

Streetwise Asia Update - Conservation project now being undertaken in Laos PDR

The first project being supported by the Streetwise Asia Fund has now been confirmed, and works are in progress. The Fund will support the re-roofing of the Community Library and Resource Centre at the World Heritage Town of Champasak in Lao PDR. This follows the recommendation of Anthony Coupe and Felicity Sando, who visited Laos PDR on behalf of the Streetwise Asia Fund in October 2007. They provided a detailed report on possible Streetwise Asia projects in Laos PDR.

The building chosen in Champasak is located within the Vat Phou Champasak World Heritage Area, which received World Heritage Listing in 2001. The building is of traditional French Colonial style, set back from the main street frontage, sitting amongst traditional Laotian style raised timber houses. The building has not been used for some time, and has been in a state of decay.

The Streetwise Asia project will allow for the removal of later inappropriate metal deck roofing and re-roofing of this building in traditional terracotta roofing tiles. The Streetwise Asia fund will be partnering with the Leric Foundation, who are concurrently undertaking other conservation works to the building, but have an insufficient budget to undertake the necessary and urgent re-roofing of the building. Without the Streetwise Asia fund input, retaining the inappropriate metal deck roofing would have been the only option, having serious implications for the heritage value of the building. The Fund has also met the cost of engagement of a local architect for a two month period to ensure that the works are undertaken to a high standard.

The UNESCO Bangkok office has volunteered to assist with the third party inspections of the works, and the management office of the Vat Phou Champasak World Heritage site keenly support this project as being a model for building conservation and a key aid in improving general literacy and knowledge about Laotian culture.

The project is due to be completed by 2008. An allocation of Australian \$12,000 from the Fund has been made for this project. This is considered an excellent first project for the Streetwise Asia Fund, as it will set a standard for conservation works in this World Heritage site, where minimal conservation work has been undertaken to date.

Those ICOMOS members who have donated to the Streetwise Asia Fund are to be acknowledged for their generosity and I thank you all for the ongoing support you have provided with this initiative.

For any additional information about this project or the Streetwise Asia Fund please contact Liz Vines on liz@mcdougallvines.com.au

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