

Accelerating Healthy Agriculture and Nutrition (AHAN) project, Pillar 3 of the 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

newsletter

# #2

3rd quarter 2020

## Building resilience

During this global pandemic, the AHAN Project sees its relevance and impact in communities rising.

find out all the details in p. 2

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**AHAN supporting the global efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19**

**Cholavieng village, TaOi District, Saravane Province.**  
The AHAN communities are now provided with handwashing stations and upcycled tippy-taps, to facilitate the practice of hand-washing, one of the first barrier to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

**Ordinary people had an extraordinary impact on their communities.**

Before, during, and after the outbreak. The action of the Accelerating Healthy Agriculture and Nutrition (AHAN) Project didn't stop with the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic. While Lao PDR has been managing well the situation - with only 22 cases detected and closely monitored, up to date - the measures implemented by the Government of Lao PDR helped a lot to limit the spread of the virus within the country. At the same time, there were a lot to be done for AHAN teams.

Before the announcement of a country-wide lockdown that would not allow humanitarian organisations to reach their target communities, our staff and implementing partners organised 118 WASH promotion events, particularly insisting on the importance of washing hands with soap. The lockdown era began in March in Laos, by order of the Prime Minister Office.

This was the start of an unrestricted working-from-home period, a suspension of usual celebrations of Lao New Year in mid-April, leading people to celebrate "Pi Mai" at home. During those times of uncertainty, the project team, even back to their hometowns, continued to closely monitor the situation with our target villages' authorities. Communities and Health facilities' needs were assessed remotely in order to prepare a COVID-19 response plan. Even remotely, we were still connected and committed to our communities, providing them latest updates on the pandemic in country and key preventive messages to share widely.

This extraordinary situation has also shown the importance of the role of our implementing partners and how essential our beneficiaries can become towards their community. Health workers from Provincial,

## COVID-19 response

**\$106,000**

Budget

to provide

### Protection

masks, hand gels, gloves, handwashing stations, soaps, thermometers

### Prevention

capacity building of village volunteers, procurement of loud speakers for the villages, COVID-19 prevention materials

District Hospitals, Health Centers, village chiefs and village volunteers have played a crucial role during the lockdown period, as the only interface between the community and the government's directives. Broadcasting prevention messages, monitoring the quarantine zones, or simply teaching siblings how to do proper hand-washing, we thank all the Hidden Heroes in Lao PDR for their outstanding impact to avoid a COVID-19 outbreak.

Now back to a "new normal", AHAN is including the new COVID-19 dimension to its activities. As a first priority, we provided hand-washing stations, soaps, hand gels, thermometers and personal protective equipments (PPE) to the health facilities. Once the lockdown was eased up by the Government of Lao PDR in early June, AHAN teams extended these supplies to its target communities, in addition to prevention materials such as awareness posters and loud speakers.

COVID-19 might leave a long lasting change on our way of life, but it had a positive impact for some of our beneficiaries and their community. In Sammakhixay District, Attapeu Province, Davanh has been selling the

vegetables from her home-garden to her neighbours. She earned the double of the "normal times" amount, with the closure of marketplaces during the lock-down. She could buy the seeds and grow those vegetables thanks to the savings she borrowed through the Saving For Nutrition group established in her village since last year. With those savings, Davanh could also fund the studies of her children, and her daughter will become a teacher by the end of the University year.

The impact of the AHAN Project on its target communities is becoming more and more visible after a year and a half of implementation. Despite the different hurdles encountered, the significant improvement in the life of our target communities gives the energy to AHAN teams to pursue their commitment to the most vulnerable in Lao PDR.

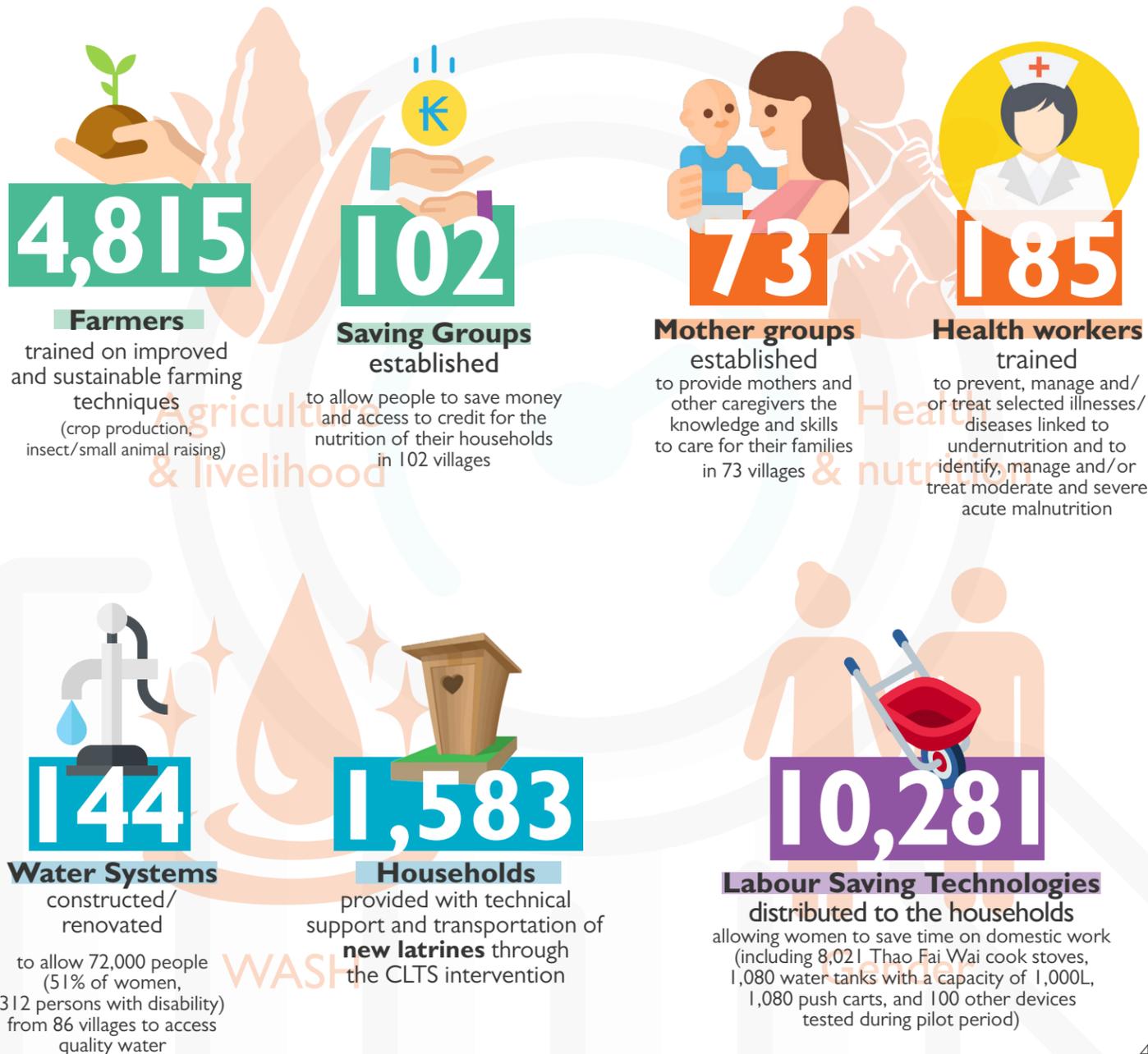


Community-Led Total Sanitation or Saving Group activities in Attapeu, caring for children during quarantine times in Savannakhet... COVID-19 have had a permanent impact in the lives of the communities, still visible whether it is by practicing hand-washing more regularly or by wearing a facemask.

# [Progress]

The visual track of the project achievements.

Find here some indicators of achievements from the beginning of the project to September 2020.



# [Who are we?]

Portrait of AHAN staff member.

This month, we meet **Thongmy Simmavong**, Agriculture & Livestock Technical Officer for AVSF in Saravane.



**“AHAN project helps improving the lives of the most vulnerable in rural areas, with equality and equity.”**

Thongmy Simmavong is a Lao globe-trotter. From Bolikhamxay - his native province - to Saravane, through Vientiane, Savannakhet, Luang Prabang... the current Agriculture & Livestock Technical Officer for the AHAN Project has an eager for discoveries and learning: “I like to gain new knowledge from various resources, like internet, or travel to new places.”

Graduated in 2010 from the Faculty of Agriculture at the National University of Laos in Livestock and Fishery, Thongmy joined the AHAN Project in Saravane District in 2019, after few experiences with private companies and non-profit associations, which allowed him to gain field experiences with communities in his area of expertise.

Moving from Luang Prabang to Saravane was a difficult choice, but Thongmy was seduced by the purpose of AHAN: “By joining the project, I knew I would be useful to the communities, ensuring that they are able to improve their nutrition by

adopting improved farming techniques. I’m also happy to see that men and women, no matter if they have disability or not, can equally and equitably access to the benefits of nutrient-sensitive agriculture for the improvement of the nutrition of their households, and ultimately to see the impact on the lives of their children.”

An outstanding teammate, Thongmy really believes that solidarity between all project stakeholders is the key for the success of the AHAN Project in achieving its goals efficiently.



# [Update]

## The picture story of the past months.

While COVID-19 pandemic changed the face of the world, flexibility, responsiveness and versatility allowed the AHAN Project to carry on its activities to serve the most vulnerable communities in Lao PDR.

Here are few illustrations of the past months highlights.



There is a striking and imperative importance attached to donors in the humanitarian world, where project visit gives a feel and direct reality of what their funds are being used for. This came to light when the EU Ambassador - Leo Faber, together with his delegation, paid a visit to the AHAN project site in Saravane Province. This was one of the Ambassador's last tour, as he ended his tenure of office in Lao PDR.

Accompanied by Micah Olad, AHAN Program Director for World Vision in Lao PDR, the Ambassador had a great opportunity to assess the impact of the EU-funded project in the communities, a year after the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding. The Ambassador could discuss directly with the local authorities about the project's progress, and with the villagers on the change made in their life thanks to the EU intervention through AHAN.

Picture from Toumlarn District, Saravane Province.

In June, AHAN celebrated the International Children's day with its communities. A vector of social behavior change, those celebrations let the children from our target villages enjoy life in all its fulness and imagine a better future for them and their families.

Picture from Thaphangthong District, Savannakhet Province.



The handover of labor saving technologies was one of the main activity after the lockdown period. 1000L water tanks, pushcarts and Thao Fai Wai cook stoves were delivered to our 124 target villages.

Pictures from Saysettha District, Attapeu Province (left) and Saravane District, Saravane Province (right).



In July-August, AHAN conducted its Mid-Term Review in 10 target villages across the 3 provinces.

174 beneficiaries participated to focus group discussions and 95 target households were surveyed to assess the project's progress since the start of its implementation.

The results of this evaluation will provide the project good indication on its achievements and the gaps to fill within its end.

Pictures from Phine District, Savannakhet Province.

# [In case you missed it]



## Transforming her world

One year after the start of the AHAN project in her village, Davanh's life has changed. From not enough food all-year round to eating and selling nutritious vegetables and supporting the studies of her children, the establishment of the Saving For Nutrition group has transformed Davanh's world.

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

## Ordinary people, extraordinary impact.

During COVID-19, Bounthiem was in the frontline of the effort. Providing awareness messages in ethnic language, but also creating tippy taps out of oil bottles, or helping vulnerable households having access to latrines...

Here is the full story of our hidden hero:  
[click here](#)



## The garden of promises.

Lettuce, chilis, cucumbers, long beans, corns - Chansam-one's garden abounds of fresh and appetizing vegetables. A fence made of cactus protects the rich flora grown with natural, non-chemical fertilizers. A garden that will provide food for her and the 13 members of her household.

Read the full article: [click here](#)

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Accelerating Healthy  
Agriculture and Nutrition

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