

Ecole Normale des Instituteurs.

The ENI's were founded in 1961 to meet a pressing need in the Lao school system. In the last few years the demand for village teachers has risen sharply. Increasing numbers of rural villages are feeling a need for education for their children and have been pressing the government to help them meet this need. As part of the response to this need USAID has been cooperating with the RLG in building village schools as rapidly as possible. These are generally small two or three room buildings housing the first three grades. To fill these classrooms with teachers a large initial investment was placed in the ENI campuses.

Our program began, essentially, as a one year "crash" program designed to quickly get teachers into village classrooms. Along with taking a competitive examination for entrance, an ENI candidate needed the certificate of graduation from a Groupe Scolaire (grade 6). To the six years of basic Groupe Scolaire Education, the ENI gives an additional two years of accelerated Teacher Training. Upon graduation, ENI 2 year teachers will be assigned by the Ministry of Education to Schools Administered by one of the provincial Primary Inspectors, who is responsible for the village schools in his district. These teachers become regular civil servants.

When the emergency need for teachers abated slightly it was felt that our educational standards should be raised and the students receive longer teacher training. Beginning in the 1965-66 school year a four year program was added to the program of the Luang Prabang and Pakse ENI's. At the same time the one year program was extended to two years.

ENI graduates have gone forth on their jobs with very limited training and experience behind them. They studied from dawn till dusk in a hurried program where many subjects vied for the limited time available. Their practice teaching experience has been a matter of days and hours rather than weeks or months. Many of them upon being assigned to a school found their schools not yet completed and lacking doors and windows. Many of them were not lucky enough to have a self-help building and had to use thatch huts or rough log buildings for their classes. One of the chief complaints has been a lack of textbooks for their students (although a current RLG/USAID program of textbook distribution has largely alleviated this problem). Their primary strength as teachers has been the quality and determination of their hopes and dreams.

From its inception, teacher training in Laos has not been limited to classical pedagogy. The principal goal, of course, has been to train good teachers. However, we know that these young people will be among the few in rural areas who have

received any education beyond the primary level. Thus, they are an invaluable asset to their village. Further, as young people, they are attuned to the process of social change. They are not expected to become community development experts but it is hoped that they will be able to influence at least the children and perhaps the adults of the village. Their experiences with learning to boil water for purification, their exposure to different farming techniques, their knowledge of government services will make them a village resource.

An IVS advisor has been involved as a part of each ENI since their beginning. Essentially, the IVS role has been threefold :

1. Teaching various courses:
2. Supervising special projects such as library work, curriculum development, textbooks, etc.
3. Helping as a liaison between USAID and the ENI.

Roderick MacRae who taught at the ENI/Pakse says this of his work :

"Those of us in teacher training are justifiably excited about our work. Of course, teaching is an exciting profession anywhere and particularly so here in Laos where the challenge is great. Teacher education is a process of changing and molding attitudes so that the teacher can be an effective person in his classroom and in the community. This process is successful only where people desire to

change. This motivation does exist in Lao schools where students have come voluntarily because they are ready to learn new techniques ; new ways of life. Thus, we feel that education is one of the important links in developing a strong nation".