

Project Description

Project Name

DEFC Laos Scholarship

Background

The project described herein is a new scholarship program currently under development coordinated by “Deming and Education For Children” (DEFC)¹⁾. DEFC is a Japanese NPO based in Kobe City which supports children and education in Laos, one of the least developing countries defined by the United Nations. DEFC’s mission is to provide learning opportunities for Lao children, particularly in destitute regions where myriad of land mines and duds remain neglected, by building schools, dormitories, libraries, providing school supplies and books, or organizing workshops with support from Japanese donators and local communities. Since its initiation in 2006 by my father, Seiji Sawada, as a co-founder, I have been personally involved with some part of its activities on various levels.

One of the projects I was mainly involved with dates back to May 2006 when I organized a fund raising campaign by cycling 500 miles in Japan with an English friend²⁾. Prior to the trip, I asked friends and colleagues all around the world to pledge donation to build a school in Laos for each mile we cycled. I also made myself a commitment to match every donation dollar to dollar, and we successfully raised more than \$10,000 to construct one school building with three classrooms in a town called Monchao, in Phongsali province in Northern Laos^{3,4)}. Consequently, total number of enrollment at Monchao Junior High School has increased 63% (from 241 in 2006 to 392 in 2008) over the last two years since its completion in 2006.

Mission and Goal of the Project

We cannot choose the place or time to be born. I believe it is the responsibility of those who, including myself, were born in a fortunate condition by random chance to support people in a less fortunate circumstance to pay forward what we have been given. Both DEFC and myself stand firm on this mission. We strongly believe the key for the future for a developing country is in its education and our continuous support is a must. Based on this belief as our mission, DEFC is currently developing a scholarship program which supports children from poor family background so that they can be granted opportunities to study and attain better life and future.

Program

The scholarship program sponsors selected students enrolled in schools DEFC has been engaged with. A selection committee is to be established within DEFC, in which I will be on board as a member. Students will be selected based on poverty level of household, school grade, paper test, interviews by DEFC staff, and recommendations from principals and local committees. DEFC prioritizes female to male in ratio of 2:1.

Each selected student will receive USD100 per annum for two years. The Grinnell grant applied herein will be allocated to support pupils at Monchao Junior High School, with which I have been engaged along with many of my friends and colleagues worldwide.

Proposed Budget

\$1,600.00

The amount proposed is to cover a total of 8 students at Monchao Junior High School, two students each grade (4 grades in junior high school in Laos) in the course of two years.

Schedule

- Feb-Mar 2009: DEFC staff visit the schools in Laos, including Monchao Junior High School, to communicate with the school authorities about the program
- April 2009: To finalize program, to establish a selection committee within DEFC
- May-Aug 2009: Selection in process
- Sept 2009: Final recipients to be announced (September is a new school year in Laos)

References

1. DEFC website: <http://homepage2.nifty.com/DEFC/>
2. Cycling Trip Travelog (May 2006):
<http://www5e.biglobe.ne.jp/~higeji-/laos/sayaka/tyu-kan/rtop.html>
3. Progress report (October 2006): <http://www5e.biglobe.ne.jp/~higeji-/laos/sayaka/tyu-kan/ftop.html>
4. Visit to Monchao Junior High School to attend the inauguration ceremony (January 2007):
<http://www5e.biglobe.ne.jp/~higeji-/laos/sayaka/phongsali/phongsali-top.html>