

LAO FILMMAKERS FUND GRANTS LARGEST SELECTION TO DATE

Luang Prabang Film Festival's Lao Filmmakers Fund awards seven grants to local film projects

Luang Prabang, 16 September 2020 — A psychological thriller about a young woman experiencing trauma and two new features from first-time directors are among those to win support from the 2020 Lao Filmmakers Fund as it awards grants to seven film projects from four of the country's provinces and Vientiane Capital.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Oxfam in Laos both supported the Lao Filmmakers Fund this year, and their contributions resulted in its largest-ever funding pool of more than \$50,000 USD granted directly to Lao film productions. This was a significant expansion for the Fund, double the total amount in its 2019 cycle.

Created and managed by the Luang Prabang Film Festival (LPFF) the Lao Filmmakers Fund is the country's first and only regular grant program for film projects. Since its inception in 2013, the fund has disbursed over \$100,000 USD to more than 20 different projects. This year's grant cycle will bring the total to more than \$150,000 USD.

LPFF Executive Director Sean Chadwell said the "pool of applications this year was outstanding," adding that, "with projects addressing an impressive array of themes and styles, we were thrilled to be able to provide more funding to more Lao directors than ever before."

The selected projects include films dealing with marginalized identity groups, specifically women, the youth, the elderly, and people with disabilities. From unexpected pregnancies, abuse, and crime, to traditional art, sign language, and women overcoming adversity, these projects are expected to bring diverse and unique aspects of Lao culture to life on screen.

Notable past projects include Xaisongkham Induangchanthy's *Raising a Beast*, which garnered additional support at LPFF's 2017 Talent Lab before going on to win the SEAFIC-TFL Award 2018 and the Talents Tokyo Special Mention Award 2018; and Mattie Do's *The Long Walk*, which premiered in 2019 at the Giornate degli Autori section of the 76th Venice International Film Festival.

With the country's film industry still in the early stages of development, the Lao Filmmakers Fund is one of the few resources available to domestic filmmakers. The projects in the current cycle are expected to be completed in late 2020 and mid 2021.

The following projects were awarded 2020 grants:

Sepia // Feature Narrative

Province: Khammouane, Vientiane Capital

Director: Phanumad Disattha

Sepia follows Phet, a woman who has recently discovered she's pregnant. However, the father has disappeared. Through a journey full of twists and turns, Phet travels to the small town of Thakek to learn about her mysterious past.

Absence of Sound // Feature Narrative

Province: Luang Prabang

Director: Sonepasith Phanphila

Absence of Sound tells the story of Fai, a young woman who develops a close mentorship relationship with her young neighbour Noy, who is deaf-mute. Despite a series of obstacles, Fai becomes inspired to help people with hearing disabilities.

"Stone Buddha Statues" // Short Documentary

Province: Champasak

Director: Xam Keodouangdy

"Stone Buddha Statues" introduces viewers to Father Kikham, the son of the original stone carving master in his village in Pakse.

"J-ID" // Short Narrative

Province: Vientiane Capital

Director: Phonesavanh Saengphachan

"J-ID" is a psychological thriller that centers on a young woman dealing with trauma from previous abuse.

"Time Missing" // Short Narrative

Province: Houaphan

Director: Ting Veu

"Time Missing" portrays the triumphs of a teenage girl who accidentally becomes pregnant.

"The Service" // Short Narrative

Province: Vientiane Capital

Director: Anouphon Phomhacsar

In "The Service," a young woman moves from the countryside to the city, where she learns to overcome adversity in pursuit of education.

"The Boy" // Short Narrative

Province: Vientiane Capital

Director: Thanouphet Onmavong

"The Boy" is the story of two boys who find themselves involved in a small crime. When only one is arrested, their lives unfold in different directions.

Filmmakers and LPFF representatives are available for interviews upon request.

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LPFF Background:

Founded in 2009, the Luang Prabang Film Festival (LPFF) is an annual celebration of Southeast Asian cinema held every December in the UNESCO World Heritage town of Luang Prabang, Lao PDR. LPFF is a not-for-profit project that fosters cross-cultural dialogue within the region and supports the emerging film industry in Laos. Throughout the year, LPFF organizes a range of cultural events and educational activities, from film screenings to workshops for Lao film-makers. LPFF also manages the Lao Filmmakers Fund, providing grants directly to Lao film-makers so that they can bring their scripts to life.