

“Improved access to energy resources is one of the prerequisites to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, yet energy needs to be transformed into providing new opportunities at village level.”



#### QUICK FACTS

**Location:**  
Xiengkhouang, Lao PDR

**Project Start:**  
Phase I in 2007

**Current Phase:**  
Phase II 2010-2013

**Budget for Current Phase:**  
1 Million Swiss Francs

**Main partners:**

- Provincial Department of Energy and Mines (PDEM) of Xiengkhouang province
- Local authorities
- Development projects, local organizations, and private enterprises like Sunlabob& public companies like Électricité du Laos (EDL) among others

**Major Donors:**

- HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation
- REPIC contribution
- Fédération\_Genevoise de Coopération (FGC)
- Blue Moon Fund

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#### THE PERSPECTIVES

The Rural Income through Sustainable Energy (RISE) project realises that access to energy cannot be a mean to an end in itself. This is why the project combines its work to improve energy access hand in hand with needs based socio-economic development activities.

RISE project is developing an approach that puts the needs and aspirations of the target communities at the centre of the energy planning process. Emphasis is put on creating ownership at the local level.

Participatory value chain approaches are used for the development of new income generating activities.



## RISE



### “Rural Income through Sustainable Energy”

“RISE aims to ensure remote upland communities gain access to clean, affordable, reliable and locally produced modern forms of energy and are using locally available resources including newly available energy to generate income and improve social services while safeguarding the environment.”



## WORKING AREA

### a) Participatory planning

The starting point of the project intervention is the aspiration of the community, its needs, readiness to invest, willingness to pay for services as well as the existence of or planned activities which could benefit from access to modern forms of sustainable energy.

### b) Public – private partnership

At village level, committed villagers are identified and trained to form village organizations representing the village and its energy users in all decisions related to energy access & eventual management. The village organizations are the owners of the energy systems and represent the public side of the partnership. The private sector plays a crucial role by designing and installing the technologies, organizing the necessary technical trainings, back-stopping the village organizations and supplying spare parts.

### c) Development of value chains

Income generating activities developed at village level with newly available energy are linked to existing or new value chains. Emphasis is put on the sustainable use of local resources.

### d) Gender sensitivity

Particular attention afforded to the empowerment of women, ensuring their participation in the village level discussions and inclusion in the created village organizations. Furthermore the uses of energy promoted by the project often benefit mainly women (e.g. reduction of households chores, production of handicraft, etc.)

### e) Environmental protection

Promoting small scale renewable energy has positive impacts on both the local and global environment.

### f) Advocacy

A new paradigm to supply electricity in remote areas needs to be found and implemented. Both centralized and decentralized power generation need to be promoted hand in hand. RISE project is pro-active in the renewable energy policy dialogue at national and regional levels.

### g) Involvement of local partners

Local authorities and local non-profit associations are selected on a case by case basis to work as project partners with local communities.



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Joerg Boethling

## THE CONTEXT

In Laos, as in many developing countries, access to modern forms of energy remains a challenge. While the national grid has made significant progress over the past years, an important number of remote villages still need support to gain access to electricity through alternative approaches. In addition, unsustainably relied on wood remains the main source of energy for cooking, heat and other purposes. This has a negative impact on the local environment and on villagers' health.

## THE PROJECT

Instead of being technology based, RISE project supports communities to identify and prioritize energy needs and to select the most suitable energy technology adapted to the local context. Once a technology is identified, solutions are found with the communities on how to invest in the technology as well as on how to manage and maintain it in the long term. Village organizations are created. Once a technology is installed, RISE project continues to support the communities to ensure that the available energy is used to improve availability of services at village level and/or provides new opportunities for income generation.

After a successful pilot phase, the project has started its second phase, planned for three years until 2013.

## ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

- Provision of **electricity to more than 350 households and 15 social buildings** through an innovative public-private partnership involving the national utility (EDL) and the first privately owned grid-connected micro-hydro in Laos (Sunlabob).
- Provision of **solar lighting to 25 remote households** and of clean **water to a 300 student school**
- Diversified production of **handicraft by three production groups**, now including recycled aluminum products made from war scrap.
- Creation/improvement of **credit/saving schemes in 4 villages with more than 14,000\$ saved** and borrowed by local micro-entrepreneurs; **175 women** out of 215 members of the 4 schemes.
- Creation of an **eco-tour** linking two villages and featuring local handicraft production, ethnic lifestyle and the renewable energy technologies.
- Creation of an **inter-village watershed management committee**
- Promotion of **efficient and safe use of energy** in remote areas with specifically designed **posters** and **trainings** and support to efficient **appliances**
- Reading promotion and improved **access to books in four rural schools**.
- Contribution to **policy dialogue** on renewable energy promotion and rural electrification.
- Promotion of **improved cook stoves in four villages** including training of 8 masons from 3 districts for construction of fixed improved cook stoves.