COOPERATION FOR PEACE AND PROSPERITY
LAOS - AMERICA

AMERICAN AID PROGRAMS IN LAOS

UNITED STATES OPERATION MISSION

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COOPERATION FOR PEACE AND PROSPERITY

President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in a speech early in 1957, made the following statement on the foreign policy of the United States:

"With other free nations, we should vigorously prosecute measures that will promote mutual strength, prosperity and welfare within the free world. Strength is essentially a product of economic health and social wellbeing. Consequently, even as we continue our programs of military assistance, we must emphasize aid to our friends in building more productive economies and in better satisfying the natural demands of their people for progress. Thereby we shall move a long way toward a peaceful world."

This statement represents the guiding principle of America's aid program in Laos as it does in other free nations around the world, for it is a fact of national life that only as an independent nation can Laos effectively pursue a course aimed at bettering the lives of its people. Because Laos has recently taken her rightful place among the independent nations, the Royal Government has a heavy task in developing the resources of the country, raising the standard of living of all the people, and maintaining its sovereignty behind which the nation can prosper. For these reasons, the United States offered and Laos accepted aid in funds and technical assistance, it being clearly understood that the aid would be in accordance with Lao wants. . This spirit of understanding, cooperation and agreement has permeated every project undertaken by USOM for the Government.

While the United States is vitally concerned with the maintenance of the nation's prosperity, in order to enable Laos to remain strong enough to maintain its freedom, the American people are also contributing to the support of an effective defense and police force. This support consumes a great part of the money available to Laos.

This booklet is aimed at telling the story of American aid, project by project, to set forth for the first time just what programs are in progress or planned for the near future. Although the articles are necessarily brief and do not present great detail, they do outline a picture of Lao Government projects - aided by USOM technical and managerial help and funds - showing a broad scope of activity and a sincere attempt to assist as many people in Laos as possible in their efforts to achieve a more prosperous and healthy life.

While each project is outlined as a separate story, each represents just one phase of the overall idea of the Laos-United States cooperative effort. All the economic and technical aid programs are interconnected, and unless each is advanced side by side with every other, the maximum benefits cannot be realized. Continual recognition of Laos' particular and unique problems and its assets have been the yardstick of this joint endeavor, and have resulted in an integrated, comprehensive and efficient program in relation to the needs of the nation.

Some of the factors that required special consideration are the fact that Laos is landlocked and must cope with a lack of communications both into and within the country; that it has not had facilities for combatting diseases; that it is a land where much can still be done at the village and community development level, and where concrete aid in education -- the erection of school buildings, the purchase of books, the intensive training of teachers at all levels -- is of paramount and immediate importance. USOM's first attempt was to evaluate what Laos needed and, quite as important, what it wanted. One instance of the interrelationship of the country's needs and desires with American aid may be illustrated by the following:

The people of Laos, like those of every other nation, want and should have commodities available in foreign lands. To bring these in -- let us say, through Thailand -- there must be an adequate ferry system, a Customs Service, a banking organization, an effective adjustment between supply and demand to ensure fair pricing, a road system and improved navigation of the rivers so that the goods can be distributed to all the people when they arrive in Laos, and there must be higher standards of living and better incomes for all so the people can buy these goods. To pay for imports, Laos must export -- cattle, coffee, minerals, lumber and the many other products that are, and can be, developed in the country. Earlier paragraphs of this introduction indicate how closely USOM is following the Government's guidance in helping the country achieve its desired results.

The programs go down to bedrock: It is the people of a country who do the work - from the highest to the lowest - and it is they, through the operation of their efficient Government, who must reap the profits of advancing industrial and economic development. If people are sick they cannot work; if they are not educated, they cannot know how to improve their lives, or even realize how much better lives they might have; if they cannot reach each other to communicate thoughts and desires, learn from each other, and share the products of their labors with each other at a reasonable profit to the producer, they cannot grow and prosper to their full potential. The potentials of Laos and the Lao people have been scarcely realized yet. A land of such ancient culture, colorful customs and varied peoples can, once it has overcome the hurdle of even a modest industrialization, and a modernization of facilities, occupy a proud place in the circle of modern nations, as well as an honored place in the past.

For these reasons, there has to be not only a close interrelationship between all USOM-aided programs of the Royal Lao Government, but a sound commercial, as well as cultural, relationship between Laos and the rest of the world. To illustrate: If Laos is to sell commodities abroad, it must be at a competitive price and quality. If Laos is to produce goods

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here at home, these goods must be at least as good and as cheap as goods produced elsewhere and shipped here. Otherwise, the Lao householder will purchase the goods of foreign manufacture because they are cheaper. That is one of the hard facts both of commerce and human nature.

Although it may be difficult, at first glance, to see how, for example, malaria eradication and export of goods are connected, the fact is that every single American assistance program is related to one theme - that Laos can be prosperous only when every one of the elements of the nation prospers together.

HISTORY OF USOM IN LAOS

The history of the United States Operations Mission in Laos parallels the emergence of Laos as an independent nation. It goes back to the period prior to the recognition by the world of Laos as a member of the family of modern nations, prior even to the actual creation of USOM/Laos itself.

United States aid to Laos began in 1951 by mutual agreement between the Governments of Laos and the United States, for the purpose of developing the potentialities of the country. Since at that time Laos was part of the Vietnam/Cambodia/Laos Union, the program was administered from Saigon, the headquarters for the projects of the area.

As Laos developed in the direction of independence and sovereignty, it became clear that its needs would be served best from its capital, by an organization closely in touch with the national aims and aspirations. In recognition of the growing statute of the country, therefore, USOM/Laos was established at Vientiane.

Its first members, Director N. Carter de Paul, Jr. and Deputy Director Alex Moore, Jr. arrived in Vientiane in December, 1954, and proceeded to establish the Mission. Actual operations started in January 1955. At first, technicians were available on loan from other U.S. Missions. In August 1955, the first technician directly assigned to USOM/Laos arrived, the Chief of the Public Health Division. The following month saw the arrival of Chiefs of Agriculture and Public Administration Divisions.

Since these early beginnings, the Mission has grown steadily in scope, supporting its program covering many essential fields of mutual cooperation.

EDUCATION

Much has been accomplished in a short time in the Education Program of the Royal Lao Government. The long-term development project is the National Education Center (Lao University) which is being built on the ThaNgon Highway, nine kilometers out of Vientiane. It is hoped that the school will be open by February 1, 1958. Eventually, a four-year course will be offered but at the beginning, because of the shortage of teachers, it will be necessary to take students for 1, 2 and 3 years as well. This is a step toward the launching of opportunities for higher education in Laos The American Mission is financing the cost of building and equipping the Training Center.

The need for technicians is being served by the new technical schools, one in Vientiane and the other in Savannakhet. In the latter school there were 36 students enrolled in 1955-56; this year there are 76. Funds were provided for the workshop and the renovation of dormitories and classroom buildings at Savannakhet. In Vientiane, the old school, closed since the war, was renovated and re-opened. A mechanics workshop has been built and paid for, the main shop renovated, and dormitory and cafeteria facilities have been supplied as well as office furnishings and equipment. Classroom furniture includes 50 drawing tables and related items.

In the country, 155 Rural Education Centers have been set up. The American Mission assists in paying the teachers' salaries and the cost of instructional materials.

The Mission also assists the Ministry of Education with some funds for improving school buildings and supplying instructional materials. Textbooks are being revised and re-translated into Lao and USOM has sent two Lao trainees to the United States for study. These are now Inspectors of Provincial Schools.

The United States Information Service has recently sent five more teachers to the United States for a one year training course.

Community Development

This project is designed to give financial and technical assistance to the villagers who undertake self-help improvement programs in the fields of health, education and agriculture. The project will train young Lao people in basic improvements in village life and assign them to live and work in the villages. These young men will then show the villagers how they can, largely with their own efforts, have cleaner and healthier communities, how they can grow more crops, how they can learn to read and write and how they can build schools, roads, community centers and do other things which will improve their standards of living.

It is hoped to train one hundred of these village workers each year at the new National Training Center which will be opened in the autumn of 1957. Each village worker will advise and help the people of ten villages; each group of 20 village workers will be guided and assisted by a team of six technical specialists. In the beginning these specialists will be trained at the UNESCO Center at Ubol, Thailand, where the first group of six Lao students is presently enrolled. These specialists will be trained in the fields of agriculture, homemaking, health, education, social welfare and village crafts; it is planned that they will be employed by the proper Ministry and assigned as a team to help and advise the village workers and the villagers themselves. They will have two years of training and the village workers will be trained for six months.

The Village Development Field Service of USOM will assist the Lao Government in organizing the program, will advise and assist with the training of village workers and will give financial help to the villagers in the form of schoolhouse roofs, cement for dams, pumps for wells and other things which the villagers cannot afford themselves.

Laos BUYS FROM THE WORLD

Month by month there is an increasing number of commodities appearing for sale in Laos which were produced in far-off lands -- commodities for the people to eat, to wear, to ride in, commodities, to increase their electricity, to build their buildings, to set up small industries, to make life more enjoyable and fruitful.

These commodities must be paid for, not in Lao kip but in dollars or in other currencies depending on the nation in which they were produced. And foreign exchange is provided as a result of the American aid program in Laos. Here is the way it works:

The Lao Government does not earn enough money to pay the salaries of the soldiers, policemen, teachers and civil servants it needs. The United States has decided to help, not by paying these people dollars, but by providing dollar exchange to the Lao Government for which the Lao Government provides kip at the rate of 35 to one. This kip is then used to pay the salaries of soldiers and policemen and others.

The salaries are spent, the kip thus made available to businessmen can be deposited with the Lao National Bank and dollar credits made available for purchase of the needed imports.

And so, U.S. aid is put to a double purpose--first it is used to defray expenses of Lao Government soldiers, policemen and other civil servants; then the same money is used again to bring to Laos all those goods which are increasing the economic capacity of the country and make life more worth living for all the people.

Major Crops -- Restoration of Coffee Crop

Before the wars, the Plateau des Bolovens near Pakse, was an important coffee-growing area producing the high quality Arabaca coffee. The scattering of trained plantation workers, the flight or death of many of the growers, with consequent neglect of the plantations, ruined the industry. There are still some growers on the Plateau but their Arabaca Coffee has been attacked by rust.

Mr. Y. Baron Goto, Director of Agricultural Services for the University of Hawaii, came to Laos at the request of His Excellency Nouphat Chounramany, Secretary of State for Agriculture, to make a comprehensive survey of the Plateau so that a basis might be provided on which to rehabilitate coffee culture.

A very conservative estimate of the productiveness of the area is 60,000 to 70,000 tons of Arabaca coffee per year, increasing as the area is developed. Being an export item in high demand, this coffee will be a valuable source of revenue and a great aid to the economy of Laos, when rust-resistant varieties are obtained.

Samples of the infected coffee have been sent to Lisbon, Portugal, for analysis. The Laboratory there will reproduce the rust and make inoculations of different varieties to see if they have a variety of coffee that will resist this particular type of rust. In the meantime, countries that have rust-resistant varieties have been asked for small quantities of seed, so that tests can be made on the ground at the Plateau.

As quickly as a rust-resistant variety of Arabaca is found, this will be propagated for multiplication and distribution to farmers.

Major Crops - Rice

Improved methods of cultivation, harvesting and storing of glutinous rice, the staple food of Laos, would result in a great increase in production of this vital food.

American technical and other aid in irrigating the land is only one facet of the work to be done; the cultivation of pure (unmixed) grain on each separate farm is of great importance, too. When, as now happens often, short, long and medium grain rice is grown in the same field, and of necessity milled at the same time, the adjustment of the millstones for the small grain results in breakage of the large and medium grain, with reduction of quality and very substantial waste.

Vermin, particularly rats, are a serious hazard to rice storage, and USOM has on order for the extermination of these pests nine thousand pounds of DDT Compounds and more than one thousand pounds of special, new insecticides.

IRRIGATION - DIVERSION DAMS

Because of the alternating seasons of drought and flood, the farmers of Laos have always had great difficulty in ensuring adequate harvests, and the lack of roads and other means of distribution has made it necessary for every isolated village to be self-supporting as far as glutinous rice production is concerned. Periodic failure has resulted in periodic famine in isolated areas.

The farmers have solved the problem as well as they could by building dams of wood, mud, bamboo and brush, but these have been maintained only with the greatest labor and have always been washed out or choked with silt before the end of the rainy season each year.

A small outlay in money and technical guidance by USOM is resulting in the building of small stone masonry dams in several sections of the country, with labor provided by the farmers. Recently, a training course, given under the auspices (patronage) of the Ministry of Agriculture, has shown the Provincial Chiefs of Agriculture how these dams are built, so that these Chiefs may teach the farmers to build them for themselves.

One recently completed dam near Luang Prabang benefits 86 farmers directly, provides a year-round water supply for 5 villages, supplies irrigation water for 110 hectares of rice land now under cultivation, has added 90 hectares of arable land to the area, and will last more than 50 years, with very little maintenance cost. The dam also gives water for growing fruit, vegetables, soybeans, corn and peanuts, which can be planted when the rice crop is finished for the year, so that the farmers have year-round employment and a cash crop that can be marketed at the nearby royal capital.

LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY IMPROVEMENT

Livestock and Poultry in Laos were among the greatest sufferers of the wars. Thousands of cattle and chickens were slaughtered to feed the invading troops; thousands more cattle were driven off into China at the departure of the Chinese invaders; enforced neglect resulted in a high incidence of disease, and scarcity of fodder impoverished the health of the herds. Altogether it is estimated that four-fifths of all the cattle were lost and a large percentage of the poultry.

As a result, the task of rehabilitation facing His Excellency Nouphat Chounramany, Secretary of State for Agriculture, and Dr. Chao Sinh, Director of Veterinary Services for Laos, was and still is an enormous one.

USOM, working with the Agriculture Department, has tried to help get on with the job. The Mission has provided some sixty-two thousand doses of vaccines which have been distributed through the provinces of Laos and these have had a noticeable effect in reducing livestock and poultry disease.

Further, USOM has delivered two good egg-laying and meat-bearing strains of chicken and has ordered some thirty-seven thousand dollars worth of equipment--including refrigerators for the storage of vaccines, station wagons and tractors--for use in the Livestock and Poultry Project. This year also aid funds are being allocated for a new Livestock and Feed Production Farm. After this site is selected and cleared, further funds are to be set aside for the importation of breeding cattle and hogs.

But in addition to funds, USOM has been giving technical advice in an effort to alleviate the situation. A Livestock Adviser has recently arrived in Vientiane from the United States to devote full time to the rehabilitation program, a U.S. Veterinarian is expected here within the next few months. And four Lao veterinarians have been trained in Bangkok for six months each.

Public Health--Malaria Eradication

Malaria, for generations, has sapped the strength of the peoples of the tropical and subtropical countries. Now a concerted effort is being made to wipe out this scourge. The methods being followed here in Laos parallel those used so successfully in Thailand over the past seven years. The main bases of operations in the anti-malaria campaign have been set up in Savannakhet and Thakhek.

One medical officer and 24 Lao technicians are now undergoing a six months' course of training in Thailand -- with the cooperation of the Thai and U.S. Governments--for leading roles in this work. Another group was trained last year and it was noted at the Training Center in Chieng Mai that the Lao technicians showed outstanding ability and technical skill. The Ministry of Health hopes, eventually, to have 4 medical officers and 86 technicians trained for the program.

House-spraying with insecticides will follow technical surveys to determine their ability to transmit malaria. People are examined and these examinations will serve as a guide for the spraying. Treatment will be given to persons with malaria and anti-malarial drugs will be administered as a preventive measure. The population will be informed by the use of printed matter, meetings and talks, so that they can do their part to eradicate the disease.

The current campaign in Laos is a revealing example of international cooperation, neighboring Thailand has shared its training facilities with its neighbor country, and the American Economic Mission, in addition to the provision of consultants, is also supplying vehicles, microscopes, technical supplies and insecticides.

Public Health--Other Projects

In addition to the major program of malaria eradication, USOM is cooperating in several other projects aimed at raising health standards in Laos.

Support for Yaws Eradication Program --- Yaws is one of the most disfiguring of all diseases and one of the most serious from an economic standpoint as well in that it causes cracks in the hands and feet with consequent crippling of the limbs. Yet it is at the same time one of the easiest to cure. One shot of penicillin will usually stay the disease.

The campaign against Yaws has been primarily one conducted by the World Health Organization together with the Lao Government. The American Aid Mission, in response to requests, has ordered vehicles and outboard motors to enable the medical teams to traverse the length and breadth of the land in their fight against the scourge.

Nursing: USOM, in another public health project, has sponsored one year courses of study in Canada for two Lao nurses. One of them is now in charge of the demonstration unit which has been integrated as a part of the hospital in Vientiane. The Unit is equipped with modern electrical equipment. USOM is now planning a special training course for nurses.

First Aid Kits: A USOM project, completed several years ago but still bearing fruit, was the distribution of some 800 first aid kits to many villages of Laos. In the hands of local teachers, villages chiefs and bonzes they have proved to be of special value in taking care of minor injuries and accidents. The $45,000 spent on the kits has indeed proved a worth while investment.

Reopening and Maintaining of National Roads

The reopening and maintenance of the national roads of Laos and the allied program of training Lao personnel are among the most important projects being aided by the United States Operations Mission. Distribution of goods is one of the most expensive and difficult problems faced by the Royal Lao Government, because transportation on many of the roads is possible only by jeep or oxcart, air-freighting of goods is prohibitively costly, and the Mekong River - the main artery of the country - is unnavigable by large craft during much of the dry season.

An intensive road rehabilitation program is under way linking Vientiane with the Royal Capital of Luang Prabang. The road from Thadeua to Vientiane had maintenance work done last year. This is a link with Thailand. These roads alone open the door to the outside world for hundreds of villages.

Roads around Xieng Khouang, the river ramp at Thadeua, and the several airports, have had maintenance and repair work done; some landslides have been cleared and roads widened in the mountains.

Almost $1,500,000 worth of road-building equipment has been brought in, serving the dual purpose of rebuilding the roads and training Lao personnel in the care and operation of equipment, so that maintenance may be carried on and new roads built by Laotians themselves in the future. Although rehabilitation work on the Luang Prabang-Vientiane Road had been in progress less than three ~~months, in~~ April it was unofficially opened when a diplomatic convoy which included the American Ambassador made the trip by car to the Royal Capital for the New Years Celebration. In addition, many Lao officials also made the journey by auto. They reported that excellent progress had been accomplished; that the road was easily passable for its entire length. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Works were so impressed at the results that they publicly expressed their enthusiasm at the near-miracle results.

Extension of Electric Power

The city of Vientiane has more than doubled it's population and therefore its demand for electricity in the past two years. To supply this need and future growth American Aid has purchased three generators, totalling 2000 kilowatts, with related equipment, which, when installed, will increase the electric power supply 400 per cent.

The generators and equipment have arrived in Vientiane--the largest and heaviest single items ever to be transported by the Thai Railway System. --and are in process of being installed at the site of the present Vientiane power station.

This gift of the people of the United States to the people of Vientiane will enable officials of the city to release the generators now in use to other major centers of population in Laos, giving these areas improved power and light.

All this is part of a Royal Government and American Aid plan to provide accomodations for current and future industries and a growing population.

Long-range planning provides a foundation upon which the future development of Laos must depend.

Communications and Industry--Other Projects

Although the installation of giant generators in Vientiane is a major USOM project in Communications and Industry, it is just one of a number of projects in this field. The U.S. Mission is now aiding the Lao Government in building a runway at the Pakse airfield. The first phase of the project ---a 1600 meter strip--is already completed. An additional 300 meters is under construction.

Another communications project is a major survey being undertaken in Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, by an American firm, Hycon-Page. The object of the survey---to study the economic aspects of a regional telecommunications network in the three nations and draw up a complete plan, designs and specifications capable of providing rapid service for commercial, governmental and military needs. The network is expected to link all important cities within the three countries, extend into rural areas and could be tied with centers of trade throughout Southeast Asia.

Laos is interested in the development of exports. In many of the developing nations around the world, large exports are being provided by raw materials, such as minerals. To ascertain whether minerals in commerical quantities are to be found in Laos, USOM, at the request of the Lao Government has brought an expert to the country to look into the problem. Although this project is still in its infancy, its potential for the future of Laos could be almost invaluable.

New Ferry and Customs Service

The river port of Thadeua is one of the most important points of entry for goods imported into Laos. To facilitate trade and develop means of transport and communication, USOM is financing the purchase of two flat barges and three pusher tugs for more than $250,000. These will be turned over to the Royal Lao Government shortly after their delivery from the Hong Kong Transportation Company, which is building the equipment. The barges and tugs will serve as a new and vastly improved ferry between Nongkai, Thailand, and a point to the near north of Thadeua.

The designs for these barges and tugs are based on those used on the Mississippi River in the United States, where the rise and fall of the water, and its speed and current are similar to the Mekong. The Company sent its plans to Hamburg, Germany, where in a special model pond the entire ferry system was tested under simulated conditions so as to achieve maximum operating efficiency at the lowest possible cost. The Hongkong Transportation Company, one of the most experienced in this type of construction in Southeast Asia, built the first push-towing fleet in this part of the world for the Burmese Government, to operate on the turbulent Irawaddy River.

The equipment is being brought via ship, in sections, to Bangkok and by rail to Nongkai, for assembling and launching.

The new ferry system will speed the handling of goods crossing the Mekong, will reduce the cost, and eliminate much of the present damage to merchandise. Large trucks will be able to drive on to the barges and then off again to the ramp at Thadeua, thereby eliminating the heavy labor whereby goods must be unloaded from trucks on to the ferries, then loaded on again at the other side of the river. The barges which have a capacity for handling 200 tons of freight at one time, will be flat-surfaced raft-like boats with landing ramps on each side. The pusher tugs, each with powerful motors, will push and pull the barges across the Mekong in low as well as high water.

The Government of Laos has been most interested in improving the Customs Service, which can be a substantial source of revenue to the country. The Public Works Division of USOM has, therefore, made funds available for construction of a ramp and adequate Customs facility at Thadeua -- to mesh with the new ferry system -- a large Customs Warehouse at Vientiane, and an addition to the Central Administration Building.

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Actual work has begun at Thadeua by the Universal Construction Company; the Customs Warehouse in Vientiane is in the design stage, and work will begin shortly on the addition to the Administration Building.

This practical American contribution is aimed not only at stimulating trade and commerce but at assisting the Royal Lao Government to control imports and collec duty on appropriate merchandise.

Development of the Lumber Industry

Forests are one of the great natural resources of Laos, constituting seventyfive per cent of the country.

Five years ago there were four sawmills in all of Laos . Today there are twentyfour-- thirteen in the Vientiane area, three at Thakhek, four at Savannakhet , and four at Pakse. Five years ago there was not enough wood to keep the four mills busy, though the forests cansupply all the timber Laos needs and leave a surplus for export.

Since then, through the operation of a plan designed to encourage private enterprise to develop the lumber and sawmill industry, loans have been made for the purchase of equipment, power saws, trucks, and for the stockpiling of logs. Timber is being cut and hauled from the forests, in large quantities, during the dry season, so that there will be enough to permit curing and still supply the country's rapidly expanding building industry.

The provision by USOM of money for this last work caused improvement of lumber through seasoning, reduced the necessity of using partly-flooded roads during the rainy season, and provided a supply of logs to keep the mills operating on a steady schedule.

To this project USOM supplied eight trucks and four tractor trucks and trailers.

The steady and thorough progress of the industry and the opening up of the forests, under the direction of M. Bouaphat, Director of Waters and Forestry for the Royal Lao Government, havenot only made it possible to stop imports of lumber a year ago, but have prepared the way for the use of $186,000 worth of equipment-- eight 5- ton trucks, twelve tractor-trucks with trailers, four D6 trailers, eight large tractors with bulldozers, and related equipment-- which has been purchased by USOM for the Lumber Development project. $171,000 worth of this equipment is on its way from the United States and is due in Bangkok by June,1957

M. Bouaphat is making efforts in several directions to open up markets not only for teak, the principal export, but for the utility woods--pine and Venven (white timber). At a later date it may be possible to develop markets for ebony.

Trade, Commerce and Fiscal Development

The Kingdom of Laos, on attaining independence a few years ago found itself unable to cope with the manifold, and intricate economic problems confronting it--taxation, and banking, the details of import and export financing, and pricing, the intricacies of government purchasing on a sound basis---all of the problems of modern-day economic existence for a national Government.

USOM, at the urging of the Lao Government, has tried to be of some help in solving these problems. And progress is being made.

Here are some of the ways in which America and Laos are cooperating in the fields of trade, commerce and fiscal development:

USOM has made available to the Royal Lao Government the services of its economic staff to discuss and advise on these problems and also to give Lao businessmen the benefit of their experience.

The Aid Mission has brought to Laos a number of American specialists called the Howell Group who are helping to develop among the Lao the procedures of international trade. During this development members of the Howell Group are themselves assisting the government in its international purchasing.

The Group has helped set up an integrated purchasing office. Such central procurement, plus a central warehouse, will create large savings for the government and will at the same time make for more orderly availability of needed stocks.

The Purchasing Office, already a going organization, will move into its new equarters beside the brand-new Warehouse soon to be completed on one of the Main streets of Vientiane. The warehouse will provide 800 square meters of storage space.

From the early beginnings and into the program's maturity, direction has been under the auspices of His Excellency Chao Nith Nokham, Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, and carried out by Mr. Oukeo Souvannavong, Commissaire au Plan.

A commercial library, under the same auspices and direction, has been set up to provide an index of sources of supply. Through this outlet, the Ministry of Finance, Economy and Plan has already issued two reference books one of which is titled, "Directory of Sources of Supply and Price Information in Vientiane", and the other "Sources of Supply in Hongkong".

Tool Kits

One of the most popular projects on which USOM has cooperated with the Royal Lao Government, the French Government and UNESCO has been that of providing tool kits for use in the villages.

Four short training courses were held - in Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Savannakhet and Xieng Khouang, at which approximately 120 Rural School Teachers were taught the use of a wide variety of hand tools. Two hundred tool kits were distributed, the additional 80 kits being given to teachers who were unable to attend the courses but who were to be taught by the trainees.

The students showed a keen desire to learn, excellent aptitudes, initiative and artistic ability. At the end of a week's training all the students could even make window frames -- no easy task -- as well as many other useful objects.

All of the trainees were enthusiastic in their desire to impart their new knowledge to students in their villages and reports received since their return indicate they have put this knowledge to excellent use.

Rural Youth Projects

In recent years there has been a rapid development of informal education programs and organizations for rural boys and girls in Southeast Asia, many of them patterned on the 4-H Clubs of the United States. Clubs of this type are active in the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Korea, Taiwan, Malaya and Japan, and in most of these countries the work is a part of the Extension Program of the Agriculture Ministry.

4-H and similar organizations of young people raise cattle, swine, poultry and other livestock, and cultivate areas of land assigned to them by their parents, conduct dairying and other agricultural and rural work, under adult guidance but as far as possible on their own responsibility.

In order to study the possibilities of developing a similar type of organization in Laos, the Ministry of Agriculture -- with USOM's cooperation -- sent a delegation to the Far East Rural Youth Conference in Bangkok in February 1957, the group consisting of a Home Economist and 2 representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture.

The problems of starting such a project in Laos are not insurmountable, the delegation felt, and it was their suggestion that young people who would be prospective members of such an organization should visit the neighboring countries where the clubs are working, and learn from the members just how the organizations aid development in their respective countries.

Foreign Training Programs

Lao-American cooperation can be well illustrated by the Foreign Training Programs, of the U.S. Assistance Mission in which 458 persons have already participated, either as students or observers.

Under these programs, individuals and groups have gone, for periods ranging from one month to two years, to Thailand, the Philippines, Taiwan and the United States. They have observed or studied much varied subjects as Agricultural Extension Services, Poultry Diseases and Husbandry, Seed Improvement, Major Crops (Rice and Coffee) Culture, Fisheries, Operation and Maintenance of National Roads, Malaria and Yaws Eradication, First Aid, Elementary, Rural, Technical and Adult Educational Systems, Fine Arts, Public Administration and Information and Propaganda Techniques.

These are continuing programs, as evidenced by the fact that 25 more technicians have recently left for Thailand to continue their studies of malaria eradication.

These earnest young men and women, returning to their native land, are sharing their knowledge with many more of their people to the benefit not only of the present but of all coming generations.

Fire Control

Forty thousand dollars worth of fire control equipment is one of the most timely gifts the people of the United States have made to the citizens of Vientiane. Four fully-equipped fire trucks have already arrived in the city, and four tank trucks are to be delivered shortly. These shiny red trucks are similar to those used in the United States, and the tank trucks can carry their own water supply for ptting out fires, as well as being capable of using stationary water supplies.

Vientiane, which has more than doubled in population in the past two years and is now the site of many valuable buildings, suffered several serious fires in recent months, and a Fire Department with modern equipment became an urgent necessity.

The fire control service is being provided by the Police Force, which is now conducting a course in this work for a number of its members at the Police School near Vientiane. More than a year ago twenty Lao hospital aides were sent to Thailand for similar training, so that the Police Department now has reserves capable of rendering first aid where necessary, as well as fighting fire.

An information program to tell the people how to get help in case of fire is to be conducted within the next few weeks by the Police Force, aided by the United States Information Service.

Lao National Police

Confronted with the task of re-establishing law and order following the disruption of the wars, being understaffed and under-equipped, the National Police of Laos appealed to the Royal Government in 1955 to be included within the framework of American Economic Aid. American police experts, after an extensive survey, made recommendations to the Government and offered the services of qualified police administrators to assist the Lao officials in the fields of training, administration and communications.

Today, a small American Police Advisory team, working in cooperation with officials of the Lao National Police, is attached to Police Headquarters in Vientiane. Many new members have been recruited for the Police Force, Trainees have been sent to Thailand, the Philippines, and the United States as well as to other friendly nations, for training in modern methods and procedures of law enforcement. In addition, a Police Training Camp has been constructed near Vientiane and the police are receiving training there from their own officials and officers.

Tiao Somsanith, Secretary of State for the Interior and Director General of the National Police, accompanied by his two Deputy Directors, Louan Vilaythongs and Soukan Vilaisarn visited the United States in October, 1956. While there, they attended the Convention and became members of the International Association of Chiefs of Police. The IACP has developed programs for the sharing of problems among world police organizations, as well as sharing experiences and new techniques in all phases of law enforcement. All of these various projects for the building up of a fine police force, well-equipped and with high morale, cannot be accomplished without substantial outlay.

American Aid is contributing the greater part of this expense.

The citizens of Laos can well be proud of their National Police organization, which teaches the police officer that he is the servant of the people, the guardian of the law, and the protector of the rights and privileges of every individual.

DEFENSE FOR FREEDOM AND PEACE

This booklet, as has been apparent in the preceding pages, has concerned itself primarily with the economic aspects of America's assistance program in Laos. However, this review would be far from complete if it ignored that aspect of the American aid program which consumes the largest percentage of the American aid dollar which is expended in Laos. This is the support given by the United States to Laos' defense efforts---the army and other security forces.

It is very easy to realize that no government can raise the living standards of its people, build up its economy, make its nation a better place to live and work unless at the same time it can guarantee the safety of its people--from internal as well as external attack and subversion. To do this in Laos--because of the extraordinary situation here--an army and air force must be maintained strong enough to deter and defend the country against any threats, with enough equipment to do the job, with high morale and keen training, with understanding of the problem and with appreciation that they are being maintained as a shield behind which the nation can, without worry, proceed to raise its living standards.

The United States, a free nation and as one with other free nations, has publicly declared that it will gladly help nations around the world safeguard their freedom, knowing that all the free nations are interdependent, one with the other. And so, realizing that the people and government of the Kingdom of Laos are willing to exert effort necessary to maintain their independence and sovereignty, the United States has offered to share with Laos its greater material resources in what is essentially the common defense of freedom.

The entire defense program of Laos cannot obviously be outlined in detail. Suffice to say, the United States at the request of Laos is helping materially and financially to build up and maintain a sound defense structure in this nation. Although America is not involved with Lao Army training, since this is prohibited by the Geneva Armistice Agreement of 1954, it is providing much of the necessary equipment for an effective defense force, and it is helping the young Lao Government carry the enormous burden of paying for their army.

Both Laos and America -- their people and their governments -- are agreed on one basic fact of their national lives -- freedom and independence must be protected against those who would destroy them.
