

Learning Through Listening- *Literacy in Laos*

Overview

This project provides reading skills to people throughout Laos who have missed out on literacy education, contributing to individual and community growth and enabling better interaction with authorities.

The literacy program also enables participants to read the Scriptures for their own personal growth and to more actively participate in church life.

Background and Need

Approximately 84.7 percent of the 7.5 million people in Laos are considered literate. While the enrolment ratio and attendance rate for primary school students is high, secondary school attendance drops radically to around 42 per cent. There is also disparity between the literacy levels of men (90 per cent) and women (79.4 per cent) across the country.

The Lao people group represent 55 per cent of the population and have good access to education. However, the other 45 per cent of the population is composed of ethnic minorities who often live in remote mountain areas. This typically hinders access to education, resulting in a very low literacy rate for minorities.

This project aims at reaching out to this neglected population and the underprivileged in Laos. Laos Partnership is the Bible Society presence in Laos, where there is currently no official Bible Society operating. Bible Society has a history in Laos, but war has disrupted its presence and it is currently difficult to be registered as a religious organisation.

This project has been established as a response to the needs of churches who wish to teach their non-literate members to read the Bible. This program uses the Bible and a textbook to teach literacy skills, while a local church volunteer conducts the classes, with the help of an audio device that dictates the lessons.



Strategic Goal and Impact

Each year the goal is to start 150-200 classes with 1500-2500 students, in the national language, Lao. There is a currently a long waiting list in local churches for members who want to be part of the program, so the need for more classes is clear.

In 2021, as well as starting new classes, five facilitator workshops are planned as well as trips to follow up students and congratulate those who graduate.

Impact

In recent years, Bible Society has achieved annual a distribution of over 1500 New Testaments, 6000 new reader Bible portions and 6000 children's Bible portions to those who participate in the classes, and other members of the community who may be impacted by this project in their area.

In 2020, five facilitator training workshops were held, even with high travel restrictions and social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Class sizes were reduced also, as many had to work hard to avoid famine, rather than attend classes. However, 42 new classes were still opened (with 419 students) in total. 692 students graduated, including students from classes started in the previous year.

Significant impact is seen as people from ethnic minorities gain literacy skills. Literate adults are able to read the Bible and become better equipped to contribute to their communities and to church life.

Testimony

"Now, by the grace of God, I can read and write, and I am so happy and proud of myself. Now I can read and understand the Bible. My reading ability really benefits me with biblical knowledge and helps me to understand God's word. Being able to read also helps me to understand the meaning of the notices and letters that I receive and the signs and posters in the markets and on the streets." - **Mrs. N**

Prayer Needs

- Pray that the churches and facilitators would inspire the students to attend classes consistently and focus their attention towards learning.
- Pray that churches will be motivated to run literacy programs as part of their outreach to both believers and unbelievers.
- Please pray that local authorities in rural areas will allow classes to take place, as there can be restrictions on Christian activity.