

STICKY RICE MINISTRY

Lao Attached Field Newsletter

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Forgotten SDA Children of Laos



Orphans making brooms for a living in Southern Laos

When Laos is forgotten by the world its people are also forgotten. In recent years, Laos has made good progress in improving its economy, but it is still one of the least developed and poorest countries in Southeast Asia. It is estimated that 27% of the Lao and 31% of rural Lao people are living under the poverty line or US\$1.25 a day. (See: <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/country/home/tags/laos>; see also: <http://thediplomat.com/2012/11/laos-different-face-of-poverty/>)

In any society, often women and children suffer most in poverty. And if children with able parents are still struggling to survive, how will children with no parents survive? Their suffering has not been seen or heard off. Although there maybe a very few orphanages in Laos, but I have not seen one myself. And if I, who travelled extensively, still could not find one single orphanage how could a Lao orphan find out one?

"So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:10, ESV). Do you think the Lord is speaking to you through this bible text? To do good to Lao orphans, especially those who are in Jesus?

In this special issue, I would like to bring into your attention a few Lao Seventh-day Adventist orphans who have been suffering in silent for so many years. And it is time that we remember their suffering and "visit" them. In this issue I would like to introduce you to two girls and two boys. Ms Sinphone Khammunlook, Chieng Xay Village, Ba Jieng District, Champasak Province. Ms Chittaphone Chinthavong, Nongsa Village, Phon Hong District, Vientiane Province. Phong Mua, Nam Phed Village, Bokeo Province. And Lu Ya Xiong, from Xayaboury Province. In fact, there are more forgotten SDA children of Laos. But, these four need our prayers and support most and urgently.

Please prayerfully consider supporting them. If you would like to be a parent to one please kindly let me know. These forgotten SDA children need surrogate/foster parents. They have lost their parents. Now, they have nobody else. Only God is their heavenly Father. You can be their earthly parent.

"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."

(James 1:27 , ESV)

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Forgotten by Earthly Father, Adopted by Heavenly Father



Lu Ya Xiong

The day Lu Ya was born, 15 August 1995, his father left him and his mother to fend for themselves in the world alone. His mother tried hard to nurse him as well as to find food to feed the two of them. She had no land to cultivate and no relatives to help. It did not take long before she fell sick and died. Lu Ya was only 4 years old when his mother died, too young to understand what happened to him. And his wayward father was nowhere to be found.

With nowhere to go, his cousin, Xia Ser, took pity on him, so he took Lu Ya into his house and raised him up. His cousin is an Adventist. So, Lu Ya grew up believing in God. In 2001, as young as 6 years old, Lu Ya began to give his life to Jesus. He knew that only Jesus is faithful to him. He could not turn to his earthly father for help. He could not turn to his dead mother for help either. His cousin could help him a bit, but God only can help him. From then he determined in his mind to serve God.

I had a chance to get acquainted with Lu Ya early last year in 2014 when I visited his village in Xayaboury Province. Then, he went with us to visit Hmong members in remote villages. I remember that he got a car sick and vomited. So, I gave him my motion tablets that I kept with me. However, that was Damamine (drowsy tablet). So, Lu Ya was sitting sleepy while we were worshipping in a house. Fortunately, it was on the ground floor, so he did not fall down when I preached too long.

After that, Lu Ya moved to live at the back of the Vientiane church among other 11 other SDA youth. They shared what they had and kept



Lu Ya in action at a centre of the blind children

each other alive.

Lu Ya studied hard and last year 2014 he passed the National University exam to study Statistics. But, he had no money to study and had to forfeit his study. Lu Ya, then, joined the One Year in Mission (OYIM) team in Vientiane. He has demonstrated his passion for ministry. He is not shy to serve the community, clean the street, visit patients at hospital, and care for the less fortunate like working with blind children (above).

When asked what do you want to do in the future, Lu Ya said confidently that he wants to serve God as a pastor. But, there is one problem. Because of his hard life, Lu Ya is a short boy. When he stands behind a pulpit, his church members won't see him there. So, when asked if he would consider study to be a treasurer of the church, after all we need a treasurer too, he said that any position, as long as it's serving God, is fine with him. I like the attitude of this boy. He just wants to serve God. Position or pay is not his concern. So, we would love to send Lu Ya to study to become a future treasurer at our university where I am a lecturer, Asia-Pacific International University (AIU), in Thailand.

But, there is one problem, the church does not subsidize or consider giving scholarships to students who study English as a Second Language (ESL). Currently, Lu Ya studies English at our English Language School in Vientiane 4 hours a week (Monday-Thursday). He is in Beginner 2 class. An average ESL student at AIU, who studies 8 hours per day, 5 days a week, takes about 2 years to advance to college program. That is 40 hours per week or 10 times more than Lu Ya's. So, if we do our mathematics correctly it would take Lu Ya 20 years before he can enter AIU. This situation applies to all Lao students because they were not born speaking English.

It would take Lu Ya 20 years before he can enter AIU.

The church in Laos surely cannot wait that long for a treasurer! We would like him to enter ESL program at AIU as soon as possible. In order to do that we will need 148,385 Thai Baht (\$5,000.00) per year. Textbooks, lab fees, field trips, and pocket money are excluded.

Lu Ya is a bright young man. I believe that it will not take him 2 years to enter college. So, if I receive just 1 year fees of \$5,000 I will send him to AIU right away. Do you think you can adopt this orphan? Would you like to be his "surrogate" parent? If you do, you will do God a big favor by being a part of God's plan to make this young man a treasurer of the Laos church in the future.

Left Behind by Earthly Parents



The late pastor Khampasong Khammunlook's 9 daughters pictured in order of seniority from left to right

Sinphone, pictured here 3rd from the right, is a daughter of the late pastor Khampasong Khammunlook. Her father was my good friend. I used to tease him a lot about his surname, "Khammunlook." You see, his surname means "10,000 children" in Lao language. And he lived up to his name by having 9 daughters.

He and his family are the first group from the Ya Hern tribe who embraced the faith of Jesus. According to the statistics there are still no known Ya Hern Christians recorded as yet. The late pastor Khampasong pioneered the work among his people and was in the process of building up the first Ya Hern Adventist in Laos when his life was cut short by liver cancer in 2013. And the construction of the church came to a halt for the lack of funds. As if one tragedy was not enough for his



The unfinished Ya Hern church in Laos

family, a year later, on 22 January 2014, his wife also passed away, living behind 9 children without the future.



The extended family of the late pastor Khampasong

Three elder sisters were married, but the remaining 6 younger

Ones are still single. The very young one is still studying in grade 9.

What can these unskilled children do for a living? How can they survive? When we talk about poverty line of \$1.25 a day, there are more than 30% of the Lao people who could not make that much per day. But, the late pastor Khampasong's children could not even make \$1.00 per day! During the reed season they would collect the stalks of this reed to make brooms and sell them to the merchants, the middle men. The merchants then take them to the market and make good profits from the trade. The producers, however, get very little for their hard labour all day long.



The brooms produced by the late Pr Khampasong's children

Once it hit the market the brooms can be sold at 20,000 kips or US\$2.5 each. But, the producers get merely 50 cents per broom. But the process of making a broom is not easy. First, one must go to the forest to harvest the reed stalks. After bring them home one needs to beat the seeds out of each stalk. Then, leave them to dry before weaving them into a broom. At least the broom making can generate some income for these orphans. But, the problem is that the broom season is only very brief, around 2 months. Then, the remaining 10 months of the year what are they going to do for their living? Besides, the children still have to go to school.

Sinphone is in grade 11 now. When I visited her family in March this year, 2015, I asked her what she would like to study after year 12? She told me confidently that she would like to serve God like her father, meaning to be a pastor. Although our culture still does not accept a female pastor, there is no reason she cannot serve God as a teacher, nurse, or accountant, etc... There is one obstacle though. If we allow her to study where she is, she will not make it further than grade 12. We will need to bring her to Vientiane to study there. In Vientiane, she can study at a better school and at night she can go to study English to improve her chance of getting to AIU in Thailand.

Now, let's talk a serious business. If you are moved by the Holy Spirit to be a surrogate/foster parent to this girl you can let me know. I plan to move her to Vientiane once she finishes her grade 11 this June. In order to move her to Vientiane it will cost \$4 a day or US\$120.00 per month (\$1,440.00 per year). This is inclusive of everything, accommodation (at our Youth Hostel), foods, school fees, books, English tuition fees (will negotiate with our English Center for sponsorship), and women's needs. And if possible, I would like to buy a motorbike for her to travel to study English at night. It is rather quite far and not possible to go by bicycle. A decent second-handed motorbike costs around US\$1,000.00. But, a brand new one, Thailand made, costs \$2,000.00 in Laos. For a girl, I would rather get a new bike as used ones are not reliable and girls don't know how to repair bikes.

So, it will need the total of US\$3,440 for the first year or \$120 per month, plus a bike. The motorbike will belong to the Laos Church, but she can use it for going to study English at night. Once she goes to study at AIU later, then, the bike will be used by another orphan, as per approval of the LAF Administrative Committee. Please remember this orphan of the later pastor Khampasong Khammunlook. Thank you for your love.

An Orphan in Need



Chittaphone Chinthavong in School Uniform

Behind the smile are untold miseries of life with no parents. Chittaphone Chinthavong was just a little kid when her parents were killed in a bomb blast at a funeral where they attended. Since then she was raised up by her relatives. Chittaphone studied hard and is quite smart in her study. She is much loved by her friends and teachers. They said that she is good at Mathematics. But, she is good with just any subject.

Recently, LAF planted a church in her village and Chittaphone was among the first who accepted the Lord Jesus as her personal Savior. From the time she got to know Jesus she has always been attending church faithfully, participating in song service, and other church activities.

Chittaphone is now entering grade 12. LAF has identified her potential and would like to send her to study at AIU later once she finishes high school. We would like to bring her to stay at the Vientiane Youth Hostel which will be completed in a month time.

Like Sinphone, Chittaphone will need only \$4 a day or \$120 per month to cover for her personal expenses, food, tuition fees, accommodation fees, and so on. If you would like to be Chittaphone's surrogate parent please let us know. Just a price of an ice cream a day you can become a parent to an orphan in Laos. Just look how cute your daughter is. Why not take her into your arms of love? Thank you for your consideration.

First Orphanage in Laos



The first Youth Hostel in Laos where Sinphone and others like her will stay and build their future

"Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you" (Isaiah 49:15, ESV). It is God's promise and God always keeps His promise.

You see, there are at least 12 Lao rural youth living at the back of the Vientiane Church. They sleep like sardines in a can, but nevertheless happy to be able to come to Vientiane to get better education. Some of these young men are orphans, including those who were abandoned by their biological father because they accepted Jesus as their God, like Kong Vang (the miraculous boy who came back from the jaw of death).

Because we had a plan to rebuild the Vientiane church the existing church will be demolished in October 2015. Where will these boys go? Where will they stay? All of them do not have relative houses to go to. There only relative/family is the church and their only father is God. It must be through God's inspiration that my friend had asked me that his late father left an inheritance for him, but he rather put into building a youth hostel in his honor. Well, who would doubt this? So, the \$30,000 Vientiane Youth Hostel was conceived. Pastor Houmphanh donated his land and I used accumulated funds, \$7,000, that were given to me from my Darwin Church members to buy an access road. Then, early 2015 the hostel construction began to take shape.

This youth hostel is located next to the 2nd Vientiane City Church at Dong Kham Xang Suburb. It comprises of 4 large

bedrooms and two common toilet facilities, one on each floor. It is capable of accommodating up to 40 youth, if they sleep the way they slept before behind the Vientiane Church. But, if they sleep on double bunk beds each room can sleep 6 people, total 24 people.



The Lao Youth Hostel in construction in Vientiane City

This hostel is expected to be completed by end of June 2015, just in time for orphans like Sinphone Khammunlook and Chitaphone Chinthavong to come to stay. And the 12 youth from behind the Vientiane Church can also move in before the demolition begins. Building the building to house the orphans is one thing, but keeping the orphans alive is another. So, if you feel that you would like to surrogate/foster an orphan please let us know. Let's invest in the heavenly business, for the Lord is coming soon. Then, we will reap our rewards.



Phong Mua is from Nam Phed Village, Bokeo Province, Northern Laos

Make Phong Mua a Pastor

Phong Mua was born on 19 April 1993 into darkness. Like most Hmong people, his parents worshipped all kinds of spirits. When he grew up all he knew was how to please the spirits. When his parents accepted Jesus as their God Phong Mua was only 13 years old. But, he has been attending church with his parents at Nam Phed Church, Bokeo Province. He has seen many of his tribal people who are still living in the shadows of darkness, in a world controlled by the devil. He would like to help them see the light of the gospel. He has heard the call of God to serve Him as a pastor. But, one thing stands in his way.

*“And I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
“Whom shall I send, and who will go for
us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”*

Phong Mua will finish his high school this year, June 2015. He has been living behind the Vientiane Church with his friends and attending school in Vientiane for a couple of years. Although he has tried to study English during the last couple of years, however, his English is still very basic. How can he enter AIU Theology program? Since there is no ESL subsidy from the church, many young men from Laos like Phong Mua simply cannot come to study to become pastors. What a pity, since there are at least 4-5 young men, who sleep behind the Vientiane Church, who have expressed their desire to study theology.

Contact Us

You can write to us or give us a call for more information about our work and other mission projects.

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The church in Laos is growing fast and we are facing with the lack of proper theologically trained pastors. As a result, we are facing with all kinds of spiritual challenges such as unbiblical practices, speaking in tongues, and sometimes even immoral practices.

One may not understand why one pastor cannot take care of several churches like in some countries. This is difficult in Laos for a few reasons. Firstly, our churches are very far from each other. It would take at least 2-3 hours drive plus 2-3 hours walk to reach the closest church. And our pastors do not own cars and do not know how to drive. Secondly, ethnic churches need the same ethnic pastors. A lot of ethnic people do not speak or understand Lao well enough to appreciate spiritual message. Thirdly, cultural barriers between different ethnics still exist. It is not ideal to let a Lao pastor look after a Hmong church and vice versa. Besides, we still do not have enough pastors anyway. In total, we only have 7 theological trained pastors, including the president and 3 departmental directors. In reality, there are only 3 pastors out in the field.

So, you can see our dilemma. Unless, we can find a way to get our young people to study ESL at AIU we will continue to face this same challenge until Jesus comes. If the Lord speaks to you to sponsor Phong Mua to study ESL at AIU please let us know. It is only \$5,000 a year. And it is only one year investment. That would be sufficient.



Nam Phed Church, Bokeo Province, Northern Laos—one of the 5 churches in Northern Laos yet to have a proper theologically trained pastor