

Development of the Laos Education Team.

International Voluntary Services, Inc. was founded in 1954 by a group of men from several walks of American life. The founding committee was composed of leaders from business, education, government and religious organizations. One of the major founding principles was drawn from President Truman's Point Four proposal. This was the statement of the principle of technical cooperation and aid on a personal level, one of sending Americans to foreign countries to help those countries develop.

At this time, there was no way for a young American to go overseas to work in development projects other than with religious organizations. Recognizing that there were many young people who couldn't or didn't want to work with a religious organization, and that the opportunities were limited, the committee founded IVS for young people who wanted to work with those of a foreign country who were less fortunate in resources and opportunities of all kinds.

IVS is specifically non-sectarian. Volunteers are prohibited by their contract from proselytizing. This doesn't affect or limit the types of personal motivations of the people who join IVS. The motivation varies from volunteer to volunteer. The common denominators being the desire to be

of service to one's fellow man, an adventurous spirit and a desire to work in a foreign land with people of another culture.

The bottom of our letterhead states that IVS is "A Non-profit organization designed to promote "People to People" cooperation in foreign development Projects". This is the guiding principle of IVS. IVS has only its volunteers to offer a developing country. The volunteers themselves offer their services, their ideas and their hopes on a "people to people" basis.

Since IVS was founded, other organizations have come into existence that offer the same opportunity for overseas service. The large-scale success of the Peace Corp, and the Growth of International Volunteerism, using the same operating philosophy as IVS, give us confidence by reinforcing our conviction that our founding philosophies are valid.

The original Team was placed under Contract in July 1959 to work at the National Education Center, located nine kilometers outside of Vientiane. Some team members arrived before the first building was completed and worked for a short time in the city of Vientiane. The original contract was for a total of eight volunteers. Seven of positions could be labeled "Practical Arts" ; home economics, nursing, agriculture, wood working, plumbing-masonry and general

building and grounds maintenance advisors. Only one of the original eight positions was for a classroom teacher, that being a science teacher. Much of the work of this first team entailed keeping the physical facilities of the school operating. Due to the unsettled conditions in the country, some positions stipulated in the contract were not filled.

In July of 1961 an amendment to the contract was written which stipulated four more IVS volunteers to work in the field of education. Only three of these positions were filled. Two of the three were practical arts advisors. During this early period political conditions in Laos were not very stable. By October of 1962 political conditions had settled and have continued to be relatively stable and all team members and dependents have been living and working normally. By 1962 nine of the twelve positions had been filled. Seven of the nine were practical arts advisors. Only two were classroom teachers.

In the fall of 1963, all 12 positions in the contract were filled for the first time. The nature of the work began to slowly evolve, although nine of the twelve positions were still "practical arts" people : two agriculturists, a home economist, a nurse and five manual arts and maintenance advisors.

As the school grew and more Lao staff become available, the IVS'ers were able to do more training of counterparts. Less

reliance was placed on the IVS'ers actually doing the work and more emphasis was placed on training Lao how to construct and maintain the facilities of the school. More classes were being taught in the areas of agriculture, home economics and manual arts. However, about two thirds of the practical arts advisors' time was still spent on maintenance, construction and housekeeping activities.

One academic teacher was added in the fall of 1963 and in December one English Teacher was added giving us classroom teachers of science, social studies and English. Our Team strength was then 13 : 9 practical arts advisors, three classroom teachers and Chief of Party.

In July of 1964 the contract was amended to include a total of 22 volunteers. Added were six English Teachers for the secondary schools, two general education advisors for the Regional Teacher Training centers in Pakse and Luang Prabang and a mathematics teacher for the ESP. The major chance was to increase the number of IVS personnel in the classroom. However, four of the English teaching positions were not filled because of lack of sufficient lead-time between the signing of the contract and the beginning of the school year.

During the 1965-66 school year our role in helping the Lao to develop their education program continued to change. The

ultimate goal of working ourselves out of a job was accomplished in two areas and IVS phased these positions out of the program. For the first time in six years, IVS did not have a nurse or an arts and crafts teacher at the ESP. The facilities of the infirmary had been sufficiently developed and the Lao staff trained to the point where we were no longer needed. A Lao arts and crafts teacher who had just returned from a USAID-financed training program in Thailand was assigned to the school. The shop and the program had been developed by IVS'ers and the new teacher was placed in the position, eliminating the need for an American teacher.

The activities of the team were expanded. We began to teach more English in the French section, a half time advisor was placed in the school library, team members played an increasing role in overall school maintenance instead of just small areas of the whole, teacher reference collections and instructional materials were collected and organized.

The direction in which our role has been moving is evidenced by the activities in which we now are engaged :

1. The activities of the team have changed.

Originally, virtually all were involved in practical arts and maintenance. This year 1/3 of our people were involved in these activities and for the 1966-67 school year, our staffing lists only 1/6 of the team to be so employed.

2. We initially taught no English in the French Section. This year two team members have been so occupied.
3. We are expanding our activities to other institutions in other locations. The original team was stationed in Vientiane. This year seven team members were stationed outside the ESP. The 1966-67 school year plans specify eleven Team members to be stationed in other institutions.
4. There has been expansion of the practical arts program but an actual decrease in the number of IVS volunteers working in this area. The following is taken from a report written during this year : "One-third of home economics is taught by an American now. Two years ago all of it was. The two Americans teaching agriculture and practical arts each have at least one counterpart whom he is training. They are at varying levels of attainment. In the last three school years (counting the present) while the enrollment has increased by about 35% and the number of hours of practical subjects (hygiene, home economics, practical arts and agriculture) taken by a student has increased by 50%, the number of IVS people teaching in these areas

has decreased from 9 to 6. This is due to successful training of counterparts and the participant training program. During this same period, available Lao staff and counterparts in these areas has increased from 3 to 12".

5. The original team contained one classroom teacher. During 1965-66 there were ten. Next year there will be eighteen.
6. The English Section at the ESP was originally founded by a University of Michigan Team. Our role in this section was minor. This year the IVS/Ed. Chief of Party served as head of the English Section and IVS'ers staffed all positions except those of the teaching of English. Next year we plan to fill all but three of these positions.