

# Newsletter - November 2020



## Laos and Covid

During the pandemic, only about 20 people tested positive for Covid. The confinement in April was a little less strict than in the Occidental world. At present, international flights are still very limited. There are no cases of coronavirus identified in the population. The only cases that have been found are among people returning from abroad, who in any case have to remain in quarantine for 14 days. However, the effect of the health crisis is being felt at the economic level. Growth this year will fall back to 1990 levels.

## More flooding



In October, several typhoons passed through the region, affecting Laos as well. In the south, parts of the Savannakhet province were hit several times in mid-October. The floods not only washed away harvests but also homes, leaving many families homeless. This is the first time a flood of this magnitude has occurred during the rice harvest season. However, rain is not the only cause of this disaster. Indeed, the various hydroelectric

dams in the region have lowered the level of their reservoirs so as not to repeat the Attapeu drama of three years ago, allowing billions of cubic metres of water to flow out.



## 2 projects end in 2020 ... for a new start in 2021:

**Salavan:** the development and health education project ended in September 2020 and is expected to resume in early 2021.



The authorities thanked the SFE for the work carried out during these 3 years in different areas of health programs: from villages to hospitals, as well as health centres. They are grateful for the assistance provided to the population in terms of hygiene through the construction of toilets and water systems, as well as for the improvement of nutritional habits through agricultural activities. The project includes training of medical staff and providing equipment that is adapted to local needs and resources. This has also created links between the different actors of the health programs and promotes the treatment of patients through better communication.

## **Sekong:**

The project for improving the health system in Sékong province is nearing completion. Here are some of the progress observed over the past 3 years: The technical capacities of the medical staff have considerably increased, particularly in the treatment of pneumonia and gastroenteritis (more than 20%). Thanks to the training of midwives in the health centres, the number of medically assisted deliveries have considerably increased. The province's hospitals have become more efficient, through the training given in management of human resources, hospital equipment and stocks. Entire villages have gained access to a reliable water supply, through the installation of water systems and latrines. The application for a third phase is in progress and the final authorization to be issued by the Ministry of Health should allow a start in January.

## 2 new projects have recently started:

### Attapeu Covid:

In order to respond to the Covid emergency, this month sees the start of a specific project for Attapeu in partnership with WHO. The aim is to improve the way hospital staff work, particularly in the field of hygiene, in order to better fight against the coronavirus pandemic. The SFE has also been retained by the WHO to coordinate this action in the provinces of Sékong and Saravane where it will be incorporated into our health activities. This request proves that the national authorities recognize the quality of the work carried out in the field.

### TerraCare project in the 4 provinces of southern Laos

For 6 years now, SFE projects have been promoting and using filters from the non-profit company TerraClear. These are ceramic filters made locally from clay and rice hulls, moulded into pots and placed in 36 l containers.



The poorest people cannot afford the filter. The idea of a partnership between SFE and the company TerraClear was therefore born, leading to the "TerraCare" project, which will reach 10,000 poor families, with approximately 55,000 direct beneficiaries, half of whom are women and the majority of whom are from ethnic minorities. TerraCare will subsidize 90% of the filters while training the villagers in hygiene and sanitation.



## Christmas action: staff training for the care of people with disabilities in Sekong

The aim is to cultivate respect for people with disabilities and to develop empathy for them amongst the medical staff. On the provincial level, no nursing staff have any training in this field at present. A physiotherapist and a nurse from the provincial hospital will be specifically trained in care for people with disabilities. Upon their return, they will hence train other practitioners in the province. A training course in the capital costs €200 per month and per person. It will take place at the COPE Center (Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise), a NGO working with a medical rehabilitation centre and which is trying to raise awareness of the tragedy of buried cluster bombs, which continue to kill and maim in rural Laos.



**Vacancies:** we are still looking for two nurses, one for the Attapeu project and one for the Sekong project. If you are interested or know someone who would be interested, you can contact us via the website:

<https://www.sfe-laos.org>

A warm thank you to all of you who support the SFE's commitment in Laos. May 2021 be full of hope for everyone,

Dr. Philippe Klopfenstein,  
Chairman of the SFE.



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