



Project location:
Xieng Khaung Province, Laos

Funding source:
AusAID 49.09%, Sunlabob 50.91%

Project start date:
1 January 2009

Total grant funds approved:
A\$526,682

Updated December 2012

Sunlabob – Renewable Energy In Laos

ABOUT SUNLABOB

Founded in Laos in 2001, the innovative company Sunlabob has grown from a small team of technicians to leading company providing affordable renewable energy solutions in remote off-grid areas of Southeast Asia, Africa, India and the Pacific region.

THE PROJECT AND HOW IT WORKED

Sunlabob sought ECF support to part fund and install hydro power equipment in remote villages in order to provide reliable electricity to households. The pilot area, in Xieng Khaung province focused on five villages surrounding Nam Kha – the site of an existing mini hydro plant to enable increased access to electricity to 24 hour supply.

- Direct beneficiaries will include over 2,200 rural people, with considerable flow-on benefits to nearby communities.
- Village technicians will have a full-time job to monitor and maintain the generating equipment.
- Village communities will benefit from a reliable electricity supply, which can launch many small income-generating enterprises and generally improve villagers' living standards.

The project supports the plan of the Government of Laos to electrify 90% of Laos by 2020.

THE RESULTS

- Sunlabob completed the pilot area in Xieng Khaung province focusing on five villages of 355 households. ECF funds purchased electricity generation equipment in conjunction with Sunlabob's technical partner, the Swiss firm Entec. The power was officially started in August 2010.
- Sunlabob has also created four jobs as village technicians to maintain the village grids.
- 355 households are able to access a regular electricity supply and around 98% of households (around 350 households) are connected via the electricity grid.
- Villagers report that having increased access to electricity is valuable more as an improvement to living standards rather than as a direct economic benefit.

- Villagers report a reduced use of kerosene and report a number of improved health benefits including having better light for reading at night. Villagers also noted the better access to public electricity for street lights, schools, temples and village offices was a positive and women said they felt more comfortable and able to walk around at night.
- Lighting in schools means the community can use this space for additional activities at night. In one village, teachers are teaching night classes to teenagers 15-25 year olds that were unable to finish the secondary schooling. Now 76 students - mostly young women are attending.
- A small number of villagers in the five villages are using electricity to develop or improve small enterprises (furniture production, rice mills and water bottling plant) much of this with support from economic development projects through a local non-government organization - Helvetas.
- Helvetas estimate that 17 families have created new businesses in 3 villages and interviewed 5 new or expanded businesses in three villages earning more money.
- In Na Phia village, a weaving house has created additional productivity for women. Funding from Helvetas provided an expanded weaving house looms and lighting for the weaving house. The village development fund subsidises the cost of inputs. Each woman can create up to three pieces of weaving per month. Full time work can increase this to five pieces. Each piece is sold for between 50,000-100,000 LAK. There are 17 looms available and almost all women in the village are involved with weaving.
- Sunlabob leadership highly regards the project and states this has put the company on "the front page – and is contributing to the company's robust track record as a go-to expert in rural electrification throughout the developing world."

HOW ECF FUNDS WERE USED

The ECF has contributed 49% of project costs as well as additional funding provided by AusAID in 2013 for the emergency repair of some equipment at Nam Kha.