

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 and Trade 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

newsletter

#6

1st quarter 2023

Leaving a rich legacy for Improved Nutrition in Laos

Some 150 rural communities from Attapeu, Saravane, and Savannakhet provinces have seen their lives changed over the past five years, with improved nutrition for the most vulnerable mothers and their children despite all the challenges brought by COVID-19 and climate hazards.

find out all the details in p. 2

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Celebrating AHAN National Closing Event: Leaving a rich legacy that enabled vulnerable communities to tackle malnutrition despite COVID-19



Vientiane Capital, 16th of September 2022.
The National Closing Ceremony of the Accelerating Healthy Agriculture and Nutrition (AHAN) Project was held at Crowne Plaza.

The Department of Hygiene and Health Promotion of the Lao Ministry of Health, the European Union Delegation, the Australian Embassy, and World Vision co-chaired the National Closing Ceremony of the Accelerating Healthy Agriculture and Nutrition (AHAN) Project with the total cost of 11 M€, including 10M€ from the European Union. The ceremony held on 16 September 2022 aimed at concluding five years of the project's implementation for EU-funded part, sharing out the key findings and lessons learnt from the recent end-line evaluation with the stakeholders and policy-makers towards nutrition, including various ministries of the Government of Lao PDR, development partners, UN agencies, and other Non-Governmental Organisations.

With activities related to agriculture and livelihoods, mother and child's health, improved access to water, hygiene and sanitation, and gender equality, around 140,000 individuals from the twelve districts supported by AHAN have benefitted from an integrated, holistic approach to tackling the roots of malnutrition and the technical expertise from the consortium of four organisations led by World Vision.

During the learning event, various stakeholders shared their views on the impact of the AHAN Project. Mr. Vincent Vire, Head of Cooperation of the European Union Delegation to Lao PDR, highlighted: "the EU is very proud to have contributed through AHAN to a major change in the life

of thousands of people in three provinces, greatly improving the food security, nutrition and sanitary situation in these areas. These are very concrete outcomes delivered under our broader partnership with the Lao PDR to improve nutrition, through promoting a multi-sectoral approach in health, agriculture, and education".

The ownership of project from the different line ministries at different levels was particularly highlighted during the ceremony, with presentations of the key learnings jointly made by the AHAN team and government counterparts from the provincial representatives of

AHAN's Amplifying Effect

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Partnering Members

European Union, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Lao Women's Union; AVSF, Burnet Institute, GCD, World Vision

149

Villages supported

from 12 districts of Attapeu, Saravane and Savannakhet provinces

135,900

individuals

reached with transformational development in the past five years

the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Lao Women's Union.

Represented during the ceremony, Dr. Phonepaseth Ounaphom, Director General of the Department of Hygiene and Health Promotion, Ministry of Health, also declared during a separate interview: "AHAN positively impacts our department by decreasing malnutrition rate at the village, creating a management system at the grassroots level, and supports better coordination between local village health volunteers and health centres. Even after the project ends, health staff and village volunteers will carry on the work because the project has involved and engaged them from the beginning; this contributes to sustainability".

While the project has already phased out from Attapeu and Savannakhet communities, leaving a durable legacy in their lives and changing their nutritional patterns, **AHAN continues its implementation in Saravane with the support of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and**

Trade (DFAT) through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). This complementary funding has allowed AHAN to extend its coverage to 25 villages of TaOi and Toumlarn districts, and brought new activities to all target villages in Saravane province. One of the main focus of this additional funding is to increase the support to people with disability, and nurturing care practices of young mothers and caregivers through World Vision's Go Baby Go model.

Deputy Ambassador at the Australian Embassy and co-chair of this closing ceremony, Mr. Dan Heldon also shared "Malnutrition is a very complex problem, it is critical to address the multiple contributing factors to malnutrition, so I think the AHAN Programme has done that very well. It's not just an NGO working in the community doing their thing and then finishing and going away; it's working with the Government and communities' systems that will be there forever and building their capacity".



In 2023, under the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade funding, the AHAN staff will continue supporting 65 villages in the 4 districts of Saravane province: Saravane, TaOi, Toumlarn and LaoNgarm. Building on the five-year-long legacy and strengthening an existing dynamic in the communities and Government ministries, ensuring all people have a common ground to sustain and create a better life for their children and future generations.

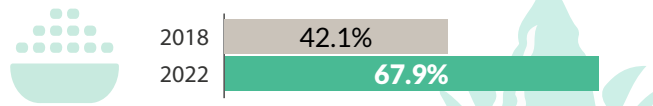
[Impact]

The visual track of the changes between project's baseline (2018) and end-line evaluations (2022)

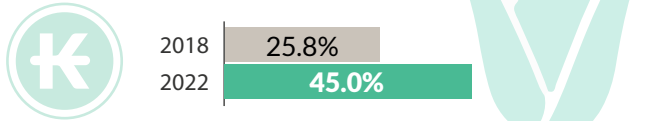
Find here the goals' and outcomes' indicators of the AHAN Project.

Outcome 1 Agriculture & Livelihood

Households with year-round access to sufficient food

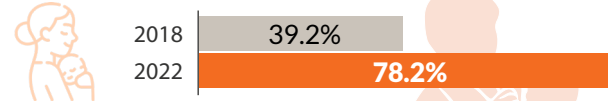


Households reporting increase in income over past 3 years

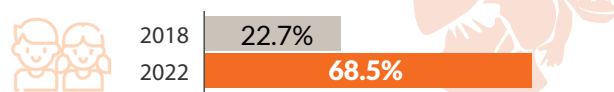


Outcome 2 Health & Nutrition

Women of reproductive age meeting minimum dietary diversity requirements



Children under five years old meeting minimum dietary diversity requirements



Prevalence of **stunting** in children under five years old **decreased from 46.7% to 29.3%**

+58% of households food secure

Food Security has increased during the project, **from 11.7% in 2018 to 70.2%** during the end-line evaluation

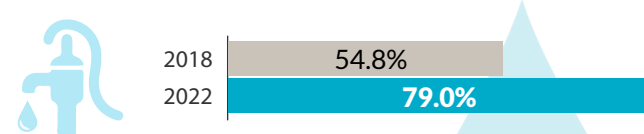
-17.4% stunting in children under 5

-7.2% Underweight in children under 5

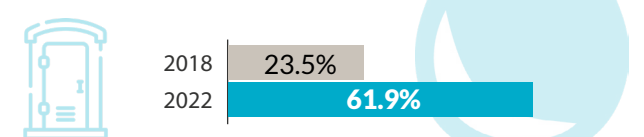
Prevalence of **underweight** in children under five years old **decreased from 34% to 26.8%**

Outcome 3 Water, Sanitation & Hygiene

Households with access to basic water sources

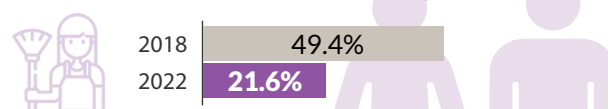


Households with access to basic sanitation facilities

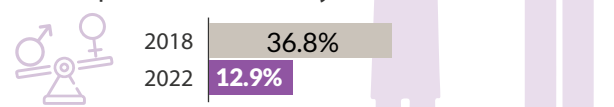


Outcome 4 Gender Equality

Households in agreement that looking after the house and children is a woman's responsibility



Households in agreement that it is natural that men have more power in the family



[Who are we?]

Portrait of our people.

This month, we meet **Sengdeuan Vannivongkham**, AHAN Project Officer in TaOi district for World Vision Laos.



“Bit by bit, I witnessed behavior changes in the communities throughout my time with AHAN, especially in food security.”

85 kilometres in the eastern part of Saravane province towards the Vietnam border is TaOi district. It is blessed by the stunning mountainous views and lovely spring-like weather most of the year. Sengdeuan Vannivongkham, whose name means moonlight, has called TaOi home since joining the AHAN project in 2019.

With her decade's experience in agriculture and rural development work, Sengdeuan has been one of our dedicated Project Officers. She oversees agriculture & livelihood,

Community Change, Mother Group, and all other activities for 13 AHAN villages (out of 23) in TaOi district, funded by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

Part of Sengdeuan's work is to build strong collaboration with the District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO), the government partner for all agricultural activities implemented by AHAN. Recently, Sengdeuan and the DAFO officer guided communities to use biopesticides and biofertilizers instead of chemical ones: an environmental-friendly practice that gradually helps families improve their food security and livelihoods.

Since AHAN takes an integrated approach to nutrition, various

technical knowledge is needed. Thus, Sengdeuan appreciates how the project equipped her and her government counterparts with the necessary resources. She says: “I valued all the topics I have been trained in AHAN. It deepens and widens my expertise,” She also applied AHAN knowledge to her personal life as a mother of a two-year-old girl - “learning the Go-Baby-Go model helps me feel confident raising my daughter”, she added.

While 65 villages of Saravane province continue to receive support from the AHAN project until June 2023 under the DFAT funding, Sengdeuan's contribution, like her name, will continue to be a light that brightens the future of vulnerable children and their communities.



[Update]

The picture story of the past months.

After a complementary year of implementation granted by a No-Cost Extension, the EU-funded part of the AHAN Project has phased out from Attapeu and Savannakhet provinces, leaving strong continuity mechanisms to the Government of Lao PDR and the communities supported. On another hand, AHAN's life has not ended yet in Saravane province, where 60 communities continue to receive crucial inputs that will cement the nutritional gains obtained in the past years.

Here are few illustrations of the past months' highlights.



On the 8th of September 2022, the Accelerating Healthy Agriculture and Nutrition (AHAN) Project organized its Provincial Closing Ceremony and Implementation Management Committee meeting in Phin District, Savannakhet province. With the Provincial Government partners, the project's stakeholders came together and share the key findings of its end-line evaluation. It was also a time for stakeholders to discuss how multi-sector coordination and integrated approach make a real difference in the lives of the most vulnerable.

All pictures from Phine district.

In October 2022, the transfer of ownership of the project's assets was conducted in Xaysettha Attapeu Province. The valuable resources from the AHAN project, including a vehicle and office appliances, are now used by provincial and district authorities to facilitate the district health centre staff's work for now and for the future.

Transfer of assets' ownership in Xaysettha district, Attapeu Province.



Sanitation for all in Saravane province!

Four villages from TaOi district supported by AHAN ANCP were declared Open-Defecation Free on Dec 19, 2022.

This marks another milestone for the project and its Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach to improve the hygiene practices of rural communities, with 45 villages declared Open Defecation Free (ODF)/Health Model villages, and a new step forward in the race of the national Open Defecation Free declaration in 2024.

Children learn about the consequences of poor hygiene practices (left), while village and district authorities officialize the open-defecation free declaration of four villages in TaOi district, Saravane Province.

[In case you missed it]



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From shy to influential: how AHAN empowered Ammala in Lao PDR.

In a rural community of Attapeu province, Ammala was once shy and insecure. But with the support of AHAN, she was empowered to become an influential voice and the missing ingredient to fight against child malnutrition in her community.

To learn more, [click here](#)

Universal Health Coverage: a sign of change in Southern Laos

“We will try to reach people from all walks of life in all places and ensure they receive helpful information and support”. Kham, health centre officer in Toumlarn district, shares how AHAN helps her create a healthy future for all.

Watch the video: [click here](#)



Promising tweets: A small bird improves the nutrition and livelihood of rural communities in Laos

Tweets became an enjoyable sound and a new sign of hope for Lao remote communities. Rural households in TaOi district, appreciate hearing their quails growing up and thriving, symbolising new income and improved nutrition, thanks to AHAN.

Discover the full story: [click here](#)



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Let's keep in touch!
Healthy Agriculture and Nutrition



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