

STICKY RICE MINISTRY

Lao Attached Field Newsletter

March 2016

CHANGING PEOPLE'S LIVES IN LAOS



Changing People's Lives gives a mosquito net to a poor family in Southern Laos

Changing People's Lives (CPL) helps change the lives of the Laos people. Who would have thought that a simple mosquito net can bring smiling faces to a lot of people? Do you know that many of the Laotians still go to bed without mosquito nets and a blankets? During the last cold spell in Southeast Asia, in late January 2016, killed a lot animals in Laos. It was the first time in human history that there were snow falls in Laos. The cold killed almost 9,000 cattle and uncountable numbers of poultry in Xam Nuea area of Hua Phan Province, and also damaged almost all crops. People in rural Laos did not know how to deal with this cold. With little blankets and thin clothes what can they do? What can the church of God do to help alleviate their suffering? Remember how Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because they turned their blind eyes on the poor. "Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy" (Ezekiel 16:49, ESV).

It was during this time in January-February 2016 I had an opportunity to visit Southern Laos with CPL delegates. Even in the south, we could feel the cold spell a little bit. The visit helped CPL to assess the needs of the Lao people and how the church of God could get involved in changing the Lao people's lives. Starting from Vientiane, the Capital City, we drove southward visiting people along the way. The first stop was at Borikhamxay Province. We visited a Khmu lady who has a passion to help her people to know God. It is by knowing God her life has been totally changed. Now, she is determined to make sure that her Khmu people's lives would be changed through knowing God as well.

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Aunty Souk, as we know her, is a Khmu Christian whose passion is to help change her people's lives

Aunty Souk is a former Lao liberation army soldier, whose once fought to liberate her people from the bondage of foreign powers. Now she is a soldier of Christ who is fighting to liberate her people from the bondage of sin and Satan. She is not fighting with flesh and blood. She is not fighting in a physical war. Her weapons are not guns and grenades, but spiritual weapons, the full amour of God. Aunty Souk travels far and wide in Laos to visit and take the gospel to her people. She is poor and cannot afford to travel so often. But, she kept receiving calls from her people everywhere asking her to go and tell them about God. For this reason, CPL has decided to help subsidize Aunty Souk's travel expenses through LAF. Please help us pray for Aunty Souk as she travels to change her people's lives. Pray that the Lord will keep her safe when she travels. Not that Laos is a dangerous place, in fact, Laos is one of the safest countries in the world. We should pray for her safety from road accidents. Pray that she will be healthy, strong, and courageous. You see, aunty is old already. She is in her early 70s. But she is still going strong in the Lord.

From Aunty Souk we headed further south towards Savannakhet. We stayed overnight in this beautiful and growing city. As some of you know, that Savannakhet is the second most populous city of Laos, after Vientiane. There are a lot of people in this city and this province whose lives need to be changed. As of now, our church has no work in this city. Plans are being made to establish our work in this city. Please pray for us. A language school can be a good start here. However, it will need a substantial amount of finance and human resources to start something here in this city.

After overnight in Savannakhet, we headed to Pakse in the next morning, Thursday, 28 January 2016. We reached Pakse

in that afternoon and after settling into our hotel we wasted no time and went out to visit people.

We visited a house church in Pakchong district area where there are a group of believers worshipping in a house. This group has around 15 members worshipping in a house, led by a young man. All of his members are from Ta Oi tribe, a sub-Khmu tribe of southern Laos. Mostly uneducated, the Ta Oi make their living from collecting coffee beans from the plantations owned by big companies. Some of them are so poor that they cannot even afford to go to see a doctor when they are sick.



A group of believers in Pakchong District, Southern Laos

Among the members here there is a woman who has been sick for several years. The disease has weakened her to the point that she could no longer go to work to earn a living. Her young daughter, who has just graduated from high school, could not go to further her study because they could not afford it. The lady is suspected of having a lipoma disease. She has swelling in her neck and also on her arm. Our CPL delegates saw how much



she had been suffering and offered to help her to get treatment at a hospital in town. To my surprise this woman had never been to Pakse city which is only 50 km from her village. She was so poor that she could not even afford a bus fare to go to town. It is not a surprise to see poor people in Laos. In fact, almost 1/3 (30%) of Lao people are living under the poverty line or less than \$1.90 a day (2011 PPP) (See: <http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/country/LAO>). Poor as they are, the Lao people are extremely hospitable and happy. We were blessed by just visiting them and that we have learned to appreciate what we have. They have taught us how to be happy in miseries.

Always, wherever we went we would be praying for the sick and the suffering. Here, there is no exception. As usual, people would bring the sick and the suffering to us to lay hands on them. It reminds me of the time of Jesus. The Lord was almost always crowded with the sick no matter where He was. In turns the Lord also commanded us, His disciples, to do the same. "And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay" (Mat 10:7-8, ESV). And this is exactly what we did wherever we went—healing the sick and helping the poor. We



Praying for the sick at Pakchong District, Southern Laos



They may be sick and poor but not sad as Jesus is their hope

bid farewell with the waves of happiness. Wherever there is Jesus there is peace and happiness. The lack of foods and worldly materials dis not crush the spirit of these people. They were too happy to see us visit them. We will go back to visit them again and help them grown in their faith.

From there, we went to visit another house church also in Pakchong district. This group is almost exclusive made up of women. Their leader, Keo, is just a young woman who happens to have passion for Christ.



A group of believers at Wat Luang, Southern Laos

This is also a Ta Oi tribal church. We learned about a young woman in this group who has suffered for the sake of the gospel. Her grandfather has decided to drive them out of his land when he learned that they had converted to Christianity. With nowhere to go, Maem sought advice from Jesus in prayers. They are currently worshipping in Maem's house and if Maem moves out they will have no place to worship. The Lord opened the heart of an old woman in the village and she allocated a piece of land for Maem and her mother to build their



Maem's house which will be a new worship place for the group at Wat Luang, Southern Laos, funded by CPL

house in her land. CPL saw the need and offered to help Maem build her new house and place of worship. Maem will also use this road front house as a beauty salon, using her skills to make a living and to make contact with her clients for opportunity to witness for Jesus. Maem could not have done it herself. CPL helped with the funds to buy construction materials and our youth from nearby churches came to help build the house for her. As of March 2016 the house was almost finished. It only needs a bit more funds to complete the construction and then

furnish the salon with equipment. Once it is all done, the lives of Maem and her mother will be changed for the better. This is another place where Changing People's Lives helped change lives.



Young people from nearby churches came to build Maem's house



An 'open' church in Southern Laos built without walls

On Sabbath, 30 January 2016, we went to a small church about 12 km from Pakse City. This church is small, but it serves as the headquarters of the southern provinces. It is indeed an 'open' church. CPL representatives and members of the Darwin Church, Northern Territory, Australia, joined the worship at this 'open' church on 30 January 2016. This church lacked not only the walls, but also the water. There was no running water. Again, CPL representatives offered to help the church get water, even if we had to drill a deep tube well. The place is sitting on a plateau and the water table is so deep that hardly anyone could reach it. With the financial support of CPL we had two options. We could drill a deep tube well or contract the city water to bring in town water to the church. Finally, we were able to bring in town water. It is a long way from the main water supply and people could not afford to bring the water in even if they put money together.

So, our water will not only benefit the church but also all the people in the village. The church will make another outlet just



Heavy machinery was brought in to dig and lay pipes

for the community use. We hope to provide the water of life to the people. Each time people turn on the church water tab the water of life will flow into their hearts of gratitude. And with the Holy Spirit working in the soil of their hearts and the water



soaks that soil, soon the soil will produce crop and yield fruits for the Lord. We would like to thank CPL for this help.

Lao Attached Field (LAF) currently implements a One-Year-In-Mission (OYIM) phase 5 at this church. We are training young people to become missionaries. Below is a motor tricycle we bought for them to go around. Unfortunately the bike did not come with a roof. It became too hot during the sunny day and too wet during the rainy day. Again, sensing the need to better equip our young missionaries CPL gave extra financial help to fit a canopy to this tricycle.

In a short time, only 5 days, 27-31 January 2016, Changing People's Lives (CPL) has done so much in changing the Lao people's lives. They have helped the poor, the needy, the suffering,



Missionary transport— Before (above) and After (below)



bringing hope to their lives, giving them better chance for life, and most importantly introducing them to Jesus the Lord of Life Himself.

Furthermore, CPL has since established a partnership with LAF to further the work of God in Laos. To continue to help change the lives of the Lao people. CPL has committed to help LAF in several areas of ministry. Taking LAF strategic plan as a guide CPL has committed to support sending workers into new areas as well as continuing to help the poor improve their lives. CPL will also help train and equip young people for ministries and provide church leaders means to minister and nurture believers throughout the country of Laos. We, at LAF, are thankful to CPL for this partnership. May God richly bless CPL and its ministries.

THE NEW FACE OF THUNWA



Thunwa as of March 2015 (before)



Thunwa as of March 2016 (After)



March 2016 when I went to preach at a church where Thunwa's mother is a member I saw Thunwa happily playing like a normal boy. Now, he can smile with confidence. He is no longer a strange monster or a child of bad luck. Thunwa will still have to undergo 3 more surgeries, but his future is going to be fine. He will be growing into a fine young man. More importantly he is a son of God. His mother knows full well that God has given Thunwa a second chance for life. God has changed Thunwa's life!

This is what the church of God doing, changing people's lives. If the church of God ceases to change people's lives the church will cease to be God's representative. Because God intends to change people's lives for the better He expects His church, His agent on Earth, to carry out His mission of changing people's lives. He said, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10, ESV).

This is what the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Laos does—changing people's lives. We work in education, building schools to make education available to all people, rich and poor alike. We work in health, helping the Lao people to become healthy and able to work and better their lives. We also work in relief and development, helping the needy people to improve their lives through development, water and sanitation, and agriculture. Wherever there are needs we provide relief materials including equipment for the disadvantaged children. We cannot do these things alone. We are thankful to you all who are our faithful partners. Thank you for your continual support and for your prayers. We pray that God will bless you and enable you to do more for Him.

As I recalled a year ago when I held Thunwa to dedicate him to the Lord I had sympathy on this little baby. Neglected by his own father and rejected by his own extended family as they blamed the mother for his deformity because his mother became Christian. Standing firm in her faith his mother decided to offer Thunwa to the Lord. As I dedicated the baby boy I sensed that God would do a miracle in the life of this boy for His name sake.

Some of you might remember that I made a special appeal to help Thunwa. Operation Thunwa touched many hearts and many had given to help Thunwa. Even the AIU Pathfinder Club, themselves children too, took a task to raise funds to help Thunwa. Finally, through some connections God provided Thunwa with an opportunity to be operated at the National Hospital of Laos. It happened that there is a "Cleft Palate Program" at this hospital.

A couple of month ago, after Thunwa gained enough weight for operation he was operated and is now recovering at home. As of