



Alongside Lao people



# ANNUAL REVIEW 2020

Service Fraternel d'Entraide



# Table of contents

- 3 Message from the Chairman
- 4 Projets and Perspectives
- 5 Perspectives 2021 – *Disability and Inclusion*
- 6 Attapeu – Impact of Covid-19 in Laos  
*Early detection can save lives*
- 7 Sekong – Hospital Cooperation  
*2020: a year under the global coronavirus pandemic*
- 8 Salavan – Strengthening the Health Care System  
*Reflections on the project 2017-2020*
- 9 Attapeu – Support to the Nursing Training Institute  
*Quality of nursing education*
- 10 Attapeu – Inclusion of People with Disabilities  
*Improving the well-being and the dignity of every person in the province of Attapeu*
- 11 Vientiane – Inclusion of Hearing impaired Persons  
*Good Hand Speakers – “Give me a sign!”*
- 12 Vientiane – Inclusion of People with Mental Illness  
*Improving the lives of people with mental illness*
- 13 TerraCare – Four Southern Provinces  
*Drinking water accessible to all*
- 14 Our Impact – Finances
- 15 Our partners



## A message from the Chairman

The year 2020, which was predicted to be an auspicious, has turned out to be less successful than expected! It revealed the frailty of our humanity and reminded us that, whatever plans and projects we might have, everything could be slowed down or stopped at once.

Laos probably had one of the lowest COVID-19 incidences in the world. This is a great news for a country that is less well-off in terms of health infrastructure and economic and social development than both its Asian neighbors and most Western countries.

As borders were closed very quickly, life returned to relative normalcy after a single month of lockdown in March.

SFE projects have been somewhat delayed, but this is as much due to the pandemic as it is to administrative complexities. Funding was also on hold for a period of time, but things have now returned to normal.

The TerraCare project started a little delay in October, but the distribution of water filters, produced locally by TerraClear and subsidized by SFE for the poorest families, is now well underway in the four southern provinces of the country.

In Sekong and Salavan, the two 3-year projects ended in 2020. However, a new phase is planned for each of these projects from the beginning of 2021.

### Impact of COVID-19 in Laos

Actually, the impacts are indirect. At a medical level, the health care staff prepared themselves for the pandemic by implementing a sanitary protocol similar to that of other countries: wearing masks, hand disinfection, barrier gestures etc. In concrete terms, these measures have had a rather positive impact on hygiene in provincial and district hospitals and health centers. On the other hand, the economic impact in certain areas of Laos is significant and affects the poorest people in particular.

### Involvement of SFE in the fight against the pandemic

The World Health Organisation has entrusted a mission related to COVID-19 to an SFE team member based in Attapeu. This project lasts 9 months. The objective is to train medical staff in all the hospitals in the seven southern provinces from Bolikhamsai to Attapeu. This request shows confidence in SFE's expertise and experience acquired in Laos during its 22 years of presence. SFE is delighted to contribute in this way to the fight against the pandemic.

### Evolution of the projects in 2020

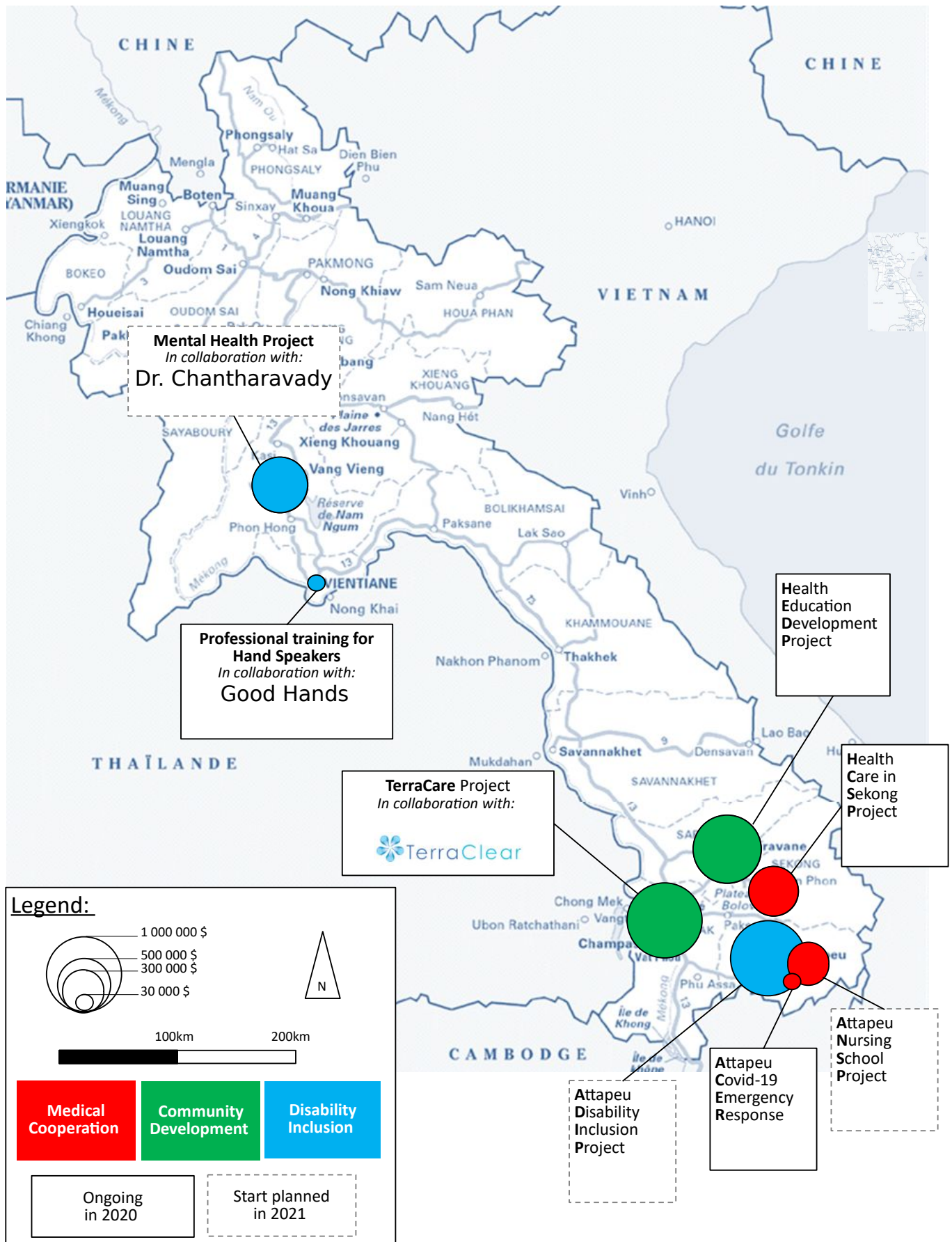
Our appreciation goes out to all the envoys, donors and volunteers who are involved in the work of SFE in Laos and in Europe. Everyone's commitment is necessary to ensure that this work goes on, especially in this particular period of time when the future is even more uncertain than ever.

Montbéliard, May 6, 2021



*Philippe Ulop/enstein*

# Projects and perspectives 2021





## Disability and Inclusion

The year 2021 will be a milestone for SFE! We are finally seeing the start of our first projects related to inclusion, disability and mental health.

The vision of SFE since its inception in 1998 has been to reach the poorest and most vulnerable. At the time, these were the inhabitants of remote provinces and mountainous ethnic groups. Today, the situation has changed, and transportation and communications have reduced physical isolation. Some people, however, experience a different kind of isolation. It is by spending time with people with disabilities in hospitals and villages that the SFE team has become aware of the profound needs of these people, as well as their immense potential. This awareness led to the decision to broaden the scope of SFE's action to include specific projects for these people.



But for this vision to be put into action, it took several years of preparation during which SFE exchanged ideas and resources with more than 20 governmental and non-governmental actors on the subject of disability in Laos, entered into various formal and informal networks, created new technical and financial partnerships, trained project staff and hired specialists. The result is the opening of the Attapeu Disability Inclusion Project and the Mental Health Project, and the involvement of an SFE volunteer in a project aimed at providing vocational training to deaf youth.

This disability inclusion component complements SFE's two historic strands of action: medical cooperation and community development. Several projects in these areas are underway or will see a new phase opening in 2021. The map opposite illustrates the balance and complementarity of these three strands, as well as the scope of the actions carried out by SFE in service of the Lao people.



## Emergency Response to COVID-19 Project

Ruth Mallow-Marcasi

### Early detection can save lives

The Emergency Response to COVID-19 project covers a variety of activities in order to reduce the effect of the global pandemic in Laos.

As of March 2021, there have been 45 positive cases of COVID-19 recorded for the entire country. This suggests that there has been no community transmission in the country. Nonetheless, necessary precautionary actions should be taken to ensure readiness of the health care facilities and most especially the communities.

Upon approval of the project activities, an initial assessment was conducted in the provincial hospital and in four district hospitals in Attapeu Province, namely Saysettha, Sanamsay, Phouvong and Sansay, to get an overview of the current situation of each health care facility (HCF). This assessment is an important milestone in the project's contribution to the Lao government's goal of containing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the assessment, participatory activities were initiated. First, SFE emphasized strict early detection. Each hospital must re-establish a screening area where all patients coming into the HCF undergo a brief screening before entering the HCF. This one simple course of action is essential in the

process of reducing the spread of COVID-19. Early detection saves lives.

While SFE was doing the simulation training in Sansay district in February 2021, the staff at the screening area was able to identify a respiratory infection which necessitated seeking help for immediate care. The baby



had low oxygen saturation and difficulty breathing. With the help of our SFE trainer who happened to be a paediatrician, the baby was able to get proper care. The child was later transferred to the provincial hospital for further treatment and close monitoring.

SFE has also established a close collaboration with other organisations working on reducing the impact of COVID-19 and enhancing the readiness of the local government to manage it. Several meetings have been held to plan and avoid overlapping of activities.

KOICA (Korea International Cooperation Agency) and SFE worked together to make an action plan to strengthen and help our local partner in an effective way and also to efficiently use our resources.

Lastly, SFE started to involve the community in early surveillance, especially in the villages which are close to international borders. Health awareness teams were deployed to facilitate these activities in Sanamsay and Phouvong districts.





## 2020: a year under the global coronavirus pandemic

*Our aim for the future is to continue to support the strengthening of the local health system by building more resilient global health care practices, ready to face challenges in the future.*

Arnold Probst

***Promoting hygiene and good sanitation practice during a global pandemic is precisely the aim of our ongoing project on strengthening health care in the province of Sekong.***

Although Laos has experienced many fewer coronavirus cases than most Western countries, the ongoing international health crisis has emphasized the relevance of our project's aim to build resilient health systems and the importance of access to quality health care, not only in developed countries but also in less developed countries. In today's globalized world, the quality of health care in foreign countries is as important as the health care in one's own country. We are all linked together, and the system is only as strong as the weakest part of the chain.

In Sekong province, during the past year we continued to pursue our goal of empowering the local health authorities to make sound decisions for the health of the whole community. We assisted them in implementing activities that were needed to prepare for the pandemic in the country. Besides the emergency materials that we supplied, we assisted in training health care staff in the necessary knowledge on personal protection and Covid-19 case management. We assisted the director of the hospital in setting up the facility for Covid-19 patients, while supporting actions to strengthen the sanitation of the hospital as

well as health centres.

In the provincial hospital, one facility that was lacking was a functioning laundry station for washing cloth materials from the operation room. The materials stained with blood were being cleaned on the floor without any protection for the laundry people. Thanks to Covid-19, the hospital received a washing machine to use, but still they had no place to install it. We supported the refurbishment of a laundry room and helped organize the regular collection of used cloth materials from around the hospital. Now the hospital has a modern and reliable laundry room and there is no more laundry on the floor. This huge improvement would be especially useful in the event of a Covid-19 outbreak in the country but is also useful for preventing all kinds of infection in the hospital.



## Reflections on the project 2017-2020

Colin et Alison Dudgeon



As the first SFE project in Salavan Province came to an end in September 2020, we were able to reflect on how being Alongside Lao People for three years has enriched lives.

In 10 rural villages more than 3,200 people now have access to toilets and almost 1000 have running watering in their homes for the first time. Most villages have a greater variety of nutritious food available with many families having successful vegetable gardens close to their homes and some villages are growing fruit for the first time. Villagers were involved in

the construction and planting meaning they have ownership and ability to sustain these activities in the years to come.

Most importantly villagers learned how their health and wellbeing could improve significantly by changing behaviour and lifestyle. One result was that we saw a reduction in the proportion of malnourished children from 10% to 3%.



Village health was further enhanced by the training of health workers in the villages, health centres and the provincial hospital. Each village is now equipped with a first aid bag and fully trained health volunteers. 25 nurses and midwives from the five health centres completed eight-week internships at the provincial hospital and received a total of 92 follow-up training visits in their places of work.

### Training

Twelve doctors and nurses from the hospital trained as trainers and were actively involved in training other medical staff. The SFE health advisors delivered 159 practical training sessions in the hospital, many with live cases on the wards. The focus was on mother and child care with topics including antenatal care, normal delivery, neonatal resuscitation/early newborn care, complications during pregnancy, triage and referral, breastfeeding and nutrition and common childhood diseases.

The newly skilled staff are able to provide an enhanced service in the community, encouraging more women to seek medical support during

their pregnancy and receive pre and postnatal care. It was encouraging to see that five months after the project finished, the team we trained at Salavan Hospital continued to teach others what they had learned using techniques we taught with equipment we provided, in the SFE training room.

Perhaps most satisfying was to see doctors and nurses developing a compassion and caring attitude towards patients, something which is sadly not always evident in Laos as pointed out by the Prime Minister who recently reiterated the need for staff to improve their interpersonal skills when carrying out their duties. We are happy to say that in Salavan, patients who in the past may have been left to die, are surviving and progressing because the staff are learning good patient care is a vital part of their professional duty.



### COVID

Then as Covid-19 struck in the last months of the project, we were able to provide emergency handwashing stations for the hospital and hand gel, soap, masks for the health centres and villages. Our education and information sheets quickly informed people of the disease and precautions they could take.



*As a team, both Lao and expatriate, we learned together and from each other. There were many challenges along the way as well as the successes but by working together, developing our relationships and understanding of one another, we were able to overcome the difficult issues. Now we look forward to continuing the progress in Salavan in a new, three-year phase.*



## Quality of nursing education

Célie Wagner

The province of Attapeu is one of the poorest in the country, with a majority of villages still living below the poverty line or even in extreme poverty. The inhabitants of many of these villages, especially in the south of the province, have to travel several hours to reach the nearest health center. There is also a lack of trained and skilled health personnel at these health centers. One of the strategies to improve the quality of healthcare services is the training of medical staff, especially nurses, who have a key role to ensure the quality of health services. To address this need the local authorities of Attapeu province opened a professional training centre for nursing in 2016. This center welcomes nursing students from Attapeu province and neighboring provinces. The current study program spans two years and includes two classes of 30 to 40 students per year.

The training center is encountering several difficulties due to, among other factors, the lack of experience and skills of the teaching and administrative team, the inadequacy of the center's premises and equipment and shortcomings in the student selection and evaluation system (mainly resulting from a problem of methodology and staff organization).

In view of their challenges, the center's managers approached SFE, as a former partner, to develop a



project to support paramedical education. After highlighting the difficulties encountered by the training center, the managers of the training center and SFE reflected together on what the center needs to meet the minimum standards of education and thus ensure a better quality of training. It was decided that the upgrading of the training center's teaching as well as the strengthening of the skills of its pedagogical and administrative team were priorities to be addressed. The project will also contribute towards improving equality of opportunity in education by offering students financial and material support, including the upgrading of the infrastructure necessary for the smooth running of their studies. The establishment of a library is planned so that students can deepen their knowledge and have access to hitherto unavailable resources.



*The project aims to respond to the overall need of improving the quality of health services in the province by ensuring quality nursing education, and is expected to begin in mid-2021.*



## Improving the well-being and the dignity of every person in the province of Attapeu

Leah Doty



After the closing of the long-running Attapeu Community Development Project at the end of 2019, we were excited to continue the momentum of locally owned development in Attapeu by launching a new kind of project to increase social inclusion and available services for people with disabilities. All was going well-- the local government was on board. New foreign advisors had arrived in the country. The documents were ready to be run. We were ready to take off.

Then came the interruption, by now a familiar story throughout the world.

When COVID-19 paused all forward motion and dried up a good portion of the funding pools we were hoping to access, the project had to adapt. The timeline, the target areas, the activities, and the staff were all squeezed down to a minimum. A special fundraising event was organized to fill in the gaps. Slowly, step by faltering step, the project began to take flight. In December the central authorities finally approved the Attapeu Disability Inclusion Project, allowing us to officially open in January 2021.

The months of waiting, of rethinking, of hesitant steps forward, were not wasted. While the project was being stripped down to its essentials, its foundation was being reinforced. Our team

adapted a tool for screening people with disabilities in rural villages, with the advice of other foreign experts. We developed a training for government and SFE staff to learn to empower people with disabilities through relationship-based case management. We identified new staff, screened through interviews with local people with disabilities, who will join hands with government partners to conduct empathetic fieldwork. We got to know our key partner, the Department of Labor and Social Welfare, for the very first time. We transferred knowledge of project management to the new advisors.

Who could have imagined all that 2020 would bring? For the Attapeu Disability Inclusion Project, the long and complicated delay would never have been our first choice. But somehow, through these unforeseen events, the newly begun project is looking to be even more grounded, even more effective, and even more sustainable than it would have been if it had started "on time."

This past year's faltering steps are some of the first movements toward widespread inclusion of people with disabilities in the province. We are excited to see the impact that rises up from this foundation, for the improved well-being and dignified lives of all people in Attapeu.





## Good Hand Speakers : “Give me a sign”

*Lydia Nussbaumer*

Have you ever tried to communicate with people who have no language in common with you? When you live abroad as we do it is inevitable! A few days ago, at a party at home, ten nationalities were represented. It was a lovely experience meeting them. But it was also frustrating: “I (Lydia) couldn't manage to chat with a Korean woman who spoke only her mother tongue. This situation made me think of the 70,000 people who are deaf or hard of hearing in Laos, and have to manage quite another frustration!”

### How is life for deaf people in Laos

Here are a few details to give you an idea of the challenges facing this community: there are only three schools throughout Laos to educate deaf children, with a total capacity limited to 200 children. They do not have access to vocational training; Lao sign language is recent (2003), still in the development phase, even their bases do not seem very stable (every week I update at least one sign that has been changed). Many deaf people in the provinces are unable to learn sign language and live isolated in their own families while being dependent for their needs. A world surrounds them and they are unable to express it. But who could have guessed, before they were taught, that colors have a name? That the food we eat has a taste that can be described? That these people who surround us have a life that can be expressed?

### Good Hand Speakers

Sent to Laos by SFE in 2014, I have recently joined the group “Good Hands Speakers”. The first objective of our project is to develop

a professional training together with Joma Café so that deaf young people can have a job that allows them to provide for themselves and their families with dignity. Found a family finally becomes a possibility for them.

The second objective, for which I am responsible, is to develop a Lao sign language learning program. We have the opportunity to test it in a large international school in Vientiane by teaching it to hearing students.

One day, I would like to be able to extend this project to the remote provinces so that deaf children in rural villages can finally communicate with their parents.



## Improving the lives of people with mental illness in Vientiane Province

*Dr. Chantharavady Choulamany*

### Why do we need to improve the lives of people with mental illness and epilepsy in Vientiane Province?

In the Lao PDR, mental health treatment services are integrated into the general health care service delivery system, but mental health services are not evenly spread across the country. At the central level, mental health units at Mahosot and 103 Hospitals provide both inpatient and outpatient services. At the provincial level, a few hospitals deliver outpatient services only. Meanwhile, 16 district hospitals (nine in Vientiane Capital, three in Borikhamxay province, and four in Vientiane Province) offer community mental health services provided by the BasicNeeds programme, in the form of outpatient clinics. A total of eight healthcare centres in Vientiane Province offer both outpatient services and follow-up visits at home.

People with mental illness or epilepsy in remote areas of Vang Vieng, Hin Hup, Phon Hong and Toulakhom districts face difficulties in accessing health services in these district hospitals. In order to facilitate access to necessary care, in 2020 we expanded mental health services to reach patients in their own communities. Two healthcare centers of each targeted district were selected. People with mental illness and epilepsy in Laos face many barriers to accessing livelihood opportunities which would enable them to earn an income and integrate into society. These barriers include lack of access to mental health services and support during the recovery period. Therefore, SFE will continue to implement the ongoing one-year project as it

is still in the embryonic stage for establishing mental health clinics at healthcare centers.

The new project run by SFE entitled ‘Improving the lives of people with mental illness and epilepsy in Vientiane Province’ will focus on several angles of this issue.

Increasing mental health knowledge and awareness is essential through mental health education for local authorities, such as through orientation meetings introducing SFE, the new project and the importance of mental health in a person’s life, as well as mental health campaigns. Local authorities are the key actors to encourage their villagers suffering from mental health problems to seek mental health treatment at healthcare centers delivered by our trained health staff.

Moreover, doctors and nurses from these eight targeted healthcare centers will be trained in mental health, mental illness and treatment along with counseling to increase their knowledge and skills in these areas. This training will enable medical staff to conduct proper interviews, assessments, diagnoses and treatments tailored to each patient with mental illness or epilepsy. Ultimately, this will empower people living with mental illness or epilepsy to access to mental health services in their own community. Village volunteers will also be trained in the identification of people with mental health problems, active listening and data gathering. They will assist health staff to follow up with patients at home.

The next step is the reintegration of people with mental illness and epilepsy into their communities. In our experience, once their conditions are stabilized, people with mental illness and epilepsy aspire to return to past employment or take up new livelihood activities. As well as providing an income that can help cover the cost of their ongoing medication, participation in livelihood activities changes the perception of people with mental illness and epilepsy, within both the family and the community. It helps to dispel stigma, allowing people with mental illness and epilepsy to gain the respect and acceptance of their communities. For this reason our patients will have access to life skills training and in-kind support to improve their quality of life.





## Drinking water accessible to all

*Dawn Lewis-Johnson*



a joint project between



and



TerraClear

TerraCare, a joint project between SFE and TerraClear, aims to contribute to "ensure universal and equitable access to drinking water at an affordable cost" in the 4 provinces of southern Laos, by permanently reducing the consumption of untreated water. Working with our local partner TerraClear, it is possible to reach the poorest families, and to develop the health awareness dimension that accompanies the sale of filters by the company.

TerraClear representatives visit the villages and work with the village chiefs. Together, they identify the poorest families who receive vouchers to subsidize the cost of acquiring a filter. Families who have purchased a filter then receive at least 5 water and sanitation-related awareness trainings by TerraCare representatives and staff, increasing knowledge about the health hazards of non-potable water consumption, open defecation and non-hand washing.

Those who wish to do so are accompanied in the construction of dry latrines with local means.

The village of Tayek Seu is a remote village in southern Laos, in the Paksong district of Champasack province. On December 1st, the TerraCare team met with the members of the village, including the village chief. The program consisted of an introduction explaining clean water, what it is, why it is important for health, and how to make sure every family has access to clean drinking water. This was followed by a presentation of the TerraCare program with the offer of filters at subsidized prices for poor families in the village.

The villagers of Tayek Seu were delighted to come together to learn how to keep their families healthy. The village chief said, "No organization has come before to train our community to teach us about clean water. It is a great honor to have water filters in our houses". After the presentation, several families signed up for the TerraCare program. All families who chose to participate will receive 5 more health and wellness trainings. Clean water has arrived in Tayek Seu!

Mr. Sojan and his wife Kho have 5 children. They practice subsistence agriculture, using their small land area for crops and to produce food for their family's needs. When TerraCare came to their village and provided training on clean water and improved sanitation practices, Sojan was intrigued. He wanted better for his family, but didn't have the knowledge and tools for change. First, Sojan obtained a subsidized filter for his family and was proud to have clean water in his home for their needs. Through the trainings, he realized that he could also take steps to improve his family's health by building a dry pit latrine. Within two days, with the support and guidance of the TerraCare trainer, Sojan and his family built a bamboo dry pit latrine. Mr. Sojan said, "The TerraCare trainer taught me how to improve my family's life. Now we will be healthier. I always want to have a toilet for my family's use".



## Key figures

### Year 2020 in a few key figures



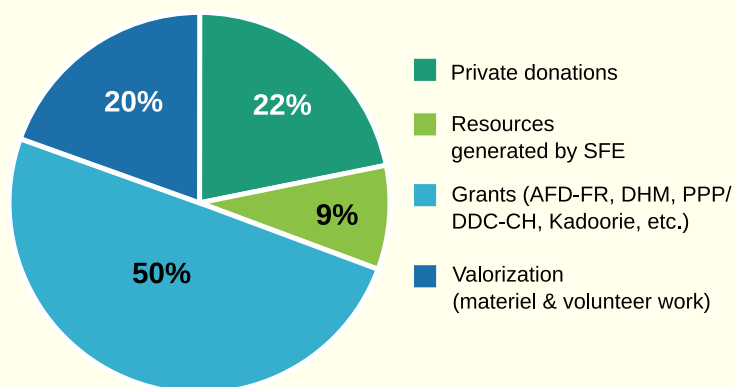
### The impact of SFE to date



## Financial report

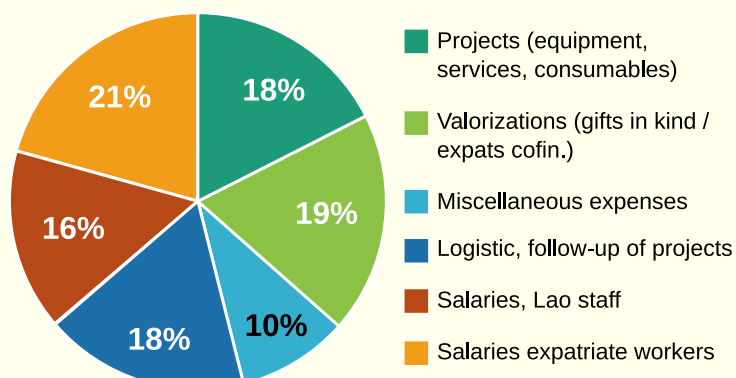
### Income 2020

Total : € 712 108



### Expenses 2020

Total : € 712 108





## Donors

 <p><b>AFD</b> AGENCE FRANÇAISE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT</p> <p><a href="#">AFD</a> (French Development Agency) - See also - <a href="#">AFD Laos</a> - Voir <a href="#">La France soutient un projet d'assainissement au Laos</a></p>	 <p><b>Agence de l'eau</b> RHÔNE MÉDITERRANÉE CORSE</p> <p><a href="#">Agence de l'eau</a> Rhône Méditerranée Corse</p>	 <p><b>La France au Laos</b> Ambassade de France à Vientiane</p> <p><a href="#">Ambassade de France</a> au Laos</p>	 <p><b>Australian Government</b> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade</p> <p><a href="#">Australian Aid (Australie)</a></p>
 <p><b>BASAID</b></p> <p><a href="#">BASAID</a> (Switzerland)</p>	 <p><b>BREAD FOR ALL</b> <a href="#">BFA</a> (The Swiss Protestant development agency)</p>	 <p><b>Christliche Fachkräfte International</b></p> <p><a href="#">CFI</a> (Christliche Fachkräfte International - Germany)</p>	 <p><b>entrust foundation</b></p> <p><a href="#">Entrust Foundation</a> (Australia)</p>
<p><b>FEDERATION VAUDOISE COOPERATION</b></p> <p><a href="#">Fedevaco</a> (Fédération vaudoise de coopération - Suisse)</p>	 <p><b>Hilfe für Brüder International</b></p> <p><a href="#">Hilfe für Brüder</a> (Allemagne)</p>	<p><b>Kadoorie Charitable Foundation</b> (Hong-Kong)</p>	<p><b>RÉGION BOURGOGNE FRANCHE COMTE</b></p> <p><a href="#">Région Bourgogne Franche-Comté</a> (France)</p>
 <p><b>Fondation Solidarité avec le Monde</b></p> <p><a href="#">SAM</a> (Fondation Solidarité avec le Monde - Suisse)</p>	 <p>Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft Confédération suisse Confederazione Svizzera Confederaziun svizra</p> <p><b>Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC</b></p> <p><a href="#">SDC</a> (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation)</p>	 <p><b>Swiss TPH</b></p> <p>Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute Schweizerisches Tropen- und Public Health-Institut</p> <p><a href="#">Swiss TPH</a> (Institut tropical et de Santé publique suisse - Bâle)</p>	 <p><b>TEAR AUSTRALIA</b></p> <p><a href="#">Tear Australia</a></p>
 <p><b>World Health Organization</b></p> <p><a href="#">WHO</a> (World Health Organization)</p>			

## Working partners

 <p><b>DYNAMIC ACTIONS</b> Sustainable Co-Development Eco-Tourisme Solidarité internationale www.dynamicactions.org</p> <p><b>LAOS</b> <a href="http://www.actionrelaos.org">http://www.actionrelaos.org</a></p> <p><a href="#">Dynamic Actions</a> (France)</p>	 <p><b>Service Protestant de Mission</b> <b>Défap</b></p> <p><a href="#">Défap</a> Service protestant de mission</p>	 <p><b>SME</b></p> <p><a href="#">SME</a> (Service de Missions et d'Entraide - Suisse)</p>	 <p><b>TerraClear</b></p> <p><a href="#">TerraClear</a> Laos</p>
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## Alongside Lao People

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