

Rural Xieng Khuang residents gain access to electricity

Khonesavanh Latsaphao

The Embassy of Germany to Laos, European Union and international organisations attended a ceremony at Nam Kha hydropower station on Monday to connect it to the national electricity grid.

The station will provide electricity to five villages in Phaxay district, Xieng Khuang province.

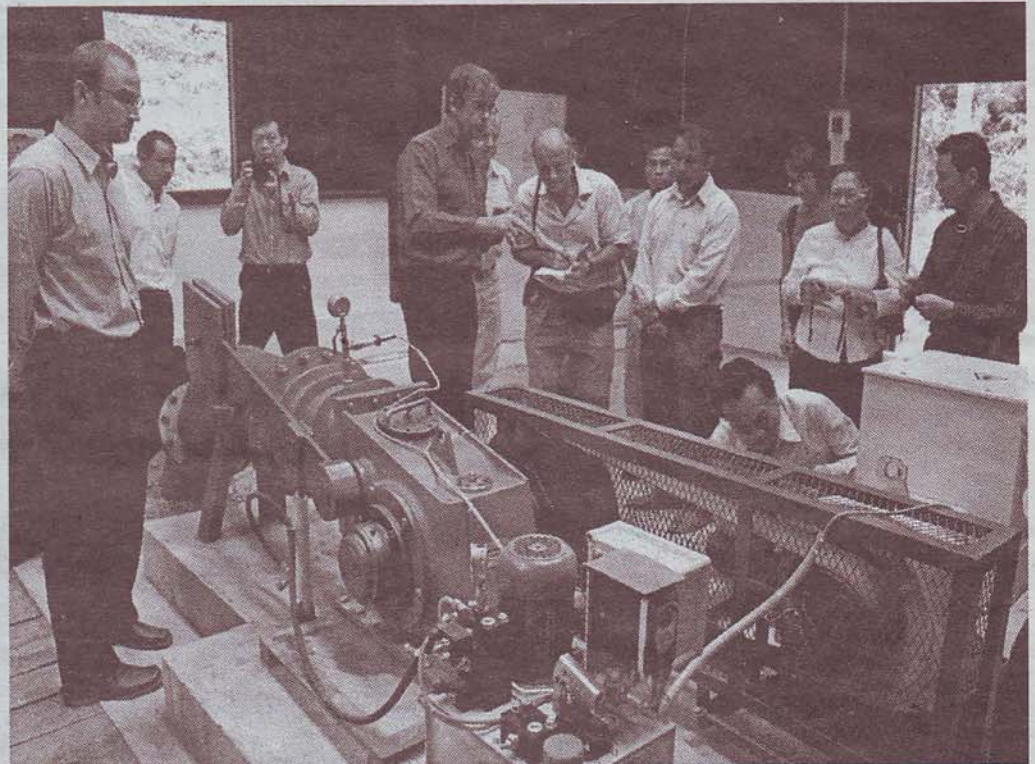
The 347 households in the villages of Nam Kha, Naphiatang, Sua, Tangxiengneua, and Navarn will receive electricity 24 hours a day through the national electricity grid.

"Our living conditions have changed a lot since electricity started in these villages and the villagers are very pleased to have electricity access," said deputy head of Nam Kha village Mr Chongsy Yang.

The objective of expanding electricity access is to allow more remote upland communities to gain access to power for use at home and in income generating activities.

Mr Chongsy said he advised local residents in his village on how to use electricity in order to increase handicraft production, the raising of animals and agricultural production for sale in local markets.

With access to power people can use electrical appliances, weave silk skirts or make bamboo baskets during the day or in the evening after



Officials attend the ceremony to connect the Nam Kha hydropower station to the national electricity grid.

returning from working in the rice fields or the forest.

More than 80 of the 110 households in Nam Kha village are connected to the national electricity grid and many households already have refrigerators and televisions, he added.

"Many households that are still not connected with electricity will soon have it provided by Electricite de Laos because the families in these households have enough money to pay bills for electricity consumption," he explained.

Director of Sunlabob Rural Energy Company, Mr Saleumphon Vongsakhamphui said the company rebuilt the small Nam Kha hydropower station at a cost of US\$600,000 (almost 6 billion kip). Helvetas Laos contributed about US\$75,000 (about 700 million kip) towards the project.

The old power station was built by the Chinese government in 1995, but had been broken for several years before it was reconstructed.

Construction begun in January and was completed in July this year.

Sunlabob signed an agreement to sell electricity generated by the hydropower plant to Electricite de Laos for 25 years.

A Lao private energy supplier for off-grid areas, the Sunlabob Company launched Asia's first village hybrid grid in Xieng Khuang province. Sunlabob has been active in Laos' renewable energy sector for the last ten years, with innovations including the development and operation of rental schemes for solar home systems and community-owned systems.