

## IVET students graduate

The graduation ceremony for Certificate 1 students having completed their courses on Agriculture, Animal Raising, and Carpentry was held on 29 January 2021 at the Integrated Vocational Education and Technical (IVET) School of Xieng Khouang province. These graduates were the first to complete training under the Vocational Training and Employment Support Services (VTESS) project.

One of the graduates who stood out was Mr. Tiong Thor, a 35-year-old man from the Hmong ethnic group. Even though he had only finished primary grade 2, Tiong is determined to provide a better future for his 5 children. "I am happy that I was given the opportunity to continue my education. I could not even finish grade 3 because my parents needed help to tend the fields. I am grateful that I could still study even at my age." In his Carpentry course, most of the students were from several ethnic groups. Tiong was very happy with the support he received during the training from their trainer, who makes sure that all trainees could follow the lessons despite the language difficulties. In addition, Tiong also appreciates that the trainees were provided uniforms and other training materials.

much supported especially also during practical sessions. "If we are diligent and eager to learn, we can achieve more if we learn together. Both men and women can learn together."

VTESS is a project of the Government of Lao PDR and the Government of Switzerland through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The project is implemented under the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. Swisscontact leads the project in a consortium with the University of Lucerne, Switzerland. The VTESS project aims to strengthen inclusive vocational education and training in Laos and brings early school leavers with disadvantaged background into employment, self-employment or back into the education system. The project works in the provinces of Oudomxay, Xayaboury, Xieng Khouang, Khammouane, Saravane.



Ms. Lee Xouadaxiong is another remarkable trainee. She is one of the 3 female students who were trained in Animal Raising. Lee comes from a poor family of farmers, and when the VTESS project announced the training in her village, she immediately grabbed the opportunity to join. "I want to help my family improve our livelihood. I want to further develop our small farm." Although there were mostly male trainees, she felt comfortable and

