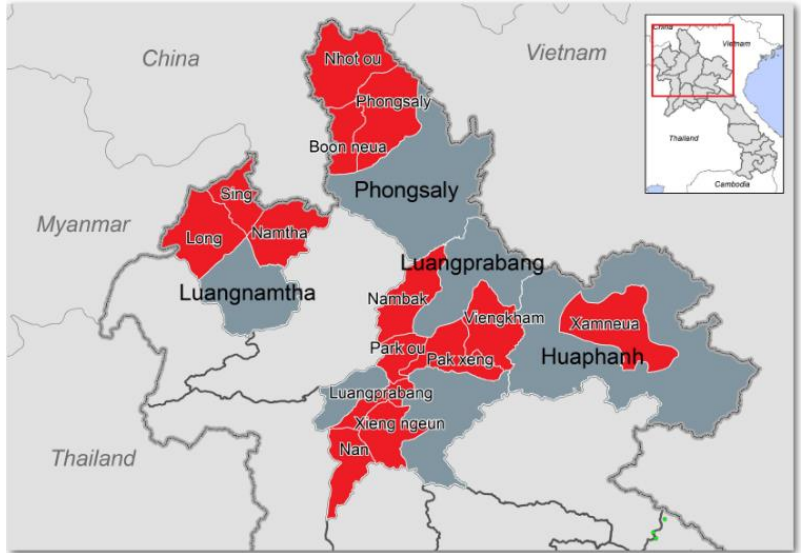


Partnership for Improved Nutrition in Lao PDR Pillar 3: Sustainable Change Achieved through Linking Improved Nutrition and Governance

Welcome!

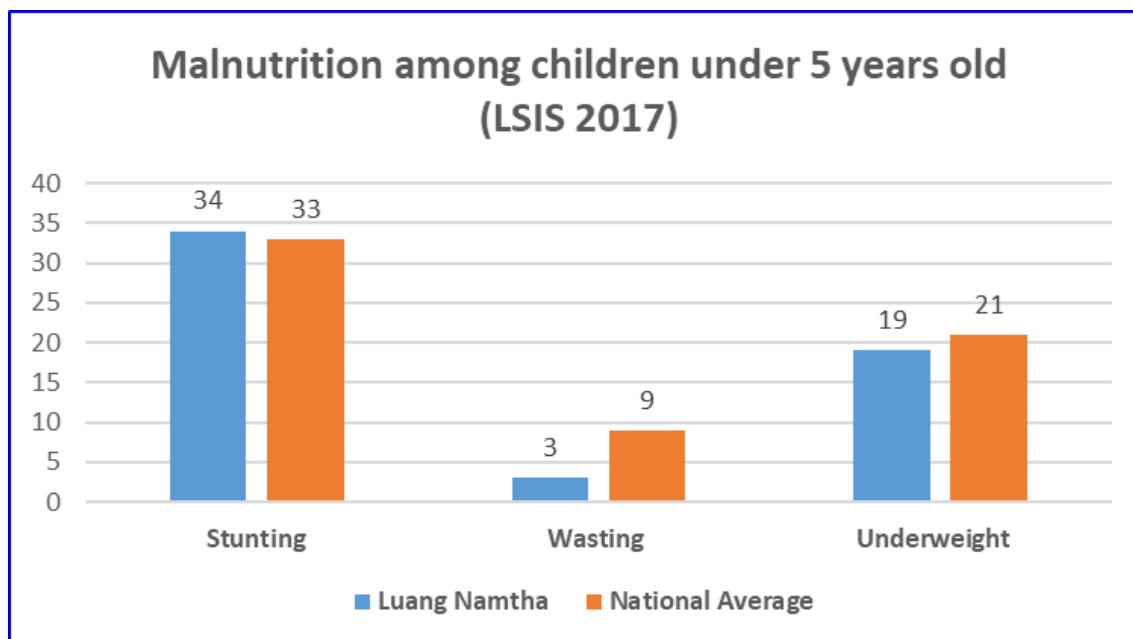
Welcome to our 6th issue. This 6-monthly publication aims to bring you updates on the Sustainable Change Achieved through Linking Improved Nutrition and Governance (SCALING) project in Luang Namtha, implemented by CARE International in Lao PDR. The project is funded by the European Union (EU) under the Partnership for Improved Nutrition in Lao PDR (PIN).

The overall objective of SCALING is to improve the nutritional status of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, and children under 5, in 14 target districts in the provinces of Huaphanh, Luang Namtha, Luang Prabang and Phongsaly. The action supports the Government of Laos (GoL) to implement at scale, the current National Nutrition Strategy (NNS), NNS Action Plan (NNSAP) and convergent approach. The project period covers December 2017 to December 2021 (four years).



In this 6th issue we focus on results achieved under the project so far per province under the three main outcomes. We also would like to share some perspectives and key messages from the target communities and local government through case studies with their direct quotes. In addition, we would like to share about some ideas and thoughts reflected by the communities and government partners of how to make the existing project activities in the target communities become sustainable after the project ends.

Nutrition context in Luang Namtha Province



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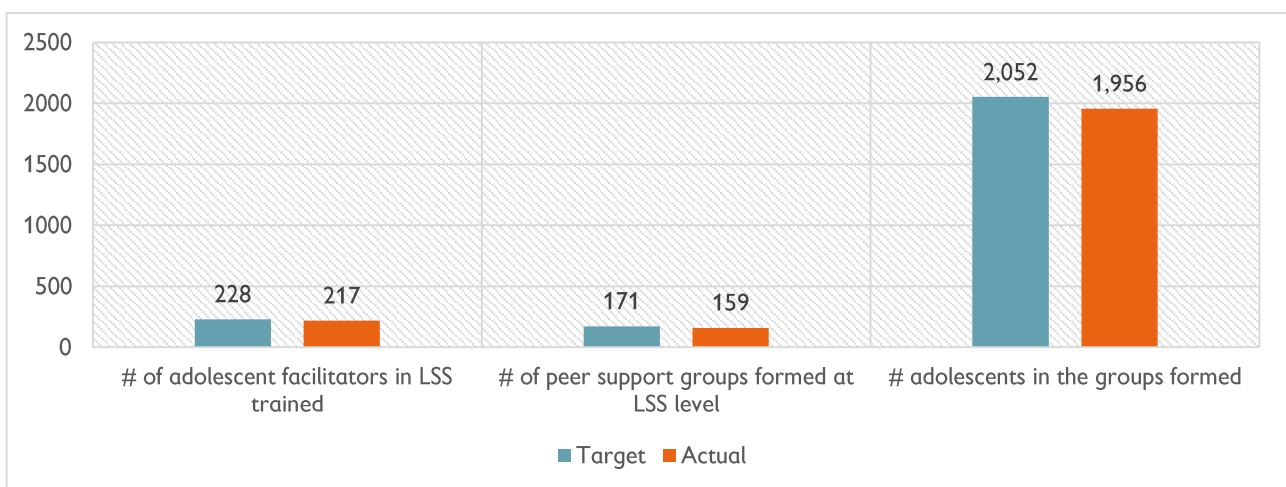
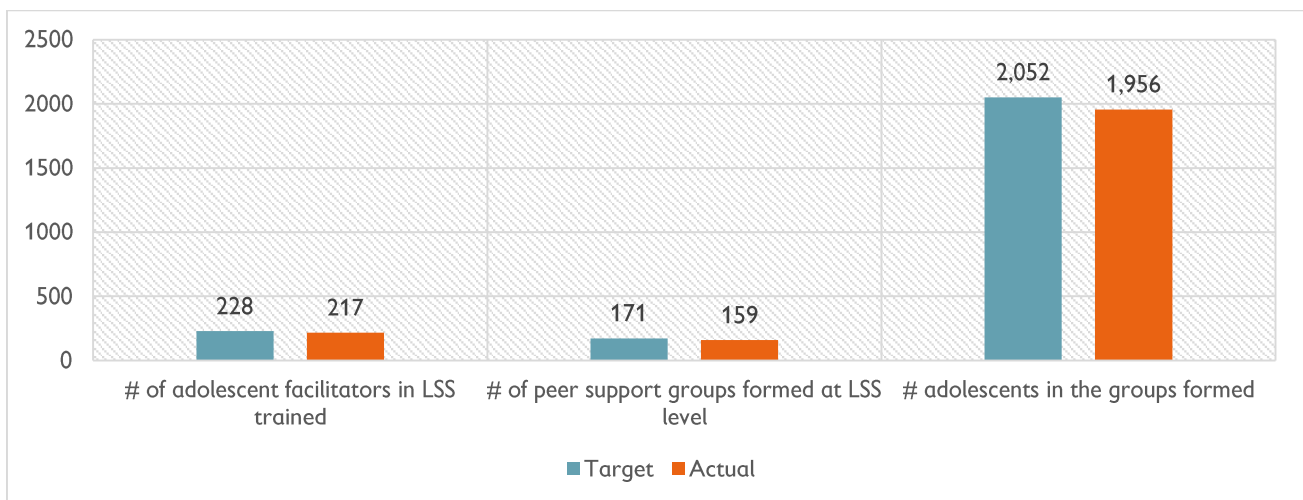
Sustainable Change Achieved through Linking Improved Nutrition and Governance

Luang Namtha is one of 11 provinces nationwide that is reported to have very high stunting prevalence amongst children under five years old, classified by World Health Organization (WHO). As can be seen from the chart above, 34% of children under 5 years old suffer from stunting while 19% from underweight and 3% from wasting if compared with the national average remains 9%. (LSIS 2017).

Key accomplishments and achievements

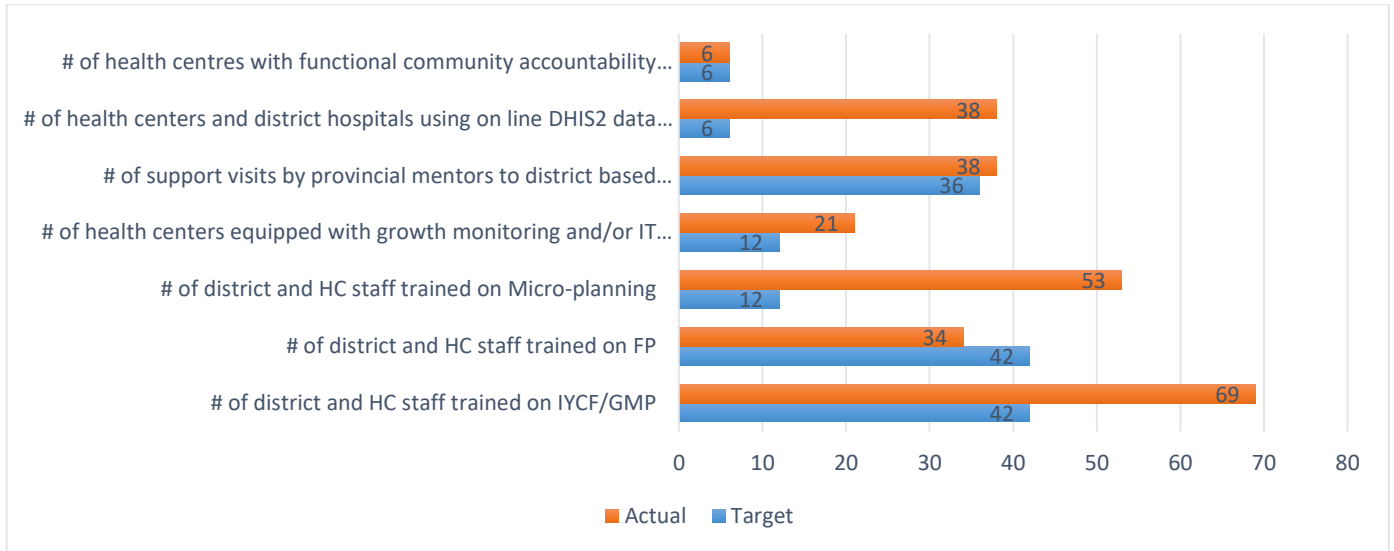
SCALING activities have been implemented in all 100 selected target villages in three districts including Namtha, Sing, and Long in Luang Namtha Province. Through this project, EU funding enabled SCALING to improve food and nutrition security among rural households and create sustainable agricultural wealth at the village and household level, as well as to improve nutritional status of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, and children <5 years in project districts. Please refer to the following charts for an outline of the key accomplishments achieved in the province since the inception of the project.

Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) at community level

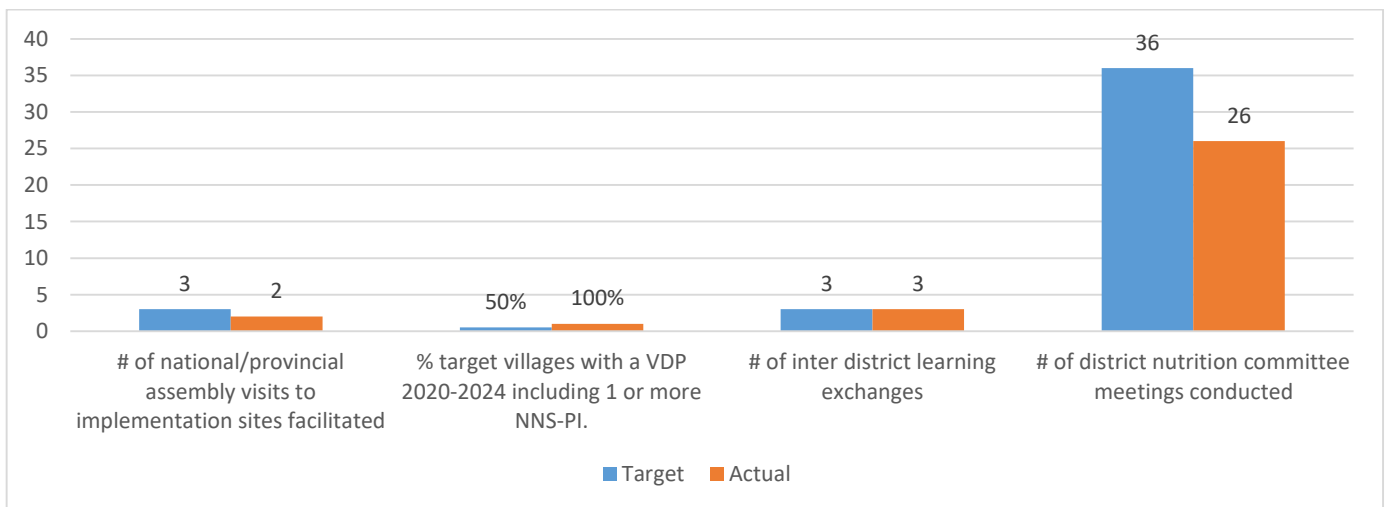


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Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) at Health Centre and district level

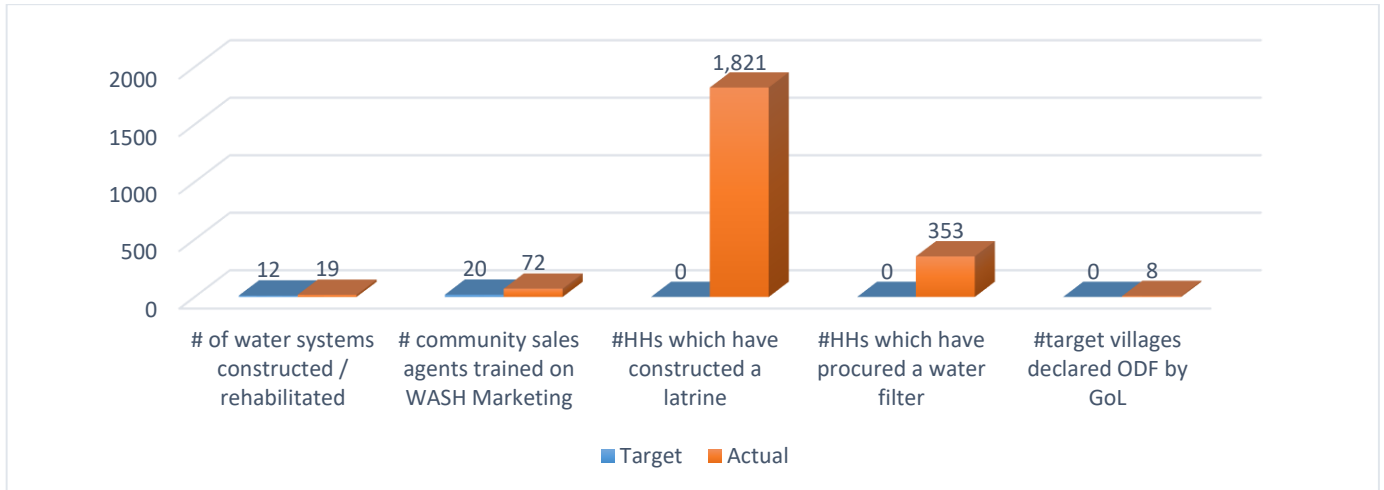


Gender

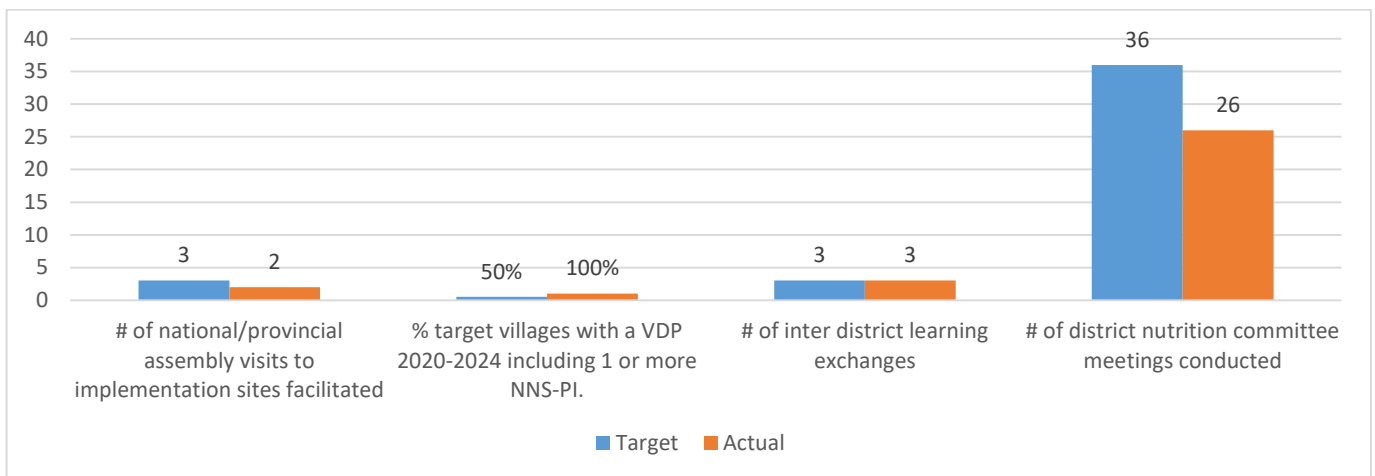


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Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Infrastructure



Nutrition Governance



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Case studies:

Case Study 1: Individual Story of Ms. Souk, Lakkhammai village, Long District, LNT. The case study and photos collected by Mr Hompheng Kongonmany (11/03/2021)



Ms. Souk, volunteer (Right side) visit and provide counselling for 1000 days HH, Lakkhammai Village, Sing District, Luang Namtha Province

Souk, 29, is from the Akha ethnic group and lives in Lakkhammai Village, Sing District. She is a farmer and has an important position as deputy village chief. Souk was also selected as team leader of the SBCC volunteers in her village, in November 2020, due to her proactive attitude, the respect of her community, and her support in rolling out SCALING activities in her village. In addition, Souk is also a member of her village VSLA group, and a strong example of women's leadership.

Souk said, "I feel so happy that I was selected to attend [SBCC] training. I learned so many things. In the past, pregnant women had small babies, ate whatever they had around, didn't get antenatal care, and didn't take their children to get vaccinated. But now everything has improved a lot. Things are good now."

After beginning SBCC activities, and once the village volunteers were trained, Souk began supporting the 1000 Days volunteers on home monitoring visits that focussed on caring for pregnant women and babies. In 2020, there were fifteen 1000 Days families in total that Souk would visit, and each quarter the number of families usually increased or decreased by about 1-2 families. Some quarters the number of families increased by ten, and Souk said, "Then, our volunteer pairs had to split up to divide the work. We went to whatever houses we were closest to."

For Souk, she found personal growth and success in providing guidance to the 1000 Days households. After implementing the SBCC activities, most of the involved households started to show behaviour changes. More pregnant women began receiving antenatal care, giving birth at the health centres, and raising their infants exclusively on breast milk until they are 6 months old. In addition, most women stopped following food taboos, and husbands started doing their share to reduce women's workloads, especially by helping with housework and childcare. The husbands also provided support by bringing their wives and children to the health centre for ANC/PNC care and vaccinations. Overall, the health of both women and children have been improved.



Ms. Souk, providing guidance on proper hand washing steps to the 1000 Days households, home monitoring visits Activities

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Case Study 2: Individual Story of Dr. Bounma, Head of Health Center, Sing district, LNT. The case study and photos collected by Ms Sonekeo Sinxaypanhya (14/02/2021)

Dr. Bounma Vasongma, 37, is the Head of Kokmouang Health Centre in Kokmouang Village, Sing District, Luang Namtha Province. Dr. Bounma said, “The SCALING project has supported our health centre in so many ways, including providing a handwashing station, birthing equipment, and trainings on safe delivery, but importantly it has also supported us through the community accountability activity.”



Dr. Bounma Vasongma, Head of Kokmouang Health Centre in Kokmouang Village, Sing District, Luang Namtha Province

The community accountability activity began in October 2020, when the project team visited villages in the service area of the Kokmouang Health Centre to ask for the communities’ thoughts and feedback about the services there. The community feedback focussed upon the cleanliness of the centre and about the need for a fence surrounding the health centre. “Because of the project’s outreach to the communities, they were able to exercise their rights to provide their feedback and opinions on the health centre’s services.

After the meeting between the communities and the health centre, the health centre reported to the head of the Grassroots Party Secretary about its efforts to maintain cleanliness and sanitation, and its collaboration with the village chief to mobilise the community to collect funds to build a fence around the health centre. For this effort, the health centre developed the budget for the fence construction of 16,150,000 kip, which, when divided across all the households in the 11 villages in its service area, which averaged out to 22,000 kip per household. It was also decided that during the rainy season, the community members would take turns coming to help cut the grass outside the health centre.



Fence construction of Kokmouang Health Centre in Kokmouang Village, Sing District, Luang Namtha Province by community contribution and it completed on 18 February 2021

Dr. Bounma said, “After receiving support from the community, we were able to successfully build a fence for our health centre. In addition, the community has been dedicated and has taken ownership on helping to maintain a clean environment both at the health centre and in their own homes, which has allowed us to achieve the agreed goal.”

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Case study3: Individual Story of Kor Eu, Pa Or village, Sing district, LNT. The case study and photos collected by Mr Bounthone Vorlachit and Mr. Khamphone Tongsorsomlar (29/12/2020)



Mrs. Kor Eu, Pa Or Village Sing District, Luang Namtha Province.
She's very happy to have the clean water to use in front of her house.

Kor Eu, 24, lives in Pa Or Village. She said, “Before getting running water, things were very difficult. I had to go get water from far away, and it took 5-10 minutes to walk there. After coming back from the fields, I would be so tired, but I still had to endure it and go collect stream water so that we would have water to use each day. Every time I had to use water it was difficult. I had to walk a long way to get to the stream to bathe or do the laundry.”

In the past year, CARE International in Laos, along with the Luang Namtha Provincial Health Office and the District Health Offices, surveyed water systems and water sources as part of the SCALING project in order to be able to respond to the villages’ water needs. Among these was the need for sanitation, especially clean water and the construction and use of toilets.

The construction of a water system for Pa Or was completed in collaboration with all the people of the village. It was finished in December 2020, and was handed over to the village on 15 December.

Kor Eu said, “I’m so happy now, because in the future I’ll have a convenient source of water to use. I won’t be tired from going to collect water from far away. In the past when my son came home from school, he couldn’t wash his uniform at home. The stream was too far away for him to go alone, and my husband and I were too busy to help him. His clothes were dirty and even the teacher told him off for it, but now it’s so much easier. My son is cleaner and his uniform isn’t dirty. In the future, I will make sure to take good care of this water system.”

To subscribe to our 6-monthly newsletter, send comments or suggestions, please contact: Bouakham Douangpanya, Email: Bouakham.douangpanya@carient.org.la and/or Houmphanh Soulivongxay, Houmphanh.soulivongxay@savethechildren.org

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