

Graduate working with public sector

A Woman organising vegetable supply for the Military Service

8 % of all graduates from the two first batches - have found work as agriculture and livestock staff with the Military Service. Ms Souk from Ban SamNaeg in Phoukoun District, Luang Prabang Province is the only female among them. She is 23 years old and graduated in 2014 in the major of Agronomy. She comes from a family with 4 children. Her father is Khamu and also working for the Military Service and her Hmong mother is running a small family farm.

Due to her fathers' good connection, she could join the Military Service in Phoukoun district, immediately after finishing the higher secondary school. Realising that her professional carrier will be very limited, if she does not have any professional education, she decided to apply at NAFC on her own funding.

Ms Souk gained a lot of useful knowledge and skills during her studies. Very special for her was the participation in the colleges' environment group (3S). She appreciated the good cooperation in the team, the learning on waste management and environment protection and was happy to contribute to the cleanness and "green-ness" in the college.

Furthermore she valued the teaching methodology at NAFC, especially the focus on practical learning and the direct and straightforward way of explaining the content by her teachers.

As she is very sportive, she also appreciated the sport activities offered, especially the sport competitions organized with other educational organisations.

Computer is quite important for her present job and she finds that the opportunities to practice computer skills were too little. She wished she had more time for individual practice and access to a computer throughout the whole study time.

Due to her fathers support Ms Souk found a place for the practical term at DAFO in Houn District, Oudomxay province. There, she was



based in a kumban service centre. She was conducting a research on Lychee production and gained valuable practical experiences. She would have liked to continue working there after her graduation, but the DAFO preferred to employ staff from their own province.

She is now back at the Military Service and is responsible for a vegetable and fruit garden. Beside this she was allowed to establish a private vegetable garden on the Army's compound to generate some additional income for herself. As a soldier she is also required to perform basic military duties.

In general she is very happy with her work and receives a decent salary of 1.141.000 Kip per month. The Army also provides free accommodation, food and cloth. Out of 159 soldiers based in this station, there are only 5 women, including 2 not yet married. Even still young and not married, she feels very comfortable in the team and is treated with high respect.

However on the long-term run she would like to join a full agriculture position, preferably with the government services. She would like to concentrate fully on agricultural work only. As the positions with the military and the positions with the government are on different planning and strategic levels – it is not possible to switch to a PAFO or DAFO. She would need to go through the common government procedures from the beginning.

Interview by Andrea Schroeter