this is the first time the centre has directly involved family members in the rehabilitation process. Consultation with the relatives of patients can be useful in developing a picture of what prior drug behaviour looked like. Family members can also remain quite influential in getting people to change their behaviours.

“The project will provide a consultative framework in its therapies to stop drug

use along with vocational training. Areas of training include agriculture, animal care, vehicle repair and maintenance, construction and also law,” he said.

“After people have completed their six-month training course we help them to find hands-on training in a workplace suitable to their background,” he said.

Lieutenant Colonel Sengthong said 1,368 people, a number that includes just 76 women, completed treatment and returned home last year.

“The drug users we treat here are aged between 14 and 67. The most common substances for which people seek treatment here are amphetamines, heroin, opium and alcohol.”

The centre concentrates a great deal of its rehabilitation efforts on training patients how to make handicrafts, toys and other items so that they have a skill that will boost their employment prospects after leaving the programme.

Issues with substance addiction is a common

problem in society. Without proper education, young people are especially at risk of developing problems, according to officials.

A report compiled by the Somsanga centre noted that nightclubs, snooker halls, gambling and gaming shops were often the places where dealers lure young people into drug use. Drug addiction can fuel crime and many other social problems.

The centre is continuing to provide vocational training and treatment for patients. It works to instil a sense of social responsibility in its patients, encouraging them to become constructive members of society for the greater good.

The Somsanga Drug Treatment and Vocational Training Centre is the largest such facility in the country and commenced its drug treatment services in 1995.

There are nine other treatment centres in the provinces of Bokeo, Oudomxay, Huaphan, Luang Prabang, Xayaboury, Savannakhet and Champassak.

Ministry, East Meets West support WASH in rural areas

Times Reporters

The government will work with the East Meets West Foundation in a project aimed at engaging public, private and civil society groups in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) development strategies through the delivery of women-led education seminars in Xayaboury province.

The MoU signing ceremony for the project took place in Vientiane last week. The papers were signed by Director General of the Department of Water Supply under the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Mr Phomma Veoravanh and the Country Director of the East Meets West Foundation to Laos, Mr Khouankeo Ardphasouk.

The event was attended by the Deputy Minister of Public Works and Transport, Ms Vilaykham Phosalath, Deputy Resident Representative of the Korea International Cooperation Agency in Laos, Ms Myung Hyun Chun, CEO of Thrive

Networks/ East Meets West Foundation, Ms Lynn Foden and other officials.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr Khouankeo said the key goal of the project is to improve health and reduce gender inequalities for low-income and vulnerable households in Laos. This will be achieved through sustainable and inclusive WASH approaches and strong public-private sector partnerships.

“19,971 people from 3,897 households in 16 villages across Botaen, Kaenthao and Paklai districts in Xayaboury province will benefit from the project,” he said.

The project will continue until January 2023 with a budget of US\$851,358 provided by Korea International Cooperation Agency and CHARITY: WATER.

In recent years, Laos has made significant progress in the WASH sector. However, WASH issues continue to challenge some rural areas. Sustainable development goals of the country aim for

80 percent of the country to have ready access to clean water by 2020. This number goes up to 85 percent of the population by 2025 and 90 percent by 2030. The government encourages the participation of multiple sectors in addressing this issue, though acknowledged there is limited capacity for stakeholders to reach some of the more isolated and rural communities.

Thrive Network’s Women-Led Output-Based Aid (WOBA) project aims to help address gaps in the Lao rural WASH sector, and ultimately improve WASH facilities and overall health outcomes in rural areas.

The project will support increasing the water supply and bettering sanitation for some of Laos’ poorest households that face gender and social exclusion barriers. The project will bolster partnerships between the government, the private sector and civil society groups to increase their engagement in WASH development initiatives.



Mr Phomma Veoravanh (right) shake hands with Mr Khouankeo Ardphasouk at the signing ceremony in Vientiane last week

Swiss-Lao Project continues cooperation to improve newborn care

Phetphoxay Sengpaseuth

The Swiss-Lao Hospital Project has confirmed its ongoing cooperation with the Mother and Newborn Hospital to strengthen the skills of Lao healthcare professionals as well as provide medical equipment.

The cooperation project is focusing on improving healthcare services for mothers and children in the target provinces

of Xayaboury, Luang Namtha, Xieng Khuang, Huaphan, Savannakhet, Vientiane and Champassak along with the main hospitals in the capital.

Vice President of the Swiss-Lao Hospital Project, Dr Marion Monkhoff told *Vientiane Times* last week about their long-term vision for skills capacity and knowledge development in newborn healthcare.

Plans include the

provision of training for doctors, nurses and midwives as well as workshops for health administrators who have an important role to play in management to ensure high-quality patient care, she said.

“We have observed that the care of new-borns and their mothers is better today than in the past but many aspects still need improvement,” she said adding that the Swiss-Lao

Hospital Project would continue to provide solutions to various problems.

Head Specialist of Paediatrics and Neonatology under the Mother and Newborn hospital, Dr Phommady Vesaphong said the Ministry of Health was attempting to improve the health of mothers and children, hoping to meet targets in reducing newborn mortality rates by 2020.

All newborn healthcare officials will also need to commit to a code of ethics to boost the quality of treatment across the country as one of five service excellence criteria to ensure patient satisfaction.

Under the project, provincial hospitals in target provinces will create a network to exchange experiences and information about newborn health and paediatrics.

The Swiss-Lao Hospital Project is an initiative run by Swiss doctors, midwives, nurses and association members who have lobbied for an improvement in the medical care available to mothers and children in Laos since 2000.

The Swiss assistance supports the Ministry of Health’s policy to reduce the number of deaths among mothers and babies throughout the country.

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Tel: (856-21) 336042, fax: (856-21) 336041
P.O.Box: 5723; Postal Code: 01000
www.vientianetimes.la; info@vientianetimes.la

Supervisor:
Savankhone Razmounry

Tel: 021 336042
info@vientianetimes.la

Editor-in-Chief:
Thonglor Duangsavanh

Deputy Editor-in-Chief:
Phonekeo Vorakhoun

Tel: 021 336042
vorakhoun@gmail.com

Deputy Editor-in-Chief:
Phon Thikeyo
Tel: 55624351, 021 336042
phonethikeyo28@yahoo.com

Features Editor:
Panyasith Thamavongsa
Tel: 020 54046644,
021 336047, Fax: 021 336046
panyasith155@gmail.com

News Editor:
Sisay Vilaysack
Tel: 55615716, 021-336045,
Fax: 336046
sisay69@gmail.com

Business Editor:
Manichanh Pansivongxay
Tel: 020 55607017, 021
336047, Fax: 021 336046
chanfeature@hotmail.com

Graphic Designer/IT:
Malaythong Phayanouvong

Tel: 021 336048, 020 55729209
Copy Sub-editor:
Elizabeth Winch

Finance Manager:
Somphone Vongsa
Tel: 336040, 020 55647291

Marketing Manager:
Phoutthasack Inthakoummane
Tel: 021 336042,
Fax: 336041
Mobile: 020 55599209
sale.adv@gmail.com

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