



**Ms Lang, Weaver of  
Amonne Village,  
Vientiane**

**Lang, a spunky woman from Subsai Village of Xieng Kho District of Houa Phan Province, quit her unhappy marriage after 4 years when she was only 21 years old. She took her young son then 3 years of age and left her husband's house to go back to live with her parents and tried to make a living by farming and weaving.**



**Like most women from Houa Phan Province, the traditional heartland of silk weaving, Lang too had learned to weave from her mother when she was a young teenager. But Subsai Village was too remote and distant from any commercial center for even skilled weavers like Lang to be able to earn a steady income by selling woven handcrafts. On the other hand, making a living by farming alone for a divorced woman with a young son was not a viable option. Even though her parents and siblings were willing to share their rice harvest with her, Lang knew she needed to be able to have a regular source of income to raise and educate her son.**



**So in 2001 when her brother, a soldier with the Lao army, asked her to come live with his family in Amonne village, a suburb in Vientiane city, Lang jumped at the opportunity**

**Some of her girl friends, including her relative Bonethong and her family, had earlier left Subsai Village to settle in Amonne village, which has become a small enclave of migrants from Xieng Kho district.**

News had travelled back to the village that women with good weaving skills could make a simple living by weaving and selling their woven handcrafts to merchants in the morning market in Vientiane or to small traders from neighboring Thailand.

Lang was confident that if she worked hard and with some initial help from her brother, she too could make a new life for herself and her son.



Now 7 years on, 36 year-old Lang has found some degree of stability and security in her life. Her brother and his wife have given her a home and treat her son no different from their other two children. Lang herself was introduced by her relative Bonethong to work as a weaver in a small weaving workshop where some 35 other women weavers mainly from Houa Phan also work.

Lang and Bonethong are considered among the best weavers in the weaving workshop and for this reason they have been assigned to produce the “pineapple design” scarf which, while looking fairly simple, demands a high degree of skill and concentration to produce the desired pattern and texture.

Lang now makes about 600,000 – 700,000 Kip (\$80-\$90) a month from her weaving which she uses mainly to pay for her son’s school fees and contribute to her brother’s household expenditure.

“Apart from weaving, I also help out on my brother’s half hectare (about one acre) land growing some vegetables and fruit trees and raising some chickens and ducks. Most of what we produce is for home consumption, but we also have some extra to sell in the market”, Lang said.

Lang has high hopes for her 13-year old son who is a Grade 7 student in local high school. “He is a good student, so I want to keep him in school as long as I can and make sure he gets a good education. I will work hard and save as much money as I can so that I can send him to university”, she said with great determination. “By the way, please ask your customers in America to continue to buy our scarves. If I can weave and sell more scarves, maybe one day my dream will come true,” she added with a nervous laugh.

