

Volunteer-run school opens new library

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A VIENTIANE weekend school opened its new library last week, built with the help of competition win.

Phosai Weekend School, run by a team of off-duty primary teachers, monks and other volunteers, received US\$5,000 to help them build a new library and community hall after entering a UN Volunteer contest last year.

Head of UN Volunteers in Laos, Sonia Josserand-Mercier, said "This competition entry was highly regarded by the jury who had the difficult task of selecting just a few winners from many voluntary initiatives around the world."

"I am proud to say that the Lao PDR stood out in this contest to highlight how volunteers are helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals."

"The money won by the school, along with generous contributions from other individuals, has helped build a great library and community hall," she said.

The library hall was opened last Friday.

Phosai Weekend School has been running for three

years. Twelve volunteer teachers provide education to over 200 children between the ages of five and 12 years.

The school teaches English, history, Lao culture, and other subjects.

School volunteer, Avi Sarkar, said "The programme is expanding as more and more parents send their children and more volunteers are found to assist with the workload."

The volunteer school has become a model for other voluntary social activities, in and around the capital.

In addition to teaching, the volunteer teachers also seek resources for school materials, such as books, pens and papers etc, sometimes funded from their own pockets.

"It is excellent to show young people how they can engage in voluntary service for the betterment of their country and society," said Ms Josserand-Mercier.

"I am extremely happy to see such strong local voluntary commitment in your country."

Many Lao children, even in the urban areas of Vientiane, do not have access to basic primary education. This is usually due to cost, distance, large class sizes and accessibility to schools.