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## **Access to Education of Taoi ethnic at Taoi District in Saravan Province, Lao PDR.**

### **I. Introduction.**

#### **1. General information of Lao PDR and Saravan province**

Lao People's Democratic Republic<sup>1</sup> is located in the heart of the Indochina peninsular, in Southeast Asia. It is a landlocked country which shares a 505 km border with China to the north, 435 km of border with Cambodia to the south, 2069 km of border with Vietnam to the east, 1835 km of border with Thailand to the west, and a 236 km border with Myanmar to the northwest. Lao PDR has 236,800 square kilometers which approximately 70% of its total area comprises of mountain and plateaus area. It was estimated that, in 2009, the population of Laos was around 6.834.924 people<sup>2</sup> which conclude of many ethnic groups and they also have each comprising their own linguistic, culture and traditions, and consist of psychological to express in the socio-culture such as we have exactly the same and different in the metal-cultural, mind-cultural, social-culture, actually, the one thing that is very important, we use Lao Language and Lao letter for the official language<sup>3</sup>.

There are 16 provinces and one Capital in Lao PDR, which Saravan province locates in the southern part of Laos. Saravan province has a wide shape, stretched across the southern part of Laos which southwest is next to Champasak 475 km long, southeast is next to Sekong province with 200 km long; west is next to Guangji Vietnam about 80 km long. Saravan province also has a border with Thailand, by having Mekong River as a border between Saravan province and Oubonratchathany of Thailand. The length of Saravan province is 90 km and 814 km. An area of Saravan province is 10.691 km<sup>2</sup> that called high mountains and plains. The high mountains are the same ratio of 40% or about 4.267,4 km<sup>2</sup>. For plateaus are covered 20% or equals 2.138,2 km<sup>2</sup>.

There are many mountains in Saravan such as Phou tueng 1050 m , Phou Gow (Taoi mountain) 1020 m, Phou Maengwan 1070 m, Phou therng 129 m, Phou thong 1800m. There are 8 rivers is Saravan such as Xedone river, Xebungnuan river, Xepone, Xelanong, Xelamong, Xepakun, Xelana and Xekated. Apart from that there are streams flowing throughout the year like Huay Imeuy, Huay Xuay, Huay Namsay, Huay song. Saravan is rich of Natural resources mainly woods: Dipterocapus, Margosa, Teak wood, hard wood etc. And there are also mines such as, limestone mine, clay, steel mine.

Saravan province has 8 destricts, namely Saravan district, Kongxedone district, Laongarm district, Samuoi district, Vapy district, Lakhonepheng district, Toomlarm district and Taoi district. The population of Saravan province is 324 327 people, 165 508 female, and people density is 30 people per Km<sup>2</sup>. The populations include 2 minority languages: Lao-Tai and mone-khmer. These 2 languages are including 14

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<sup>1</sup> Lao People's Democratic Republic may call Lao PDR or Laos

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.indexmundi.com/laos/population.html>

<sup>3</sup> The information from Lao National Statistic Center

ethnic groups in Saravan:

- |            |              |            |
|------------|--------------|------------|
| 1. Lao.    | 6. Taoi.     | 11. Tang.  |
| 2. Katang. | 7. Phouthai. | 12. Katou. |
| 3. Suay.   | 8. Ine.      | 13. Lanai. |
| 4. Pakoh.  | 9. Kadeau.   | 14. Alak.  |
| 5. Lavane. | 10. Ngae.    |            |

These 14 ethnic groups have solidarity tradition; they help each other, diligent in working and very brave in fighting against invaders from outside. If talking about their culture and traditions, they are quite the same but they have their own symbol such as their own speaking language, their lifestyle, and their clothing, which shows an artistic work, good traditions.

Each ethnic group has different believes such as: Buddhism covers 70% believe in ghost 29, 3%, Christian 0,5%. These cultures has been kept and developed from generations to generations.

Their main occupation is agriculture: reed animals, hunting and fishing. Apart from that, there are handicrafts; animals they breed are cows, buffalo, pig, horse, goat and poultries. They are also farming, cultivation, gardening, plant rice, plant corn and many more. In brief, their lifestyle mostly sticks with natural.

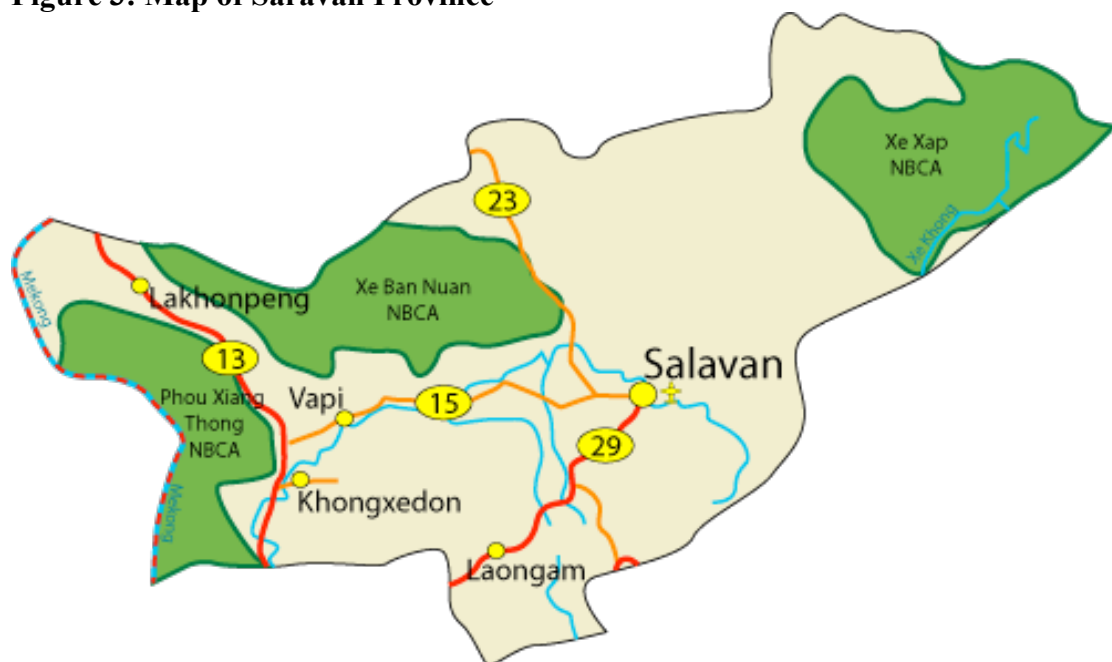
**Figure 1: Map of Lao PDR**



**Figure 2: Map of provinces in Lao PRD**



**Figure 3: Map of Saravan Province**



## 2. General information of Ethnic group in Lao PDR

According to the documentary of the name and the amount of ethnic group in Lao PDR, we can be classified that there are 49 ethnic groups and 4 main linguistic families called Lao-Tai, Mone-Khmer, Tibeto-Chinese, and the Hmong-Ioumein<sup>4</sup>.

1. Lao-Tai has 8 groups; accounted for about 64.9 percent of people.
2. Mone-Khmer has 32 groups, accounted for about 22.6 percent.
3. Tibeto-Chinese has 7 groups, accounted for about 2.8 percent.
4. The Hmong-Ioumein has 2 groups, accounted for about 8.5 percent and the others about 1.2 percent.

Each linguistic group has the different rate on education that show in the table below. So you can see the rate of literacy of the ethnic groups are lower than 72.9 percent which is concerned with the Lao-Tai group, 36.9 percent of Mone-Khmer group; 26.5 percent of Hmong-Ioumein group and only 17 percent of Tibeto-Chinese group. When we compare the rate of literacy between women and men, we found that the number of women were very low. For example, there are only 8.1 percent and 0.7 percent of Hmong women and Akar in order.

Table 1: The rate of literacy's people who are up to 15 arrange with sex and ethnic<sup>5</sup>.

Linguistic family	Tribe	The rate of literacy (male) in percent	The rate of literacy (female) in percent	Total in percent
Lao-Tao Language	Lao/Phoan	86	65.1	75.2
	Tai	77.2	50.1	63
	Lu	73.9	46.6	59.7
	Yuane	71.2	48.7	59.4
		84.4	62.3	72.9
Mon-khmer Language	Kamou	60.8	22.7	40.9
	Katang	49.3	12.8	30.3
	Makong	39.1	12.3	25
	Xaoy	55.7	20.5	36.8
	Taoi	54.8	20.3	36.8
	Talieng	58.4	25	40.4
	Lavare	52.2	18.7	34.4
	Katu	43	10.6	26.2
	Lamare	49	10.2	28
	Phai(Pale)	40.6	20	29.6
	Alack	54.6	21.3	37.1
	Eaoy	69.4	34.2	50.2
	Ngare	52.3	15.6	33.5
	Cheng	56.9	19.9	36.8
	Yare	45.9	17.7	26.5
	55.6	19.9	36.9	
Chine-Tibetan Language	Sengsali	58.8	36.2	46.8
	Laru	2.9	0.4	1.6

<sup>4</sup> Documentation of some experience and success of studying, complication and separation ethnic group in Lao PDR

<sup>5</sup> The report of National Human Development in Lao PDR 2001

	Ackha	7	0.7	3.8
		22.3	12	17
Hmong-Iewmian Language	Hmong	45.7	8.1	26.5
		45.7	8.1	26.5
Other		60.8	32.9	46.8
Total		73.5	47.9	60.2

### 3. General information of Education

According to article 1 and article 2 on the Education Law in 2008 which has the function to determine on principles, rules and measures for working on the education. The purpose of this is to make and create a good population with knowledge, qualification, patriotic, maintain people's Democracy regime, multi-ethnic harmonious, understanding in the natural science, social, having the ability to organize in the function, preserving out own traditional custom. These are the symbol of our nation, reserving natural resources, environment and make a good relationship with other countries to protect and develop country to be a civilization in order of patriotic, science, being progressive, public and sociality. Education is processing of learning, training people in politics, ideas, behaviors, brilliant, art which are the main obligation for public knowledge, brilliant ability for Lao resident to make good condition for developing in society effectively.

#### Education system

The system of administration and management of national education is determined by Ministry of Education in the network of department of provincial Education and administrator of district. Strategy and policy of education were created by central of ministry. It was coordinated with village's plans which responsible by chief of village, administrator's committees of school and directors.

Lao PDR's national education system is unified one with formal and non-formal education that has parallel and equivalent content and status in all education levels. We divided the national education in levels and stages early childhood Education until the highly Education.

There are:

1. Early Childhood Education (ECE).
2. General Education: Include Primary Education and Secondary Education
3. Vocational Education
4. Bachelor Education

#### Education Policy

Following the adoption of a new constitution in 2003 and Law on education in 2008 presented that Lao people among all nations and ethnics recognize the rights to have education. Law was regulated that primary education shall be compulsory and education development particularly with ethnic group, women (who is very poor), deformed child and special talent's child. Law on Education was majority set up education development policy for future. Law on Education was participated suggestions and states (royal) concerned strategy in 20 years until 2020 and educational development plan in five years, which agreed on the party's committee Conference in fifth time (2001–2005).

The new plan policy of government was emphasized on education, particularly the

state of Prime Ministry on “Policy implementation, authority spread in the sector of 5 years socio economic development plan and poverty reduction plan” The Ministry of Education has adjusted policies and regulations to be a plan and educational administrative policy.

ASEAN meeting on education in Chomthien Thailand, had planned “ Education for all people program” Its goals are 95% of children attending primary school by 2015 and especially girls attending primary school by 2020, and 74% of children attending lower secondary school. In Lao PDR, the program is not successful, there are still some students have to study again because they cannot pass the examination. It is lower 5% per year. The Lao government emphasizes to educate for ethnic children in remote areas. The programs conclude school expanding plan and basic study program for pre-school children, 5% per year and improve education, life skills and vocation for adults from 15-25 year-old. Policies and regulations are very important for children and families for improving education from primary schools to lower secondary schools.

In Lao PDR, the education centre of Human Resource Development, Behavior, Science and progress are developed to let them have knowledge, ability in economic development, pay attention to expand pre-school education and complete primary school for Lao children, invest more in education and give a priority for national budget. The government and society improve the quality of education; give Lao people opportunity access to education, especially people who live in remote areas, women and children.

Beside that, the government also encourages many sectors to invest in the national education development through policies such as loan policy, except or reduce tax depending on law. The government also encourages investment and cooperation with foreign countries to develop education and exchange lesson such as academic, teaching, administration and management of education, and support to consider each other about the certificate, qualification certificate and education certificate.

The education development, government focus on ethnic group in rural areas, female who has a chance to study and has talent, government planned to assist, promote and give a chance to those people to get the education equally with another people. It is the priority of Lao government to make Lao country get away from permanent illiteracy to develop the living standard. This objective is also the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations. Thus, it is very important and necessary to help the economic development progress like the other countries in the world and encourage our country to be developed country in the future.

Primary school, lower and upper secondary school, vocational schools, college and universities focus on upgrading educational methodology appropriate with the recent situation by using new educational methodology which emphasizes child-centre according to the suggestion and educational mythology of the Ministry of Education and the mythology are successful. In addition, the Ministry of Education tries to find new methodology to make Lao education better by adjusting educational methodology of neighbor countries with Lao educational methodology.

### **Education in Saravan**

Education is very important and it is one of the problems in Saravan province,

because education builds characters to have the ability to develop the country. Therefore, this work should be focused by giving opportunities for disability kids or lack of opportunity children to access to school in the entire province especially ethnic children in remote areas. In fact, some villages have only 7 houses, which is hard to build school in these areas because building school costs a lot of money. Moreover, distance from each house to school is very complicated. So it's an obstacle for children to attend school. Also there are many factors that prevent the access to school for ethnic children such as poor family and short of school equipments. In some cases, parents cannot afford their children to attend school and have no money for school fee. For women or girls, they have to look after their family, which some traditions do not support, female to access to school. For example, eleven parents are illiterate which makes them have no concern about value and the benefit of education for their children. Example from an interview of Mr. Chankeo CHANTHAVIXAY, director of Education department of Saravan province said that: "The education work in Saravan province is not wide spread yet, especially in remote area, some village locates very far as Taoey district locates 84km far from town. Also, some villages have only 2 or 3 houses because most people are living with natural, a place that they think they can work for farming. They will build their house there. If there were no permanent house, no permanent village it would be very difficult to build a school. Most of schools are being built only in big villages, a place that there are many people are living in. The distance from one village to another village is very far; some villages' people have to travel across 1 or 2 mountains to another village. Some village is in the middle of the jungle, that's why many people are illiterate. In teacher groups, there are a few people who can speak ethnic language because each ethnic group has their own languages for communicating with each other. For teachers who know the ethnic language is a person who comes to study in the town. When they are graduated they will return to teach in their own village. From these problems, the education in Saravan province is still in low condition."

The Lao government and international organizations have contributed and coordinated to develop and improve the education network. Only in Saravan province itself, there are many international organizations gave assistance to them, those organizations are Asia Development Bank, GAPE, AusAID, Jica, Poverty reduction fund. These organizations are in barren and remote areas. They helped in school equipments, provide scholarship to children who have no personal fund, organize workshops for teachers, especially ethnic teachers, which we can see the increasing number of students in each grade from the draft below:

Draft 2: Statistics of schools, classrooms, teachers and students, kindergartens of Saravan in 8 districts, year 2006-2007.

Order	District	Number of Kindergartens	Number of classrooms	Teachers				Number of students	
				Total	Girls	Primary level	Medium level	Total	Girls
1	Saravan	10	14	24	24	1	23	307	134
2	Taoi	2	2	2	2	0	2	97	66



3	Toumlarn	5	7	7	4	0	0	110	56
4	Lakhone peng	4	4	6	6	0	6	89	45
5	Vapy	14	14	15	15	5	10	411	206
6	Kongxedone	3	5	12	12	8	7	141	55
7	Laognam	3	4	8	8	3	5	113	58
8	Samuoi	1	1	1	1	0	1	46	22
<b>Total</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>1314</b>	<b>642</b>

From draft (2), in the entire Saravan province there are 42 kindergartens, 51 classrooms, Vapy district is the only district that has more kindergartens than other districts. In 8 districts of Saravan province, Vapy district has 14 kindergartens and the district that has the least kindergarten is Samuoi district, just only 1 place. For the kindergarten's teachers in Saravan province are 75 people, 72 are women and only 3 male teachers. These 3 male teachers are from Toumlarn district. 58 lady teachers graduated and 14 lady teachers graduated.

In the amount of 75 teachers, 24 of them are from Saravan district. And the district that has the least teacher is Samuoi district, just only one teacher. The total kindergarten students in Saravan province, according to the statistic of year 2006-2007 were 1314 people, girls 642 people. Vapy district has the most students, 411 people, and girls 206 people. Samuoi has the smallest amount of students, just 46 people, and girl's 22 people.

Draft 3: children age 3-5 years old access to school and not access to school in Saravan province, year 2006-2007.

order	Districts	Age 3-5 year did not go to school		Age 3-5 year go to school		All of age 3-5 old children	
		Total	girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls
1	Saravan	6696	3427	359	157	7055	3584
2	Taoi	1097	573	97	63	1194	636
3	Toumlarn	1231	644	125	53	1356	699
4	Lakhonepeng	3131	1625	89	45	3220	1670
5	Vapy	1843	971	411	206	2254	1177
6	Kongxedone	4004	1941	141	96	4145	2037
7	Laognarm	5480	2784	145	81	5625	2865
8	Samuoi	698	410	46	22	744	432
<b>Total</b>		<b>24180</b>	<b>12377</b>	<b>1413</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>25593</b>	<b>13100</b>

In draft 3 we can see that the total numbers of children age 3-5 years old are 25,593 people, 13,100 are girls. In this amount Saravan province covers the majority of 7,055 children and 3,584 are girls. It is opposite to Samuoi district, there only 1,413 children; girls are 723 people that have entered school. Vapy district has the most children access to school, with the total of 46 people, 22 are girls. For others have not access to school 13yet. Draft 4 the amount of schools and primary schools in Saravan province, year 2006-2007.

Draft 4: the amount of schools and primary schools in Saravan province, year 2006-2007.

Order	Districts	Preschools			Primary schools		
		Schools	Buildings	Classrooms	Schools	Buildings	Class rooms
1	Saravan	99	103	165	39	71	199
2	Taoi	32	32	69	12	15	45
3	Toumlarn	20	20	35	7	7	35
4	Lakhonepeng	51	54	71	15	26	99
5	Vapy	40	40	90	18	33	125
6	Kongxedone	48	49	66	32	41	156
7	Laognarm	49	52	117	26	44	155
8	Samuoi	17	17	22	10	10	32
<b>Total :</b>		<b>356</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>635</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>846</b>

Saravan province has the total school of 356 places, and 635 classrooms. Saravan district is the only district that the most kindergartens, with 99 places, 103 buildings and 165 classrooms. Samuoi district has the least kindergartens, only 17 places, 17 buildings and 22 classrooms. Primary school in the entire province is 159 schools, 247 buildings and 846 classrooms. Saran district has the most primary schools with 39 places, 71 buildings and 199 classrooms. Toumlarn district has the least primary schools, only 7 schools, 7 buildings and 35 classrooms, less than other districts including Samuoi district, just 10 schools, 10 buildings and 32 classrooms.

Draft 5: Class levels and students from year 1-5, year 2006-2007.

Order	Districts	grade 1	grade 2	grade 3	grade 4	grade 5	Total grade 1-5
1	Saravan	4.866	2.876	2.232	1.658	1.431	13.066
2	Taoi	1.353	640	474	299	192	2.958

3	Toumlarn	1.339	509	335	219	185	2.587
4	Lakhonepeng	1.916	1.378	1.201	904	718	6.117
5	Vapy	1.49	1.15	957	804	706	5.168
6	Kongxedone	2.474	1.872	1.558	1.314	1.11	8.328
7	Laogmarm	3.831	1.977	1.483	1.026	919	9.417
8	Samuoi	1.056	420	235	170	133	2.014
<b>Total :</b>		<b>18.325</b>	<b>10.822</b>	<b>8.475</b>	<b>6.574</b>	<b>5.458</b>	<b>49.654</b>

Draft 5 shows that the decreasing number of students from year 1-5 which the students in grade 1 of primary schools has the most students, 18325 people. Saravan district has students in year 1 more than other districts with 4866 people. The district that has the least is Samuoi district, only 1056 people. But the following year, the students are declining and the district that has the most students' access to school such as Saravan district and the district that the least students like Samuoi district, students are also declining, but they can still keep the declining average in the sustain level. Year 1--5, the biggest and the smallest amount of students of the 2 districts are still the same, and the entire students from year 1-5 are 49654 people.

The case of the declining number of students from each year is:

Family lack of workers, students has to quit school to help their parents working, most of them are girls, because most of their parents still have the same old thoughts and girls can do more jobs than boys, girl can help their parents look after their children and baby sitting. Another problem is their homes are very far from school, it is very complicated for going to school, especially girls, it's very risky and unsafe for girl to walk through the forest for school and many more.

Draft 6: First semester students, new students and the failed students.

Order	District	First term students		New students		Failed students	
		Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls
1	Saravan	13.066	5.93	10.515	4.764	2.135	986
2	Taoi	2.958	959	2.404	775	554	184
3	Toumlarn	2.587	701	1.755	489	832	212
4	Lakonepeng	6.117	2.936	4.642	2.295	1.475	641
5	Vapy	5.168	2.545	4323	2.114	845	431
6	Kongxedone	8.328	3.962	7.046	3.458	1.278	504

7	Laognarm	9.416	4.434	7.695	3.665	1.278	769
8	Samuoi	2.014	866	1.394	568	620	298
<b>Total</b>		<b>49.654</b>	<b>22.333</b>	<b>39.774</b>	<b>18.128</b>	<b>9.46</b>	<b>4.025</b>

From the above draft, it mentioned that students in the early year there are 49 654 people, until midterm there are 22 333 more students come to school, it made the number of student has increased to 71 987 people. Here, the district that has the most new student access to school is Saravan district, 10 515 people, 4 764 girls. Samuoi district has the least students; there are only 1394 people, 568 girls. In this case, it made many students failed 9460 people, 4025 girls. Saravan district, apart from they have many students, they also have the most students who failed with 2135 people, 986 girls. For the district that has the least students failed in Taoi district 554 students, 184 girls.

Draft 7: The number of high schools in Saravan province year 2006-2007

Order	Districts	Secondary school year 1-3	High schools year 1-6	Total
1	Saravan	7	2	9
2	Taoi	3	1	4
3	Toumlarn	0	1	1
4	Lakhonepeng	1	2	3
5	Vapy	2	2	4
6	Kongxedone	9	2	11
7	Laognarm	4	1	5
8	Samuoi	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>38</b>

In draft (7) the total number of secondary schools and high schools is 38 places, secondary school is more than high than high school with 26 places, Kongxedone district is the only district that has more secondary schools than other districts with 9 schools, but there are only 2 secondary schools in the district. For Toumlarn, Samuoi and Taoi districts, there's only 1 secondary school in each district.

As we know that in Saravan province there are 8 districts with many ethnic groups with many traditions. So we have Taoi as a study case, because Taoi district has the most population.

## **II. Study condition: The access to education of Taoi ethnic people in Taoi district.**

### **1. Location and population of Taoi district.**

Taoi district is one district that locates on the mountains area and is the poorest

district. The district is 84km far from the city, which the north is next to Nong district Savannakhet province, the south is Saravan province, East is next to Samuay district and west is next to Toumlarn district. Taoui district has the total area of 319,000 hectare, including 4 ethnic groups: Lao loum, Taoui, Katarnng and Pakoh. There are 56 villages in the district, with the total of 3,036 houses including 3,621 families and 23,871 people. Women cover 12,428 people. An average of people density is 6 people per km<sup>2</sup>. Before our country fighting for independent, the district is ethnic district 100%. Taoui district is very rich of natural resources and variety species of wild animals such as reindeer, deer, sugar glider, possum, and wild pig. Apart from that, there are also many kinds of expensive woods such as Teak wood, Dipterocapus, Margosa and hard wood.

Taoui district has many beautiful natural scenes, especially beautiful rivers, stream, creeks, ponds, and forests. This district has 4 ethnic groups, each of them has their own tradition and different languages and they have identity of living styles. Some is quite similar and some is different. Every ethnic group has kept their traditional, culture for a long time and it has been maintained and implemented by the new generations until today. Moreover, it has been developed unstoppable to suit with the new era.

The life style of this ethnic is based on agriculture, crops and animal breeding as their major occupation such as rice, can and vegetables planting. For animals, mostly they breed cow, buffalo, pig, duck, chicken and goal but we can easily see and identity of pig breeding which wee can see anywhere because they let it runs around in the natural. There are other kind of livelihood such as hunting in the forest, on the mountain and fishing in the ponds and river and in the field of agriculture. They can make their own products for selling and trading with other villages such as weaving and handicraft including basket, broom but the living style of Taoui ethnics mostly based on natural.

Picture 3: House in Taoui district



## **2. Taoi ethnic**

Taoi ethnic is one of the ethnic groups that live in Laos for many centuries. Just only Taoui district of Saravan province, this ethnic group has evacuated and moved into Laos with the ethnic groups in the group of Mone-kmer language. In between 5 to 8 century, there's no clear information or documents that tells about them.

Currently Taoui ethnic in Laos lives mostly in Saravan province and mostly in Taoui district. They also live in Savannakhet, Champasack, Xekong and Attapeu provinces. Taoui population in Laos is 30,876 people, 15,358 are women, equals 0, 7% of the population in<sup>17</sup> the country<sup>6</sup>. Many people had given the name and the meanings of Taoui district in different meanings, some calls it as the name of Taoui plateau and the name of Taoui district. Some says Taoui is a name of their ancestor who led this ethnic group, which "Ta" means uncle, "Oi" means a people's name.

Taoi ethnic has their own language in Mone-kmer language, but they don't have letters for writing. According to their tradition, they believe in ghost and sacred spiritual succession system is affected in accepting property and to succeed in the next generation is only male. Following to Taoui's customs, their house's style is like a hut. In the past mother gave birth in the forest and brought the baby home later, but recently, they give birth to children at home and hospital. For the custom of mortality, they organize religious ceremony step by steps, their relatives will help each other. At the funeral ceremony, they will build a hut on the grave with some decorations of woodcarving or build a colorful sculpture on the grave. The traditional customs and important ceremonies in each year is also related to an anniversary of the people who past away or they call it the ceremony to commemorate the people who past away, in Taoui ethnic language they call it "La Puep". Apart from that they also have a traditional moral ceremony and they believe that it will protect them, their animals and plants. In the past, their main occupation is farmer such as planting rice, vegetables, and hunting in the forest. However, nowadays, many things have changed, before they used to do slash and burn cultivation, now it is decreasing, they are basing on breeding animals such as cows, buffaloes and pigs. The way of their believes in religion has also changed, especially for the property equipped during the marriage arrangement. In Taoui district, they still work on slash and burn cultivation and breeding animals because of the inconvenient environment and the location is on high land so they cannot grow rice or farming.

## **3. Educations.**

Overview of education in Taoui district is still in low condition. Even though, the government and NGOs had given assistance to them, it still uncovered. There are just a few places that received assistance, for other villages that are far from town and small villages still do not get enough assistance. Accessing to school mostly boys that have more opportunity than girls because they think that sending girls to school is a waste of time and waste of money. Even though they have accessed to school, when they get married education does not help them at all. Women just do house work and it's better to help parents working at home. Also, it is difficulties to go to school

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<sup>6</sup> Statistic of Lao population in 2003

because their houses are very far and danger might occurs anytime. At the same time, some children have to drop or absent in the midterm of school year. Moreover, they have to quit school because of their family conditions cannot afford or they have to work at the farm and at the harvest season.

Example: An interview from Mr Somkhit Thummavong, parents of the students said that actually, I really want my children to have access to school, but because my family is poor, I don't have money to afford my daughter to go to school. In the harvest season, I have to ask my daughter quit school to help me working. Another reason is the distance from my village to school the school is very far. So I am worried that something dangerous might happen to my daughter.

For the above example, the factor that causes children not attending school and quit school during midterm is the problem of the family expenditure, long distance between house to school and lack of work force in family<sup>7</sup>.

Draft 8: The age of children who attend and those not attends school timetable<sup>8</sup>.

The age of children	Total		Attend		Does not attend	
	Total	female	total	female	total	Female
3 to 5	1194	636	97	63	1097	573
6 to 10	2799	1384	1885	891	914	493
11 to 14	2536	1248	1525	413	1011	835
15 to 24	3691	2029	959	291	2732	1738

From the above draft, we have known that the total number of children who are at the age of 3 to 5 year old is 1194 (636 for female) 97 children attend school, 97 for female. 1097 children do not attend school, 573 for female. It is shown that the number of children who do not attend school is much more than the number of children who attend school.

The total number of children who are at the age of 6 to 10 year old is 2799 (1384 for female). 1885 children attend school, 891 for female. 914 children do no attend school, 493 for female. Although, the number of children who attend school is much more number of children who do not attend school, female is much more than male which cover 1/2 of all girl in the district.

The total number of children who are at the age of 15 to 24 year old is 3691 (2029 for female), 959 people do not attend school, 1738 for female, we have seen that the number of people who do not attend school has increased, and female has increased too.

From the comparison of children who attend school and do not attend school in the

<sup>7</sup> Interview of Mr Somkhit THUMMAVONG who is a parent of a student

<sup>8</sup> Information of statistic of the age of children who attend and those not attend school time

timetable, we have seen that the amount of children who do not attend school at the age of 3 to 5 and 15 to 24 years old is high.

All the ages of children, female rate is higher than male rate. As a result, those are effects to Taoui ethnic access to the education, especially female.

There are only 52 schools in the Taoui district, 12 primary school, 40 mid-primary school, 2 permanent schools, 32 mid- permanent schools and 18 primary schools.

### **III. The Lao government and international organization assistance to Taoui ethnics in the Taoui district.**

#### **1. The Lao government assistance.**

The Lao government has issued law and policies to encourage and upgrade the education for local people, especially Taoui ethnics group. According to Article 23 of the laws on education<sup>9</sup> which defines the assistance and encouragement for pupils and students without separating ethnic groups and religion like the following:

The government has encouraged ethnic pupils and students who live in the remote areas, especially female to enter school and also support excellent students. In addition, they also encourage people and social organizations to help their students. Lao revolutionary party, government organizations such as the ministry of national defense and the ministry of interior, enterprises, public organizations, social organizations and other people are responsible for keeping the good environment for children and youths, in order to develop their mentality, physical growing and brain improvement.

From the policies, Taoui ethnic groups are assisted by the government to access the external and internal education, which make them aware and see the importance of education. Furthermore, the Lao government has encouraged their parents to recognize how important of education for their children. They have campaigned parents to allow their children to attend school and support the educational equipment. Parents can know the importance of education and know that their children will do after they finished school such as they will develop their families, their provinces and their country. The government also expands schools and improves the quality of education for teachers.

For example, Mr Phernvilay ORAVIENG, he came from Taoui family in Taoui district. “My family was very poor, so I had never thought that I could continue my study at the National University of Laos. Due to the government assistance, after I finished a lower secondary school in Saravan ethnic school, I got the scholarship from the government to study in Savannakhet ethnic school because there was not any ethnic school in upper secondary school level in Saravan. Ethnic school is one for the branches of Savannakhet ethnic school, which receives the students who finished the Saravan ethnic school. Educational policy which gives the scholarship for the best students at that time. Fortunately, I got high points and I also was the best student in the class, so I has the opportunity to continue my study in Savannakhet province and

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<sup>9</sup> Education Law in Lao PDR 2003



the government have supported me until now” said Mr. Phernvilay<sup>10</sup>.

From the policy, the Lao government has built new schools which are necessary though out the country. They have also supported teachers by cooperation with foreign institutions such as government of Japan, France, Australia, European Union, Asian Development Bank, World Bank. The Lao government is implementing a lot of programs to expand opportunity of education in ethnic areas by supporting from donors. In 1990s, the government increased the educational budget. In 1995, the educational budget covered 14% of the national budget.

According to memorials, museums, libraries, scientific centers, cultural center, art gallery, stadiums, cultural places, historical places and scientific park, these are responsible for facilitating teachers and students to study and search. In addition, radio station, television and mass media have had educational programs to let them know and understand about politics, concepts, behavior, moral, culture, science and technology.

Public organizations, cultural institute, social organization and heroes are responsible for organizing the activities about society, culture and education, which are useful to develop their mentality, body and brain. Organization and all sectors are responsible for receiving students who want to internship them in order to build school and educational institution.

## **2. International Organization Assistance.**

Nowadays, a lot of international organization assists the Lao government to educate ethnic groups, especially Taoi ethnic group which is assisted by the Japanese government, JICA, GAPE, AusAID, ADB, UNICEF.

For example, UNICEF is assisting the Lao government to train mid-primary teachers how to teach two or more than two classes at the same time. Therefore, children can attend schools, especial ethnic groups. UNICEF is working with the Lao government in the rural areas to explain the importance of education to children’s parents and village development committee. In addition, UNICEF reviews of gender equality in primary schools than encourage girls to attend schools.

In 1992, the Ministry of Education was assisted by UNICEF to implement the program of teachers upgrade and change the system of teaching. The objectives of this program are to supply continuing education for teachers and improve their teaching skill. There are now over 7,000 teachers who finished lower secondary school. From the outcome of this program and others, in 2002 the percentage of teachers who were trainee in Lao PDR was increased 77%. As the success of the program, the Lao government has expanded the program across the country by cooperation with others international organizations. Besides, UNICEF has supported the program of school group system in 8 provinces by participating of teachers who come from 8 provinces and other provinces around there. They organize the academic meeting and seminar on teaching, especially teachers who teach in remote areas.

UNICEF’s goal is to support education for provinces where have a lot of ethnic

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<sup>10</sup> Interview of Mr. Pernvilay ORAVIENG, a student of National University of Laos

groups. Saravan is one of them that got assistance from UNICEF. According to informal survey, teacher workshops and giving the information about education in communities have almost succeeded in encouraging girls to attend schools.

Another example is GAPE which has given the budget to build schools by cooperation with JICA to improve and support education for ethnic students who are poor, but good at studying; specially, GAPE built GAPE Center in Taoi District to receive students who want to be volunteers to develop the communities. In addition, GAPE Center also helps them to develop themselves. In fact, some volunteers had ever come to Vientiane for the performance on the important occasions and they were also representatives of schools to participate in singing contest, drama and so on. Those made Taoi children got many experience.

Example, Mr. Phetsamone MATTAVONG, the director of Ethnic School in Taoi District, said, “ This school was built by JICA including toilets, tables, benches and educational equipment<sup>11</sup>.”

### **New School sported by JICA**



#### **IV. Survey and the estimation of Taoi Ethnic’s education**

The access to education of ethnic groups in Laos is limited, Even though the government has put the special emphasize on the education system and issued the new education policy. The education are unable to cover the whole rural area such as Taoi ethnic group in Taoi district, Saravan province that we selected as our case study, after the surveyed and the estimated we found that there were some advantages and disadvantages as following:

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<sup>11</sup> Interview of Mr. Phetsamone MATTAVONG the director of Ethnic school in Taoi district.

## **1. The advantage of access to the education of Taoi district, Saravan province.**

The access to education of Taoi ethnic is convenient due to the location of Taoi district lies on the target area of education development for ethnic group plans. Therefore, they received the aids from the government and some international organizations. These provide the aids to develop the education of the ethnic group in the target area. In order to support and provide the education opportunity to the Taoi ethnic group, refer to the amended constitution of Laos 2003, chapter 4 which legislated “the fundamental right and obligation of Lao citizens as Lao citizens have the right to receive education and upgrade themselves”<sup>12</sup>. Implement the article of this constitution, the government has given the education opportunity to the children in remote areas, by providing school buildings and facilities such as rest rooms, education equipments, textbooks, stationeries, tables, and chairs. These facilitated the teaching and studying, according with providing some scholarships for the outstanding students from poor families. Furthermore, the government has cooperated with the international organizations as Aus AID, ADB, UNICEF, Gape and JICA. As well as, helping the orphan children from poor households in remote areas by building ethnic boarding school and improving their living conditions. Those schools have also provided scholarship for students to buy their stationary, and other necessities, approximately 90,000 kip per month. In addition, some teachers had only finished primary or secondary school so the government helps these teachers by training, improving acknowledge and skills. In addition, they also build medical centre and some exclusive and effective training to improve their living condition and their study.

## **2. The disadvantage of access to the education Taoi district, Saravan province.**

Beside the various advantages, there are some difficulties as the education could not cover the remote area, only some areas received the aids and fund from government and international organization, nevertheless, the problems are still remain and unsolved because Taoi is one of the poorest district in the country, people still struggle with their living condition causes by the geographically problem, that bring some difficulties for their transportation. Taoi district is situated far from the city 84 km, There are difficulty to travel across 5 mountains to reached Taoi district, in some places we had to across the bridge or some of the bridges are broken down or not completely built, so the journey was very difficult. Some roads are built by Lao people who were forced and tortured by the French colony to built the roads for the convenient transportation in rainy season. The evidences of oppressed are still remained, these problems have affected ethnic groups in Taoi district for traveling to school and the city center the most.

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<sup>12</sup> New constitution of Lao PDR, 2003.

## terrible road and bridge conditions.



The location of houses and accommodation one of the main factor, there were planning for building their house due to this cases, most of children are not allow to go to school, their parents realize the dangerous may occur to their children while traveling to school, particularly for the girls. To be notice by the statistic, the number of male and female student that's obviously different. One of the reasons is that their parents do not even know the important of education. Some of them let their child work on the farm instead of go to school, better than wasting money on buying stationary and education equipment, while they do not even have money to buy food. Therefore, the number of students who attended school is less than the children who work at home, the number of students are decreasing continuously and in the cultivated season the students will be absent from school because they have to help their parents working on the farm such as cultivation, paddy farming, and gardening fishery. Some students take this opportunity leaving school and quit study with that situation. The parents do not recognize the significant of education due to various problems that effect to their living condition. The education of teachers that could not respond to the demand of the students can be noticed by the number of teachers in some schools is only one or two who are responsible for teaching in every classes and as well as in other districts. One of the main reason is there are some difficult for the teachers who come from different area, and could not communicate in ethnic language. For example, in Taoi district most of the villagers communicated in Ka-thange and Pa-koh language. Therefore, it requires the teachers to learn the ethnic languages. However, the teachers have not been trained or improved their education with the other school's teachers. Due to the lack of teachers, and not knowledgeable, the teachers finished only lower and upper secondary school, therefore, it requires the teacher to improve their knowledge and skill in some school. The director has limited directive Skills and does not know how to use their resources to develop their education system. The report of situation and statistics to the district education department are still delay and not transparency refer to the lack of budget to building

the school. The NGOs or inter organization provided aid to them, but not cover in all areas. The making decision are depended on the central because lack of professional, the budget and social welfare to the student when they are sick or pass away and lack of textbooks particularly the primary school which the foundation of schools and others problems.

### **3. Suggestion and the improvement.**

In order to make the access to education cover all remote area in Laos especially, Taoi ethnic group, firstly, the government has to rebuild the roads from city center to Taoi district, to convenience the transportation from town to the remote area, to widen the education network. Furthermore, it could also improve their living condition of villagers if transportation is convenient. In order to make the communication between villagers and town which is the best way to help them and give them the opportunity to study in the city, in otherwise to improve the living condition of villager by promote the goods exchange between villager and people in the town which consequence to progress their economic development than before. So parents can support their children to have more opportunities for studying. On the other hand, to set up the houses shall be reallocation. If there are least villager and household in the village, they should combine into big village. Than they can build school in that are and it will be convenient for students to go to school so their parents will not be worried about them. In addition, It should go together with the dissemination and orientation of how importance of education to the villagers. According with Gender equality in education, to adjust timetable for the children in Taoi district in order to arrange the free time for children to help their parents on the farms, to wipe out their parent's negative perspective on education. All of these will promote the access to education of the children.

## **V. The advantages and disadvantages of data collection.**

There are some advantages and disadvantages that effect to our research during the period when we collected data in Saravan province. Those are the followings:

### **1. The advantages.**

Our research was supported by SIDA project which provide the cost of travel, accommodation and food. In addition they also bought some educational and sport equipments for donating to the ethnic students in Taoi district.

When we arrived in Saravan province, we received a warm welcome from the provincial officers at the Saravan Education Department. They provided some information that we requested and facilitated our team by permitting us to interview some of the officers there. Especially the head of the province Education Department provided the vehicle for us to go to Taoi district, which is in remote part of the province. Apart from that he also chose one of the officers who are responsible for cooperating with NGOs, in particular GAPE. That person is Mrs Bounthavy KEOMANYVANH. She led our team to Taoi district to find more information with the local authorities and she also prepared the accommodation for us. During this journey we were cooperated from the local people who lived there that supplied and gave us the necessary information which concern to our research.

## **2. The disadvantages.**

In couple of those advantages mentioned above in collecting data, there are still some disadvantages such as the long journey and the road was very difficult to travel to Taoi district but it is the only way to travel. A narrow road was cut by a river and yet there are a lot of deep holes, sometimes we have to cross a river, climb a high mountain and cross an old and nearly damaged bridge. As a result, it was quite risky for travelling. The only vehicle can be used for travel is the four-wheel drive that cause difficulty to us because the kind of vehicle was available. Therefore, we approach provincial officers asking for help; fortunately, they provided us that type vehicle.

With regard to data collected from provincial officers was not enough. Therefore, we need to conduct personal interviews the local authorities, teachers and students over there.

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