



SENGSAVANG



Annual Report 2014



French Republic Human Rights Prize 2014



Providing protection and assistance to victims and girls at risk of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Laos.

Annual Report 2014



GENERAL INFORMATION

Name/ Status

SENGSAVANG
French NGO (Loi 1901)

Country of Intervention

Lao PDR

Date of Incorporation

1996 - Establishment of the NGO in France
June 2006 - MoU signed with the Lao government, start of the Phase I of the project

Head Offices

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Main Partners

Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Lao PDR
Ministry of Public Health, Lao PDR - Mother and Child Health Hospital, Vientiane, Lao PDR
Ministry of Justice and Lao Bar Association, Lao PDR
Lao Women Union, Lao PDR
International Organisations and NGOs

Representatives

Mr. Claude Pretot, President - France
Mrs. Virith Khattignavong, Country Director - Lao PDR





SENGSAVANG is a small French non-governmental, non-partisan and non-religious organisation **supporting victims and girls at risk of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Laos**. In addition to providing holistic care and recovery for those rescued, we offer education and job skills development to support a sustainable community reintegration. Our work also includes prevention and awareness raising activities, advocacy and campaigning as well as representation and participation in women's issues at national and international forums.

SENGSAVANG was established in France in 1996 and operates in Laos since June 2006. Our main strategic decisions are made by the board of director based in France. Thereupon, activities are implemented by local staff in Laos under the guidance of the Lao country director. Our local team is composed of Lao nationals managed by one expatriate and supported regularly by a few international volunteers.

SENGSAVANG is a Laotian word literally meaning "shining light". It can also be translated with "nurturing light" or "light chasing the shadows" which perfectly captures our impact on the lives of the girls we rescue, care for and protect.

Our mission is to **provide protection and assistance** to victims and girls at risk of human trafficking and sexual exploitation and to **support their sustainable reintegration into the community** as an active support for their families. To achieve this goal of permanent rehabilitation and reintegration, our work is based on a victim-centred approach customised to the real needs of victims.

Our **rehabilitation centre** is located in Savannakhet, one of the main hubs of cross-border trafficking to Thailand. Our shelter provides a safe home where the girls receive holistic care. Besides offering accommodation, food, clothing and other basic necessities, we foster the girls' overall well-being through health and psychological care, social services, and recreational activities as well as legal support to enable victims to access justice.



SENGSAVANG Rehabilitation Centre in Savannakhet

To prepare the girls for their lives after leaving the shelter, we provide formal and informal education and vocational training in sewing or beauty, including basic business management training. We also offer micro-business starter kits to enable the girls to set up a sustainable source of income in their home communities. Long-term follow-up and monitoring ensure a sustainable socio-economic reintegration.

To date, SENGSAVANG **supported over 400 victims and girls at risk** of sexual or labour exploitation and realised prevention activities for more than 13,000 people. By taking actions to **reduce social and economic vulnerability**, we address the root causes of this issue and prevent trafficking or exploitation in the long run. Through securing financial independence and awareness raising we help cutting off the supply for sex trade and forced labour. ■





Laos is a landlocked country in Southeast Asia. It is classified as **one of the least developed countries in the world** and the poorest within its geographic region. The majority of its population (about 6 million inhabitants) lives in rural areas. Regarding median age, Laos has the youngest population in Asia.

Laos is a source, and to a lesser extent, a transit and destination country for human trafficking. As a criminal activity, trafficking in person is difficult to evaluate and statistics documenting the scale of this subject in Laos are very poor. International surveys estimate that **between 200,000 and 450,000 people are trafficked annually** within the Greater Mekong Subregion.

Human trafficking is closely linked to rising legal and illegal labour migration. **Lack of economic opportunities, income uncertainty and poverty in the home community** are significant push factors causing young people to travel away from family and other support structures in search of work. The vast majority of Lao migrants move to Thailand due to proximity, cultural and linguistic similarities as well as better economic conditions.

Most human trafficking cases start as voluntary movement, before being tricked, cheated or forced into exploitation situations after border-crossing. Trafficking in person is sustained and strengthened through local Lao middlemen increasingly collaborating with traffickers to facilitate illegal entry. Individuals offering transportation services near the Thai border also play a key role in cross-border trafficking. About **90% of trafficking from Laos occurs to Thailand** where **the majority of victims are girls aged between 12 and 18 years**.



Map of Laos and its neighbouring countries; The logo of SENGSAVANG locates our rehabilitation centre.

Young women and girls in Laos are particularly exposed to unsafe migration. Obligations to provide income for their families force them to drop out of school at young age. Desperateness for earnings and lacking information on trafficking and migration issues, make them particularly vulnerable to false promises of traffickers. By accepting offers of potential high earnings, they could support their entire family. Many Lao girls, some as young as 11 years old, end up exploited in Thailand's commercial sex trade and in forced labour in domestic service, factories, or agricultural industries. Trafficking of Lao girls to Myanmar and China for the purposes of buying and selling brides is also reported.

SENSAVANG's work addresses the root causes of this issue - **social and economic vulnerability**. Empowerment of women through alternative production resources is fundamental to ensure them with a sustainable autonomy. ■



2014 IN NUMBERS

87% stayed for more than 2 months



The longer our residents stay the more likely is a successful reintegrated as they complete a full training and have longer access to our holistic support.

We provide...



17

residents were **reintegrated** successfully in their home community

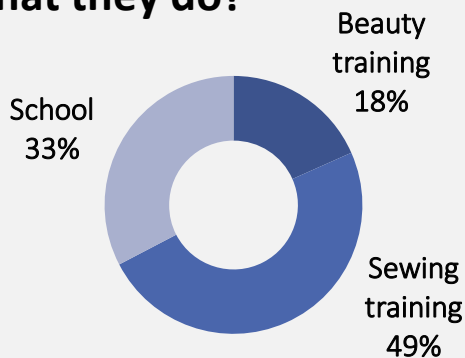
54

girls stayed in our shelter

164

individual sessions were provided by our psychological counsellor

What they do?



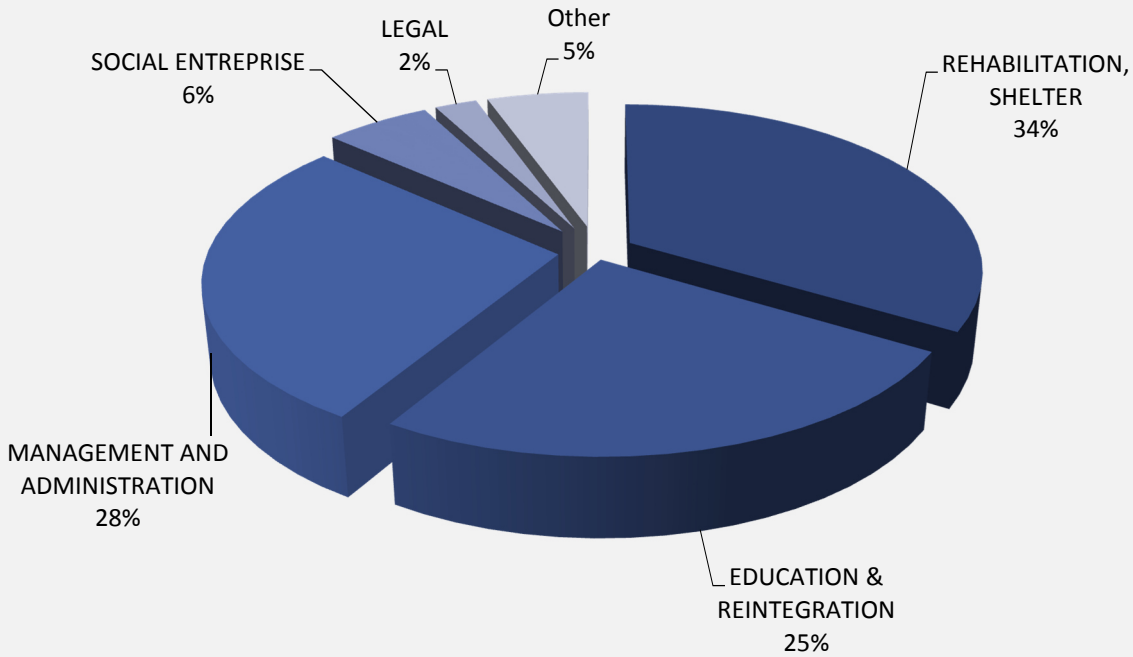
starting kits were provided to support the set-up of **micro-business**



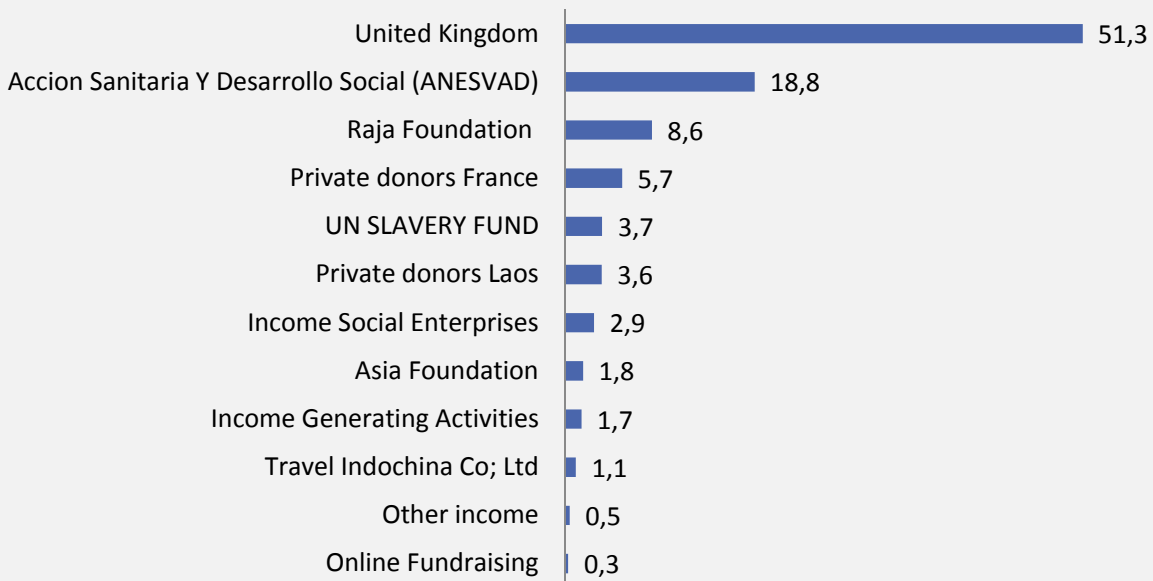
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW 2014

The total budget of SENGSAVANG for the year 2014 amounted to **219,021 USD**.

Budget breakdown per activity



Sources of funding (%)





CARE AND PROTECTION

SENGSAVANG's rehabilitation centre provides a **safe home** where the girls receive holistic care. Besides offering accommodation, food, clothing and other basic necessities, we foster the girls' overall well-being by providing health care, psychological care, and legal support.

The girls have access to quality **health care** treating physical injuries and diseases. A medical check-up is a priority when new residents arrive at our shelter as many newly admitted residents test positive for sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, or have other gynaecological problems in need of treatment. Appropriate medical care is administered by our internal doctor or, as a case requires, is sought externally in clinics and hospitals with doctors trusted by SENGSAVANG. Our doctor comes every week to check on the girls and educate them on important topics such as personal hygiene, sexually transmitted diseases, and sexual and reproductive health.

SENGSAVANG provides **psychological care** to the girls staying at our shelter. Many victims suffer severe forms of trauma and distress through mental, emotional, sexual and physical abuses at the hands of their traffickers, exploiters, clients in previous establishments and/or family members. Restoration of self-esteem and reparation of damages in personal development are fundamental in the process of recovery and reintegration but can take a long time due to the severity of the trauma. Three days per week, our psychological counsellor provides ongoing support to all beneficiaries.

Various methods are used such as individual or group counselling, art therapy techniques (e.g. picture drawing and clay modelling), and recreational activities undertaken inside and outside the centre. In 2014, SENGSAVANG organised 22 **recreational activities** for the girls on weekends.



Psychological Care: Girls drawing pictures in an art therapy session.

SENGSAVANG also offers **legal support** to make sure that our residents are aware of their rights and are able to access justice. In Laos people have very poor access to information about their rights and justice as mediation in the community is the traditional way to solve disagreements between individuals. It's a disturbing fact that human trafficking is so common in Laos that most people do not even know that it is illegal. We work together with a trusted and human rights orientated lawyer on a consultant basis to file complaints against exploiters and enable victims to receive compensation for their suffering. In 2014, our legal officer provided 171 individual and group counselling sessions. ■



EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

SENGSAVANG puts emphasis on developing **educational skills** to prepare the girls for their life after leaving our shelter. Some residents attend the public school, or take classes at a government-run school for adults, both located near the rehabilitation centre. In 2014, SENSAVANG supported 15 girls to return to school - 14 girls to secondary school and 1 girl to primary school. At the moment, we develop a scholarship program so that beneficiaries who leave our shelter can pursue education.

Residents who do not attend school, are provided with a **non-formal education** program which takes place inside the shelter, in addition to their vocational training. This program is based on the government curriculum but adapted to the needs of the girls. Provision of the curriculum is provided by a government teacher working for the Provincial Education Department. The main goal of the education program is to teach literacy and numeracy to the girls. Each student has to pass exams on a regular basis and the student's progress is recorded in a personalised book. In 2014, 33 beneficiaries received non-formal education training, with 30 of them for a long-term period permitting them to substantially improve their knowledge and skills.



Education: Girls getting in the car to go to school.



Vocational Training: Girl practicing sewing.

SENGSAVANG provides different **vocational trainings** to facilitate a sustainable community reintegration. Those training options are based on local job market opportunities. Trainings take place either in our shelter with in-house trainers, in vocational training centres, or in local businesses which propose trainings. At the moment, we offer in-house trainings in sewing and beauty, including business management training. In 2014, we trained 30 girls, with 8 of them completing their training and receiving a certificate of completion - 5 in sewing and 3 in beauty. Currently, SENSAVANG works on a new project to expand the training range.

Besides educational and vocational training, SENSAVANG provides teaching on **life-skills development**. Those tutorials focus on various topics such as women's traditions, choosing a spouse, family planning, family laws as well as coping and social skills.

Residents also learn to **self-produce food** by growing vegetables, fruits, and mushrooms in our in-shelter garden. As rice is the main diet staple in Laos and impoverished families often only eat rice at mealtimes, self-food production is a good way to have some complementary nutritious food. ■



REINTEGRATION AND FOLLOW-UP

SENGSAVANG implements a **reintegration policy** which makes sure of a **successful socio-economic reintegration** of rehabilitated girls into the community. The reintegrating process is complex, long-lasting, and consists of a number of interlinked activities.

Tracing and assessment of family and local situation is an important part to determine the possibility and feasibility of safe and successful **reintegration into the home community**. Several factors are taken into consideration, such as family circumstances, adaptability of vocational skills training, and local market opportunities. The wishes of our residents as to whether and when they want to return to their families are a top priority and are always followed and respected.

Family visits during the shelter period are a vital component to reintroduce and reconcile girls with their families, as they have usually been apart for a long time. Many victims fear that they will face prejudice from their family or community. Our social workers help to fight against social stigmatisation and facilitate a social reintegration through pre-reintegration visits and discussions with members of the family and community on a regular basis.

When residents do not want to or cannot go back to their family, **reintegration outside of the home community** takes place. This concerns situations when girls do not have any family (orphans) or simply want to stay in the city, as well as when the family is a possible threat to the girl (domestic violence, sexual abuse) or does not welcome the girl anymore. For those cases, SENSAVANG will find a safe home and an employment opportunity.

The appropriate time of reintegration varies from case to case. Once the environment and circumstances are fully assessed and deemed appropriate, **reintegration support** is offered in the form job placement or of micro-business set-up. In 2014, 10 girls were reintegrated, with 4 of them being employed at a private local company or at SENSAVANG's social enterprise, and 4 starting their own small business, whereas 2 girls returned to their family but were not working.

Former residents aiming to become small-scale business women and run their own shops are provided by SENSAVANG with a micro-business starter kit, either in-kind (stock for business) or in cash (credit). Those starter kits have an average value of 450 USD and are tailored to the vocational training the girls received (sewing or beauty). For example, an in-kind beauty kit contains all equipment needed to start a small beauty salon, such as sitting and shampoo chair, manicure/pedicure chair, sink, scissors, brushes, hair-dryer, straightener, as well as beauty and cosmetic products. In 2014, we provided 12 reintegrated girls with starting kits - 10 beauty and 2 sewing kits.

SENGSAVANG implements **long-term follow-up and monitoring** activities to ensure a successful reintegration and prevent girls from situations of (re-)trafficking or (re-)exploitation. Currently, our reintegration team follows up on a total number of 65 reintegrated girls. For up to three years our social workers check up on former residents through regular phone calls and field visits, placing importance on their family, health/psychological, and financial situation. Besides advice and counsel, we also provide additional financial support if needed. ■





SENGSAVANG wins the French Republic Human Rights Prize 2014

The judging panel particularly highlighted the concrete actions implemented by the organisation and the long-term positive impact the project had on the lives of the victims.

The French Republic honoured SENSAVANG with the Human Rights Prize for its project focusing on protecting and assisting victims and girls at risk of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in the Lao PDR. The SENSAVANG team is very grateful to be awarded with this prestigious prize in the category of “trafficking and child exploitation”.



French Republic Human Rights Prize

The Human Rights Prize, which was created in 1988, honours non-governmental organisations working in the field of protection and promotion of human rights, irrespective of nationality or borders, undertaken in France or abroad. Organisations embodying the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the World Conference on Human Rights are recognised. Every year, only five organisations are commended for their efforts.



FLTR: Christine Lazerges (President of the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights), Aurelie Socias, (SENGSAVANG Representative), Christiane Taubira (French Minister of Justice)

The President of the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (Mrs Christine Lazerges) together with the French Minister of Justice (Mrs Christiane Taubira) presented SENSAVANG with the Human Rights Prize at an official ceremony held in Paris on 9th December 2014.

“We are extremely attached to this human rights award because it carries a powerful message of value”, said the French Minister of Justice, highlighting the winners of local, national, European and international commitments. “We must ensure that human rights truly come in daily practice and are normalised” advocated the French Minister of Justice before recalling France’s ratification of the 3rd Protocol to the Convention on children’s rights on 4th July 2014, and finally the Istanbul Convention on the prevention and combatting violence against women and domestic violence.

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Providing protection and assistance to victims and girls at risk of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Laos.

SENGSAVANG Laos

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