



A solar powered water purification factory in Khammuan province.

Solar powered factory produces drinking water

Khonesavanh Latsaphao

More than 630 families in five villages of Mahaxay district, Khammuan province, have access to clean drinking water after a solar powered water purification facility opened on May 18.

The new plant was constructed with the support of the Global Environmental Facility through a grant of US\$48,000, the Lao Institute for Renewable Energy, and Sunlabob Renewable Energy.

The technology used in the plant, the first in the province, was manufactured in Germany, Deputy Director of the provincial Public Health Department Dr Ketsana Latxachack said.

“We are very proud and happy that local residents have a source of clean drinking water because it will help improve general health and reduce the prevalence of food and waterborne diseases,” he said.

Prior to the facility’s completion, villagers drank

bottled water or would collect it from streams, ponds, rivers and wells.

People would have to boil the water before it was fit to drink in order to kill water-borne bacteria that cause illnesses and lead to diarrhoea. However, due to transport difficulties in remote areas many people lacked the necessary equipment to properly treat water and would drink it without boiling it, he said.

About 70 percent of the population of Khammuan province has access to clean water for household use but it is not safe to drink, Dr Ketsana said.

“The water from the new plant tastes good,” said local villager Mrs Khamma Phommaly.

Her family would typically drink about one bottle of water a day at a cost of about 3,000 kip per bottle.

In the past some people would drink stream water without boiling it because the water was clear and they assumed this meant it was

safe, she said.

Head of the Lao Institute for Renewable Energy and Sunlabob Renewable Energy, Mr Saleumphon Vongsakhamphui, told *Vientiane Times* the factory produces 80 bottles each containing 20 litres of water every hour.

“Now people don’t need to spend time collecting wood to boil water when they return home from working in the rice fields.”

“This means their lives are easier and they have more time to spend with their families,” he added.

“We plan to expand the plant so that all villages in the surrounding area, not just these five, have access to clean water.”

Every six months staff from the Lao Institute for Renewable Energy and Sunlabob Renewable Energy will collect samples from the plant and submit them to the Food and Drug Department in Vientiane to ensure the highest quality standards are being met, he added.