

Good Design: Mekong Design Selection
~Travel to Lao P.D.R.~

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For the *Mekong Design Selection* project, I was one of the selected designers for an opportunity to collaborate with an awarded company. My counter partner company is Houey Hong Vocational Training Centre for Women which is located in the village of Houey Hong, 8 km northwest of Vientiane city.

The mission is to produce a brand product using *paper textile* that is made by the artisans of Houey Hong.

The Houey Hong Vocational Training Centre for Women (Houey Hong) was established in 1998 with the mission to help women and the disabled with training and employment in various skills of traditional dyes and weaving techniques. There are two main training courses, one is the small business administration course (long term) and the other is technical skills course (short term), with the following traditional disciplines in natural dyes, weaving, and tailoring. There is a special designated gallery and shop area for the trainees of the small business administration course to sell their products.

The production of paper textile in Laos began around 10 years ago in a town called Vang Vieng. It was under a Japanese support project with the partnership of the Agriculture and Forestry Training Center that the technique of paper making was passed on to the local farmers of the town.

The *posa paper* is traditionally made in several locations in Laos. Posa papers are mainly used in traditional occasions of festivities, but are now largely produced for souvenir purposes. In general, posa papers are unsuitable to be used as paper textile.

At Houey Hong, they produce very high quality paper textile that was adapted from Japan. They create paper yarn using the posa paper produced in Vang Vieng by altering it to make it suitable as paper textile. In my visit, I was unable to research on the manufacturing process of posa. However, on my next trip, I would like to research on this important source of paper textile in order to produce a brand and product.

Both parties agreed that the theme of this collaboration project will be based on the idea of “using the paper textile that is currently being made for the production of *obi* (sash) into a new brand product that appeals to the material”.

I am grateful and joyous to be able to join this collaboration project and look forward to the challenge of successfully produce a brand using Laos paper textile.

For the original report in Japanese with pictures, please view this link:

http://www.asean.or.jp/ja/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Lao-P.D.R.-Report_Mr.-Idebuchi1.pdf