

Eye project to give Khammuan children a clearer future

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The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has agreed to provide funding of about 2.4 billion kip (US\$290,000) through the Academy for Education Development to provide healthcare for children in rural areas of Khammuan province.

The Ministry of Education and the NGO International Relief and Development (IRD) yesterday agreed to implement the Better Vision for Better Life Project.

A memorandum of understanding was signed by Preschool and Primary School Education Department Director General, Mr Chaleun Souvong, and IRD Country Director, Mr Todd Bruce, in Vientiane, and witnessed by Commercial Officer at the United States of America's Embassy to Laos, Mr Franc Sheton.

The project will focus on Nhommalath, Bualapha and Mahaxay districts, and run until January 2011.

The project aims to raise awareness of eye health and strengthen the capacity of teachers and healthcare providers to identify and treat eye health conditions.

The project will work closely with provincial education and health departments to screen 23,000 children under the age of 14

for eye conditions, and provide eye health training clinics for health staff, primary school teachers and village health workers, said Mr Bruce.

He said the project will also promote eye health awareness and provide equipment and materials required for testing, treating and correcting eye conditions. The National Ophthalmology Centre in Vientiane is also providing training and support for the project.

"We look forward to close cooperation in the implementation of this project with the Ministry of Education and other partners, and know that children identified and treated for vision difficulties will be able to realise improved quality of life and

development," said Mr Bruce.

IRD helped to implement the Save Educational Opportunity Project from 2007-09 in the same districts where this latest project is being carried out, said Mr Chaleun.

That project involved providing daily snacks and educational supplies for primary school children, improving school facilities and school health awareness, and training teachers.

IRD is currently implementing the Promotion of Education Through School Feeding project in the same three target districts.

In the period March 2007 to April 2011, IRD will have provided support to Laos worth a total of US\$3.9 million.



Mr Chaleun Souvong (left) shakes hands with Mr Todd Bruce after the signing ceremony in Vientiane yesterday.