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# Newsletter

## Lifelong Learning and Non-formal Education in Lao PDR and Southeast Asia



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Special Issue:

Community Learning Center:  
Experiences and  
Lesson Learnt

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## Editorial

Dear Readers,

In June, the German Adult Education Association celebrated its 14<sup>th</sup> “Volkshochschultag”. This big event takes place every five years and brings together more than 1,500 participants from Germany, Europe and the world, representing education, business sector and governments. It is a big celebration of non-formal education and underpins the importance of our sector. In his opening speech, the German President, Mr Joachim Gauck, expressed his respect to our work with these words: Adult Education centers are “schools for life”, they are crucial to ensure that no one is left behind.

The Lao delegation was chaired by HE Vice-Minister Lytou Bouapao, who expressed the importance of non-formal education for the further development of Lao PDR, especially for upgrading the skills and knowledge of people living in remote rural areas. Lifelong Learning, he said, is an important tool to reduce their dependence from nature and increase livelihood.

The success of the German non-formal education depends a lot on the more than 900 Community Learning Centers (in German language “Volkshochschulschulen”). This idea of a house for learning in the community is very popular worldwide, especially in Asia. In Vietnam, more than 10,000 so called CLCs are established, Thailand has nearly 9,000 and in Japan nearly 15,000 Kominkan, as they call the CLCs, exist. In Lao PDR as well, government and development partners pay growing attention to this idea. The latest Education Sector Development Plan mentions CLCs as the main providers of non-formal education. The reasons are simple: CLCs allow offering flexible learning opportunities to the people, they are not expensive and they are open for many different forms of learning, sharing and exchange: literacy course, skills trainings, library, village meetings, sport and cultural activities can take place in the CLC.

DVV International and its partner support CLCs in many countries of our region. This issue of our Newsletter would like to offer you a wide range of experiences from Lao PDR, Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Vietnam and share some insights in the successes and challenges of CLC establishment.

I hope these stories can be interesting and inspiring for you!

Yours sincerely,  
*Uwe Gartenschlaeger*  
Regional Director  
DVV International, Southeast Asia

*“Community Learning Centers will play a more important role in sustainable development in the future”, Mr Arne Carlsen, Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning*



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## Community Learning Centers in Lao PDR – Promoting Community Development and improving lives

### Contextual Background

A large section of the Lao population, especially ethnic minority groups inhabiting remote areas have limited opportunity to participate in new economic opportunities and enjoy benefits of the progress in the country. Our target districts of Nong and Xepon in Savannakhet Province are amongst the poorest regions in the country. Data from Nong District authorities indicates that 62% of the households are still classified as poor, while the equivalent figure for Xepon District is 33%. Food insecurity affects many poor households. Low level of education and lack of skills have proved to be major barriers in this respect as poor households in particular face considerable challenges in adopting their livelihood systems and finding new sources of income.

### Community Learning Centres (CLC) Approach: An Overview

According to UNESCO, a CLC is as a community-based non-formal educational institution, which provides a range of services and learning opportunities to out-of-school children, youth and illiterate or semi-literate adults from socially disadvantaged communities. The CLCs operate outside the formal education system and intend primarily to address the learners' basic literacy and educational needs, and therefore support the development of citizens and communities.

In the context of Lao PDR, the current Non-formal Education policy envisages establishing CLCs as key venues for lifelong learning at village level in Laos. Following this concept and in our effort to make education more accessible to all, DVV International has supported the establishment CLCs in more than 20 target villages.

### In a nutshell

- CLCs are basic buildings constructed with contributions from villagers (labour and local materials)
- Villagers select a CLC manager who has the responsibility to manage the centre
- The managers receive training and financial support
- The centres are equipped with flipcharts, writing materials, solar-panels, radios and microphones with speakers for information dissemination and to encourage active participation and create learning atmosphere in the CLCs
- A modern latrine toilet is also constructed outside the centre as a way to raise awareness on hygiene and health amongst the villagers.



The villagers join event in the CLC

Moreover, in order to ensure and improve the delivery of relevant and effective non-formal education (NFE) services in target villages,

### DVV International through its CLC program aims to:

1. Promote literacy development and lifelong learning in order to combat illiteracy in the country
2. Train facilitators in different teaching methods and provide and conduct regular youth and adult NFE courses, as well as short-term livelihood-oriented basic literacy, numeracy and life skills education courses.
3. Provide tailored basic vocational training courses, based on the results of need based assessments conducted in the target villages in order to facilitate socioeconomic development, community-based income generation activities, social empowerment and transformation
4. Foster cultural preservation and dissemination of local/ indigenous knowledge and practices

The CLCs serve as hubs for community services, providing a system of integrated partnerships between the Local Authorities, Non-state actors, community members and their elected CLC leaders. The CLC is a medium that brings communities together and is now acting as a platform for interaction, discourses, information dissemination and learning. While bringing change is a challenging task, the CLCs with its life skill trainings and literacy classes, especially in the closed communities of ethnic minorities, offer recreational, educational, social, health, civic and cultural opportunities for adult learners, families and the community and are now playing a pivotal role in empowering individuals and promoting community development through life-long education for all people in the community.

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## We aim at making education available for everyone: Community Learning Centres in Lao PDR

Interview with Ms. Dokkham Xomsihapanya, Project Manager at DVV International

*Interviewing: Ms. Dokkham Xomsihapanya, project manager (D.)*

*Interviewer: Ms. Gesa Domes, volunteer at DVV International (G.)*



Unfortunately, there are still many Lao people who are cut off the educational system due to poverty or infrastructural reasons. Community Learning Centres (short: CLCs) are planning to change this: They are defined as community-based, non-formal educational institutions which offer a big variety of courses to Lao people of every age, helping them to obtain a basic literacy and numeracy. Lao government hopes that this will support them to find new sources of income. Ms. Dokkham supports the establishment and development of CLCs and will share some of her personal insights with us today.

G.: Ms. Dokkham, please tell us more about yourself. How long have you been working with DVV International now and what are your duties there?

*D.: I started working here at the end of 2010 as a project coordinator of Non-Formal Education. Since three years, I have become a project manager. This means a lot of administrative work in the office as well as trips out to the provinces to observe the CLCs.*

G.: How many CLCs have been established so far?

*D.: By now, we have built 24 CLCs and one more is under construction while we are speaking. All these centres are located in Savannekhet province, Nong district and Sepon district, which are all very poor and rural areas.*

G.: According to Nong District authorities, 62% of all

households in the southern Savannekhet province are still classified as poor. Can you name some reasons for this?

*D.: First of all, Savannekhet province consists of 15 districts and is therefore very large. Many of the small villages are remote and the overall bad infrastructure adds to that. In an environment like this, it is hard to establish a good-working educational system that is available for everyone. And without education, Lao people do not succeed in pursuing a career. It's a vicious circle really...*

G.: How are those centres equipped and who is financing them?

*D.: All CLCs are equipped with basic teaching material, so the teachers have access to books, blackboard, pencils, paper as well as technical equipment such as a microphone and speakers. Additionally, solar panels power the light and modern toilettes have been built in order to raise awareness for health and hygiene. Concerning the financing of this: We are kindly sponsored by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the European Union and also the German Charity organisation Sternsinger*

G.: What are the main goals of the CLCs?

*D.: I think the overall goal could be called Lifelong Learning. We at DVV International aim at making education - especially non-formal education - available for everyone. The centres offer a variety of courses for children as well as adults and all of them are for free. Therefore, they also serve as a platform which brings people together and encourages them to interact.*

G.: Can you name some examples of very popular courses?

*D.: Oh, there are so many... Naturally, the people learn how to read and write and basic mathematics at the centres. In addition, there are a lot of handicraft classes: sewing, pottery, weaving... We also offer mechanical courses and then there are some about health, gender equality and agriculture. The variety is quite big and depends on the demand.*

G.: In your opinion, what will be urgently needed in the future?

*D.: I suppose we need more local, educated teachers. You know, it's a big flaw of the Lao system that educators are getting paid so little... Their salary really needs to go up in order to make the job more attractive. If we had more trained teachers, we could broaden the topics of our classes and open up more Community Learning Centres. The concept has proved itself as very successful so we are hoping to extend it.*

G.: Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

All the best of luck for your projects.

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## Community Education - social change and new life opportunities for the younger generations

Wolfgang Schur, DVV International Afghanistan

During the last four years, DVV International and its Afghan partner, the Afghan National Association for Adult Education (ANAFAE) have re-established eight Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in different urban districts of Mazar-e-Sharif City, in the northern Province Balkh.

These CLCs were set up by UN-Habitat as District Community Forums (DCF) in 1995 before the Taliban regime to serve community needs and to provide a safe-place for women. The programme mainly focussed on literacy education and work opportunities, supported by small loans for illiterate women. The DCFs operated a printing press, a taxi service and some act as basic health posts.

After 2002, the UN HABITAT program ended without a proper concept for sustainability. The DCFs were forgotten for years but managed, somehow, to continue small activities with very limited resources and organisation capacities.

The new Community Learning Centres under the leadership of ANAFAE are deeply rooted in the fight against poverty. The centres promote skill and competence development for disadvantaged groups, refugees and displaced families and also empowerment, social change and new life opportunities, especially for the younger generations within the communities.

With around ten million illiterate adults, literacy education in Afghanistan, especially for women, is crucial. Despite the progress in building up the Afghan education system, access to education is still a huge problem. At present well over 30% of children are not enrolled in school, most of them young girls. School education lacks qualified teachers. Access to higher education and vocational training is still limited. The future of the country critically depends on the training opportunities and the qualification of the younger generation. More than 60 percent of the population is under 25 years old, their unemployment rate is high and still the vocational training system is insufficient.

Young people could make important contributions to economic growth but lack new knowledge and skills.

In the context of the present education sector in the country, the objectives of the CLCs are to widen participation in education, as well as to increase educational chances by relevant

community-based offers that develop skills and also provide an important bridge in the transition from school to university education or to employment.

The Community Education Programmes in Afghanistan still address the interests and needs of the traditional target groups, but the education needs and challenges of the younger generations in these urban communities, especially of girls, have changed.

Complementary programmes of the CLCs run by ANAFAE support formal school education. More young people from the urban communities now want to join higher education. Just recently, in one of the CLCs, 68 out of 90 learners who joined the preparation courses for the university entry test got the highest scores in the city.

The education programmes of the CLCs improve the opportunities of the younger generations in urban communities, supports their employability in working life through IT, English language or accounting courses, offering technical qualifications, as well as business and office skills.

The CLCs provide the local infrastructure and resources for social development through community-based education. They make a key contribution to Lifelong Learning in a very comprehensive manner (informal, non-formal, formal).

The new community learning concept emphasizes increased involvement of parents, businesses and local NGOs to become partners in addressing educational and community concerns. For example, some owners of a local mobile phone repair shop provides practical technical trainings. After some training in the Community Learning Centre, participants get a job or open their own small repair shop in the informal market.

The cooperation with the parents and the families is the strength of the successful education programmes. Parents and community elders influence the quality of the education programmes.



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## Experiences on mobile library in Ratanakiri province, Cambodia

*Vansak Vay*

Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP),  
Cambodia

### Purpose of established library

To encourage and promote community member, especially students in the community have to increase their knowledge in terms of reading.

### Establishing mobile library

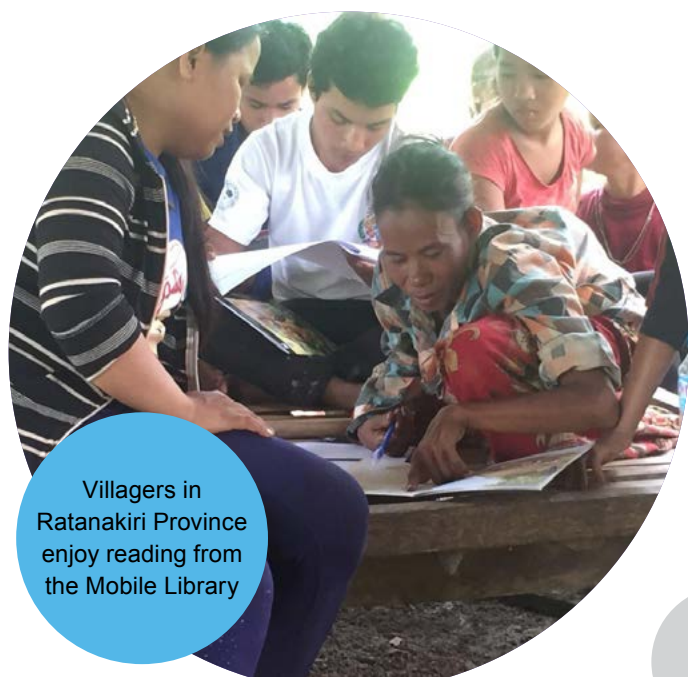
The mobile library has been established since 2004. It was very important to set up the library in the community because beyond of their studying within their class, pupils can improve more of their reading in library, in the library there were many books including life skill, education, basic health and story books available for readers.

### Involving to set up library

Based on the need of community and students, village chief, community, volunteer teacher and NTFP's staff has been involved to establish the library.

### Managing library influence community for reading

There were 3 librarians for one library and they play role in terms of managing books, encourage community to come to read in library. Every meeting which organized by my NGO (called NTFP) the librarian carried many story book to keep in the meeting hall and ask people in the meeting hall to read the book before the meeting start for half an hour. By this way we regular conducted reading examination one time per year with supported awards for good reading and good recap of the story.



Villagers in  
Ratanakiri Province  
enjoy reading from  
the Mobile Library

## Movement of Community Learning Center in Cambodia

*Vanna Peou, NEP Cambodia*

Cambodia Non-Formal Education aims to ensure that all children, youth, adults, poor people and those with disabilities realize their rights to a basic education and lifelong learning. Another objective is to provide opportunities for youth and adults to access life skills and become literate.

The constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, states in article 65 "The state shall protect and upgrade citizen's rights to equality education at all levels and shall take the necessary steps for quality education to reach all citizens" and in article 66 "The state shall develop a complete and uniform education system throughout the state so that citizens have an equal chance for improving their livelihood".

The Royal Government of Cambodia defines that non formal education is a part of the education system, to achieve education for all and give people access to lifelong education and help build a learning society with equity, justice and social development. In 2002 the Policy of Non-Formal Education has been established, signed by the Cambodia Prime Minister. In 2016 a guideline for community learning center standard was established.

CLC-based Income Generation Program in Cambodia:  
The concept of community learning center has been in the forefront of experiences in the field of non-formal education and lifelong learning. The purpose of the community learning center is to mobilize community and creating a literate environment, allow all those who are no longer in primary education or never been, to meet and go through some learning process, be it literate, skills, livelihood, etc. CLCs have context-specific and multi-purpose functions. They promote lifelong learning and offer a programme of activities appropriate to the needs of the community and resources available in the community. These activities include education and skills training, community information and library services, counseling services and social and cultural activities. The activities respond to the needs of adults and young people and, particularly, to disadvantaged groups.

In setting up CLCs, special consideration is given to the issue of sustainability. An important and underlying assumption in the establishment of the CLCs is that what stems will last. Hence the strong emphasis on community ownership, community participation and on conducting programmes that respond to identified learning needs of the community.

Literacy has played a very important role in Community Development. Without literacy people have difficulties improving their quality of lives. For this reason, Cambodia has implemented the various literacy programs. One of the programs is Community Learning Center Program (CLCP).

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The Tailoring room  
of the CLC



So far Cambodia has 324 community learning centers (CLCs), of which 24 CLCs were managed by development partner (NGOs). The challenges include financial disbursement, it was difficult to select the skill teachers to respond to the need of community. This is to conclude the consideration of management, operation, and core curriculum to train as well as to consider the CLC Standard implementation.

Have the CLCs delivered its service as expected from community? The visit to two communities in Kompot province Southern-coastal area of Cambodia shows many complex situations due to which the initial objectives sometimes disappeared for variety of reason. The lack of an effective program is the major reason in the failure of CLCs in Cambodia.

To achieve the SDGs by 2030 some suggestions have been made such as provide regular basic literacy (reading, writing and arithmetic/maths); livelihood or income-generating skills training (in, for example, farming techniques, animal husbandry, cash crop production and honey production / bee keeping); gender and health awareness (in, for example, HIV/AIDS, maternal health, infant mortality, family planning, personal hygiene, sanitation, reproductive health and family nutrition); and environmental management (climate change and disaster risk reduction)/ conservation.

The adoption of such an integrated curriculum is primarily intended to boost programme attendance and retention rates as well as enabling CLCs in Cambodia to effectively cater for the diverse learning needs of community participants, a majority of whom are more interested in acquiring practical life skills that would enable them to improve their living standards as well as being self-reliant.

## Developing Community Learning Centres - The experience from Vietnam

*Nguyen Phuong Linh*

SEAMEO CELLL, Vietnam

The subject of lifelong learning has been increasingly prevailing in ASEAN in the past decade. As lifelong learning is gaining continuing popularity, community learning centres (CLCs) have occupied an important place in the learning society. Prior to the widespread of CLCs, continuing education centres (CECs) have long been in existence in Vietnam to cater for diverse learning needs of the people. However, as CECs are only at a provincial and district level, their provision for educational opportunities seems not wholly adequate. Hence, with the support of Japan National Federation of UNESCO Association of Japan (NFUAJ) and The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the establishment of 10 CLCs in Vietnam in 1998 – 1999 is of crucial significance. According to 2013 data from national reports to UNESCO, Vietnam was the nation that had the most CLCs in the region (with 10, 826). In 2015, 11,000 CLCs nationwide were in operation. Currently, almost all wards and villages have a CLC to satisfy the local demands and the number of CLCs is positively on an upward trend. CLCs in Vietnam have served four main functions as follows: Education and Training, Information and Consultation, Community Development, Network and Coordination. In particular, they offer programmes strongly correlating with public needs such as literacy education, agricultural techniques or income generation skills. Nearly two decades have passed since the establishment of the first CLCs, Vietnamese society has experienced positive changes: illiteracy rate has been declining and poverty has been alleviated. Additionally, people lead a healthier lifestyle with better community cohesion and higher law awareness.

One activity at  
Vietnam CLC  
Dance club



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Dominant as they might be, the operation of CLCs still face unavoidable challenges namely quality, effectiveness and sustainability. The aforementioned difficulties could be attributable to various reasons. First, intermittently available funding takes a heavy toll on the management of CLC while various costs need covering. Second, regarding infrastructure, the fact that CLC offices are commonly shared with existing buildings such as schools or cultural houses limits CLC functioning to some extent. Third, incumbent and rotary management along with the lack of dedicated staff also has a negative impact on CLCs as a whole. Last but not least, teachers or facilitators, who exert direct influence on learners, usually work on a voluntary basis without prior knowledge in terms of adult education. Consequently, efficient CLC management is a matter of concern that managers need to deal with.

Aware of those problematic issues faced by CLCs in Vietnam, SEAMEO CELLL, as the Regional Centre for Lifelong Learning, is working towards activities aiming at enhancing CLC operational capacity. Specifically, with the motive of learning from the effective model of Japanese CLCs, on November 2014, deriving support from SEAMEO Secretariat and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science & Technology, Japan (MEXT), MOET Vietnam and SEAMEO CELLL successfully organized the workshop “KOMINKAN – The Successful Japanese Model of CLCs and Lessons to be Learned” with Prof. Dr. Teuchi Akitoshi, University of Tsukuba, Japan as a keynote speaker. The following year witnessed the follow-up of the aforementioned workshop; SEAMEO CELLL proceeded with a training workshop on “Curriculum development for CLCs” on November 2015 to assess the effectiveness of the KOMINKAN workshop and apply theories into practice. The workshop provided the participants – managers of CLCs with relevant knowledge concerning curriculum development and offered them the opportunity to practice constructing a curriculum under the direction of Prof. Dr. Teuchi Akitoshi, Chair of Doctoral Program in Education and an expert at Japanese CLC operation. On 23 June this year, to continue the chain of events on boosting CLC management, SEAMEO CELLL hosted a training workshop on “ICT for the Effective Lesson” for teachers of CLCs in Ho Chi Minh City and the neighbouring provinces to assist them in designing more effective and engaging lessons with the aid of technology. The workshop facilitator was Mr. Khau Huu Phuoc - Manager of Research and Training Department of SEAMEO CELLL. The chain of workshops obtained active participation and positive feedback from the participants, indicating widespread interest in the subject. In this connection, SEAMEO CELLL’s training orientation is to conduct more training activities regarding CLC operation to satisfy local demands.



Participants discussing at the Kominkan workshop

## Finalize Lifelong Learning Policy Conference

The final draft of the first Lifelong Learning for Lao PDR was presented at the conference on 27 June 2016 at Thalath Guest House, Vientiane province. The event was organized by Department of Non-formal Education, Ministry of Education and Sports which is supported by DVV International Regional Office, Vientiane. The meeting brought together more than 50 officials from various departments of MOES, representatives of Provincial Education and Sports Service from all over the country, including from DVV International. HE Lytou Bouapao, Deputy Minister was invited to attend and chaired the meeting.

At the conference, the third draft was presented by Dr. Zenaida T. Domingo who is an advisor working closely with the Department of Non-formal Education in developing the National Lifelong Learning strategy of Lao PDR. She presented her final third draft to the meeting and after that was the working group discussion.

The results of three working groups were some changes and recommendations are submitted to the draft. All participants agreed and adapted to the final draft which will be checked and edited again before sending it to the minister board in begin of July.





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## The Lao Lady from Nepal!

*Surabhi Singh*, Intern

DVV International

in Vientiane, Lao PDR

My experience as an intern at Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V. (DVV). DVV International started in February 2016. My willingness to intern here primarily stemmed from my desire to work and learn in such an established and prestigious institution in the field of Adult Education, and development in general. The three months that I have spent in Laos while working at DVV International has been a life changing experience for me.

Laos and Nepal are considered similar in many aspects including its geography, as a landlocked country and as a post-conflict recovering nation. While I knew this very superficially before, working at DVV International and going to its working areas gave me a good opportunity to test this comparison first hand. My field visit to Nong and Sepone, the working areas of DVV International, is undoubtedly one of the most cherished memories I will take with me. While it was a very knowledgeable experience, it was also a very revealing journey on a personal level. I had the opportunity to visit the CLCs that have been established with the support of DVV International, during a program to hand over resources such as publications with information, mic and speakers, and sports and musical instruments. The CLCs have indeed brought the communities together and are now acting as a platform for interaction, discourses, information dissemination and learning. While bringing change is a challenging task, the CLCs with its life skill trainings and literacy classes, especially in the closed communities of ethnic minorities, now play pivotal role in empowering individuals and promoting community development through life-long education for all people in the community.

DVV International has indeed succeeded in its role as not only an initiating and implementing agency but also as a liaison between multiple stakeholders; by involving the government and the locals at every level of the progress and decision making not only ensues accountability but also promotes reliability and cooperation. Seeing the journey of these CLCs, of its ongoing activities, the journey of people's participation and acceptance of this foreign idea, realized ownership towards it and utmost use of the CLC buildings for community programs at local levels I believe, truly illustrates development in motion. Working at DVV International, given its involvement at all levels of governance provides a rounded understanding of the opportunities and challenges involved here and in the development sector in general.



Apart from this, I was also given the chance to present during the sharing and learning event, a case study of success stories from DidiBahini's Village Resource and Learning Centers which principally function as CLCs. It gives me great pleasure to have been able to contribute to the sharing and learning session, to have been able to answer the questions raised during the event and hope that the participants will be able to make some use of the examples in the future given that it comes from a different yet similar country in terms of culture, economic status and rural setting.

Reflecting on my experience as the internship program has made immeasurable impacts in my aptitude in varied fields such as team work, organizational and intercultural competence, and much more. All in all, for me, this internship was an exhilarating challenge of real world experience combined with professional skill building and cultural immersion. I was more often than not taken as a Lao lady, which I must say, had both its pros and cons. Although the culture and the food were very new to me, I'd like to believe I adapted quite well. That is why I was once called the "SAO LAO JAK NEPAN" which translates to "Lao lady from Nepal" and I stick with it because I find it very much true.

My sincere gratitude to the DVV International team and Laos for taking me as one of your own,

Khopchai Lai Lai!

## Interesting

### Important Website in region

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

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

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

### Interesting publications

Adult Education and Development

AED 79: Networking - Rio + 20 - Lifelong Learning

AED 80: Post 2015

AED 81: Communities

AED 82: Global Citizenship Education

### International Perspectives in Adult Education

IPE 75: Agenda - 2030 - Education and Lifelong Learning in the Sustainable Development Goals

IPE 73: Digital Adult Education - A Key to Global Development?

IPE:72: 1914-2014-Remembering the past to live the present and shape the future

IPE 71: Adult education in an interconnected world

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### New Publication

DVV International Impact Report 2009-2015

Sharing for Learning in Lao PDR: DVV International Engaged in Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development in Asia Pacific

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