

## Graduate working abroad

### New experiences in a foreign country and its challenges

A livestock graduate of the first batch in 2013, Mr Phinthong originates from the remote Tomlan village in Boten district, Sayaboury province. Both parents complete primary education and work as farmers.

He is presently supporting his parents on their farm, but is considering this as interim after his experience in Israel and is waiting for the entrance exam for a permanent government job.

He conducted his practical term at NAFC at the cattle and buffalo farm, because he knew that the responsible teacher could provide a good coaching and backing to him.

During the time of graduation and preparation for a job assignment, he was informed by the previous year graduates on the opportunity to go to Israel for a work-cum-study assignment of 11 months. He liked the feedback he got and thought it will be a good opportunity for gaining experience – especially as he had not yet gained any practical experience outside the college and his parents' farm.

Together with 10 other graduates from NAFC, he worked at a private orange farm for 4 days a week. 1 day per week he received theoretical training from teachers of Agro-studies University.

Retrospective – similar to his Lao colleagues – he appreciated the experiences and opportunity to work abroad for the following reasons:

- To gain a work experience in a foreign country and environment
- To experience a high-level technology
- To work along an agreed time-schedule
- To combine work & upgrading knowledge
- To have the opportunity to visit other working places
- To get a decent salary (net 1.500 \$)
- To gain additional and new knowledge
- To receive additional technical and practical training for 1 day in the week.



But there were also some negative issues, he realised. Those were:

- The graduates were posted on farms which did not match with their technical background (e.g. livestock graduates on orange farm)
- The graduates were not properly informed on the political situation and the possible consequences.
- Security was not assured (the country in a critical conflict situation did not provide any information on special security to the graduates)
- No Lao Embassy or representing Embassy is present in Israel, thus nobody was responsible in emergency situations.
- He was based in a living environment with Lao people, thus the exchange with other cultures was very limited
- Also the improvement on English language skills was very limited due to the same reason
- Some of the employers cut the salary without any reason (don't know why)
- High expenses for accommodation (500\$/month), food and travel occurred, thus the actual savings remained between 2.000\$ and 5.000\$ for the whole 11 months.

If he gets the chance, he would like to gain additional work experience in another foreign country, but would prefer to go to Thailand or Vietnam where the learning and technology is applicable to the Lao context.

*Interview by Andrea Schroeter*