

IVS-LAOS

project description

1956-1964



EDUCATION • AGRICULTURE



CONSTRUCTION • PUBLIC HEALTH



VOCATIONAL TRAINING • SELF-HELP

IVS LAOS 1956-1964

International Voluntary Services (I.V.S.), a nonprofit organization, was founded in 1953 to assist developing nations by sending teams of young Americans to work at the "grass-roots" level with the people of the host countries.

The I.V.S. programs in Laos have been financed by contracts with the U.S. Agency for International Development (U.S.A.I.D.). I.V.S. teams have been working under the direction of the AID Rural Development and Education divisions, in cooperation with appropriate agencies of the Royal Government of Laos. Team members have been able to make a unique contribution to Laos' economic development by using their American skills to carry out the U.S.A.I.D. programs.

The initial I.V.S. team in Laos was a seven-man group situated on the rolling plain of Xieng Khouang province. This team, working under the AID Rural Development Division, consisted of a Chief-of-Party and team members of diverse abilities: an animal husbandryman, sociologist, agriculturists, a mechanic, and a nurse. Their success indicated that I.V.S. team members might well operate at the teacher training institution near Vientiane, the capital of the country. A second contract, signed in 1959, provided for such a team of teachers. I.V.S. operations have continued under these two similar contracts, with the two groups known as the Rural Development team and the Education Team. They have worked uninterrupted with the exception of temporary evacuation from Laos in 1960 due to an unstable military situation. From the initial Xieng Khouang site, there has been expansion to over a dozen greater and lesser locations in 10 of the 16 provinces of Laos. Vientiane remains the seat of I.V.S. and U.S.A.I.D. administrative operations.

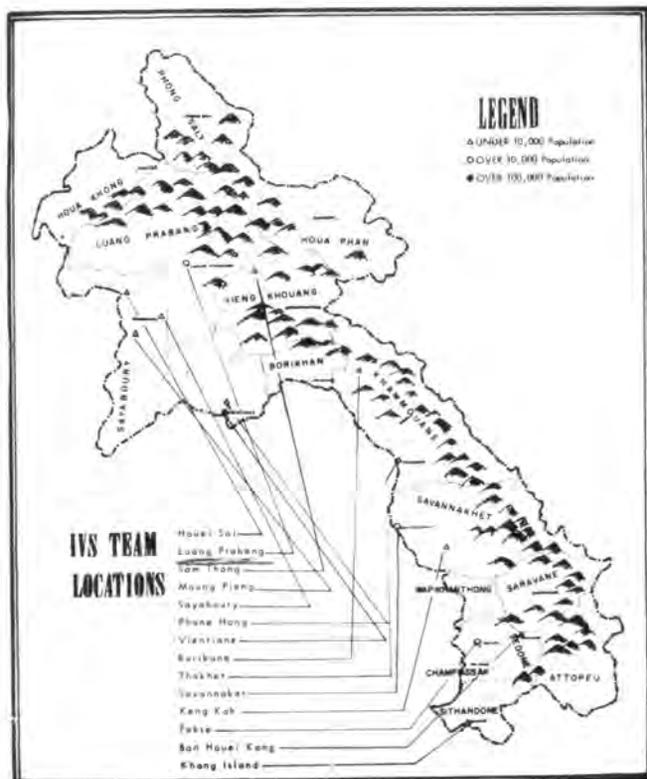


EDUCATION TEAM

The 'university' of Laos, the Ecole Superior d'Education, near Vientiane, resembles a large American high school. The Education group there supplements the French education staff by assisting in classroom teaching. A large part of the work consists of practical operations in related fields: the I.V.S. electrician is in charge of the power plants; the plumber supervises installation, maintenance and repair of plumbing and sewage disposal; and the Animal Husbandryman oversees the livestock breeding farm and agricultural programs. Other personnel are skilled in nursing, home economics, carpentry, and similar basic programs. These I.V.S.'ers live in modern American-type housing nearby.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The I.V.S. RD program in Laos is an important part of the AID Rural Development program. Locations, methods, and objectives are determined by the policies of the official American effort in the rural areas. The RD division provides direction, technical and material support to the I.V.S./RD projects.



PERSONNEL

MOST

EFFECTIVE

Certain types of people are particularly skilled for work in cluster villages. Their activities follow a community development pattern - demonstration, training and extension. The job requires dealing with rural people, recognizing problems, and suggesting and demonstrating new alternatives to old problems. New arrivees may be assigned to a new area but more likely will first be in an already functioning center.

The major activities of an AGRICULTURIST generally include (a) setting up a small demonstration center, (b) establishing a propagation area to produce plant materials for distribution to local farmers, (c) conducting courses and demonstration on crop production, and (d) usual extension type activities. Work provides training situations for Lao Agriculture and Fundamental Education workers. Animal Husbandrymen have similar activities along livestock lines.

CONSTRUCTION SPECIALISTS provide assistance and training in carpentry and masonry to villagers for self-help projects such as roads, bridges, culverts, homes, schools, markets, dispensaries, and airstrips. This man may frequently be responsible for supervising construction of buildings for farm demonstration centers.

In some situations, a HOME ECONOMIST or a SOCIOLOGIST-GENERALIST may be assigned to an area. Activities of the home economist will be with women and girls in home sanitation, food preservation, gardening, sewing and other handicrafts. The sociologist or generalist's activities are to spread the news of the center to the cluster villages and leadership groups to enlist support. This includes visits, showing films, organizing fairs and athletic contests.

In the past, I.V.S. teams were located primarily in provincial capitals, with Vientiane as the focal point. Now teams are further into the country: provincial centers are becoming the centers of operations for nearby villages.

U.S.A.I.D. emphasis in rural Laos is presently based on "cluster village" development. These natural cultural and economic units of 10 - 15 villages are usually located in remote areas. Small teams of two or three I.V.S.'ers are assigned to these cluster villages. Their day to day activities are under the general direction of a U.S.A.I.D. coordinator, usually a social scientist, responsible for all American activities in the area. Lao counterpart workers in agriculture and fundamental education are frequently assigned to work in these villages along with the I.V.S. team members.

TEAM LOCATIONS AND WORK

The northermost outpost of U.S.A.I.D. in Southeast Asia, the Mekong River town of Ban Houei Sai, is within walking distance of Burma. Duties of the two young I.V.S. college graduates there are legion. As one puts it, "We're the representatives of anybody and everybody - I.V.S., AID, the U.S. Importation Program and the Information Service, and the Bureau of Public Works." Projects have included demonstration of a machine to make building blocks from earth, direction of rat elimination programs, road building, village surveys, and refugee assistance.

The team in Luang Prabang, the Royal capital of Laos, is still getting underway. But for two years the local Rural Teacher Training Center, one of the several in the country, has had an I.V.S'er in the staff developing the overall program. Another man acted as regional coordinator until a U.S.A.I.D. man was available. And two musically inclined team members sought out traditional Lao folksongs, now printed up as part of the nation's heritage.

Sayaboury, a team site since 1961, is the capital of the province bordering northern Thailand. Early work consisted of "maintaining presence" and resettling Meo tribespeople, refugees from the north, in local Villages. Now a livestock propagation farm is underway, Lao youth have been trained as mechanics, and woman team members are directing home economics classes in sanitation, dressmaking and cooking. The group is branching out to cluster village Moug Pieng, nearby in the mountains.

Vientiane's seven-tons-per-day imports of vegetables from Thailand spurred an I.V.S. manned program which increased production by 500%. And an I.V.S'er who saw a potential in making bamboo rakes has a veterans rehabilitation center turning them out by the hundreds.



THE I.V.S. HOUSE IN BAN HOU EI KONG IS A TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF I.V.S. HOUSING IN LAOS.



The teams in southern Laos are centered in the towns of Pakse and Savannaket. The Pakse team, beginning with teaching in the local Teacher Training Center and leading school vegetable programs, now includes the building of schools, bridges, and roads on Khong Island in the Mekong River, initiating agricultural cooperatives and other community development programs among Kha tribes in the mountain areas, and investigating possibilities of new cash crops such as coffee on the Bolevens Plateau. Savannaket team members have been conducting health and home economics classes and assisting vegetable production in villages.

The spearheads of the RD programs, the cluster village personnel, are established in centers around Savannaket and Pakse. Borikane, upstream from Paksane, has a team 'majoring in concrete'. The well rings and water-seal squat toilets they have trained the village people to build have been enthusiastically accepted. One cluster village is at Phone Hong, only 70 kilometers from Vientiane, where a agricultural demonstration center and dispensary are being built.