

## *Letter of Support*

(Original in Japanese, translated by Sayaka Sawada)

To whom it may concern:

First and foremost, I would like to convey my sincere gratitude for taking this opportunity to introduce myself and a non-profit organization “De-mining and Education for Children” (DEFC) which I have been involved as a chief representative.

For over thirty years, I taught science education and organic chemistry at Kyoto University of Education (Kyoto, Japan) and retired as a professor emeritus in 2003. During my tenure, I had two chances to work in Thailand for one year each, first time about thirty years ago and second about twenty, to assist science education there. Both missions were funded by the Japanese government’s Official Development Assistance (ODA). Thailand back in those days was far from development just as less as current Laos.

Immediately after my retirement, I assumed a position from the official foreign aid body to work as an advisor for Ministry of Education in Laos over two and a half years. Main task was to provide the Lao government with advices on the integral basic education. I traveled all over the country, from cities to remote destitute areas, to observe myself the situation in terms of education.

When the term as an expert was finished, I decided to found a non-profit organization DEFC, in the belief that I could be of more assistance to improve education in this country in my own way.

As a first project, we built a small library in Vientiane where children in neighborhood can come to study and play. Now we utilize this library also as our local center and try to build schoolhouses in provincial area with generous support from a number of people. As of now, we have built nine schools and dormitories, Sayaka’s Monchao Junior High School as one of them.

As I believe we are all aware, education requires a long time and process. School building is a necessity to provide a space to learn, but it is certainly not sufficient to solve the challenges Lao people face. Here comes our reason to start a scholarship program to bring up students. It is a program to sponsor competent children who cannot afford to learn at schools due to financial reason of their family.

We are planning a humble start and would like to apply the alumni fund, if granted, for scholarships at Monchao Junior High School sponsored by my daughter Sayaka and her friends worldwide.

Best wishes for Grinnell College and global education!

Sincerely yours,

Seiji Sawada, PhD  
Chief Representative, De-mining and Education For Children  
Professor Emeritus, Kyoto University of Education