

# saoban

VILLAGE HANDCRAFTS FROM  
THE HEART OF LAOS



## **Ms Bonethong Weaver of Amon Village, Vientiane**



**Like many other girls of Subsai Village of Xieng Kho District of Houa Phan Province in northern Laos, Ms Bonethong first learned the art of weaving from her mother at the tender age of 10. “My mother first taught me plain weaving using hands-spun cotton yarn and then later taught me how to weave head scarves and skirt borders with simple designs using a mixture of cotton and silk. Most of what we weave was for our own household use, but sometimes, my mother made skirt borders for sale to earn a little money for household expenditure”, explained Bonethong, now aged 40.**

**Married at eighteen to a man called Subin from the same village, Bonethong had no idea that she would one day leave her home in northern Laos to come to live in a rural suburb of Vientiane, the capital city of Laos. “My husband decided to move the whole family to Vientiane about 7 years ago when a friend from our village offered him work as a construction worker in Vientiane. Life in the village was quite hard. Although we had some land on which we can produce food for the family, there were little opportunities for us to earn money for our family of six children”, Bonethong sighed, looking up from her loom where she was weaving a black and white silk scarf in a pineapple design.**



**After moving to Vientiane, the family rented a house in Amon Village, a rural suburb in Vientiane about 15 km outside the city where they have lived since. Soon after moving to Amon Village, Bonethong found that her weaving skills were in demand.**

**She found work in a nearby small weaving workshop started by a distant relative.**

**Her monthly income from weaving now averages 600,000-700,000 Kip/month (equivalent to \$80-\$90). “What I make from weaving helps to supplement the income earned by my husband and goes towards paying for our household expenditure. We are now able to put aside some money every month. If I can keep weaving and more people buy the scarves I produce, I will be able to save more and more. My dream is to buy a small piece of land and build our own house one day.” she said smiling.**

**Now, with only her 12-year old son still in school, and two of her oldest children working, Bonethong’s dream may indeed come true in the not too distant future.**

