

Accelerating Healthy Agriculture and Nutrition (AHAN) project, Pillar 3 of the European Union's Partnership for Improved Nutrition (PIN) in Lao PDR. Project funded by the European Union, with matching programming supported by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) in Saravane Province. Implemented by World Vision-Laos, Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières, Green Community Development Association and Burnet Institute.

# ahan #3

newsletter

1st quarter 2021



## Creating synergies

Following the Mid-term review in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of project implementation, AHAN is now visibly creating a sustainable linkage among all stakeholders involved in the fight against malnutrition in Lao PDR.

find out all the details in p. 2

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Vientiane Capital, 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

Almost 90 participants from different line ministries (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Laos Women Union) of the Government of Laos, donors, UN agencies, and development partners were gathered with keen interest to receive research findings conducted by the project on harmful feeding practices, Nutrition Sensitive Value Chain Analysis and Gender Assessment.

**“We urge all departments and communities to unite and work together, supporting access to nutritious food for all women and children.”**

**Roslyn Gabriel,**  
Country Program Director  
for World Vision International  
in Lao PDR

After 16 months of implementation, the AHAN Project experienced its Mid-Term Review (MTR) in July and August 2020. This review, as part of the project design, was conducted to assess the project’s progress against goals, objectives, and outcomes since the baseline. Using the Lot Quality Assurance Sampling (LQAS), a simple low cost random sampling methodology, the MTR was rolled-out in 5 out of the 12 districts covered by AHAN. Among the key findings and recommendations, there is still a need for a much concerted effort to work on a convergence approach among all nutrition actors.

While the MTR was reaching its conclusion, the AHAN Partnership disseminated the key findings of the three main researches conducted by the project to highlight the importance of a multi-sectoral approach to improve nutrition in Lao PDR. As a top priority until the end of the project, AHAN has already started to create linkages

between counterparts in agriculture, health, WASH and gender sectors.

It is now becoming more and more effective at the community level with the developing connections between the project’s activities: the Mother Groups participants using home garden produce, small animal and insects raised with AHAN agricultural inputs to organize cooking demonstration, the Saving Groups members using savings and earned interest to build latrines and improve their sanitation practices. The provision of nutrition-sensitive agriculture and hygiene messages during the Mother Groups’ sessions, gender-sensitive financial literacy training to establish gender-balanced decision making at the household level are some examples of this multi-sector integration the AHAN Project tries to promote.

As results of this integrated-approach are becoming more visible, Somsamai and Hom from Phalanxay dis-

## Community Change\*

8

C-Change Master Trainers  
from World Vision staff  
trained

69

Facilitators  
(Lao Women Union and AHAN  
field staff) trained to cascade

109

C-Change Groups  
at the village level  
initiating activities to address  
harmful norms

1,471  
members

\*data up to February 2021

trict in Savannakhet Province are a good example. Two years ago, their daughter Bounthai was diagnosed malnourished during a monitoring visit by the outreach clinic. To address the situation of the household, both parents joined the AHAN Project activities. Thanks to training provided on home-gardening, they now have available nutritious food to eat all-year round. Hom is participating in the Mothers Nutrition Group in her village. She now understands the importance of good nutrition for her kids, and is able to cook balanced diets from her garden. The successful production of the garden allowed the family to sell up to 360.000 KIP (app. 38USD) worth of vegetables last year. The money was placed into the Saving Group established by AHAN, re-invested into the construction of a latrine for their family and to buy more food for their children. Witness of the life transformation his family experienced, Somsamai is now an advocate of change in his community, promoting good hygiene practices, as a member of the Village Water and Sanitation Management Committee (VWSMC). He also encourages his neighbors to build their latrine to stop open defeca-

tion to improve the health status of his village. As a result of these combined new activities introduced in her village, little Bounthai is no longer malnourished, she is healthy and thriving.

One of the main additional catalyzers of this integrated approach for improved nutrition is the roll-out of the Community-Change (C-Change) model in the villages. Based on the results of the researches conducted by AHAN, the C-Change activity aims to allow the communities to generate dialogue to explore in depth their underlying beliefs, norms and traditional practices that either challenge or support the improvement of child well-being. This inclusive approach facilitated by the community themselves empowers the members to come up with their own solutions and plans for social change. AHAN is currently rolling-out the training of community facilitators and has been witnessing promising behaviors among the participants from various sectors (health departments, agriculture and forestry offices, Lao Women’s Union), realizing that it takes all of us to tackle malnutrition in Lao PDR.

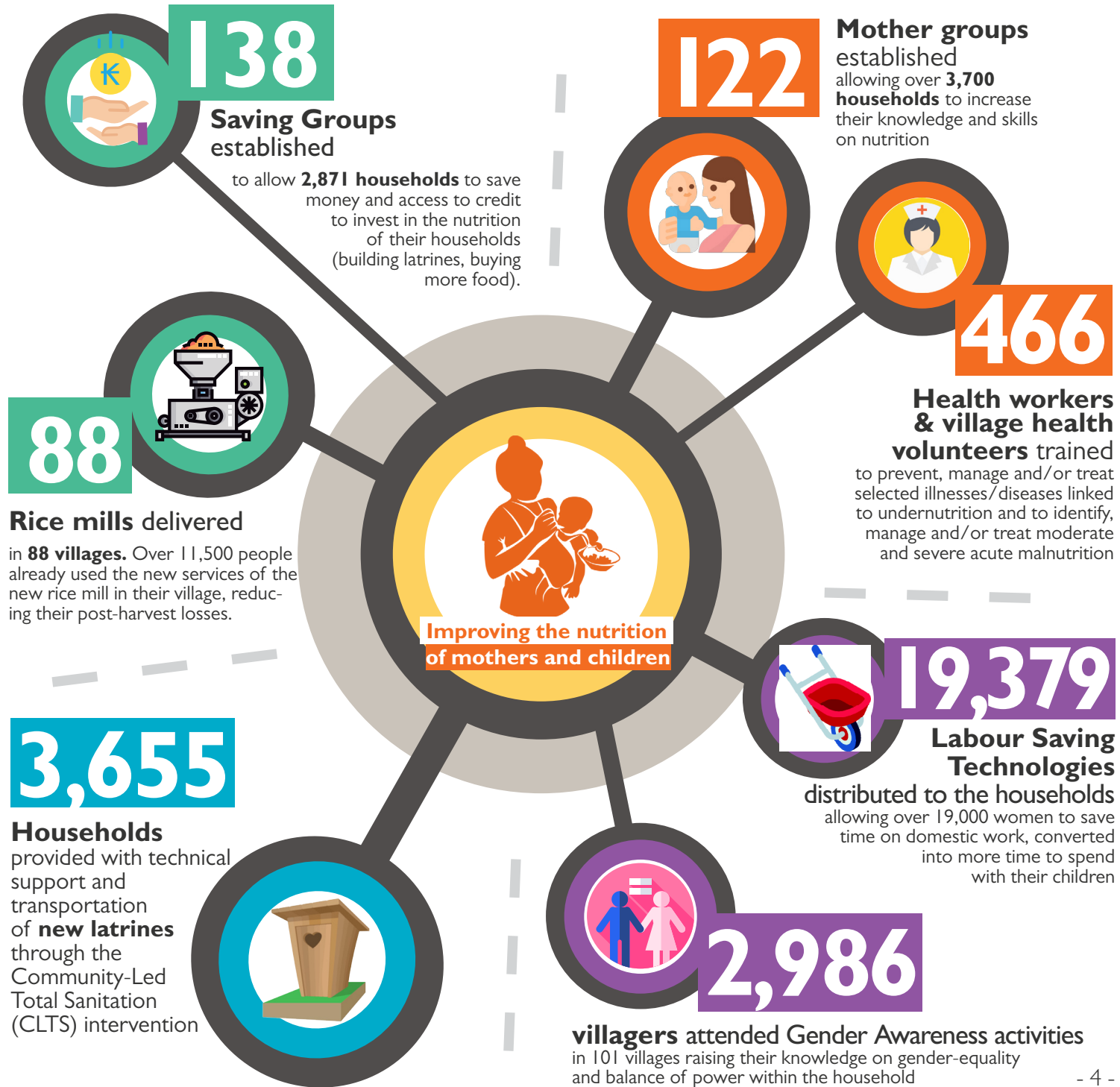


From a whole family enjoying the benefits of their home garden in Savannakhet to a mother now able to cook nutritious food to her baby after a Mother Group session in Saravane, through the share-out of the dividends of a Saving Group in Attapeu, the impact of AHAN activities is more and more visible. Yet, more time is needed to guarantee more linkages between all nutrition-related sectors and ensure the sustainability of AHAN intervention.

# [Progress]

The visual track of the project achievements.

Find here some indicators of achievements from the beginning of the project to February 2021.



# [Who are we?]

Portrait of our people.

This month, we meet **Sisouphanh Phommahaxay**, Safeguarding and Child Protection Specialist for World Vision Laos.



*“I want a good future for our children and youth in Laos. A future safe from harm.”*

Working with youth and children has been an early vocation for Sisouphanh. During his time at high-school and University, the Vientiane Capital-native gave his time to support communities. “As a youth volunteer I had the opportunity to work with children and youth in rural areas and in different situations in Lao PDR”. A young volunteering experience that shaped his professional career: “I loved volunteering with humanitarian agencies, and wanted to improve my knowl-

edge and skills to make a difference” explains Sisouphanh. His empathy did the rest: “It’s important to hear the voice of the children, to understand their issues, support and work with them to reduce and stop the harm they can face”. Sisouphanh is an optimistic person, driven by one clear will: “I want to see a good future for our children and youth in Laos. A future safe from harm. This is the reason that motivates me to work on child protection and safeguarding”.

To ensure the efficiency of the processes established by AHAN towards safeguarding and child protection, Sisouphanh has been providing training to our field teams.

“It is always important to frequently provide refresher training, but this time I want to deepen the knowledge of our staff, including our partners from AVSF and GCDA, on safeguarding and child protection”. Through two days of theoretical and practical training, the staff are able to provide awareness on child protection to the communities, and to reiterates the available mechanisms to report incidents through World Vision’s systems.

This to ensure our communities are safe from harm.



# [Update]

## The picture story of the past months.

The new normal is going on. A lot of AHAN activities have been rolling out over the past 6 months, and changes have been witnessed in the communities. Crickets and frogs are raising, vegetables are emerging from the ground, mothers are meeting regularly to discuss nutrition, water is gushing through the new boreholes, push carts, cook stoves and water tanks are used to reduce women's workload... AHAN is playing an important role to tackle malnutrition in Lao PDR.

Here are few illustrations of the past months' highlights.



The 6<sup>th</sup> National Nutrition Forum was held in early February. As part of the European Union's Partnership for Improved Nutrition in Lao PDR, the AHAN Consortium had a chance to reaffirm its strong partnership with the Government and development stakeholders in Lao PDR to ensure that mothers and children are well-nourished across our target communities.

The booth displaying the materials utilised by AHAN was visited by the Deputy Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone, the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Health Dr. Phouthone Muongpak, and the European Union's Ambassador Ina Marciulionyte, and generated a lot of interactions with the visitors.

National Convention Center, Vientiane Capital.

A Mothers' Nutrition Group session generally consists of discussions on nutrition topics to provide new knowledge.

It also concludes by a cooking demonstration, with locally available ingredients such as the vegetables from the home garden activity beneficiaries and other animal source protein foods.

Sammakkhixay district, Attapeu Province.



Left: Latrines are being built across the 3 provinces, which led 15 villages to be declared health model/open defecation free villages in Saravane Province.

Saravane district, Saravane Province.

Right: Families are also provided with kettles and water storage containers to reduce the risk of waterborne diseases and improve hygiene conditions for their children, particularly under five.

On the right, Thaphangthong district, Savannakhet province.



88 village rice mills started operating since the start of AHAN.

The project provided these machines and requisite training to identified rice millers on how to manage their small business. The pilot period indicated that the quality of the milled rice have improved, while the time spent on milling and percentage of loss and spoilage in the process have been reduced, compared to bigger rice mills.

Over 11,500 people have been using this new service across the 3 provinces.

Sammakkhixay district, Attapeu Province.

# [In case you missed it]



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## Raising crickets, rising hopes.

Inn has joined the cricket raising activity implemented by AHAN since 2019. Since then, the life of his family has changed thanks to the small insect!

To read the full story: [click here](#)

## Vilayphone, symbol of the European Union's efforts to improve nutrition in Lao PDR.

In Atsaphone district, Savannakhet province, Vilayphone has been joining the Mothers' Nutrition Group of her village. Her whole family's nutrition, starting with 1-year old Singto, has benefited from the change brought by the European Union's AHAN Project.

Here is the full story of Vilayphone: [click here](#)



## Community markets opening!

Since the start of the project's implementation, AHAN has already officially launched eight new community markets through GCDA activities, with the support of local authorities.

Last in date, the official opening of Koudmoum village market, in Saravane Province: [click here](#)

Get the latest updates of AHAN project on partners and donors Facebook accounts:



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Let's keep in touch!

Accelerating Healthy Agriculture and Nutrition

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