

More information about Don Bosco Lao Past Pupils

(Don Bosco Youth Vocational Training Center Vientiane Lao PDR)

Don Bosco Youth Vocational Training Center Vientiane is a charitable project for underprivileged Lao young men, and it is the only Salesian presence in this country of about 7 million people, under a communist regime. Since its beginning, Don Bosco Center has been funded by the Salesian Foundation of Thailand, which entered into partnership with the Revolutionary Lao Youth Union Department for Youth Development in 2008 (first MOU).

The adventure of Bosco Lao Past Pupils started in 2004, when 5 Lao past pupils, who had just completed their vocational training at Don Bosco Technological College in Bangkok, returned to Laos and opened a private and small job training shop for some poor young people in Vientiane Capital. Under the leadership of Fr. Tito Pedron and Mr. Sanya, a skilled electrician and past pupils of Don Bosco Bangkok, this first group of past pupils grew in number and in training experience. **What is special about Don Bosco Center Vientiane is that all the trainers have always been selected from among the graduate past pupils.** These past pupils, who loved Don Bosco's educational method and his mission for the poor, accepted to sacrifice themselves, willing to share with other poor young people the education and vocational training they had received. This has always been the practice until the present time. No doubt, this is the main activity that Don Bosco Past Pupils in Laos are carrying on. The cooperation of these past pupils is essential for the running of Don Bosco Center Vientiane.

But, of course, there is also the larger number of more than 1,300 past pupils who have graduated at our Center and are scattered in all the provinces of Laos. We are sure that they always remember Don Bosco Center Vientiane with gratitude. However, since their training here has been very short, only 6 months or 12 months at most, their sense of belonging to a group or association is weak. Besides, many have to move from one province to the other looking for work. Only occasionally, some of them show up at Don Bosco Center. All these things cause some difficulty when we want to organize gatherings and meetings of past pupils, as it is not easy to contact them, nor is it easy for them to come. For some past pupils, living and working in Vientiane, it is easier. In the period between 2011-2014, every year some past pupils organized a friendly dinner together. In 2017, some trainers of our Don Bosco Center and some other past pupils organized a meeting, at which about 50

past pupils attended. After a friendly foot-ball match, they also had dinner together. In September 2017, we had the animation meeting by Mr. Alberto Piedade from Timor Leste and Mr. Angel Gudina from Europe. They gave some inspiring talks about the mission and organization of the World Federation of Past Pupils to a group of our past pupils who were very happy and also enthusiastic. The two guests visited the activities of two successful past pupils, who have set up a car and motorcycle repair shop, and a drinking water plant. In February 2018, a group of our trainers organized a month long motorcycle and welding training course for 20 poor young men in the country-side, about 100 km away. It was a successful activity. In September 2018, some past pupils met with Fr. Rector to see whether we could start some kind of organization of the past pupils. One week after this meeting, 9 participants met to elect the leaders who would be in charge of all activities of the past pupils. It seemed like a good start. But, unfortunately, it didn't come up with anything concrete. And this is still the situation until now. During this pandemic, no special activities were carried out by the past pupils. So far, the idea of being active participants in a group or association doesn't seem to attract our past pupils. On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Don Bosco Past Pupils, we would like to try again.