



**Ms Noi
Weaver of
“Dotty Design”
Vientiane**



Twenty-two year old Noy left her home in Viengsay Village, Ngoi District of Luang Prabang Province in 2000 when she was 14 years old. The sixth child in a family of 11 children, her parents could not produce enough to feed the family by farming their small plot of land. So her family sold their land and moved to Vientiane, the capital city of Laos, where her father found a job as a truck driver.

In Vientiane, the family settled in Nongbuatong village, a well-known weaving village only 5 km outside the city center. After school, Noy used to hang around a weaving workshop in Nongbouathong village, earning some pocket money by doing odd jobs like reeling and spinning silk yarn. Gradually she learned how to weave simple designs from the older weavers. Noticing her dexterity and skills, the owner of the weaving workshop hired her to do simple weaving jobs after school. This was how Noy learned to weave.



After Grade 8, Noy’s family could no longer afford to keep her in school and she dropped out of school and became a full-time weaver at the weaving workshop. It was at the Nongbouathong weaving workshop that Noy met her future husband, Soubin, an expert maker of natural dyes in the same weaving workshop. In 2005, 19-year old Noy and 24 year-old Soubinh got married. Noy left her job at the weaving workshop when she became pregnant.

Now that her daughter, Phouna, is over two years old, Noy has started to weave again. With four other girls, Noy now works in a small weaving workshop started by Ms Phonesouk, a former weaver of the Nongbuathong weaving workshop. “I am happy to be weaving again and be able to bring in some steady income for the family”, Noy said. With her income of about 700,000 Kip/month (\$90), Noy is not only able to pay for some of her own daily expenses, she is also able to give a little money each month to her mother to help pay for the school fees of her 2 younger brother and sister who are still at school. “I hope they can at least finish high school and not need to drop out of school like I did”, Noy continued.



While Noy concentrates on weaving an exquisitely delicate silk scarf with a brown and lime green checkered design, her husband, Soubinh, is busy boiling down another batch of eucalyptus leaves to make the lime green dye needed to dye the silk used by Noy for the checkered scarf. “This color is very difficult to make”, Soubinh explained. “I need to make sure that the eucalyptus leaves are boiled just right and the silk yarn is dipped in the dye at the right temperature several times before I can get just the right color. If the timing and the temperature is a little bit off, the color will not come out right and I will have to start the process all over again.”

The young couple now lives in the quarters at the weaving workshop provided by Phonesouk. Although Noy and Soubinh are quite satisfied with their living conditions, they both dream of the day when they can move into a house they can call their own.

