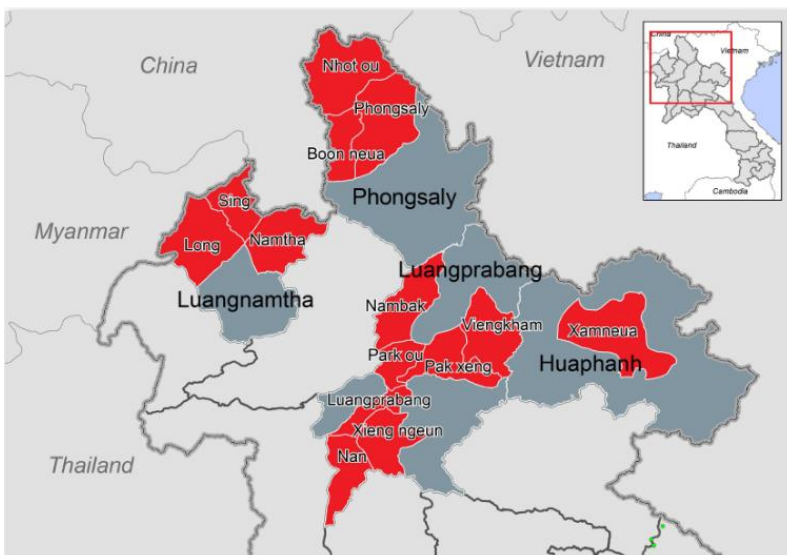


Partnership for Improved Nutrition in Lao PDR Pillar 3: Sustainable Change Achieved through Linking Improved Nutrition and Governance

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 Phongsaly province, implemented by Comité de Coopération avec le Laos. 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 per province so far. 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 Phongsaly province

Phongsaly province shows one of the highest rate of malnutrition in Lao PDR: 54% of the children under 5 years are stunted, 9% wasted and 28% underweight (LSIS 2017). Based on SCALING baseline survey in 2018, this situation is explained by lack of optimal nutrition practices especially during pregnancy and the first 1 000 days, lack of hygiene and low access to health services.

SCALING tackles these issues in a convergent approach: good nutrition practices are promoted through a Social Behavior Change approach targeting women of reproductive age, pregnant and lactating women but also adolescent girls and boys in Lower Secondary Schools, as a way to spread the messages to the next generations.

In addition, SCALING supports to strengthen the health systems, especially at Health Center level, improve access to hygiene facilities (water filters, latrines) at community level as well as access to water (new/rehabilitated water supply systems) are also key components of SCALING project. In Phongsaly, gender considerations are key due to social norms and local considerations that affects women's access to food and health facilities (food taboos, huge workload even during pregnancy and lactating period)

Phongsaly province is also quite behind compared to the other SCALING target provinces in terms of nutrition coordination: District Steering Committees have only been created very recently (in 2019 in Phongsaly, mid 2020 in Boun Neua and Nyot Ou districts) and still need support.

Key accomplishments and achievements



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Despite the impact of COVID-19 on the activities in 2020, SCALING implementation is moving ahead. In Phongsaly, up to **1,505 households have received home visits** from nutrition volunteers, while **1,832 adolescents** have participated in group discussions about nutrition, hygiene and gender in 16 selected Lower Secondary Schools supported in the three target districts (Boun Neua, Phongsaly and Nyot Ou).

Access to hygiene facilities is also improved (more than **1,000 households have constructed a latrine, 464 procured a water filter**). **Eight water supply systems** have been constructed, and **five** new ones are under construction in the second quarter of 2021, leading to **13** villages with a new system. Thanks to SCALING.

Working on gender issues needs time. Step by step some progress is made on women workload reduction. Progresses are particularly significant where the access to water has been improved: the installation of a water tap at household level helps women to save a lot of time, as well as the use of a water filter (see cases studies below). **28** Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) have been created in Phongsaly with the support of SCALING project: these groups offer a space to women to meet and discuss about their problems and their objectives, and give to them the opportunity to play a role in the management of household finances, by taking a loan or deposit money.

Case studies:



“My name is Buachan Alae. I’m 30 years old and live in Salabee, in Phongsaly district. I am Akhha. Before CCL came, life was difficult for women. We had to wake up so early to prepare food, feed the animals and then work in the tea garden or in rice fields. In December 2019, CCL and the Lao Women’s Union came to talk about Women Workload reduction. I didn’t dare to talk about this to my husband afterwards. But the project came back, and my husband listened to the discussion and understood. After that, he started to take care of the children, to fetch water and feed animals. He even agreed to let me become a VSLA member. VSLA helped me and my daughter to do ethnic embroidery.”

VSLA: Village Savings and Loan Association

Figure 1. Buachan ALAE. She is going to have VSLA meeting with members.
Photo by: Arphone CHANTACHONE
February 2021.



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Figure 2: Mrs. Thaper LAOCHOUNG. She is using her water filter at home.
Photo by: Chankam SOUYTANG, March 2021

“My name is Thaper LAOCHOUNG. I’m 30 years old and live in Khamkoer village in Boun Neua district. I am Akha. My family is quite big, we are 10 people living together. Our main activity is sugar cane cultivation. It takes a lot of time to plant and harvest by hand. Before CCL came, I had to wake up so early to cut wood and fetch water and boil it. For 10 people! Sometimes, I had not enough time to boil so we just drank the water like that and could get sick. Nam Saat and CCL showed me the use of a water filter. It costs only 260,000 Kip. Now, I don’t need to cut so much wood, have more time, and even the children can bring clean water when they go to school.”



Figure 3: Len is breastfeeding her child.
Photo by: Boualouy SIAPHAN, February, 2021.

“My name is Len, I am 21 years old and live in Ngapoung village, in Phongsaly district. I am Phounoi. We have 2 children. For the first child, I didn’t know that breastfeeding was so important until 6 months. Tea gardens takes time to collect the leaves, so after 3 months, I gave rice and supplementary milk to my child. But for the second child, CCL and DHO explained me that breastfeeding is better. My child is now 9 months and I still breastfeed him, and I go to the health center to check his health and get vaccine injection as advised by the HC staff.”

To subscribe to our 6-monthly newsletter, send comments or suggestions, please contact Laetitia Laurent, laetitia.laurent.ccl@gmail.com and

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