



Stories from the field



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Fighting malnutrition in Lao PDR

Lao PDR

One of the core priorities of the Lao Government is the eradication of poverty and to decrease high levels of malnutrition, through the provision of an enabling environment for growth and development.

An assessment in 2007 showed that despite the economic growth in Lao PDR in the last decade, chronic malnutrition continues to be as high today as it was ten years earlier. Malnutrition levels in the Lao PDR are the most severe in South-East Asia. Every second child under 5 years in the rural areas is chronically malnourished, affecting not only their physical development but also their cognitive capacity. The most common type of malnourishment is protein and/or energy malnutrition but people often also suffer from micronutrient deficiencies, such as vitamin A, iron, iodine and vitamin B1.

In the wake of the alarming assessment results, renewed attention was given to the situation and the Lao Government

demonstrated its commitment to attend to the problem by requiring assistance from FAO and other development partners. FAO has played a key role since, in supporting the Lao Government in the participatory drafting of a National Nutrition Policy in 2008 and a National Nutrition Strategy and a National Plan of Action for Nutrition in 2009 that together provide a framework for how the nutritional situation in the Laos can be addressed, activities scaled up, and, ultimately, the situation changed.

The National Nutrition Policy, the Strategy and the Plan of Action place nutrition as a cornerstone for development and emphasize the importance of nutrition for the well-being of families. The Decree on the National Nutrition Policy is legally binding. Laos hence has a unique opportunity to make sure its children and mothers/people are supported for improved food and nutrition security. FAO also continues to support the Lao Government with several activities as

identified and agreed upon in the guiding documents. FAO trains staff from government to the village level to improve household nutrition. FAO also promotes indigenous food and solutions that are accessible to all Lao.

With funding provided by a wide range of donors - European Community, Italy, New Zealand - technical assistance in support of the above legislative work was provided in the areas of household food security and better nutrition, and food safety.

CONTACTS

Serge André VERNIAU

FAO Representative

Phonxay Rd, PO Box 1640

Vientiane

Lao PDR

Tel: +856 21 413205

Fax: +856 21 414500

E-mail: FAO-LA@FAO.ORG

Larissa Bruun

Communications and Programme Officer

Tel: +856 21 413205

Mobile: +856 20 77902476

Fax: +856 21 414500

E-mail: Larissa.Bruun@fao.org

LINKS

http://www.fao.org/world/laos/index_en.htm



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FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
Maliwan Mansion, 39 Phra Atit Road
Bangkok 10200, Thailand
Tel: (+66 2) 697 4000
Fax: (+66 2) 697 4445
Email: FAO-RAP@fao.org
www.fao.org
www.fao.org/world/regional/rap