

# Vim Sustainability Supports Education of Khmu Village Children in Laos

In the Khmu village of Lak Pet about 20 kilometres outside of Luang Prabang education of village children is not always accessible due to poverty and the necessity of utilising children in farming and other work.



## *Village children in Lak Pet*

The Khmu people of Laos do not have a traditional written language and in isolated villages many Khmu, particularly the older villagers, converse in Khmu and cannot speak Lao. Very few Khmu schoolchildren in Laos learn English. Therefore, many Khmu children remain largely uneducated and unable to obtain anything other than unskilled jobs.

Whilst staying in Luang Prabang, Laos in 2009 Vim Sustainability's John Brodie asked his tour guide how many children in his village (Lak Pet) finished high school. The answer was, 'Very few.'

Many families struggled to eke out an existence from agriculture and many children worked with them out of necessity. Also, the cost of sending their children to school was prohibitive – \$100 US per year per child. Female children often stayed at home to tend to their many younger siblings and assist with domestic duties. The village schools themselves were woefully under resourced and secondary schools did not offer English as part of the curriculum



## *Local primary school*

John offered to sponsor several of the village children to attend the village school if in primary school and to board at the secondary school in the next village and take English lessons from a local teacher. Phon undertook to administrate the allocation of funds to the selected children and advise of their needs as they arose.

Since this time Vim has financed the education of four village children in Lak Pet as part of its sustainability policy. Vim has also helped to resource the local primary school with text books, stationery, sports equipment and bicycles. Helping families financially is of limited benefit, but the education of children will lead to sustainable improvement in the ability of these children to help both themselves and their communities.



***Sports equipment for the school -- Alix and Kham Chitaphone***

Vim continues to work with Phon and the village elders in Lak Pet in sponsoring the education of more local children and to assist in improving the classrooms and resources of the Lak Pet primary school.

In November 2009 Alix Rochaix, John Brodie's wife, travelled to Luang Prabang to help allocate funds to buying clothing, equipment, uniforms and bicycles to ride to weekly English lessons for the children: Kun (7), Sang Chen (10), Ping (15) and Hak (15). While there she was privileged to partake in a Khmu Bhasi ritual that blessed her, the children and the school.