

# Dundup

vey found that 199,758 of the s total 1,053,349 families (18.96 live in poverty, down from 20.4 in the 2009-10 fiscal year.

bank has recorded a higher profit dicted, expanding its business over six months of this year.

ublic company's Administration Head Mr Khamhou Thongthavy week that the company generated of about 248 billion kip from to June this year, with around 84 ip in outgoing expenses, leaving it t profit of around 164 billion kip. pany had expected to make a net around 157 billion kip after paying the government, and has exceeded ions.

o Brewery Company (LBC) has about 200 billion kip (US\$25 to boost its production capacity as for its beer products surge. Speaking company's annual conference in e, LBC Managing Director Mr Vongsay said that the expansion ction facilities in Vientiane was y and will be completed by the f next year.

nstruction of the new processing s completed, the company's beer on capacity will reach 310 million year, increasing from the current ion litres a year.

37.6-million Wattay International pgrade Project began in Vientiane c as part of preparations to host the -Europe Meeting (ASEM) next e ceremony to mark the launch oject was held at the airport in e after a project agreement was between the Lao Civil Aviation ent and the China CAMC ring Company last month. rt-term aim of the project is to e the arrival and parking of large s during the ASEM meeting, il Aviation Department Director Mr Yakua Lopangkao said at the y.

lation rate in Laos dropped ally in July as the government l efforts to address months of ices in the country. The Ministry ing and Investment's Statistic announced this week that the rate was 7.13 percent in July, the first time in three months annual Consumer Price Index as been below the projected IDP growth of 8.3 percent for this



A representative of SBFIC Mr Bernd (second right) Werthenbach presents 330 million kip to Ms Sirikit Boupha (second left) on Thursday at the WFDF office in Vientiane.

## Germany helps Lao women access microfinance opportunities

**Ounkham Pimmata**

The German government has provided 330 million kip to the Women and Family Development Fund (WFDF) to continue its work to improve the lives of women and their families in Laos, extending the funding from July to December.

From January to June, the project provided 3,000 households in Vientiane capital, and Vientiane and Borikhamxay provinces with microfinance products, namely loans and saving accounts.

The fund has operated since 2009 as a collaboration between the Lao Women's Union and the Savings Banks Foundation for International Cooperation from Germany (SBFIC), with the aim of setting up a professionally run and sustainable microfinance institution.

According to a press release, the WFDF has successfully implemented a modified Grameen Bank methodology adjusted to meet Laos' particular needs, through which customers are divided into groups in their villages as

part of the operational model.

The WFDF provides basic training to its customers during weekly meetings, with much attention placed on financial education and business skills.

The fund has a strong savings focus, wherein customers have to build a savings base before being able to apply for loans for productive purposes. Customers can open a savings account with as little as weekly deposits of 5,000 kip.

Individual loan amounts range between 500,000 kip and 8 million kip, with loan terms between three and 12 months. All customers are women and engage mainly in cottage industries and agricultural enterprises.

At present, the WFDF has collected 1.4 billion kip in savings, while its loan portfolio stands at 2.5 billion kip with a 100 percent on time-loan repayment rate since its inception. The loan funding gap is covered by a credit fund provided by the German government.

The WFDF recently applied for a license with the Bank of Lao PDR as a

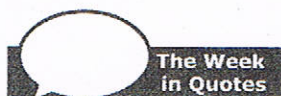
Deposit-Taking Microfinance Institution.

Chairperson of the Board of Directors of WFDF Ms Sirikit Boupha said that according to the fund's 2010 annual report and 2011 mid-year review the microfinance project has assisted in improving the livelihoods and overall economic situation of customers and their families and reduced poverty.

Through the fund, women are enabled to become more independent in financial terms and in their decision-making processes, which are important components for economic growth.

In Laos, many women are responsible for the financial management of their households, so supporting women as a target group for microfinance activities remains a key objective of the Lao government.

The WFDF receives technical assistance from the SBFIC in various areas of its business operation and the project is embedded in SBFIC's regional microfinance network in Southeast Asia, with seven projects partners in Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia.



National University of Laos, Ms Viengtha Phouvisouk.

"I think that if the government makes a decision that affects a lot of people they should explain their reasoning to make sure people understand why. I also think that the government should issue special SIM cards for students so that they can take advantage of free calls, SMS and call time promotions." A student at the

-- Thursday, August 18.

"Our society is waiting for us to address our shortcomings, including autocracy, corruption, slow development and weak administration of the state, which have not been addressed in a timely manner. In addition, social problems are rising and we still don't have real measures to address them or reduce their prevalence. All these things have affected the leadership of our Party and management of our State," President of the Lao PDR, Mr Choummaly Sayasone.

-- Monday, August 15

"Some laws are still not practically enforced, as some offenders simply pay money to ensure they go unpunished. This effectively means there aren't equal rights under the law."