

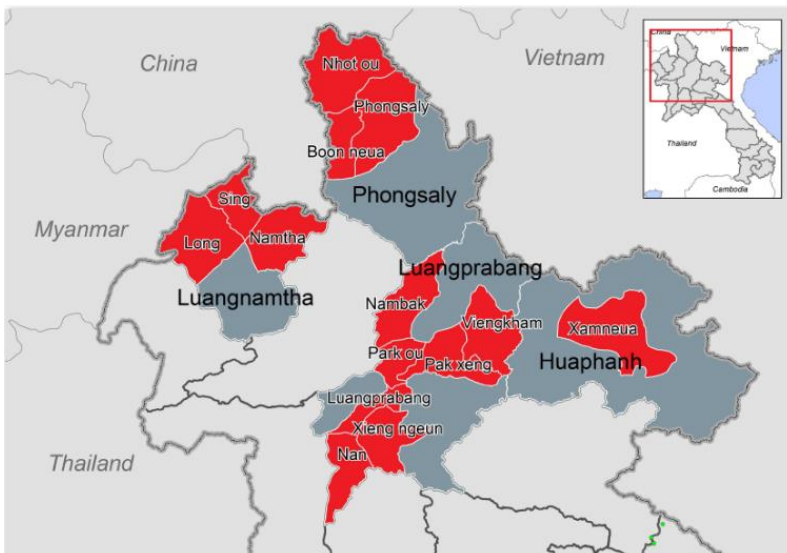
Partnership for Improved Nutrition in Lao PDR Pillar 3: Sustainable Change Achieved through Linking Improved Nutrition and Governance

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 Prabang province, implemented by Save the Children. 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).

The 6th Newsletter is done in four parts, one per target province, and in this 6th Newsletter 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 project beneficiaries in the target communities through case studies with direct quotes.



Nutrition context in Luang Prabang province

Indicators	Luang Prabang	National Average
Malnutrition among children under 5 years old – Stunting (LSIS 2017)	41%	33%
Malnutrition among children under 5 years old – Wasting (LSIS 2017)	9%	9%
Malnutrition among children under 5 years old – Underweight (LSIS 2017)	25%	21%

As classified by World Health Organization (WHO) Luang Prabang is one out of 11 provinces nationwide is reported to have very high stunting prevalence among children under five years old. As can be seen from the table, 41% of children under 5 years old suffer from stunting while 25% from underweight and 9% from wasting. (LSIS 2017)

The children who are too short for their age (stunted) may suffer from different factors such as inadequate nutrient intake, water-borne and infectious diseases, food insecurity of the household (HH), poor mother and child care, poor access to health services and facilities, remoteness, etc.

The government is making efforts to address malnutrition issues through implementing the National Nutrition Strategy (NNS) 2016-2025 from central to provincial and to district level.

The government of Laos has received contributions from international organizations, INGOs and other Development Partners in terms of technical expertise and financial support to address the malnutrition issues in Laos.



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Key accomplishments and achievements

SCALING activities have been implemented in all 210 selected target villages in seven districts including Viengkham, Nambak, Pak Xeng, Pak Ou, Xieng Ngeun, Nan and Luang Prabang.

Through this project, EU funding enabled SCALING to implement activities under three components.

Component 1 is aiming to achieve behavior change at the community level with a main focus on the so-called 1,000 days HHs. Specific target groups are pregnant and lactating women, and caregivers of children under two years to improve feeding, caring, hygiene and sanitation practices. It also aims to change the behavior on personal hygiene and sanitation, gender, reproductive health and nutritious foods among adolescent girls and boys in Lower Secondary Schools. Another main focus under this component is to increase the access to quality Nutrition and Reproductive, Newborn, Maternal, Child Health (RNMCH) in Health Centers and through medical outreach services to more remote villages.

Component 2 addresses environmental factors affecting nutrition. It aims to increase the role of women in decision-making, reduce their workload, and increase control over resources and health. This component also improves water and sanitation infrastructure and access to and use of nutritious foods.

Component 3 aims to strengthen the coordination on nutrition among relevant government sectors and ensure that the province and districts have a common understanding on national government policies and strategies with regard to nutrition. This component supports the target villages to complete nutrition sensitive Village Development Plans.

The achievements so far are listed below:

Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) at community level

- **3,788** 1,000-day HHs have been visited by trained volunteers on a regular basis
- **228** peer support groups on nutrition were formed among **2,776** young adolescents (**1,375** girls) in 38 Lower Secondary Schools.

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

- **39** support visits have been conducted by the provincial supervision mentors to district based mentors for strengthening skills of HC staff as service providers to ensure safe delivery for both mother and newborn child – this is a system of mentors-mentees linked to Early Essential Newborn Care (EENC) and Post Natal Care (PNC) counselling.
- **45** Health Centers have been equipped with growth monitoring equipment and IT equipment to enter data online, correctly and on time in the government District Health Information System (DHIS2).
- **67** health staff (**44** females) at district and HC level have been trained on Infant and Young Children Feeding and Growth Monitoring and Promotion.
- **14** health centers (HCs) have a functional community accountability mechanism. All these HCs have completed a joint action plan with the local communities. This means that gaps and priorities have been identified on the quality of services provided by the HC. On a quarterly basis the implementation of the plan is being monitored. After nine months a full review is due.

Gender

- **7,383** women have attended the Women Workload Reduction (WWR) training.
- **2,002** couples have participated in WWR or Gender Equality in Relationship training.
- **424** women have attended women leadership skills training.



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- **100** women Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) have been formed and are functioning.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Infrastructure

- **36** Water Supply Systems have been constructed or rehabilitated.
- **89** households have procured a Water Filter, and **2,714** households have constructed a latrine as a result of the WASH Marketing approach. **85** target villages have been declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) by the authorities.

Nutrition Governance

- **1** provincial assembly visit was organised to SCALING implementation sites in Viengkham, Nambak and Pak Ou districts.
- **6** inter-district learning exchange visits have been facilitated between SCALING target districts.
- **137** government staff have been trained on nutrition technical content and implementation of the NNS and other nutrition policies/strategies.
- **210** target villages have completed a new Village Development Plan 2020-2024. All have included one or more nutrition Priority Interventions.

Case studies:

Case study1: Individual Story of Chanthaly, Phonsawang village, PO district, LPB. The case study and photos collected by Khamson Namsavanh (06/04/2021)



Chanthaly, a student at Phonsawang LSS

Chanthaly is 14 years old from Khmu ethnic group and she lives with her parents in Phonsawang village, Pak Ou district. She is the only child. Her parents are rice field farmers. This school year Chanthaly is attending Grade 8 at Lower Secondary School located in Phonsawang village. After school she helps her parents with doing household chores. For example, cooking food, feeding animals, doing washing up and maintaining home cleaning. She sometimes has to help her parents working in the rice field. Chanthaly has been a voluntary Adolescent Facilitator (peer educator) on nutrition since the SCALING project began its LSS initiatives at her school from December 2019. She feels happy to be part of the team of facilitators because she has learned and gained better understanding about food groups that are good for health and food that is not good for health and she should avoid eating. She is also more aware about maintaining personal hygiene and practice after the training.

Chanthaly said, “Since I have been a peer educator group member I have learned and gained better understanding and knowledge about nutritious food, maintaining personal hygiene and something about reproductive health. For example, six food groups that are good for health including flour, vegetables, fruits, meat, calcium, oil and fat. I understand that consuming green-leaf vegetables is good for eyesight, we can also receive good protein from eating beans, consuming two types of fruits daily helps to boost our immune system, and our body needs calcium to make our teeth and bones strong.”



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“I have shared the knowledge about nutritious food, personal hygiene and reproductive health that I have learned from the training with my school mates, parents and friends. We are now in our adolescent period and required to pay much attention to taking care of our physical health.

We should keep eating healthy food daily and we should consume at least two types of vegetables and fruits daily. When girls are having their period they should wear a sanitation pad and replace it with a new one every 2-3 hours. If girls and boys are having sex, they should use a condom to protect the girl from getting pregnant and sexually transmitted diseases. I am aware more about the correct steps of washing hands with soap and clean water. It is not very clean to wash hands in the same bucket or bowl. We should wash our hands from water tap or from water bottle hanging on a wooden bar. It is clean and we can save water” she continued.



Chanthaly is sharing some knowledge about nutritious foods with her schoolmates during the break time in the school

Case study2: Individual Story of Xiengphanh, Houaykha village, Pak Ou district, LPB. The case study and photos collected by Khamson Namsavanh (18/03/2021)



Xiengphanh helps his family with doing housework

Xiengphanh is 25 years old and from the Khmu ethnic group. He lives with his family including his wife, little boy and mother-in-law in Houaykha village, Pak Ou district. Xiengphanh is upland rice farmer. His family also raises some chicken and ducks and earns income by selling some groceries at home. In 2019 his wife attended the WWR training and in 2020 Xiengphanh and his wife attended the Gender Equality in Relationship training in the village. The trainings were conducted by District Lao Women’s Union (DLWU) and SCALING project staff. After the training they understood better about gender equality, family relationship, family planning and joint decision making. After the WWR training his wife shared with him about what she learned from the training. For example, men should share family household chores especially when women get pregnant or when they are lactating. Pregnant women should not do lots of work. They need more rest at home and eat enough food so mother and child are healthy.

Before Xiengphanh thought that household chores should be all done by women. Men should just do heavy work. For example, earn money by selling physical labour and work in the rice field. After hearing about WWR and gender equality he has gained better understanding about gender issues in his village and he decided to do more household chores for his family. For example, feed the animals, do washing up, collect and prepare firewood for home cooking because during that time his wife was in her pregnancy, and now he has a little boy.



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Xiengphanh said. “Conducting Women’s Workload Reduction and Gender Equality trainings in my village are very good because it makes men more aware of real gender issues and how much time women spend on doing HH chores daily. I observe more men in my village have shared HH chores.”

Now my wife and I are more aware of gender equality, family relationship, family planning and joint decision making. I love my family and I will continue doing more my HH chores because my wife is having a 4-month old boy and I would like my wife to have more time taking care of my little boy. I will also advise my brother, sister and neighbours to help one another by sharing their family’s HH chores” he continued.



Xiengphanh helps his family feeding animals

To subscribe to our 6-monthly newsletter, send comments or suggestions, please contact Houmphanh Soulivongxay, Houmphanh.soulivongxay@savethechildren

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