

Teachers Day

This week Lao PDR celebrated Teachers Day - one of the happiest and most memorable events in the annual school calendar for Lao students.

Teachers' Day is a celebration. It allows students, officials and parents to reaffirm the important roles and responsibilities of teachers in society. Teachers' Day gives everyone the chance to remember their own school days and their favourite teachers. It presents an opportunity for students to thank their teachers not only for the knowledge and skills they develop, but also for inspiring them to reach their full potential.

Ms. Khouane from Ban Dakkiet Primary School: Sanxay District of Attapeu Province

Ms Khouane is of Alak ethnicity from a small community about 5,000 people. She lived in Dakkiet village when she was recruited to be a teacher trainee, with support from the Australian aid program. She graduated from Saravan Teacher Training College in 2005. In an interview, Ms Khouane reflects that in the first year of college, she was shy and kept quiet



because her spoken Lao was not good. However, after a few months she grew to enjoy her time at the college and made many friends. It was hard work; she had to walk six kilometres each way from home to school, carrying her young baby because she could not ride a bicycle. After requests to the District Education Bureau, she was moved to the school in her home village. Now, there are three teachers providing all five grades of primary education. To support more teachers like Ms Khouane, Australia is supporting the Lao Government through a major

new education program. The Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR program will support teachers and teacher training - including the provision of scholarships to ensure teachers are available in the most remote communities. The program will support more girls and boys, especially those experiencing disadvantage, to complete a quality basic education, achieving literacy, numeracy and other life skills.

Teachers Day gives us the opportunity to reflect on the role of teachers in our society and in our communities particularly those who are willing to make sacrifices to leave the comfort of city life and serve in remote communities. Their contribution, to individual children, and to the prosperity and development of the country, goes well beyond the contribution education makes to GDP growth.

For me, a good teacher not only teaches but also learns. They go further than the teacher guides and textbooks, they encourage questions from students and pose questions back to the students. Good teachers are those who help students find the answers for themselves.

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