

Villages receive solar-powered drinking water

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More than 2,300 people in four villages of Sangthong district, Vientiane, now have access to clean drinking water.

The district, consisting of 37 villages containing 27,000 people, is one of the poorest in Vientiane, Deputy District Governor, Mr Sengmouang Sithivohan, said on Monday.

"About 50 percent of the district's population now have access to clean drinking water," Mr Sengmouang said.

The Sunlabob Renewable Energy Company, in collaboration with the German Embassy to Laos, installed a solar powered water purification facility in Sor village last Friday.

The project aims to provide technology to supply clean drinking water in communities

where traditional solutions cannot be applied.

Each facility is managed by a village water committee on behalf of the village, who select a technician to run the service. Water is sold for 2,000 kip for a 20 litre container, said Sunlabob Director, Mr Saleumphon Vongsakhamphui.

"The money generated pays for maintenance of the facility," he said.

This allows the system to be sustainable in the long-term and have a lasting impact on the quality and productivity of villagers' livelihoods.

The project is run by Sunlabob, in collaboration with the Lao Institute for Renewable Energy and the German Embassy to Laos.

Residents of Sor village are using the Sang River as the source of water for the

purification unit.

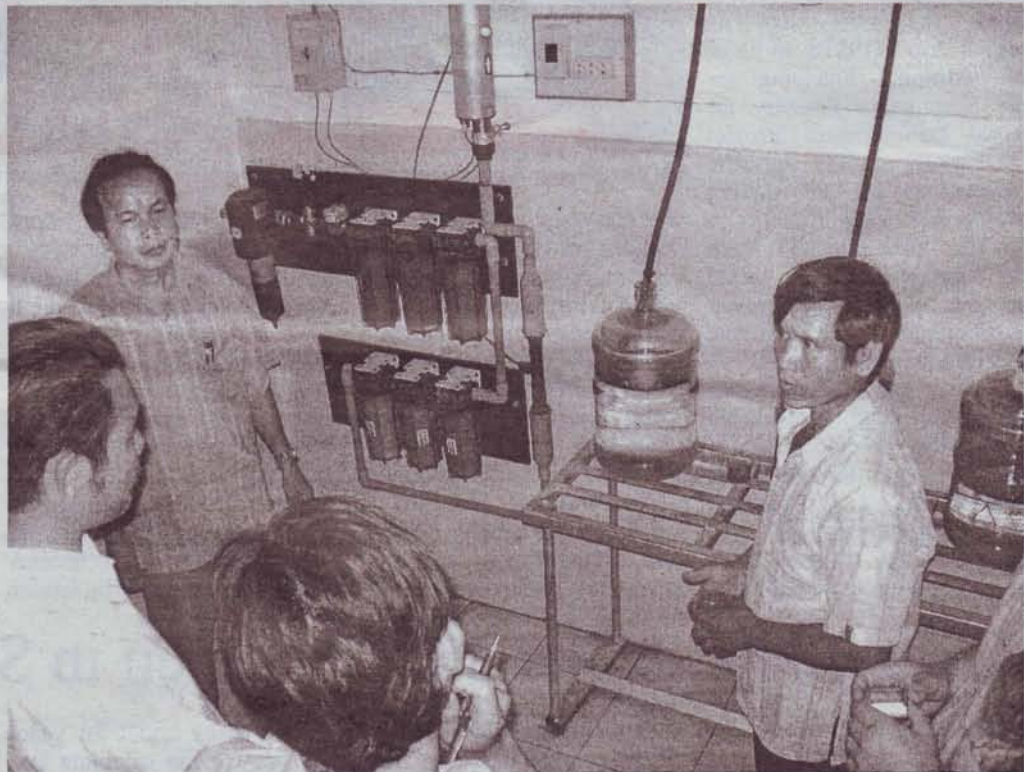
A survey conducted by local authorities shows that although Sor villagers are generally in good health, diarrhoea and back pain are recurring problems.

Before the water purifier was installed villagers sourced their water from nearby rivers, wells or rainfall.

As the water is dirty, people have to collect fire wood to boil it before they can use it safely, Mr Saleumphon said.

He said most people spend several hours a day collecting firewood, although about 20 percent buy charcoal at an average cost of 40,000 kip per purchase.

The average monthly income in Sor village is 256,000 kip per person, with about 80 percent earning over 300,000 kip a month.



Water is purified for consumption by local residents.