



China - Yunnan



Ties between Yunnan Province and Laos: A model of win-win development

Zhang Ruogu

In December, when north China is already a world of ice and snow, it is still as warm as spring in Yunnan Province's Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, where the construction of the China-Laos Mohan-Boten Economic Cooperation Zone is in full swing.

On the road from the prefectural capital city of Jinghong to Mohan port, heavy-duty construction machinery often causes traffic congestion. The 1,750-kilometre road will complete its high-grade transformation in three years.

As the second cross-border economic cooperation zone established between China and a neighbouring country—as well as the first-ever cross-border economic cooperation zone in Yunnan Province—the Mohan-Boten Economic Cooperation Zone is attracting more and more far-sighted investors.

The year 2015 marks the first year of implementation of the Mohan-Boten Economic Cooperation Zone. The zone is emblematic of a new era of friendly exchanges between China and Laos. On December 1, Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Central



Mohan Port becomes busier since the Houayxai Bridge was opened to traffic in 2013. Photo by Xu Yan

Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Chinese President, wrote a letter to Choummaly Sayasone, Secretary General of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) and Lao President, saying that the relations between the two parties and two countries have entered the best period in history.

Today, China has become the largest source of foreign investment and the second largest trading partner for Laos. Chinese-funded companies and Chinese people are engaged in various cooperation projects all over Laos. In the future, as proposed by President Xi Jinping, China is willing to further develop its strategic partnership with Laos on the principles

of “enjoying long-term stability, cherishing good-neighbourliness, trusting each other and conducting all-round cooperation”.

As the only Chinese province bordering Laos, Yunnan has derived great confidence from the broad prospects offered by the China-Laos cooperation and is proactively participating in the construction of the Mohan-Boten Economic Cooperation Zone. As Deputy Mayor of Mengla County Wang Zhiping said, “There are many issues and difficulties, but time and opportunity wait for no man. We must turn the Mohan-Boten Economic Cooperation Zone into a hotbed for development and opening-up.”

Yunnan Province and Laos are linked by mountains and rivers. In particular, the Kunming-Bangkok Highway runs through Laos to connect with the road network in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. Such interconnection has brought great benefits to the cooperation between China and Laos as well as between China and all ASEAN countries. As good neighbours, good friends and good partners, Yunnan Province and Laos have jointly set up an example of harmonious and win-win development in the Lancang-Mekong river basin.

At present, Laos is the largest investment destination for Yunnan, accounting for 33.9 percent of the province's total actual outbound investment. Yunnan's investment in Laos mainly involves agricultural cooperation and hospitality and catering industries. In addition, Laos is one of Yunnan's major foreign economic cooperation markets. A series of construction projects have improved the infrastructure and investment environment in Laos, laying the foundation for sustainable development in many areas of the country.



Langcang-Mekong River in Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture Photo by Wangchao

YCEGC performs well in Laos

The Yunnan Construction and Engineering Group Company (YCEGC) plays an active role in infrastructure construction in Laos. Up to now, it runs projects related to economic planning, people's livelihood, building materials in Laos. Here are three of the projects it runs in the country:

120,000 m³

Dongmakkhai Waterworks lies ten kilometres to the north of Vientiane. Upon completion, it will have a supply capacity of 120,000 m³ and will relieve water shortage in Vientiane, as well as in the economic development zone around the capital.

33,920 m²

Adjacent to the west of Mekong River, the ASEM Hotel is a five-star hotel with more than 200 rooms, which offers national level reception in meeting, catering, and amusement. It has a building area of 33,920 m².

240 million USD

Xaysettha Development Zone is 17 kilometres northeast of Vientiane. It covers a planned area of ten square kilometres. By the end of 2014, ten companies had set up branches in the Zone, with a total investment of US\$240 million.



China - Yunnan



COOPERATION

Agricultural cooperation: Cultivating the land of hope

Luo Rongchan

The Lao People's Democratic Republic, known as "the roof of Southeast Asia", borders China, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar. Mountains and plateaus account for 80 percent of its territory, and agriculture holds an important position.

Yunnan, a close neighbour of Laos, boasts rich agricultural resources. Yunnan's diverse agricultural products have been recognised as safe, high-quality and eco-friendly. From January to September 2015, the province's agricultural exports amounted to US\$2.4 billion, a year-on-year increase of 26.3 percent. This year's annual agricultural exports are expected to exceed US\$3 billion.

Both Laos and Yunnan have special affection and demand for agriculture. They have been working together



Lao businessmen are investigating pepper planting base in Mohan, Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture. Photo by Su Ying

constantly, cultivating a land of hope and sowing the seeds for the happy lives of the two peoples.

Yunnan and Laos are constantly enhancing cooperation in the promotion of agricultural technology, applied technology and

new varieties. The two sides have promoted new hybrid rice varieties and new technologies in Laos, provided practical agricultural technology training for agricultural research personnel in northern Laos and jointly

established cross-border animal disease monitor stations. In addition to long-term cooperation and exchanges in other areas, Yunnan also helps Laos train its officials and draw up plans.

Today, in the provinces

of Luang Namtha and Bokeo, large rice-growing bases, rubber forests and teak forests invested in by Yunnan enterprises can be seen along the Kunming-Bangkok Highway. In northern Laos, Chinese enterprises bring seeds and technology to villagers and teach them to develop agricultural production. According to local statistics, such assistance has helped local Lao farmers increase their income by 2,000 yuan per household. In addition, the substitution planting projects carried out by Yunnan have helped northern Laos promote economic development; reinforce the country's industrial base and increase tax revenues and employment. They have won the approval and recognition of the Lao central government, local government and people, producing good political, economic and social effects.

INVESTMENT

Jinrui Seed "bears fruit" in Laos

Wu Ping

In order to ensure food security and nutrition for human beings, he has been researching rice breeding with great perseverance for more than 40 years. Not just so, he also came to Laos from Yunnan. Today, the new hybrid rice varieties he has bred are growing well in the fields of Lao farmers. He is Lu Yixuan, Chairman of Yunnan Jinrui Seed Industrial Company (Jinrui Seed).

Jinrui Seed is an enterprise designated by the Yunnan Provincial Department of Commerce for opium poppy substitution planting outside China. It plants the hybrids at different altitudes for shuttle breeding, screening and evaluating, and finally promotes to South and Southeast Asian countries the new varieties suitable to be grown in local areas.

"On the one hand, Yunnan's seeds and technologies are what Laos needs. On the other hand, Laos's fertile farmland, low labour costs and tropical weather are complementary to our rice varieties and technologies. The cooperation will bring the Lao people more grain resources and greater food security," said Lu Yixuan.

In 2009, Jinrui Seed began to cooperate with Laos in agricultural technologies. After six years of efforts, Jinrui Seed, the Agricultural Bureau of Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture and agricultural authorities in Oudomxay Province jointly set up an agricultural breeding station in Oudomxay Province of Laos. This year, Jinrui Seed has promoted red rice, purple rice and soft grain indica rice in Oudomxay Province and Xayaboury Province of Laos, which are showing high yields and good adaptability.

Since 2009, according to statistics, Jinrui Seed has promoted hybrid rice in Luang Prabang Province and Oudomxay Province, with a total planting area of 45,000 mu.

FRIENDSHIP

"Old Coffee" and "Sabaidee": Two brands of one coffee product

Chu Donghua & Yang Hongchuan

"Sabaidee" means "hello" in Lao. However, in the coffee industry, it is also a brand name. It is a coffee brand newly launched by Yunnan Changshengda Investment Company (Yunnan Changshengda). "We have another brand called 'Old Coffee'," said Yin Xinhua, chairman of the company.

"Old Coffee" is registered in and targets the Chinese market, while "Sabaidee" is registered in Laos and aims to become an international high-end brand. Ma Chun, Chief Marketing Officer of Yunnan Changshengda said, "The dual-brand operation in China and Laos can not only win market recognition but also satisfy the demand for the product origin and quality of different consumers. This practice has an international touch with some ecological

implications. In addition, it is also in line with the current consumption concept."

Five years ago, Yunnan Changshengda began to invest in Laos. With the expansion and deepening of business, the company found that much of the land in Laos was suitable for coffee planting, the cost of land was low and the supply of low-cost labour is abundant. In 2011, the company incorporated Yunnan (Laos) Changshengda Coffee Company and signed a cooperation agreement with the Lao government.

In 2013, the company launched its first coffee brand "Old Coffee". The coffee is so aromatic that it soon conquered the taste buds of numerous consumers. In addition, through online marketing, the "Old Coffee" brand has been further promoted and recognised.

The Lao National Commission for Drug Control and Supervision has specially requested that "Sabaidee" coffee be marked as a substitution planting product on the package, and be used as a gift for government departments, in a bid to demonstrate to the world an achievement of opium poppy substitution planting. Through the expanding international marketing network, the "Sabai Dee" coffee will be spread all over the world as the achievement of Yunnan-Laos cooperation.



YUNNAN-FEATURED AGRICULTURE



The Yunnan Agricultural Big-Data Centre (YABDC) aims to promote the development of Yunnan-featured agriculture via internet. Since its establishment, YABDC has improved competitiveness of Yunnan-featured produce in the market.

YABDC endeavors to better market the Yunnan-featured farm produce including tea, flower, TCM, coffee, mushroom, wine,

and chicken. In addition, the Centre promotes innovation, restructuring, and rapid development of Yunnan agriculture. And to ensure safe and green produces sold online, the Centre will build a platform where produce are traceable.

The photo above is a newly-innovated product, a blend of tea and flower by Yunnan e-businessmen.

Photo by Yang Zheng



PEOPLE STORY

Tom, An excellent Chinese learner from Laos

Zhu Hai

"The southern hemisphere and the northern hemisphere have exactly opposite seasons. When it is spring and flowers are blooming everywhere in the northern hemisphere, the southern hemisphere is already..." In the classroom, a lean young man reads text to the class. His Chinese pronunciation was so good that you would never expect he was a foreign student. He is Tom, a 20-year-old who is from Laos and came to Kunming to learn Chinese last September.

"I will sit the HSK Level 4 test next June and I am preparing for it. Time is tight and my study schedule is packed," said Tom. He is studying Chinese language and literature at Yunnan University on a four-year programme. "Chinese writing is a bit difficult," Tom murmured.

Every class when his teacher wrote Chinese words on the blackboard, Tom immediately copied them into his notebook, marked them with pinyin (a system of Romanisation for the Chinese language) and noted their meanings in Lao at the side. "You must be attentive in class, or you will easily miss important things," he explained. In his spare time, he watches Chinese movies, listens to Chinese songs and reads Chinese novels to enlarge his vocabulary.

"The university is very considerate to international students. It provides us with a good learning and living environment." With his excellent academic performance, Tom received a scholarship this year.

"I am from the beautiful tourist city of Luang Prabang. Today, a lot of Chinese people travel there, so I want to learn Chinese to help my hometown develop its tourism industry." When the interview was over, Tom put his palms together and bowed politely to bid me farewell. "Xiexie! Zaijian!" (Thank you! Goodbye!)

COOPERATION



Nowadays, the number of Lao students studying in Yunnan is increasing. Photo by Dai Zhenhua

Educational cooperation brings hearts closer

Xiong Yan

With increasingly frequent economic and trade exchanges between China and Laos, more and more Lao people are learning Chinese.

In Laos, many parents send their children to Chinese schools so they can begin to learn Chinese from an early age. Many others choose to learn

Chinese in Yunnan. Currently, higher learning institutions in Yunnan Province have become the main destinations for Lao students who hope to study, research and improve their education in China.

In 2009, the Yunnan Provincial Department of Education and Laos signed an agreement on educational cooperation that

has remarkably facilitated bilateral cooperation. In 2012, the Department of Education held the China (Yunnan)-Laos Educational Cooperation Promotion in Vientiane, in a bid to enhance educational cooperation with Laos by increasing exchanges of students, strengthening cooperation in medical education and promoting agricultural

education. With support from both sides, thousands of Lao students are studying in Yunnan at present.

Education exchanges have brought the hearts of two peoples from Yunnan and Laos closer. The beautiful friendship is cherished by not only teachers and students, but also people from other walks of life.

EXCHANGE

Lao students seek further studies in Xishuangbanna

Dai Zhenhua

On October 20, the opening ceremony of a Xishuangbanna class for Lao students was held at Xishuangbanna Vocational and Technical College. In collaboration with Kunming University of Science and Technology, Xishuangbanna Vocational and Technical College began to provide education for Lao undergraduates.

When Xishuangbanna Vocational and Technical College began to recruit Lao students in October 2004, Zhao Jiang, a bilingual teacher who has been teaching foreign students for 20 years, became the person in charge of educating Lao students in Xishuangbanna. Over the past 11 years, he has kept a busy schedule, travelling to northern Laos and other Lao provinces, receiving visiting Lao

508 Lao & 156 Chinese students

Over 11 years, Xishuangbanna Vocational and Technical College trained up to 508 Lao students and sent 156 students to learn the Lao language at the National University of Laos.



Lao students in Pu'er University are learning Chinese calligraphy. Photo by Shen Hao

educational officials and school principals, and handling all sorts of issues related to the Lao students.

Over 11 years, Xishuangbanna Vocational

and Technical College trained up to 508 Lao students and sent 156 people to learn the Lao language at the country's National University. The College has signed

educational cooperation agreements or memoranda with the National University in Vientiane, Souphanouvong University in Luang Prabang and Luang Namtha Teacher Training College. In addition, it has signed educational cooperation memoranda with the departments of education of six Lao provinces, establishing a long-term cooperation mechanism.

Moreover, with the deepening and expanding of China-Laos exchanges and cooperation, Mengla County of Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture signed an agreement with Laos in August 2001, according to which both parties agreed to set up a special class for Lao students. Since the enrolment of the first batch of Lao students in September 2001, the class has trained an increasing number of students.

PEOPLE STORY

Young Mani: Falling in love with Pu'er

With increasingly frequent trade and cultural exchanges between China and Laos, the Lao students studying in China expect great prospects after graduation. Their favourite majors at university include Chinese, computer, biology and landscaping.

Shen Hao

Yang Mani is from Phongsaly Province. She is a freshman at Pu'er College in Yunnan, where she studies Chinese and makes Chinese friends. In her words, she has "gradually fallen in love with Pu'er."

Currently, there are 165 Lao students studying at Pu'er College. In addition to 74 job-directed students studying at state expense like Yang Mani, most of them are studying at their own expense.

Yang Mani came to study as an international student before she was 18 years old. Now she speaks fluent Mandarin and can even understand the Yunnan dialect. During her three years of high school in Laos, she had one Chinese lesson every Monday. After that, she came to Pu'er College and has attended preparatory language class for a year. Laos and Pu'er are linked by mountains and rivers and have similar cultures and customs, so she has quickly become accustomed to the climate and life in Pu'er.

For students from Laos, Pu'er College mainly adopts a "1+4" training model. That is to say, they spend the first year learning Chinese, and after passing the Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK), they can choose an undergraduate programme and study it for four years.

With its geographical advantages, Pu'er College is going farther and farther in its provision of international education. Now 60 Lao students are recruited every year.



China - Yunnan



They hold deep affection for Laos

The national boundaries have never become family boundaries here. Today, with the increasing China-Laos cooperation, the fate of the two peoples is more and more intertwined. Their lives are changing and their hearts are closer.

Xishuangbanna and Luang Namtha: Conducting medical cooperation

Luo Rongchan

This year, eight officials from Luang Namtha Provincial Health Department in Laos came to Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture People's Hospital in two batches of exchanges and study, one month at a time. Twelve Chinese officials also went to Luang Namtha Provincial Hospital in two batches of exchanges and study. The Chinese side not only donated 19 sets of medical equipment but also offered to help the hospital with maintenance of the equipment. During the cooperation, Xishuangbanna People's Hospital collaborated with medical personnel in Luang Namtha Province in treating 19 cases through a telemedicine

system.

So far, in cooperation with five provinces in northern Laos, Yunnan Province has selected the Luang Namtha Provincial Health Department as the China-Laos Cross-Border Disease Prevention and Control Coordination Centre, to further strengthen the normalisation of cross-border disease prevention and control. The two sides have established and improved coordination mechanisms regarding AIDS, malaria, hemorrhagic fever and plague. The Chinese side has sent medical personnel to border provinces of Laos, training medical workers for China-Laos border areas and exchanging experience in prevention, control and treatment of the above-

"Southern Power Grid People": Light-bringers

Luo Rongchan

On November 29, the launching ceremony of the 230 Kilovolt Northern Laos Power Grid Project jointly constructed by China and Laos was held in Luang Prabang. This is the first power grid cooperation project as part of the Belt and Road Initiative and attracted worldwide attention. Cao Zhi'an, General Manager of China Southern Power Grid Company witnessed the historic moment in Luang Prabang.

On that day, Lao National Power Corporation and China Southern Power Grid (Yunnan International) also signed a general contracting framework agreement for the 500 kilovolt Namou-Muang Houn power transmission project.

Cao Zhi'an said at the launching ceremony: "China Southern Power Grid and Lao National Power Corporation have maintained close exchanges and cooperation as strategic partners. Since 2009,

the power transmitted to Laos by China Southern Power Grid has registered an annual growth rate of 38 percent. As of late October 2015, 892 million kwh of power has been transmitted cumulatively, providing strong support for the rapid socioeconomic development and the steady improvement of people's living standards in northern Laos."

It is Laos's national economic development strategy to "make the country rich by developing hydropower." According to ADB estimates, the Mekong flowing through Laos has a power reserve of about 18,000 megawatts, but the utilisation rate is less than four percent. Today, more than 100 remote mountainous districts and 14 percent of households in Laos still do not have access to electric power, leaving great room for the development of electric power.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The year 2015 marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. For the people of Laos, this is an unusual year. Likewise, China's Yunnan is also paying special attention to its southern neighbour.

In fact, this is a friendship passed from generation to generation, just like the water continuously flowing in the Lancang-Mekong River. As 2015 is coming to an end, please follow us into Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture. You will learn about what happened in the prefecture. You will also get to know two Yunnan people and listen to their experiences with Laos. Let's commemorate 2015 with these stories.



Passenger bus from Kunming to Houayxai
Photo by Lei Tongsu



Workers from Yunnan Power Grid Company
Photo by Zhang Qiang



Border Fair Photo by Dai Zhenhua



Lao visitors arrive at Jinghong Airport. Photo by Dai Zhenhua

Wei Chunquan:

Planting trees of friendship

Zhang Ruogu

After the rainy season this year, the palm tree in front of Wei Chunqian's house has grown taller again.

Wei Chunquan lives in Pu'er City, Yunnan near the China-Laos border. In 1992, when the China-Laos border was demarcated, he planted a small tree in front of his house.

Wei is from the Hani ethnic group and is very proud that he participated in the demarcation of the China-Laos border. In the 20 years following demarcation, He often came back to this section of the border and is now familiar with every blade of grass and every tree.

Along the 710-kilometre China-Laos border, the relationship between the two countries is reflected in every ordinary person. Wei Chunquan is a representative of them.

Deep in the jungle, Chinese and Lao villages are closely connected. People speak the same language, help each other and marry their children regardless of nationality. During the harvest season every year, the Lao villagers transport sugar cane, rubber and other farm produce to China for processing. During holidays or when there are weddings,

the Chinese and Lao villagers cross the border to visit their relatives.

The national boundaries have never become family boundaries here. Today, with the increasing China-Laos cooperation, the fate of the two peoples is more and more intertwined. Their lives are changing and their hearts are closer.

Such changes are written on the face of every participant in Yunnan-Laos cooperation, recorded in the heart of every individual coming to fairs in the China-Laos border area, and reflected in the dream of every Lao student studying in universities in Yunnan and hoping to help build their motherland in the future.

Wei Chunquan's house sits on the hillside not far from the Lancang-Mekong River. The palm tree that he planted in 1992 has grown into a giant tree more than 20 metres tall. In 2011, when the first joint inspection of the China-Laos border was conducted, he again planted a row of trees in front of his house to commemorate his participation in this event as a family honour.

As these trees grow year by year, so does the China-Laos and Yunnan-Laos brotherhood.