



German Ambassador to Laos, Dr Peter Wienand (second right), and National Authority for Science and Technology Deputy President, Dr Maydom Chanthanasinh (second left), at the seminar.

Solar units give power to the people

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The potential for solar energy to change people's lives was the focus of a renewable energy seminar held yesterday in Vientiane.

The documentary *Power to the People* was launched at the seminar and highlighted the work done by Sunlabob Renewable Energy Company bringing solar energy units to villages in Laos.

German Ambassador to Laos, Dr Peter Wienand, said he learnt about the company's work firsthand during a study tour to Xieng Khuang province last year.

"Small cottage industries like weaving, sawmills and other income generating

businesses sprang up and the electric light in the evening gave children the opportunity to do their homework and women their housework," he said.

Dr Wienand said the electricity provided by the Sunlabob units allowed people to improve their economic and social circumstances.

"The changes may not be to the liking of romantically-minded tourists searching for unspoiled natural living, but it is an immense improvement for a population long deprived of light in the evening and electric power for their daily work," he said.

Yesterday's seminar was attended by representatives from the government, non-

government organisations and private enterprises.

National Authority for Science and Technology Deputy President, Dr Maydom Chanthanasinh, said solar power was an inexpensive source of energy which had the potential to assist the government in developing rural areas.

"Laos has an abundance of biomass, sun, wind and water - exploiting these will reduce our reliance on expensive imported fossil fuels," he said.

"Devices like Sunlabob units could also ease pressure from the expensive development and maintenance of grid infrastructure leaving an excess of power to sell to neighbouring countries."