

Skills Training to Lao Youth Phase II: LAO/00/V01 Project Evaluation

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Evaluation conducted for UN Volunteers by:

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LYU PROJECT EVALUATION

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
1. PROJECT HISTORY	7
1.1 BACKGROUND	7
1.2 PHASE ONE.....	7
1.3 PHASE TWO	7
2. DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES AND EVALUATION CRITERIA	9
2.1 DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE	9
2.2 IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVES	9
2.3 INDICATORS AND UNV TERMS OF REFERENCE.....	10
3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY	11
3.1 INTERVIEWS	11
3.2 RELEVANT PERSPECTIVES.....	11
3.3 REPORTING PROCESS.....	11
4. EVALUATION FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	12
4.1 ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING.....	12
4.2 TAILORING TRAINING.....	16
4.3 HANDICRAFT TRAINING.....	19
4.4 AQUACULTURE TRAINING.....	21
4.5 HEALTH EDUCATION TRAINING.....	24
5. VOLUNTEERISM	29
6. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED	30
6.1 PROJECT STRENGTHS.....	30
6.2 PROJECT CHALLENGES	31
7. EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS	33
7.1 ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING.....	33
7.2 TAILORING TRAINING.....	33
7.3 HANDICRAFT TRAINING.....	34
7.4 AQUACULTURE TRAINING.....	34
7.5 HEALTH EDUCATION TRAINING.....	34
7.6 COMPLETION OF PHASE TWO.....	35
8. FUTURE DIRECTIONS	36
8.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A FUTURE PARTNERSHIP.....	36
APPENDIX ONE: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS.....	38

Executive Summary

The Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union (LYU) is a mass organisation under the direct supervision of the Lao Government. Among goals identified for the organisation in the mid 1990s were the training, unification and motivation of LYU members and Lao youth at large. It was recognised at this time that young people in Laos often lacked skills and found difficulty accessing employment. A lack of learning opportunities, including teaching and training programs, was identified as an underlying reason for this problem. In 1997, with funding assistance from the government of Japan, United Nations Volunteers (UNV) developed a project to assist the LYU in addressing this need. This initial project (INT/99/V27) focused on four key skills including tailoring, agriculture, handicrafts and English language. In July 2001 a second phase of the project was established through the joint funding of the Government of Japan and the Government of the Netherlands (SUNV). The project (LAO/00/V01) was expanded to include aquaculture training and a health awareness program focusing on HIV/AIDS and drug abuse.

This evaluation has been undertaken for the UNV Country Office in Laos with the twin purposes of assisting an efficient and productive closure of the second project phase and advising UNV on any likely future relationship with the LYU. The terms of reference for the evaluation point to three key elements for investigation, namely the relevance, success and sustainability of the LYU Project. An additional consideration for the evaluation is the notion of volunteerism, specifically whether UN volunteers are appropriate staff for work of this nature and whether the project has succeeded in promoting volunteerism among Lao Nationals.

This evaluation report is the result of consultation-based research where evidence has been sought in the form of stakeholder opinion generated and analysed by the evaluation consultant. Through consultation with UNV country office staff in Vientiane it was determined that interviews would offer the most effective mechanism for gathering opinion. Six key groups were identified for interviews including UN Volunteers, LYU counterparts, LYU staff, LYU trainers, UNV Country Office staff and young Lao program participants. An interview proforma was developed for all of these categories, each with minor variations on the key themes identified for investigation. The collated results were then assessed and summarised for presentation.

A total of forty-three individuals were interviewed in Vientiane, Pakse and Luang Prabang and their thoughts and comments are reflected throughout the following pages. Aside from the four key expectations outlined in the evaluation terms of reference, analysis of findings also took place against the objectives and goals outlined for the various program streams. Substantial variations in the strengths and challenges of each independent area of the project have led to their separation in this report. Common themes and overarching findings are provided in the final two chapters of the document.

The quality and commitment of the UN Volunteers was consistently apparent throughout the evaluation. Their technical skills were uniformly strong and their willingness to persevere in a complex and often inhibiting organisational structure was exceptional. The transfer of skills and delivery of quality training, both to LYU trainers and direct to young people, is also a particular highlight of the project. The ability to engage and train young people from the target group was regularly demonstrated across most of the project streams. Young people affected by the various programs have seen substantial developments in their skills, technical awareness and abilities. Similarly, there are consistent examples of LYU trainers or teachers demonstrating excellent advances in their knowledge bases and their delivery techniques. It is in this immediate, deliverable sense that the project most clearly meets its goals.

Opportunities for diversifying outcomes and 'value-adding' to this project were sought out and met on several occasions. Specific examples, such as the tailoring workshop and salesroom in Luang Prabang and the English Language Resource Centre in Vientiane, were outside the expectations

of the project document yet offer some of the strongest contributions to the project goals. This strength, once again, is testament to the skills and awareness contributed by the volunteers and the flexibility granted by the UNV Country Office. Perhaps even more importantly, these developments are representative of a fluid, developmental relationship with the LYU. It is well documented that in the Lao context, and particularly within the LYU, the pace at which change occurs is very slow and the opportunities for creating new programs are very limited. Given this, these accomplishments are all the more noteworthy.

The project also showed strength in meeting many of its pre-determined goals. It can be argued that the project made significant inroads into the empowerment, vocational training and informed health dialogue sought in the overarching development objective of the project. Similarly, the indicators identified for the various project streams were, or are being, met. This is especially true of the success or immediate 'impact' project activities are seen to have on young participants or LYU trainers. The project areas appear relevant for their target audience and remain popular both during and after the UNV placements. Indicators identified for the various project streams were, or are being, met.

The fundamental challenge facing the LYU Project is one of sustainability. This is common to development programs in Lao PDR and must be seen in the Lao context, where the capacity for organisational change and the commitment to long term planning is generally very low. Nonetheless, it is a consistent feature of this project that a focus on effecting lasting change has often been lost to the immediate concerns of program delivery. It is the contention of this evaluation that the capacity building focus needs to be rediscovered and that new strategies need to be developed to increase the likelihood of sustainability.

The LYU appears to require support with key elements of youth program development. This is particularly evident in the lack of clear processes for choosing program activities and equally pressing in the follow up support that is currently missing from program delivery. The future success of the various project streams will depend largely on the LYU meeting, and being supported to meet, advances in organisational development. The financial position of training programs at the LYU is another critical consideration in the sustainability of this project. The lack of adequate funding was repeatedly brought to the attention of this evaluation and is fundamental to the future of all project activities. Even in those circumstances where the skills transfer is high, capacity has been adequately built and management support appears in place, it seems likely that projects will run aground due to a lack of money. Finding and securing adequate resources to run programs will be an ongoing challenge for vocational and health training at the LYU.

Another key challenge is found in the inadequate protection provided to skills and assets associated with the project. It has been the experience of several evaluation participants that equipment and resources provided by the UNV budget has failed to remain in place after completion of assignments. This is directly linked to the sustainability of program initiatives and the LYU management commitment to achieving project goals. Mechanisms need to be created to ensure that UN sponsored resources targeted to specific program outcomes remain in place beyond the placement of UNV specialists. Similarly, where counterparts have been supported to learn skills and build capacity, these individuals become critical to the ongoing success of their program areas. The LYU needs to be encouraged and supported to nurture people in such positions and ensure skills are passed on before those individuals are lost to other occupations.

These and other key reflections from the evaluation are discussed in some detail throughout this report. Evaluation recommendations are listed overleaf, however they are best considered in the light of detail provided in the Recommendations chapter. The many differences between particular project streams have resulted in the grouping of recommendations under a series of headings. The suggestions are separated into specific learning streams, the completion of Phase two of the project and, finally, into suggestions for future directions for UNV and the LYU

English Language recommendations include that:

- *The EL UNV follow up on training in the provinces, including observation of work practices and contribution of additional teaching materials where possible*
- *The expectation of management training for LYU staff be removed from the workplan for the EL UNV*
- *An agreement be negotiated between the LYU, the EL UNV and the UNV Country Office staff that seeks to protect the ELRC (including ELRC equipment and resources) during and beyond the UNV assignment*
- *There be a renewed focus on maximising the ELRC counterpart's capacity, supported by the negotiation of a commitment from the LYU to provide support and staffing beyond the UNV assignment*

Tailoring Training recommendations include that:

- *The UNV Country office seek to meet with national and local LYU management to promote a plan for continuing the training program*
- *The UNV Country Office seek to raise the issue of finance, including recycling of resources and the use of those resources that were accumulated by the completion of the UNV assignment, during discussions with LYU management*

Aquaculture Training recommendations include that:

- *There be a renewed focus on the original expectations of this program, as listed in the UNV TOR, with a particular emphasis on providing training and developing the KM 14 site in Vientiane*
- *There be a reduced focus on preparatory visits and training programs in the provinces, in line with the UNV TOR*
- *Selection and recruitment strategies be reviewed to ensure youth participation*
- *UNV Country Office staff, with support from UNDP Country Office staff, seek to negotiate a firm plan for the protection of UN sponsored facilities and the appropriate use of income generated as a result of the fisheries program*
- *The UNV be supported to build direct links on behalf of the LYU with relevant departments and industry groups, and that this be represented in the UNV workplan*

Health Training recommendations include that:

- *There be a renewed focus on the transfer of skills and training materials to the LYU Counterpart*
- *There be a reduced focus the training of trainers or young people in short period available to UNV and Counterpart*
- *A planning process be arranged between LYU management, UNV Country Office staff, the UNV and the LYU Counterpart to devise and implement a model for the continuation of the health awareness program beyond the UNV assignment*
- *Where money and time allow, basic health training aids (such as booklets, leaflets, posters or pictorial tools) be developed and distributed to provincial LYU offices to assist with the delivery of health awareness advice to young people across Laos*

Phase Two Completion recommendations include that:

- ***Regular, formalised and documented meetings be established between LYU management and UNV/UNDP Country Office staff to refresh the focus on the objectives of the project, the specific expectations of UNV TOR and the steps necessary to maximise capacity development and skills transfer***
- ***Resources, equipment and facilities attached to UNV project areas be documented and an agreement be negotiated with LYU management that ensures they are protected during and beyond UNV assignments***
- ***LYU Management and the UNV Country Office organise a public event which demonstrates the strengths and successes of UNV involvement whilst also offering specific detail about the manner in which the LYU will work to continue the projects.***

Recommendations for Future directions include that:

- ***A new partnership program be developed between LYU and UNV that is independent of the current project yet seeks to build upon the outcomes and learnings offered in this evaluation***
- ***Resources be sought for the development of a project proposal/ project document that includes key responsibilities and has a clear grounding in shared development goals***
- ***The initial focus of any new partnership between LYU and UNV be moved from program delivery to organisational capacity, specifically:***
 - *Management Expertise and Planning Procedures, including effective internal and cross-sectoral collaboration*
 - *Youth Program Development, including recruitment processes, transition support for young people and destination tracking*
 - *Co-ordination of program delivery, including the creation of an active and representative steering committee governed by the project document goals*
- ***The new relationship between the LYU and UNV include provision of fundraising expertise, perhaps in the form of a specialist UNV, including donor targeting, submission writing and funding accountability***

In the event that a new partnership is established recommendations include that:

- ***Specific choices for training programs be developed through consultation with LYU staff and young people with a demonstrable evidence base and a transparent process of selection***
- ***That any and all vocational training activities be linked to the youth development framework, including careers advice, transition support and business skills training***
- ***That HIV/AIDS and health awareness training remains particularly pressing for young people in Laos, particularly in isolated areas, and that the strengths of the current program should be built upon with a focus on rural and regional centres***
- ***That it may be appropriate to extend activities in English, Tailoring and Aquaculture into other provincial areas, however this should be based upon ongoing LYU support for:***

- § **The English Language Resource Centre, Vientiane**
- § **The Tailoring Workshop and Salesroom, Luang Prabang**
- § **The Aquaculture Facilities at KM 14, Vientiane**

1. Project History

1.1 Background

The Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union (LYU) is a mass organisation under the direct supervision of the Lao Government. In the mid 1990's, prior to the development of a relationship with United Nations Volunteers (UNV), the key roles and duties of the LYU were identified as the training, unification and motivation of LYU members and Lao youth at large. Further, the LYU sought to generate new owners of the People's Democracy and promote equality amongst gender roles within ethnic minorities and classes. It was recognised at this time that young people in Laos often lacked skills and found difficulty securing permanent employment. This led in many cases to distractions and criminal behaviours such as drug abuse, prostitution and theft, particularly in the cities and along borders with other countries. Migration of young people from rural to urban areas was also identified as a consistent theme, often compounding the challenges faced by youth in those towns or cities.

The underlying reasons identified for these challenges were the lack of learning opportunities for young people, the poverty they commonly endure and the lack of teaching and training programs in remote areas. This was seen as particularly pressing in the case of young people graduating from secondary school who have no opportunity to further their education. As a result the Lao Youth-Child Vocational Development Centre (LYCVDC) was established in 1995 to implement the Youth Pioneer Development Plan under the direct supervision of the LYU.

1.2 Phase One

In 1996 and 1997, with funding assistance from the Government of Japan, United Nations Volunteers developed a project to assist the LYU in achieving its goals through volunteer placements. These volunteer placements were to focus on three key streams: assisting the LYU in their program endeavours; building the capacity of the LYU to continue tackling identified concerns, and; assisting the LYU in networking and exchanging information. Four key areas were identified for UNV specialists including sewing skills (tailoring), agriculture, handicrafts and English language training. Technical support began in March 1998 and continued until July 2000.

An informal evaluation mission by the Japanese government in late 1998 concluded that the operations of the LYCVDC and the UNV training support were a success, with particular praise for the low running costs of the intervention and the enthusiasm demonstrated by Lao youth for the project. Further positive reflection came in 1999 when the Executive Co-ordinator of UNV at that time (Ms Capeling-Alakija) and the First Secretary of the Embassy of Japan (Mr Kobayashi) visited the program and commented similarly on its success. Mr Kobayashi recommended an extension of the project. The Lao government, on behalf of the LYU, requested continued UNV support for the program and suggested areas for expansion.

1.3 Phase Two

In July 2001 an extension of the project was established with joint funding through the Government of Japan and the Government of the Netherlands (SUNV). The fundamental premise for the extension was a continued focus on addressing youth unemployment in Lao PDR, building on the successes of the first stage. The training of young people and LYU trainers remained a priority. Project areas included English language, handicrafts, tailoring, agriculture and aquaculture. With the extension of the project came the addition of a new program area in health education, particularly focusing on HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and reproductive health. The agriculture component was cut short as a result of the relevant specialist's inability to continue with his

assignment shortly after commencing work. A replacement UNV was found in aquaculture and energies and resources were channelled into the fisheries program. As a result, the focus for this evaluation will be limited to Aquaculture, English, Handicrafts, Tailoring and Health.

The remaining UNV placements of this second phase are due for staggered completion over the next fourteen months, with the final assignment (aquaculture) expected to be complete in early 2004. This evaluation seeks to reflect on the status of this second phase and point, where appropriate, to any future relationship between the LYU and UNV.

2. Development Objectives and Evaluation Criteria

This evaluation seeks to identify the relative success of the project against the objectives set down in the project document for Phase Two. These objectives form indicators against which the individual programs and the project as a whole may be assessed. The objectives may be identified in three tiers, including the project-wide development objective, the secondary or "immediate" objectives and, finally, the performance indicators and terms of reference for individual UNV assignments. These three tiers are explained in some detail below.

2.1 Development Objective

The project document outlines and overarching development objective upon which all project activities are based:

"Empower the Lao youth by enabling them to constructively approach the challenges of their generation through vocational training that will strengthen their accessibility to employment and through informed dialogue on the health issues they are facing"

2.2 Immediate Objectives

The project document also outlines three immediate objectives of the project through which the broader development objective might be accomplished. The immediate objectives fall under three key project disciplines and are as follows:.

"Training of Trainers":

"To increase the ability of the Lao Youth Union to manage and sustain its own vocational training priorities by providing personnel better equipped intellectually to understand teaching techniques pertaining to training for the young"

"Skills Training for Lao Youth":

"To provide Lao youth with the opportunity to learn vocational training skills and have the ability to practice them in an economic environment"

"Health Education in HIV/AIDS and Drug Abuse":

"To provide Lao youth with the opportunity to learn about the issues and problems related to HIV/AIDS and drug abuse"

It was anticipated that the "training of trainers" and "skills training for the Lao youth" objectives would be linked or combined in the delivery of programs in English language, Tailoring, Handicrafts and Aquaculture.

2.3 Indicators and UNV Terms of Reference

Each volunteer has a performance indicator set against their work, including:

English Language Specialist:

The Lao Youth Union language trainers will raise their standard of English (especially pronunciation) and will incorporate new material and teaching activities in their lessons.

Tailoring Specialist:

The Lao Youth Union trainers will incorporate quality control checks in their provincial training and introduce marketing and business principles to their trainees

Handicraft Specialist:

The young trainees will return to their hometowns with new skills and confidence and apply them in their work. Some of the trainees will start up small businesses.

Aquaculture (fish-farming) Specialist:

The fish-farming ponds at the agricultural Centre will be operational with different species introduced to them. The Lao Youth Union staff will repeat the establishing of small scale fish-farming ponds in the provincial centres and use these for their training activities.

Health Education Specialist

The Lao Youth Union health educators will incorporate preventative health, especially with regard to HIV/AIDS, in their health education. They will foster and encourage open dialogue with the young on matters important to them, such as drug abuse and reproductive health. The young at the LYU Centre will become aware and knowledgeable on the issues of HIV/AIDS and drug abuse.

The UNV's individual assignment Terms of Reference (TOR) offer further criteria against which an evaluation may take place, and these are identified later in this report under "expectations of the project" in the Findings and Analysis section (section 4).

3. Evaluation Methodology

This is consultation-based evaluation where evidence is sought in the form of stakeholder opinion that is generated and analysed by the independent evaluator. The following outline offers a general interpretation of the tools used to garner opinion, the perspectives sought for the purposes of evaluation and the process of interpreting and reporting on findings.

3.1 Interviews

The evaluator, through consultation with UNV programme staff in Vientiane, determined that interviews with key stakeholders would offer the most effective mechanism for gathering opinion relevant to the study. Key lines of inquiry were identified in the TOR for the evaluation and included the relevance, success and sustainability of program activities. An additional area of interest was the role of volunteers and the contribution made by the project to promoting volunteerism in Lao PDR. As such, interview questions were built around these four key areas of interest. Those interviewed were also given an opportunity to reflect on any needs identified during the project and encouraged to make any other comments or suggestions that may be of interest to the evaluation.

3.2 Relevant Perspectives

The evaluation sought opinion from a number of differing perspectives during the course of the consultation. The consultant identified six groups for interviews, including:

- *United Nations Volunteers and UNV Program Staff*
- *LYU counterparts, LYU staff and LYU trainers/teachers*
- *Young Students (Lao youth)*

An interview proforma was designed and agreed upon for each of these six audiences, each with minor variations on the key themes identified for investigation. Interviews were then held with people from all six categories using the proformas as a guide. Where necessary a LYU staff member was employed to translate questions and answers. The consultant took extensive notes of responses, taking care to quote or paraphrase answers and confirm these with respondents during the interviews themselves.

3.3 Reporting Process

The data collected through the interview process has been collated and analysed for presentation in this report. In the first instance this occurs under the headings of the five key program areas (i.e. the Aquaculture program, the Tailoring program) with particular attention on the status, relevance, success and sustainability of each independent project. Further analysis is directed at the expectation laid down for each program and the strengths or challenges they apparently face.

Findings on key project areas are then supported by data collected on the project as a whole and lead to the project-wide conclusions and lessons learned. Once again the key themes identified for investigation are represented, as are the strengths and challenges for the project as a whole. In a return to the broader expectations of this evaluation, conclusions and findings are then summarised in the specific steps necessary for the successful completion of Phase Two and possible paths for a future relationship between UNV and the LYU.

Recommendations are available in the last two sections of this report, where clear links are drawn with findings, analysis, conclusions and lessons learned. Recommendations focus on the five key program areas, project co-ordination and future directions.

4. Evaluation Findings and Analysis

A total of forty-three people were interviewed for the purposes of this evaluation including UN Volunteers/ Specialists (5), LYU counterparts (4), UNV program staff (2), LYU program staff (7), LYU trainers or teachers (11) and program students (14). Additional perspective was gained from informal meetings with SUNV staff (2), UNDP staff (1) and LYU management (2).

Whilst this number of interviews exceeded the expectations of the evaluation planning, certain constraints are worthy of note. In particular, the minimal nature and extraordinary consistency of responses from LYU staff has meant the depth of analysis has been restricted in several instances. Similarly, the student interviews (with the exception of one group interview with three English students) were not particularly valuable in their contribution to the analysis. Whilst respondents were encouraged to open and honest, and to elaborate where possible on simple answers of yes or no, this proved quite difficult on several occasions. This may be linked to cultural norms that limit a willingness to criticise and/or to a clear position nominated by LYU management that most LYU staff were seen to uphold. Among the implications of such constraints are a stronger dependency on analysis and interpretation by the evaluation consultant (given the lack of independent opinions on certain project issues).

Regardless of these limitations, certain consistencies were identified and are outlined in the following pages. The strongest data was gathered through interviews with UNV volunteers, specialists and program staff and was supported by key interviews with LYU staff willing to offer new or differing thoughts. The individual projects were found to be vastly different in their strengths and applications and, as a result, have been assessed independently in this section of the report. Where consistent characteristics can be identified across all projects, these are outlined in the *Conclusions and Lessons Learned* chapter to follow.

4.1 English Language Training

4.1.1 Expectations

The indicator set down in the project document asks that the Lao Youth Union English Language Trainers raise their standard of English (especially pronunciation) and incorporate new materials and teaching activities in their lessons.

Further expectations of the project are found in the terms of reference for the UNV where the role of the English Language Specialist is broadened to include development and implementation of the English Language Training program with Lao Youth as well as the LYU English trainers. In addition, the UNV is to provide management and co-ordination advice to the LYU project manager on the implementation of all activities within the context of the broader UNV/LYU project. Finally, the UNV will advise LYU representatives on the coordination of the project with similar projects from other development organizations. These expectations carry with them a number of highly specific methods with which to achieve outcomes in the three key result areas.

4.1.2 Status

The volunteer, Mr Martin Fairbairn, is currently 14 months into his 24 month contract with an completion expected in November 2003. Martin's Annual Volunteer Report 2002 comprehensively outlines activities carried out to date. The training of LYU Trainers has taken various forms including a needs analysis survey, staff meetings, course administration and advice and informal daily advice. Trainer training for the first year culminated in two residential Teacher Training Courses held in September and October of 2002. The direct teaching of young people has also occurred in a number of ways, most notably including daily teaching of two intermediate

classes for the first six months of the project and informal teaching programs for young students in the six months to November 2002.

Project Co-ordination activities have taken the form of regular contact with the other two UNVs working with the LYU in Vientiane and co-ordinating project banking arrangements. The UNV also undertook the annual accounting for these projects. The training and support of LYU directors in management, administration and English is planned during the second year of the project.

Additional activities worthy of note include procurement of English Teaching Materials and the creation of the English Language Resource Centre (ELRC). New materials include textbooks, cassette tapes, maps, posters, computer equipment, tape recorders, video facilities and more. The ELRC was established as a venue for the advancement of English Language training at the LYU site and as a home for the new equipment and teaching materials. It has become a popular and accessible facility for English students to advanced their language skills.

4.1.3 Relevance

A focus on English language training was consistently seen to be relevant by project stakeholders. The LYU English teachers in particular stress the key role that English language skills play in enhancing opportunities for Lao youth. The increasing presence of English in the Lao economy is felt to mean that language skills will continue to be a stepping-stone to work or more active community participation. English is also a pre-requisite for most of the international education opportunities that so many Lao youth seek. It was suggested that with another language young people will have the means to promote Lao culture to other communities. Consultation participants suggest that the desire to communicate with foreigners is very high among Lao youth and that this popularity further increases the relevance of this form of training.

“English is good to have in Laos, but also important if you want to go overseas and get good skills”

English Student

“If they know another language, Lao youth can extend Lao culture into other communities”

LYU English Teacher

The UNV does draw attention to some limitations to the relevance of English skills, pointing out that the links to vocational or business training in specific areas might be necessary to genuinely improve opportunities. Whilst very popular with young people in Laos, the real value of English might be greatly enhanced by links to other relevant curriculum.

4.1.4 Success

Consultation participants uniformly feel the contribution of the UNV to improving English training and facilities has been successful. Of particular note is the success of the trainer training, where all parties feel they have improved the quality and capacity of their teaching. Students have demonstrated more interest and have been more actively engaged in the English classes following the introduction of new methods and styles. In Pakse in particular, LYU staff and English teachers have seen an immediate rise in the numbers of students that they feel is directly linked to the new methods learnt by the teachers attending UNV Training of Trainers (TOT).

“The greatest success for us has been the increased interest in our English classes since the teacher training. Numbers were low but now we have no room...”

LYU Office Chief, Pakse

English students in Vientiane are similarly glowing in their reflections of direct UNV involvement in language training. There is a sense of accelerated learning when the UNV is involved as it seems improvements in language skills are dramatically more rapid under the instruction of a native English speaker. When asked for the most beneficial and/or enjoyable aspects of this training, students at the LYU training centre draw particular attention to the use of conversation and activities based on conversation skills. This can be seen to be a positive recognition of the focus on pronunciation outlined in the project indicators.

“You can see results, especially with real English language speakers. It’s active, it’s faster and more fun.”

English Student, Vientiane

“The best part is conversation. Activities that lead conversation are the best”

English Student, Vientiane

The creation of the English Language Resource Centre (ELRC) is among the most substantial successes of the project to this point. The UNV identifies this as the greatest contribution he has made thus far in his assignment. The ELRC provides support direct to students, encouraging self-directed learning and the exploration of English language skills well beyond the expectations of the standard English classes. The consolidation of resources and space dedicated to furthering English offers renewed energy and focus for students and LYU teachers alike. It is gradually increasing its profile at the site which, in turn, is leading to greater usage and the possibility of a long term position in the planning of LYU English Training.

“The teacher training was highly praised, but the resource room is a particular success. It’s the best thing I’ve done...”

UNV English Language Specialist

4.1.5 Sustainability

The UNV is expected to complete his assignment in November 2003. Unlike other areas of the project, the role of counterpart is not very clearly defined in the English Language stream. A member of LYU staff has been identified as a counterpart learning to manage the ELRC however no real counterpart exists for the training of trainers or direct English teaching roles. Two or three key staff from the LYU are closely involved in the work of the UNV, however none specifically identify as the one to continue work at the completion of the assignment.

The UNV suggests that it may be unreasonable to expect Lao English Teachers to teach at the TOT level, and that for this reason a counterpart may not be appropriate. This issue is further complicated by the constant change in staffing within the LYU language section, meaning that although skills are transferred and expertise is developed this is often lost when staff choose (or are asked) to move on. One LYU staff member suggests that consistent changes in priorities at the LYU, mirrored by the shuffling of staff regardless of the point in their development as teachers, will work against continuing development after the UNV has left. The point is also made that LYU teachers are very poorly paid and often not tied to the LYU staffing profile, meaning that they may easily be tempted away from work for a more lucrative offer or may legitimately be taken from the LYU to work in another department of the government.

The skills learnt by teachers attending UNV training will likely remain in place after completion of the assignment, however many draw attention to the fact that without follow up and without physical records of the training some of these skills will be lost. The teachers interviewed for this evaluation felt they used the skills learnt everyday during their teaching and felt this would be an ongoing benefit regardless of the presence of a UNV. They also suggest, however, that there

needs to be follow up and support from the LYU to ensure that the development of skills does not stop there.

“I always use the skills I learnt. I use them everyday and they have enabled me to work at the University. It has stayed with me.”

LYU English Teacher

“We need follow up and feedback. We need someone to observe and comment on our teaching styles. Perhaps we also need a meeting once a year to discuss how we are going, what problems we are having...”

LYU English Teacher

Fundamental resource shortages in the provincial offices also limit the likely spread of new skills. Time and again during the consultations the question of facilities was brought up. The provincial staff lack textbooks, teaching aids, tape players and other materials which remain well outside their available resources but would be invaluable in their teaching efforts. This may have been addressed in some part by the ELRC in Vientiane, however in the North and South regional centers no such facilities exist. The UNV suggests that an extension of language support into the provinces is necessary, above and beyond the short provincial training packages he has been able to provide.

“We could use tapes to help with pronunciation. Local students would really like that. But we have only one tape player and it is broken.”

LYU English Teacher, Pakse

“The need for EFL in the provinces is very high, there needs to be a decentralization of EFL training to these areas.”

UNV English Language Specialist

The UNV and some among the staff consulted from the LYU are particularly concerned about the maintenance of resources at the ELRC. Consultation participants point to a number of examples of equipment and materials being absorbed elsewhere into the LYU or the Lao government after completion of a development program. This is critical question in the sustainability of UNV cooperation with the LYU, especially in the case of the ELRC. Information Technology, Audio-Visual equipment, teaching aids, furniture and other items have been provided out of the UNV project Budget. These play a critical role in the ongoing success of the English Program at LYU and must be protected from other departments wishing to employ them after completion of the UNV assignment. There is the real possibility of the project's greatest legacy and strongest capacity enhancing tool being lost.

“We must protect the EFL resources or they will be lost. There must be a register and checking procedures in place. This is critical.”

UNV English Language Specialist

4.1.6 Strengths

Reflections from participants in English classes and Teacher-Training suggest this project has been highly successful in delivering key aspects of the UNV TOR. English teachers feel their skills and delivery have been significantly enhanced and students feel they have achieved substantial development in their language and pronunciation. The creation of the English

Language Resource Centre (ELRC) has been a notable addition to the project outcomes, bringing rich rewards to the LYU Language facilities. The quality and enthusiasm of the LYU counterpart in place to manage the ELRC after completion by the UNV is another valuable aspect of the work to date

4.1.7 Challenges

The absence of a counterpart for the Teacher-Training aspect of the project is a challenge that may limit the sustainability of the project. Communication and support from within the LYU for initiatives of the English Language UNV has been inconsistent and must be remedied before the completion of the project. Resources and equipment put in place in the ELRC are at risk of being lost to this project after the volunteer has completed his assignment and must be protected by some means. A new or refreshed focus on follow up with Teacher-trainers is necessary to ensure the benefits of the original training are maximized. The project co-ordination and management training roles included in the UNV TOR are unreasonable expectations of the volunteer's time and are likely to limit the capacity of the volunteer to meet the primary goals of the assignment.

4.2 Tailoring Training

4.2.1 Expectations

The Project Document indicators for tailoring suggest that LYU trainers should incorporate quality control checks in their provincial training and introduce marketing and business principles to their trainees.

The UNV TOR for the Textiles and Marketing Specialist offers more detail, asking that workplans be developed and implemented for LYU tailoring trainers, that vocational training be prepared in tailoring skills and that proposals be developed for new designs and new sewing techniques in the relevant provinces (Luang Prabang and Vientiane). The UNV is further expected to take part in training courses as required and prepare training manuals as required. As with all such programs, the UNV is to report both to the relevant LYU manager and the UNV program officer.

4.2.2 Status

The UNV in this sector was Ms Eriko Kawaguchi, who had two assignments with the tailoring sector in phase one and phase two. In total she was on assignment for 3 years and 4 months. The Phase Two Tailoring Program was completed in November 2002. A comprehensive project report was compiled by the UNV on completion of the project and outlines all of the achievements and difficulties identified. The report details training and skills development with 80 young people and four adult women over the course of the UNV assignment. The highest representations of young people were in income generating activities (24 youth), handicraft training (29 youth) and weaving training (20 youth). A broad variety of related training packages were also provided by the volunteer including accounting training, basic English training, design training, colour combination training, rural development and marketing.

A self-sustaining workshop and salesroom in Luang Prabang is the lasting representation of the UNV intervention. The workshop offers work to some of the young women who have participated in the training and offers income-generating opportunities for other participants (in outlying areas) who sell cloth they have made off the premises to the workshop itself.

4.2.3 Relevance

All parties interviewed agreed that the skills and applications of tailoring and marketing is entirely relevant for young people in Laos, particularly as it applies to income generation for people in their own villages away from built up areas. There is awareness that tailoring skills are relevant for individuals and their families as well as the increasing market of foreigners interested purchasing locally made goods.

"This training is very important for young people. After training is finished they can work here, or at home, or at another employer."

LYU Counterpart

"Foreigners really like handicrafts and clothes so that means there is work"

Tailoring Student

4.2.4 Success

The maintenance and continuing operation of the tailoring workshop and salesroom in Luang Prabang is in many respects the strongest sign of success. All the expectations of the project, including quality control checks, skills training and income generation activities are well represented in this example. The continuing involvement of the LYU counterpart as co-ordinator of the business and the employment of young women who themselves have come through the skills training is noteworthy. The sourcing of materials from young women who have trained in income generation through cloth making offers another sign of success. Perhaps even more importantly, the ability of the business to both self-sustain and potentially generate the income required for further training is very significant.

"They really can do it. Their products are good. I have gone into the villages and seen them selling their goods. They also send us their goods and we pay them."

LYU Counterpart

"I knew nothing when I came but now I can do it very well and I have a job"

Tailoring Student

The numbers of participants and diversity of training activities undertaken suggest a commitment of great skill, energy and perseverance by the UNV. The statistics outlined in the UNV project report are a further indication of success, reaching above and beyond the expectations of the UNV TOR.

"I achieved everything I said I would at the beginning of the project"

UNV Tailoring Specialist

4.2.5 Sustainability

The existence of the workshop and salesroom in Luang Prabang is a substantial indicator of sustainability for the Tailoring program, as described above. A high skills transfer is evident between the UNV and her LYU Counterpart, even though their relationship started late in the assignment and was particularly brief. The additional focus beyond income generation to accounting and an awareness of basic business management procedures was beyond the original expectations of the project but may be seen to greatly enhance sustainability.

"The counterpart is well set up. The strong focus on income generation is outside the original training expectations, but critical. I focused on cycling profits back into the business"

UNV Tailoring Specialist

Questions do arise, however, over the commitment of the LYU to continue and expand the program to reach more young people. There is a sense that the project will not reach any new participants unless this actively pushed by the local LYU management. The UNV worked extremely hard on the business and marketing side of the program ensuring it was well positioned and offering clear advice to the organisation. If the local LYU management choose to maintain the producer groups in four villages, maintain and increase the profile of the well-positioned salesroom, ensure the accumulated funds and profits are re-invested in the business and make sure the trained staff (including counterpart) stay involved, the project is likely to succeed and expand. During the evaluation interviews it was suggested that the current accumulated funds were not adequate to support business costs or run new training, bringing into question the use of pre-existing funds and the commitment from management to support this program.

4.2.6 Strengths

In many respects a flagship project of UNV involvement with the Lao Youth Union, the creation and maintenance of a Tailoring workshop and salesroom in Luang Prabang offers a tangible and obvious symbol of success. A high skills transfer to the UNV counterpart is demonstrated and the ongoing work opportunities for many of the training participants attest to the success of the intervention. The creation of jobs for trainees within the workshop and salesroom is complemented by the purchase of materials from other trainees using their skills in their own villages to produce cloth. The ability of the workshop to self-sustain through sales is an excellent example of the legacy of UNV involvement well beyond the completion of an assignment.

The competence and dedication of the UNV, particularly in the face of inconsistent support from LYU management over the course of the assignment, offered immeasurable value to the outcomes of the project. In particular her willingness to identify and address needs above and beyond the expectations of the TOR contributed greatly to the value of this endeavour. The additional time spent on income generation training, business awareness and the creation of a lasting facility are obvious project strengths.

4.2.7 Challenges

Communication between the LYU and the UNV was at best inconsistent over the course of the assignment. Poor sharing of information within the LYU office meant that after the passing away of the local LYU director a few months into the project no one else was familiar with the goals or activities of the initiative. For several months little progress was made in terms of counterpart support or management contributions to the running of the project. This compounded the limitations already in place given the short (fifteen month) nature of the phase two assignment. It is a continuing concern of both UNV and Counterpart that without ongoing, meaningful support from higher levels of local management the many successes of this project may be lost.

Participants in the evaluation point to a lack of cash resources to maintain and expand the program, however this is incongruous with the apparent cash resources and income flow at the time of the UNV completing the project. Maintaining vigilant accounting mechanisms will be a necessary challenge if the project is to move forward. Similarly, maintaining staff and management systems supported and implemented by the UNV will be fundamental to future success. Should these be lost much of the capacity built as a result of the placement will be lost also.

Another challenge presented by this project is the support and status offered to UN Volunteers by the LYU management. The volunteer in this project was a highly skilled and qualified specialist however there appeared a lack of regard for this expertise. Whilst other experts are often highly respected and given ready access to support, it was the experience of this worker that her volunteer status worked against such assistance. The UNV was often not consulted or included in decision making closely related to her work, and often excluded from key meetings.

4.3 Handicraft Training

4.3.1 Expectations

The Handicraft Training, unlike other streams of the LYU Project where volunteers would be assigned, was to be undertaken by an outside consultant contracted to UNV. The indicator set down in the project document asks that the young trainees will return to their hometowns with new skills and confidence and apply these in their work. Some of the trainees are expected to start up small businesses.

Through negotiations with the UNV office, specific expectations were established including the shortening of training to four months (from six months in Phase One of the project) in recognition of the flagging interest found in later parts of previous training. This would also allow for additional resources to be spent on equipment participants could take with them after training. It was anticipated that trainees would learn specific skills, learn teaching skills in order to share what they have learnt, and receive a take-home tool kit that would enhance the likelihood of sustained use of their new skills.

4.3.2 Status

The Handicraft Training project was conducted by Mr Michel Saada of local enterprise, T'Shop Lai; an independent handicraft initiative. The two courses were completed in 2002, having occurred over four months between November 2001 and March 2002. The consultant has undertaken some follow up with students in the time since.

The focus of skills training was on using readily available and affordable materials for producing saleable products. Specifically, the raw materials chosen were Scrap Metal, Coconut Shell and Bamboo. Items produced by the young students during the training are detailed in the consultants project report and included 169 scrap metal pieces, 123 Coconut pieces and 24 Bamboo products. Beyond working materials into finished products, the training included research and development for product types and quality control. The consultant's vast experience in the local handicraft market was brought to the training floor.

4.3.3 Relevance

There appears a general agreement that handicrafts is an appropriate market for young people to seek work in, and that the use of affordable and accessible materials is key to making such work possible. There is, furthermore, some consensus that young people are interested in undertaking training and work in this field. Some questions arise, however, over the relevance of one-off training in the absence of follow up and ongoing support. Without more structure and support, young people find great difficulty in working alone. A sense of community and industry is lacking and this has a negative impact on the relevance of one-off training for young people in this field.

"Yes, it (the handicraft training) is relevant, but it depends on follow-up. The skills are appropriate but there is inadequate support afterwards."

Handicraft Consultant

4.3.4 Success

There have been a number of immediate successes for participants in the training. A sense of accomplishment and a real development in skills was apparent, as was the building of self-confidence. Young participants felt they could set and achieve a target and were seen to develop a sense of pride in their work. Students generally gave positive reviews of the training experience and felt confident that they had benefited as a result.

"We set a target and we could meet it. We could produce something for the market and sell it."

"The end product is very good and we are all proud of our work"

Handicraft Students

The other fundamental premise of the project, that some of the trainees would start up their own small businesses, was far less successful. Whilst a number of young people attempted to begin a business they soon found that a lack of business skills or a lack of technical support became too limiting. Some of the trainees were eventually able to attain work with the handicrafts consultant himself, however whilst very positive these outcomes were outside the project brief of developing trainers or business people.

"They (the students) have new skills and are happy, but no-one has been able to set up a business. They have no business skills and a lack of opportunity in smaller areas."

Handicraft Consultant

4.3.5 Sustainability

Several essential elements are lacking in the capacity building and sustainability aspects of this initiative. A key partnership with someone from the LYU (similar to the UNV/LYU Counterpart arrangement) was missing from the consultant model, meaning that at the completion of the training no-one at the LYU was positioned to take-over support and advocate for new or ongoing needs. Whilst the consultant was content to field questions from young people in the weeks and months after training, this was beyond the expectations of his contract and was more realistically a role to be played by the LYU. This issue (follow-up support) was consistently identified by the consultant as a flaw in the long-term success of the program.

"Training needs to be part of a longer support plan. Not for 4 or 6 months, perhaps for two years with ongoing mentoring. As one group finishes another starts, but every six weeks there is follow up with the previous groups."

Handicraft Consultant

The application and study of business skills was identified as another limitation of the project, where more attention to this component was seen as necessary to ensure young students were given a realistic opportunity to attempt small business. As with other streams of the LYU Project, funding resources to follow up with students or provide additional support after their training is completed appears to be lacking. There is much uncertainty as to the capacity of LYU trainers to continue or expand the skills taught by the external consultant, particularly given the lack of budgetary freedom.

4.3.6 Strengths

The knowledge and skills of the consultant to this project are substantial and may be seen as a significant strength of the intervention. Furthermore, the consultant's willingness to spend time and money outside the scope of the project to support students is admirable. The students generally appeared to enjoy the experience and make significant developments in their skills. In some cases students were fortunate enough to secure work with the consultant's small business as a direct result of their participation in the program

4.4 Aquaculture Training

4.4.1 Expectations

The aquaculture indicator outlined in the project document asks that fish farming ponds be set up at the LYU agricultural centre in Vientiane for the purposes of training. Further, it asks that LYU staff repeat the establishment of small scale fish-farming ponds in the provincial centres to enable similar training activities in these areas.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the UNV Aquaculture Specialist highlights additional expectations of the role including the development and provision of aquaculture training for young people, the development and provision of a training programme for LYU trainers, support for the LYU in the establishment of the provincial fish-farming facilities and co-ordination with other similar projects taking place in Lao PDR.

4.4.2 Status

The aquaculture volunteer, Mr Takao Iwamoto, commenced work on this project in April 2002 and is therefore 8 months into the 24 month assignment. Facilities were very poor for the volunteer on arrival and as a result the first four months of the assignment were dedicated to establishing adequate fish ponds and equipment. The first training course was held for 27 aquaculture students in September and included two weeks of theoretical and practical instruction. September also saw the production of 5000 fish fry as well as the introduction of breeding and growth programs for three other species of fish. Further activities in the later months of 2002 include the improvement of fish breeding facilities and the creation of new fish cages. Links were made with other UNVs in agriculture and rural development with the intention of enhancing links and support across similar projects.

4.4.3 Relevance

The volunteer and related LYU staff view aquaculture as an entirely appropriate training area for Lao young people. Evaluation participants point to a common cultural interest in fish production and consumption across Lao PDR. Individuals, families and communities have all expressed interest in growing fish and sharing these skills. Furthermore, demand exceeds supply for fish in Lao PDR to such an extent that fish are now being imported from bordering countries. As such, the economic and social relevance of vocational training in fish farming seems assured.

“Most people live in rural settings and lead a natural life. Agriculture and fish farming is very appropriate”

Aquaculture Student

The evaluation demonstrates some uncertainty on the part of key stakeholders as to the notion of vocational aquaculture training being targeted at *young* Lao nationals. Whilst this focus is made clear in the project document and the terms of reference for the aquaculture volunteer, all parties

consulted felt the training was equally appropriate for interested people of any age. Students interviewed from the first training course were approximately 50 years of age. As a result, determining the relevance of UNV involvement for the young target group is somewhat compromised.

4.4.4 Success

At the time of the evaluation the project is still developing. Much of the early energies have been dedicated to establishing the fish farming facilities themselves and this has met with significant success. The volunteer now has an appropriate environment in which to demonstrate techniques and, potentially, with which to provide additional income to the project through fish sales.

Students from the early training sessions were interviewed and suggest they have seen a substantial development in their skills and their technical understanding of fish farming. The focus on managing ponds and fish feeding techniques was seen as particularly useful. One student suggests he is now preparing to grow fish for the marketplace as well as for his family and that this is only possible because of the training he received.

“I learned a lot. I am famous now. I have the skills to share... I have a lot of technical advice to give”

Aquaculture Student

The UNV and his LYU counterpart both identify a number of indicators that suggest significant success for the project. In particular, the willingness of the students to ask appropriate questions during the training is a clear sign of engagement. Similarly, the follow up from students who have come back to the LYU or the UNV with additional questions or difficulties suggests that interest has been maintained and skills are being put to use.

4.4.5 Sustainability

Both the UNV and his LYU counterpart believe the transfer of technical skills is very high in this project. It is felt by both that by the completion of Takao's assignment the counterpart will be well placed to continue managing the fishery facilities at KM 14. The UNV adds that the transfer of labour skills is similarly high.

“the transfer of technical skills is no problem, it is already something like 60 or 70 percent”

UNV Aquaculture Specialist

“We do everything together, there are no secrets. I have the technical skills”

LYU Counterpart

Inconsistencies appear, however, in the two parties' understanding of available resources within the Lao Youth Union at the conclusion of the volunteer placement. The LYU counterpart suggests there is both policy and funds within the Union to maintain the Vientiane Program and extend into the provinces. The volunteer is concerned that the cash flow required to maintain the program may be less assured in the absence of UNV involvement. Similarly, it is essential to the sustainability of the project that the LYU counterpart be supported to stay on in the project and share his newly developed skills with others. Should this individual move elsewhere in the LYU or government the capacity will be lost and the project will falter accordingly.

The expenses associated with the aquaculture project may also impact on the long term sustainability of the program. At present a significant percentage of the program budget is being spent on Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) for participating students during training. The UNV

is concerned that in the absence of hospitality provision (eg: lunch) students might choose not to participate at all. This is not only unreasonably expensive for the project in the long-term, it invites a fundamental question about the motivations of participants. Another financial concern arises in the costs associated with visits to the provinces, originally expected to be met by the LYU when they sought to repeat the experience of the Vientiane facilities elsewhere. Whilst this extension into the provinces is strongly supported by the UNV and the LYU, resources to support such steps cannot fail to limit the delivery of outcomes in Vientiane.

The LYU counterpart feels there is a strong case for developing text book resources to support sustainability in the long term. Students would benefit if able to take with them a pocket book of key questions and answers about fish farming. This would work to promote the sharing of skills in local communities as well as leaving a capacity building tool in place after completion of the assignment. Furthermore, the LYU counterpart would have a permanent tool on which to base his work in the absence of the volunteer.

The possibility of self-sufficiency within the project has been raised and the UNV is particularly interested in developing the business side of the fish farm. It is possible that fish production and sales will become high enough to generate the resources required to maintain and extend the facilities and training. This is dependent, however, on a number of conditions. The idea assumes successful entry into the Lao fish trade by the project and support from appropriate sections of the agriculture sector. Perhaps more importantly, the idea depends on a commitment from the LYU to reinvest any funds generated back into the fish farm and training program. The UNV feels that negotiating this commitment will be a very difficult matter and may require a compromise over what percentage of profits go back into the farm.

The UNV identifies time and money as the key restrictions associated with the project. Given the project started with nothing but a single unusable pond, two years is not seen as adequate time to achieve the success Takao would seek. In particular, Takao is concerned that there is not enough time or money to establish provincial training programs and facilities. The expenses associated with bringing students in for training are too high and this issue needs to be addressed. The project budget is further stretched by the LYU expectation that maintenance costs for the KM 14 site (above and beyond the fish farming facilities) be met by the aquaculture project.

There is a further need to link students to fundamental training in business and accounting skills. This is outside the scope of the aquaculture training however it is seen as an essential step in the practical application of fish farming skills. The UNV quotes the example of one student who was willing to pay for fish but not for fish food, resulting in a substantial drop in fish numbers as the strongest ate the weakest to survive. Similarly, students need to understand creation of a sale price for fish that represents the costs of growing fish and includes a profit to the farmer. Support in developing these basic skills needs to be provided at the same time as the aquaculture training to ensure the application of technical skills brings appropriate rewards.

The UNV suggests that better links are necessary with the department of agriculture for a successful business venture of this type. Such links may provide the necessary assistance to break into the fish trade in Laos as well as the opportunity to share in industry expertise. In the eyes of the UNV such links might also enhance the prospect of investment in the farm and increased capital would increase the likelihood of economic prosperity for the fish farm. Furthermore, the UNV suggests that the teaching of aquaculture itself may be best placed in the department of agriculture rather than with the Lao Youth Union.

Finally, it was clearly stated that the fish and facilities at the KM 14 site need to be protected not only after but *during* the volunteer assignment. So real is the concern that the equipment or the fish will be stolen or sold off that at present the volunteer and counterpart work on a schedule that covers 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. This places unrealistic demands on both parties and warrants immediate redress. The UNV also states his concern that the fish may be sold off whilst he is away in the provinces or involved in some other activity off site.

4.4.6 Strengths

The relationship between the UNV and the LYU is particularly congenial in the case of the aquaculture project. The LYU feel that the UNV, perhaps because of his Asian origin, understands the Lao culture and system better than most. All parties are particularly proud of the progress made at the KM 14 site since the arrival of the UNV. Indeed, the facilities now in place are outstanding given the complete absence of working systems at the time of Takao's arrival.

There have been solid steps towards meeting some of the expectations set out in the project document and volunteer terms of reference. The functioning fish farm is now operational and training courses have begun.

4.4.7 Challenges

The project appears to have drifted away from its anticipated directions in several respects. It is at risk of being weakened as a result. It may now be time to consolidate the expectations of the project to ensure those most critical steps are met.

There is some discrepancy between the expectations laid down in the project document and those of the key stakeholders with regard to fisheries training in the provinces. Whilst the value of such activities is not in doubt, it remains the responsibility of the LYU to attempt to repeat the Vientiane facilities in the provinces. The project document identifies it as a UNV responsibility to establish and develop the Vientiane facilities and to *advise* the LYU as *they* attempt to repeat this elsewhere. This advice might best be provided to the LYU counterpart and perhaps to key LYU staff in the provincial centers, however the expectation that provincial facilities will be set up by the UNV out of the current UNV budget is unreasonable. The challenge is to get the best possible use out of the resources and energies that have already been put in place at the KM 14 site.

The process of selecting students for participation in aquaculture training requires attention. The selection of individuals by village chiefs is clearly a rewarding one for those chosen, and there can be no doubt the technical advice is beneficial to those concerned, however it fails to reach the target group for which funding has been provided. There appears a fundamental lack of appreciation for the youth-orientation of the vocational training model.

Ensuring sustainability is another critical challenge facing the aquaculture project. It appears that counterpart capacity is being well developed and that the resources being put in place will provide long-standing opportunities for this form of activity within the LYU. The future of the program, however, depends on a commitment from the LYU to maintain the facilities, ensure adequate transfer of skills within LYU staff and to manage the reinvestment of funds earned into the business itself.

Finally, the Aquaculture Program requires support to enter the Lao fish trade, a challenge that the project must seek to meet during the second half of the funding term. This need is tied to the expectation laid down in the UNVs terms of reference requesting links to other activities in agriculture within and outside the government of Lao. It may also be possible that, through these relationships, a partnership can be developed to meet the training needs of older Lao fish farmers currently participating in the youth scheme.

4.5 Health Education Training

4.5.1 Expectations

The Health Education indicator set down in the project document expects LYU health trainers to incorporate preventative health, especially with regard to HIV/AIDS, in their health education. Further, they are expected to foster and encourage open dialogue with youth on matters of importance to them such as drug abuse and reproductive health. As a result of the intervention it is also expected that young people in Vientiane will become aware and knowledgeable on the issues of HIV/AIDS and drug abuse.

Specific expectations identified in the UNV TOR include the development of materials and a training program for LYU trainers and Lao Youth. Through workshops and other the events the UNV is to facilitate open dialogue among young people that will lead to increased awareness on issues of HIV/AIDS and drug abuse. The UNV is also expected to co-ordinate with other components of the broader UNV/LYU project and with similar health-related projects undertaken by other development organisations. Specific methods and steps are identified in the TOR that will lead to the achievement of these expectations, including some provision of training in provinces outside Vientiane.

4.5.2 Status

At the time of the evaluation the UNV (Ms Danielle Stafford) is approximately two months from completion of her assignment. The UNV annual report for 2002 outlines activities carried out to that point. As a result of the UNV placement a space has been established where young people may access information and training about health-related issues. An eight-session health course was held for 20 young people in Vientiane. Equipment was purchased for student health training sessions, as were certificates for those students completing such courses and additional equipment for sport and recreation. Regular sport and recreation activities have been put in place, supported by one major "positive recreation day" that was attended by approximately 100 young people and included a broad variety of activities.

Training in provinces included two weeks training of LYU trainers in Luang Prabang and a similar two weeks training of LYU trainers in Pakse. This training reached a total of 70 participants, all of whom completed 32 hours of training in HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and peer-education basics. Additional support has been extended to 8 peer educators that joined the UNV in the provincial training, 1 employee of the Lao Women's Union who assisted in the implementation of provincial training package and the LYU counterpart who has been involved in all aspects of the program's delivery.

4.5.3 Relevance

It was uniformly agreed across all participants in this evaluation that the issue of health awareness, particularly with regard to HIV/AIDS and drug abuse, was critically important and entirely relevant to the population of young people in Laos. There was a consistent opinion that young people in Laos, especially in the provinces and isolated areas lacking popular media, require access to information and knowledge about these issues. Further, it was a consistent suggestion that economic and social future of Laos is dependent on healthy and aware young people. This extends beyond disease prevention to the positive use of free time and the ability to offer meaningful contributions to the nations development.

"Yes, absolutely, health awareness is relevant in Laos and the peer education approach is very much appropriate"

UNV Health Educator

"In Laos there are a lot of young people with no information or advice about drugs or hospitals or sexually transmitted diseases... the good health of our young is critical for the future of Laos"

LYU Counterpart

The relevance of this particular type of intervention might, however, be better ensured through improvements in information flow and improved capacity at a management level to co-ordinate program delivery. There is a sense that the process of identifying needs lacks clarity and the opportunities for young people themselves to contribute to the development of programs may be inadequate. The information flow between departments of the LYU and, furthermore, between this program and similar activities elsewhere in Laos requires further support.

4.5.4 Success

This program has produced some excellent results against the indicator set down in the project document. The training of LYU trainers has offered demonstrable progress in their awareness of issues pertaining to preventative health as well as their skills in adapting their work to include such content. The promotion of a peer education model has worked to promote youth dialogue on related topics and young people directly involved in training have demonstrated marked developments in their awareness and familiarity with the issues covered. Similar success is apparent against key elements of the UNV TOR, where programs and materials have been developed as planned and workshops or events have been held promoting both good health and awareness.

"Young people have become more aware... when people ask the right questions, you know they are understanding"

LYU Counterpart

"The two best things for me have been a lot more understanding of HIV/AIDS and drugs and also learning how to share the information"

LYU Health Trainer

4.5.5 Sustainability

The high skills transfer between UNV and LYU counterpart is an outstanding example of capacity building and is the strongest indicator of probable sustainability for this initiative. Both parties feel the knowledge base and technical skills now owned by the counterpart leave him in the position to confidently continue the key aspects of training developed during the UNV assignment. The tools developed to assist with program delivery are adequate for a sustained program well after the placement is complete. The LYU counterpart, furthermore, appears capable and driven to continue and expand the work he has begun under the tutelage of the UNV.

"He (the LYU Counterpart) is motivated and dedicated. He is learning to really plan. If the equipment remains available to him he will be able to run the training in HIV/AIDS"

UNV Health Educator

"I have learnt a lot. Not just the information but lesson plans, finding information, teaching strategies and working with young people... I feel able to continue... I have most of the skills required to do this job in the future."

LYU Counterpart

Questions do arise, however, over the sustainability of this project in the absence of the UNV and the accompanying project budget. There are fears that the small budget required to run the

training program will not be available and further fears that the resources put in place by the UNV will be lost or absorbed into other parts of the LYU community. Other concerns relate to the organisational capacity of the LYU to support a plan for health awareness training in the long term. Communication between departments on issues of health is poor and communication with other organisations is very poor. Record keeping mechanisms and other fundamental program tools are rudimentary or absent. There is also a sense that the concept of an ongoing strategy (including the training and peer education programs) lacks support by LYU management.

"The health program does not have much power in the LYU because no money is brought in via health. The real problem (with sustainability) is budget. No volunteer, no money. It's very difficult. There is not the money even to fund small activities"

LYU Counterpart

"Success (in sustainability) also depends on control over equipment. On it staying where it is."

UNV Health Educator

The final pressing issue regarding sustainability in the Health Education project involves what follow up is likely to be made available to health trainers from the provinces. Almost uniformly those interviewed from this category felt that, whilst they had benefited from the training and were consistently putting it into practice in some manner, the lack of follow up and resources meant they could do little to spread the word. This is beyond the scope of the UNV assignment and has links back to budget gaps and institutional support from the LYU. It seems necessary to follow through on the substantial work done with these LYU representatives or risk losing the progress achieved through the UNV placement.

"I always share what have learnt about HIV/AIDS, but to run training or hold sessions with young people costs money. It's also very hard to get young people together with no facilities. We need someone to get other organisations working with us. And we need materials with which to train young people"

"I want someone to follow up. To observe me and feed back on my methods"

LYU Health Educators

4.5.6 Strengths

The expertise and perseverance offered by the UNV in this project has been outstanding. Through continuing negotiation and often in the absence of institutional support, the UNV continued to strive for the goals laid down in the project document. Similarly, the commitment and interest on the part of the LYU counterpart is excellent and is perhaps the best example of this role across the entire LYU/UNV collaboration. As a result of this partnership the greatest strength can probably be seen as the skills transfer between these two parties.

The programmatic outcomes outlined in the success section were achieved in a very short space of time, particularly when given the Lao context and the slow processes in place for effecting new initiatives. The continuing work of the LYU counterpart during the UNV's maternity leave offers another noteworthy strength, and with it some strong evidence of capacity building. In general, the project was highly successful in meeting the indicators and expectations laid down in both project document and UNV TOR and is accordingly worthy of acclaim.

4.5.7 Challenges

The short nature of this assignment (twelve months) presented a challenge, particularly given the pace of program development in Lao PDR. The plans to develop and implement additional programs around reproductive health were unrealistic in the available time and were justifiably removed from the workplan. The brevity of the placement was particularly pressing given the organisational limitations identified by the UNV. There was no consistent understanding of what was expected or desirable from the LYU perspective, compounded by a resistance to sharing information and/or including the UNV in relevant activities. The UNV was left without a sense of where her work fitted in with LYU plans in the absence of clear definitions for youth program development. Co-ordination with other LYU health activities, other LYU administrative activities and other health programs outside the LYU proved very difficult and remains a substantial challenge.

Success in health awareness training requires the continuation of current project activities and the introduction of effective planning and follow up procedures. Introducing such steps, however, will require organisation-wide support. Institutional awareness and management capacity will be central to the ongoing success of this intervention. All parties interviewed identify a lack of funding as a potential constraint. Without adequate internal resourcing the substantial achievements of the UNV placement are likely to break down. Training equipment, travel costs, material costs and similar expenses appear unlikely to be met by the LYU budget allocations. This is particularly true of provincial health training activities, where LYU representatives have new skills and awareness yet no financial support to put them to use. As with other UNV projects within the LYU, protection of the resources put in place through the UNV placement is also a challenge critical to future success.

5. Volunteerism

The notion of volunteerism has been a significant consideration throughout this project and the evaluation has sought out specific reflections on this concept. It is apparent that volunteerism has found enhanced visibility as a result of the project and has, furthermore, demonstrated a noteworthy presence across all project streams. In seeking out further reflections on volunteerism in the evaluation participants were asked to consider two key questions:

1. *What are the advantages that the UN Volunteers contribute to the project that an international or national consultants/ staff could not bring?*
2. *How did UNVs in the project contribute to stimulating 'local volunteerism efforts'?*

There is consensus among UNV specialists and UNV Country Office staff that volunteers are well placed to undertake the work required in this project. Their typical willingness to work at the grass roots level, to focus on outcomes for participants rather than career or organisational outcomes and to really engage with communities rather than work around them are all seen as strengths. Motivations based on community goals and the reciprocity between what they hope to offer and what they hope to gain set volunteers apart from other international staff in a project of this nature.

"Volunteers often wish to work at a grass roots level rather than deal exclusively with management. They are happy to get their hands dirty and actually work with the target audience."

UNV Country Office

Stimulation of local volunteerism was consistently found in the promotion of skills sharing across all project programs. Students and LYU staff alike are encouraged to share their new skills in the workplace but also with family, friends and communities. Whilst not always recognised as voluntary work, it is in keeping with Lao tradition and cultural norms to share skills and energies with family and community groups. Reports suggest this form of volunteerism is commonplace and has been consistently enhanced by this project.

"I share the skills I learned with my family but also with people from the villages I represent. I do this all the time, (sharing) all I can recall."

Fisheries Student

An unexpected challenge identified by this evaluation was the inconsistent recognition offered to volunteers on the project. Several of those interviewed drew attention to the fact that 'volunteer' status is not highly regarded by LYU management. Volunteers felt they were not always consulted and their opinions were not always respected during their assignments. Although specialists and experts in their given fields this was apparently not clearly understood by LYU management.

" 'Experts' are seen having power and prestige. Volunteers are not. They are not included in decisions and not always respected."

"Volunteers often have a low status with the bosses. You are required to prove yourself more than someone with 'expert' status. There is a sometimes a sense that you are 'only a volunteer, you don't know much'."

UNV Specialists

6. Conclusions and Lessons Learned

6.1 Project Strengths

The quality and commitment of the UN Volunteers was consistently apparent throughout the evaluation. Their technical skills were uniformly strong and their willingness to persevere in a complex and often inhibiting organisational structure was exceptional. These reflections evidence strong recruitment processes and appropriate levels of professional support on the part of the UNV country office.

" The synergy of volunteers and training participants (was a strength). We were fortunate to have excellent volunteers."

UNV Country Office

The transfer of skills and delivery of quality training, both to LYU trainers and direct to young people, is a particular highlight of the project. The ability to engage and train young people from the target group was regularly demonstrated across most of the project streams. Young people affected by the various programs have seen substantial developments in their skills, technical awareness and abilities. Similarly, there are consistent examples of LYU trainers or teachers demonstrating excellent advances in their knowledge bases and their delivery techniques. It is in this immediate, deliverable sense that the project most clearly meets its goals.

"...after the training I have a better knowledge and understanding of the issues, but also how to explain to young people. It fits in well with my work. I share this with about 90% of the young people I see"

LYU Trainer, Pakse

"...the teaching is active, it's faster and more fun with the Volunteer"

English Student, Vientiane

Opportunities for diversifying outcomes and 'value-adding' to this project were sought out and met on several occasions during the project. Specific examples, such as the tailoring workshop and salesroom in Luang Prabang and the English Language Resource Centre in Vientiane, were outside the expectations of the project document yet offer some of the strongest contributions to the project goals. This strength, once again, is testament to the skills and awareness contributed by the volunteers and the flexibility granted by the UNV Country Office. Perhaps even more importantly, these developments are representative of a fluid, developmental relationship with the LYU.

It is well documented that in the Lao context, and particularly within the LYU, the pace at which change occurs is very slow and the opportunities for creating new programs are very limited. Given this, these accomplishments are all the more noteworthy.

"...other strengths include the diversification of project activities, such as opening the workshop in Luang Prabang, that were never in the project document"

"... and building some sort of working relationship with the LYU. Not many have been really able to do that."

UNV Country Office

The project also showed strength in meeting many of its pre-determined goals. It can be argued that the project made significant inroads into the empowerment, vocational training and informed health dialogue addressed in the overarching development objective of the project. Similarly, the

indicators identified for the various project streams were, or are being, met. This is especially true of the success or immediate 'impact' project activities are seen to have on young participants or LYU trainers. The project areas appear relevant for their target audience and remain popular both during and after the UNV placements. Indicators identified for the various project streams were, or are being, met.

A final noteworthy strength relates to volunteerism in Lao PDR, as identified in the volunteerism chapter of this report. Specifically, the motivations and expectations of volunteers are well suited to the goals of the LYU Project. The advanced skills brought to the project by UN volunteers are entirely appropriate and are well supported by the desire to actively participate at all levels of community and government. The promotion of volunteerism among Lao nationals is similarly strong, particularly where project participants have been encouraged to share their new found skills or knowledge outside of their workplace. In keeping with a strong cultural tradition of sharing expertise and contributing time and effort to the work of local communities, many of those affected by this project have spread their learnings well beyond their personal needs.

6.2 Project Challenges

The fundamental challenge facing the LYU Project is one of sustainability. This is common to development programs in Lao PDR and must be seen in the Lao context, where the capacity for organizational change and the commitment to long term planning is generally very low. Nonetheless, it is a consistent feature of this project that a focus on effecting lasting change has often been lost to the immediate concerns of program delivery. It is the contention of this evaluation that the sustainability focus needs to be rediscovered and that new strategies need to be developed to increase the likelihood of sustainability.

The organizational capacity of the LYU to address sustainability and forward planning has been limited. Record keeping, management mechanisms and platforms for decision making are not clear. Communication within and outside the organization has been unclear, limiting the opportunities for project participants to contribute to planning and limiting the scope for similar activities to work in collaboration. The LYU appears to require support with key elements of youth program development. This is particularly evident in the lack of clear processes for choosing program activities and equally pressing in the follow up support that is currently missing from program delivery. The future success of the various project streams will depend largely on the LYU meeting, and being supported to meet, advances in organizational development.

Linked to organizational challenges is the issue of project co-ordination and support. Given the limitations outlined above, effective co-ordination was clearly a challenge of the LYU Project. The evaluation found that project co-ordination was not adequately addressed during the life of the project, mainly due to the unrealistic expectation that the English language UNV would also perform the role of project coordinator. This was found to be unreasonable given the workload in the sector of ESL training and TOT. Similarly, the UNV program officer managed the project relationships very well however effective co-ordination is also beyond the scope of the program officer role. The lesson learned is that a project of these proportions with the LYU requires a dedicated co-ordinator to promote the support of LYU management, encourage communication and collaboration and maintain the focus on the goals of the project document.

The financial position of training programs at the LYU is another critical consideration in the sustainability of this project. The lack of adequate funding was repeatedly brought to the attention of this evaluation and is fundamental to the future of all project activities. Even in those circumstances where the skills transfer is high, capacity has been adequately built and management support appears in place, it seems likely that projects will run aground due to a lack of funding. The Lao Youth Union does not appear to be in a position to raise parallel donor funds for activities. While there appears to be ongoing donor support for infrastructure such as

buildings, the funding of activities and youth support is not clearly defined and appears ad hoc at best.

This apparent funding crisis may mean that projects do not continue in any form, let alone expand and develop beyond the involvement of UNV specialists. The project activities are not unduly expensive; the funding shortage simply appears too great. Finding and securing adequate resources to run programs will be an ongoing challenge for vocational and health training at the LYU.

"The budgets are too small to effectively run the projects without volunteers"

LYU Staff Member, Pakse

As identified earlier in the Volunteerism chapter of this report, volunteers have not always found adequate recognition for their skills and expertise when working with this project. Volunteers were not consistently included in decisions that affected them or their work, and in some instances felt undervalued by their colleagues at the LYU. It is therefore necessary to ensure that LYU management, at both national and local levels, be advised of the expertise on offer through volunteer placements and encouraged to promote planning and decision-making processes that acknowledge this.

A final noteworthy challenge is offering some protection for the skills and assets associated with the project. It has been the experience of several evaluation participants that equipment and resources provided by the UNV budget has not remained in place after completion of assignments. This is directly linked to the sustainability of program initiatives and the LYU management commitment to achieving project goals. Mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that UN sponsored resources targeted to specific program outcomes remain in place beyond the placement of UNV specialists. Similarly, where counterparts have been supported to learn skills and build capacity, these individuals become critical to the ongoing success of their program areas. The LYU needs to be encouraged and supported to nurture people in such positions and ensure skills are passed on before those individuals are lost to other occupations.

7. Evaluation Recommendations

It is the conclusion of this evaluation that the project should be brought to a close in line with the current expectations for the Health, English and Aquaculture streams. A number of specific suggestions are outlined below for effective closure of the remaining project streams. In addition to these particular platforms, some general evaluation findings offer suggestions on key steps to take between now and project closure. The evidence base for all recommendations is contained elsewhere in this report, however for clarity each suggestion is accompanied by a brief explanation.

The tendency for project activities to drift away from the priorities outlined in the TOR, particularly as they apply to capacity building, is a consistent evaluation finding. Whilst this may in part be addressed sector by sector, a co-ordinated response is also warranted. The UNV country office will be required to open an active dialogue with LYU management to ensure this issue is addressed. Similarly, the protection of assets and equipment bought through the UNV budget will require a project-wide focus in the remaining months. Finally, the role of counterparts will also require attention given the uncertainty identified regarding the LYU commitment to supporting this concept and supporting the individual counterparts concerned.

7.1 English Language Training

Given the consistent call for follow up to the highly successful provincial training for English Language Trainers, and the apparent lack of resources in these areas, it is recommended that;

- ***The EL UNV follow up on training in the provinces, including observation of work practices and contribution of additional teaching materials where possible***

Given the complexities of management training needs and the conflicting priorities of the English Language UNV, it is recommended that;

- ***The expectation of management training for LYU staff be removed from the workplan for the EL UNV***

Given the obvious strengths of the English Language Resource Centre (ELRC) and the apparent risk to its future support, it is recommended that;

- ***An agreement be negotiated between the LYU, the EL UNV and the UNV Country Office staff that seeks to protect the ELRC (including ELRC equipment and resources) during and beyond the UNV assignment***

Given the importance of the LYU counterpart to the sustainability of the English program beyond the UNV assignment, it is recommended that;

- ***There be a renewed focus on maximising the ELRC counterpart's capacity, supported by the negotiation of a commitment from the LYU to provide support and staffing beyond the UNV assignment***

7.2 Tailoring Training

This UNV tailoring assignment is complete, however to maximise the likely sustainability of the program in Luang Prabang it is recommended that;

- ***The UNV Country office seek to meet with national and local LYU management to promote a plan for continuing the training program***

Given the questions raised in this report regarding the recycling of tailoring workshop resources back into the business and training program, it is recommended that;

- ***The UNV Country Office seek to raise the issue of finance, including recycling of resources and the use of those resources that were accumulated by the completion of the UNV assignment, during discussions with LYU management***

7.3 Handicraft Training

The handicrafts training program is complete and no specific recommendations apply to this project.

7.4 Aquaculture Training

Given the apparent departure from key elements of the UNV TOR in the aquaculture program, it is recommended that:

- ***There be a renewed focus on the original expectations of this program, as listed in the UNV TOR, with a particular emphasis on providing training and developing the KM 14 site in Vientiane***

Given the time and costs associated with provincial training efforts, and with particular consideration for the original project plan and UNV TOR, it is recommended that:

- ***There be a reduced focus on preparatory visits and training programs in the provinces, in line with the UNV TOR***

Given the apparent age divide between the target group for this program and the training participants thus far, it is recommended that:

- ***Selection and recruitment strategies be reviewed to ensure youth participation***

Given the fears expressed over the safety of resources and equipment at the KM 14 site, and the similar fears about the use of income generated being reinvested in the program, it is recommended that:

- ***UNV Country Office staff, with support from UNDP Country Office staff, seek to negotiate a firm plan for the protection of UN sponsored facilities and the appropriate use of income generated as a result of the fisheries program***

Given the need to better link the aquaculture program with agriculture industries and the Lao fish trade, it is recommended that:

- ***The UNV be supported to build direct links on behalf of the LYU with relevant departments and industry groups, and that this be represented in the UNV workplan***

7.5 Health Education Training

Given the short period of time left in this project and the relative importance of counterpart preparedness, it is recommended that:

- ***There be a renewed focus on the transfer of skills and training materials to the LYU counterpart, and***
- ***There be a reduced focus the training of trainers or young people in short period available to UNV and Counterpart***

Given the questions raised during this evaluation about sustainability of the program in the absence of the UNV, it is recommended that:

- ***A planning process be arranged between LYU management, UNV Country Office staff, the UNV and the LYU Counterpart to devise and implement a model for the continuation of the health awareness program beyond the UNV assignment***

Given the consistent advice to this evaluation that the benefits of the provincial trainer training would be greatly bolstered by provision of teaching materials, it is recommended that:

- ***Where money and time allow, basic health training aids (such as booklets, leaflets, posters or pictorial tools) be developed and distributed to provincial LYU offices to assist with the delivery of health awareness advice to young people across Laos***

7.6 Completion of Phase Two

Given the consistent questions raised during this evaluation regarding LYU commitment to counterpart preparedness and program sustainability beyond UNV placements, it is recommended that:

- ***Regular, formalised and documented meetings be established between LYU management and UNV/UNDP Country Office staff to refresh the focus on the objectives of the project, the specific expectations of UNV TOR and the steps necessary to maximise capacity development and skills transfer***

Given the apparent likelihood of UN sponsored resources and equipment being lost to their specific program areas, it is recommended that:

- ***Resources, equipment and facilities attached to UNV project areas be documented and an agreement be negotiated with LYU management that ensures they are protected during and beyond UNV assignments***

As an additional mechanism to promote sustainability and celebrate the successes of the project, it is recommended that:

- ***LYU Management and the UNV Country Office organise a public event which demonstrates the strengths and successes of UNV involvement whilst also offering specific detail about the manner in which the LYU will work to continue the projects.***

8. Future Directions

It is the conclusion of this evaluation that a new relationship between the LYU and UNV is warranted. The success of the project in reaching so many of its primary goals offers evidence supporting such a step. Furthermore, the quality and appropriateness of volunteers placed in the current project suggests UNV will be well placed to support a new partnership. The incremental developments in a working relationship between UNV and the LYU are also substantial, particularly given the historical pace of such achievements in the Lao context.

The growing population of Lao youth remains particularly exposed to poverty, unemployment, drug abuse and criminal behaviour. Health awareness also remains a pressing issue. Access to youth learning opportunities that support positive vocational and health outcomes will remain of critical importance to Lao PDR over coming years. The Lao Youth Union is likely to play a central role in delivering such opportunities and will benefit greatly from the expertise and support available through a partnership with UNV. On these grounds, and given the partnerships already in place, a new relationship seems entirely appropriate.

Lessons learned in this evaluation offer certain fundamental priorities that would set a new relationship apart from the current project, even where eventual program delivery may be similar. The recommendations to follow seek to identify some fundamental premises on which this new relationship should be based. A renewed focus on holistic youth program development will be necessary, as will closer co-operation with management expertise and planning processes. The funding crisis for program delivery must be addressed through a mechanism other than UNV resources, and as part of a new awareness regarding funding procedures and accountability. Project co-ordination will become the foundation on which a new partnership is based, and will require assurances of support and access to LYU management. Finally, adequate internal and external communication procedures must be seen as a pre-cursor to the success of any new relationship, and be accordingly given priority in the development of a project plan.

In the event of a new partnership between UNV and the LYU the specific training streams are likely to be linked to activities in the current project and some specific suggestions are available in the final chapter of this report. These and other such programs will be dependent, however, on a LYU commitment to supporting project co-ordination mechanisms and implementing a transparent process for choosing and planning training areas.

8.1 Recommendations for a Future Partnership

Given the successes of the project and the gradual development of an effective working partnership between the LYU and UNV, it is recommended that:

- ***A new partnership program be developed between LYU and UNV that is independent of the current project yet seeks to build upon the outcomes and learnings offered in this evaluation***

Given the need for a project proposal that is carefully planned and is owned mutually by the LYU and UNV, it is recommended that:

- ***Resources be sought for the development of a project proposal/ project document that includes key responsibilities and has a clear grounding in shared development goals***

Given the relative absence of youth program development principles and management expertise in the current project, it is recommended that:

- ***The initial focus of any new partnership between LYU and UNV be moved from program delivery to organisational capacity, specifically:***
 - *Management Expertise and Planning Procedures, including effective internal and cross-sectoral collaboration*
 - *Youth Program Development, including recruitment processes, transition support for young people and destination tracking*
 - *Co-ordination of program delivery, including the creation of an active and representative steering committee governed by the project document goals*

Given the funding crisis limiting the sustainability of vocational and health initiatives across the LYU, it is recommended that:

- ***The new relationship between the LYU and UNV include provision of fundraising expertise, perhaps in the form of a specialist UNV, including donor targeting, submission writing and funding accountability***

Should the organisational supports be successfully negotiated and put in place, a number of new training streams may be considered however it is recommended that:

- ***Specific choices for training programs be developed through consultation with LYU staff and young people with a demonstrable evidence base and a transparent process of selection***

In the event of a new project being established, the evidence of this evaluation suggests certain advice regarding program delivery areas, including:

- ***That any and all vocational training activities be linked to the youth development framework, including careers advice, transition support and business skills training***
- ***That HIV/AIDS and health awareness training remains particularly pressing for young people in Laos, particularly in isolated areas, and that the strengths of the current program should be built upon with a focus on rural and regional centres***
- ***That it may be appropriate to extend activities in English, Tailoring and Aquaculture into other provincial areas, however this should be based upon ongoing LYU support for:***

- § **The English Language Resource Centre, Vientiane**
- § **The Tailoring Workshop and Salesroom, Luang Prabang**
- § **The Aquaculture Facilities at KM 14, Vientiane**

Appendix One: List of Participants

This evaluation would not have been possible without a substantial commitment of time and energy from a number of people. In particular, Ms Joanna Shaw and Mr Stuart Moran at the UNV Country Office in Vientiane are to be thanked for their invaluable contribution. A further acknowledgement is extended to Mr Jack Cortenraad (SNV) and Ms Ingrid Baken for their assistance with developing the evaluation methodology. The following is a list of all those who participated in evaluation interviews, and to whom the evaluation consultant owes many thanks.

UNVs

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UNV Country Office

Ms Joanna Shaw

Mr Stuart Moran

In addition, acknowledgement is extended to the fourteen students who participated in the evaluation interviews. Of the fourteen, seven were male and seven female. They ranged in age from 17 to 55 years, with the majority aged approximately 20 years. Those that were interviewed had been involved in English, Aquaculture, Handicrafts and Tailoring training programs. Students interviewed from the Health Awareness Training were also LYU representatives and are listed as LYU staff above.