



Lotus Grade 12 Update

Lotus has, for almost a decade, been supporting education efforts for Laotian girls in rural areas. Lotus has focussed on providing tuition, books and school uniforms, through life skills training and health education. These efforts have been grounded in grassroot energies. It has not been without struggles. Persistence, commitment and just plain hard work have resulted in some extraordinary results. Twenty-one Lotus Grade 12 girls have successfully graduated from secondary school this past summer. That in and of itself is a veritable accomplishment for young girls in rural Laos where there is infinite pressure to leave school and work or get married.

Now, through a very generous grant given by Dr. John Schiller, we are also offering scholarships for further study and vocational training for the Grade 12 graduates. Lotus, with great pride and enthusiasm, is pleased to present in this newsletter, the labours that have led to some amazing outcomes arising from its mission and the extraordinary efforts made by these girls and the Lotus Team. Above all, it is the continued support of our donors that we have to be grateful to for the continued support and funding. The last five months has seen both Lotus Advisory Committee and the dedicated local Laotian staff working on a project to get these girls into further education institutions. Here below are some of the highlights of where the girls are headed to (or already in place). in their further studies.

We hope that you enjoy reading and that you will take pride in the fact that you, as a donor or sponsor have been fundamental to this undertaking. Lotus has always maintained that education is the path to personal and community transformation. This is proving to be true.

Thank you for your continued support.
The Lotus Team



Alex and her amazing local team have been working overtime mentoring the girls through the Lotus Scholarship Program which has included; university/college interviews, partaking in entrance exams and transporting and supporting the girls as they complete the course registration process. While not all girls were selected in their first academic choices, it was great to see the increasing number of career options available to secondary graduates in Laos. This enables the girls to find the most appropriate study choice for their current situation and future dream.

It is wonderful to share this exciting journey with the girls and watch the Lotus girls breaking the 'glass ceiling' in their career choices.

Jeua and Alex (the Lotus Coordinator) at SVKU



Recipient of the Lao Governor's Scholarship

With 80% of the workforce engaged in agriculture, and “feminization of agriculture” due to the technological advancement of agriculture by aid agencies, it is vital that women are involved in this transition phase. We are very proud of **Jeua Yodmany** who has been awarded the Governor's Scholar to study 4 years of agriculture. She has five siblings and her father, a retired teacher, makes money from selling vegetables at the local market. Jeua is particularly interested in farming opportunities related to animals such as cows, pigs, and chickens. Jeua's mother is beaming with pride about her daughters' achievements thus far and is very supportive of her plans for tertiary study.

Technology Trailblazer

Always a trailblazer, **Somphong Vilasak** is taking a non-traditional pathway and studying the 3 year course of Information Technology at SVKTC. Somphong is not deterred by the challenge that lies ahead of being one of only five girls in a class of 21 students, she is determined to follow her dreams. Somphong lives at home with her mother and three younger siblings. Somphong's mother has never had any schooling but has obviously been a great role model and is extremely supportive of her study plans. Somphong says “I want to know how to use computers for copying and printing and I want to know more details about computers, especially how to use various programs with its rules. I have a dream about working with some technology office or some computer center. If I have some available budget, I will open my own copy shop in Yang Soung village. I can copy a lot of documents for many people including their family books and other necessary documents.”



Can you imagine how challenging a male dominated classroom might be for the shy and very polite Lao woman?

A Further Update

Dokkham and **Phedsavanh** have both overcome challenging personal situations to complete their education. Now they are both studying accounting at SVKTC with the goal of working for an NGO and further developing their English skills acquired during the Lotus workshops.

Phim, Kedkeo and **Mouksida** will complete a two year sewing course with the intent of either working in factories in SVK Economic Zone or returning to their villages and opening up small businesses.

Baisy and Vanvisa are both waiting patiently to sit the SVKU entrance exam and we are looking forward to following not just their educational journeys but also the personal pathways that these girls navigate for themselves. Laos is changing and continues to open up to globalisation, however the gender divide remains challenging.

Sida and **Vanmany** will study the 5 year Rural Economic Development course. **Ladtana** will study agriculture at SVKU. **Noutana** will study a Japanese degree with the dream of working in development upon graduation.

Khamsai and Doungmala have enrolled in Accounting at Savannakhet Technical College (SVKTC), **Khonesavanh** and **Khamvenh** are studying a 4 year degree in Hotel Management at Savannakhet University (SVKU).



Our fantastic Lao Team Coordinator, Alex, with Lotus girls going to the College in Savannakhet. They have just purchased bedding for the dormitories.