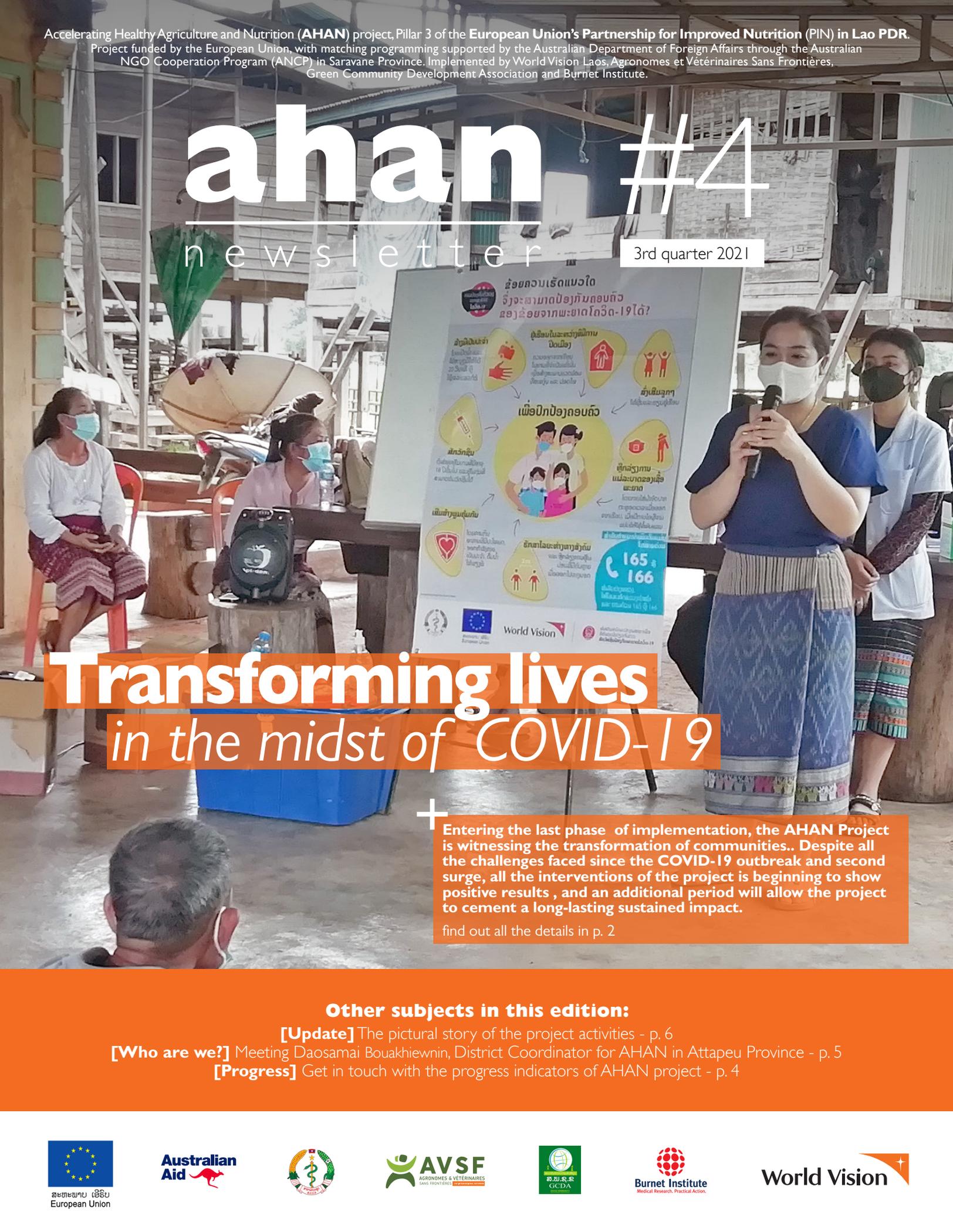


ahan #4

newsletter 3rd quarter 2021



Transforming lives in the midst of COVID-19

Entering the last phase of implementation, the AHAN Project is witnessing the transformation of communities.. Despite all the challenges faced since the COVID-19 outbreak and second surge, all the interventions of the project is beginning to show positive results , and an additional period will allow the project to cement a long-lasting sustained impact.

find out all the details in p. 2

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COVID-19 outbreak and project implementation:
the ups and downs of development work in 2021

Saysettha district, Attapeu Province.

It's 7am in Hadsati village, and it's time for Nalivanh to broadcast her daily update on COVID-19. Through the loud-speakers system and diverse training on health and WASH provided by AHAN, the village health volunteer is now able to enter in every households and provide accurate awareness messages from trustable sources of in-formation.

COVID-19 has certainly changed the face of the world, and for such exceptional circumstances, exceptional responses are needed.

The last six months have been unfortunately marked by a large COVID-19 outbreak in Laos. With a second wave started in late April and still ongoing, the implementation of the project activities has been compliant with all restrictions. In addition a significant integration of the activities on COVID-19 prevention has been mainstreamed. The grains planted by the project over the last years are growing and blooming.

COVID-19 has certainly changed the face of the world, and for such exceptional circumstances, exceptional responses are needed. With the support of the European Union and the Australian DFAT, the AHAN Project integrated and mainstreamed COVID activities to better counter and fight against the disease. Since the outbreak last year, the project provided numerous protective materials to support health workers and volunteers across its 12 target districts in Attapeu, Saravane and Savannakhet provinces.

Infection prevention and control (IPC) items such as gels, disinfectants, and drinking water were included in the COVID-19 response to ease up the efforts of the workers in the frontline of the pandemic in Laos. To better prevent the disease at the community level, AHAN provided handwashing stations with soaps, as well as loud speakers systems to broadcast prevention messages on COVID and village signboards to display the social behavior change key messages adapted and produced by the project. With more vaccine supplies now available, the project staff are supporting Government health officers from our target districts to roll-out the vaccination campaign. Preparatory work with COVID-19 and vaccine awareness events with small groups in the villages have helped to increase the vaccine acceptance of the ethnic and remote communities. This will contribute to reach the target of 50% of the Lao population vaccinated by the end of 2021.

COVID-19 response*

\$271,000
of budget repurposed to respond to COVID-19

66
Health facilities
(district health offices, district hospitals, health centers, quarantine centers) supported with protective and infection prevention and control equipment

124
villages and their sub-villages provided with communication equipments to disseminate COVID-19 prevention messages

*since April 2021

Respecting all COVID restrictions and adapting to the “new-normal” has not impeded AHAN to continue its development work with communities. In addition to the COVID response and through a thorough monitoring of all existing activities, the project witnessed significant changes happening. Families are able to access diversified food through the blooming home gardens, buzzing crickets, and thriving chickens and frogs, also allowing them to receive a new source of income. Households are drafting their financial plans, with an increased participation of women in the decision-making process. Health workers and volunteers are better trained and equipped to provide quality health care to their communities. Women of reproductive age are more aware of what good nutrition means and more prepared to take care of their newborn and children under five. 14 villages received a new borehole to improve access to clean water with villagers trained to maintain their new asset. Proper sanitation practices are becoming common with new villages declared Open-Defecation Free. Women are using their new labor-saving devices, and their husbands are becoming great helpers in the domestic tasks. Through its disability inclusion component supported by the Australian Department of Foreign

Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the project's staff have been trained on identifying disability and impairment and are now able to better respond to the needs of the people with disability in communities.

However, all this progress would be quickly lost without an additional time to ensure the sustainability and ownership of the project by all its major stakeholders: the communities and their volunteers, and the Government counterparts from Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Forestry and Lao Women Union.

In regards to all the challenges (COVID-19, floods) faced by AHAN, the consortium is seeking for a no-cost extension of the project, and is expected to implement activities under the EU funding for one more year. With successive approvals from the Ministry of Health - from the district to the national level - the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Planning and Investment, AHAN is securing a crucial additional year of implementation to enable the most vulnerable children and their communities to be sure they have a brighter future.

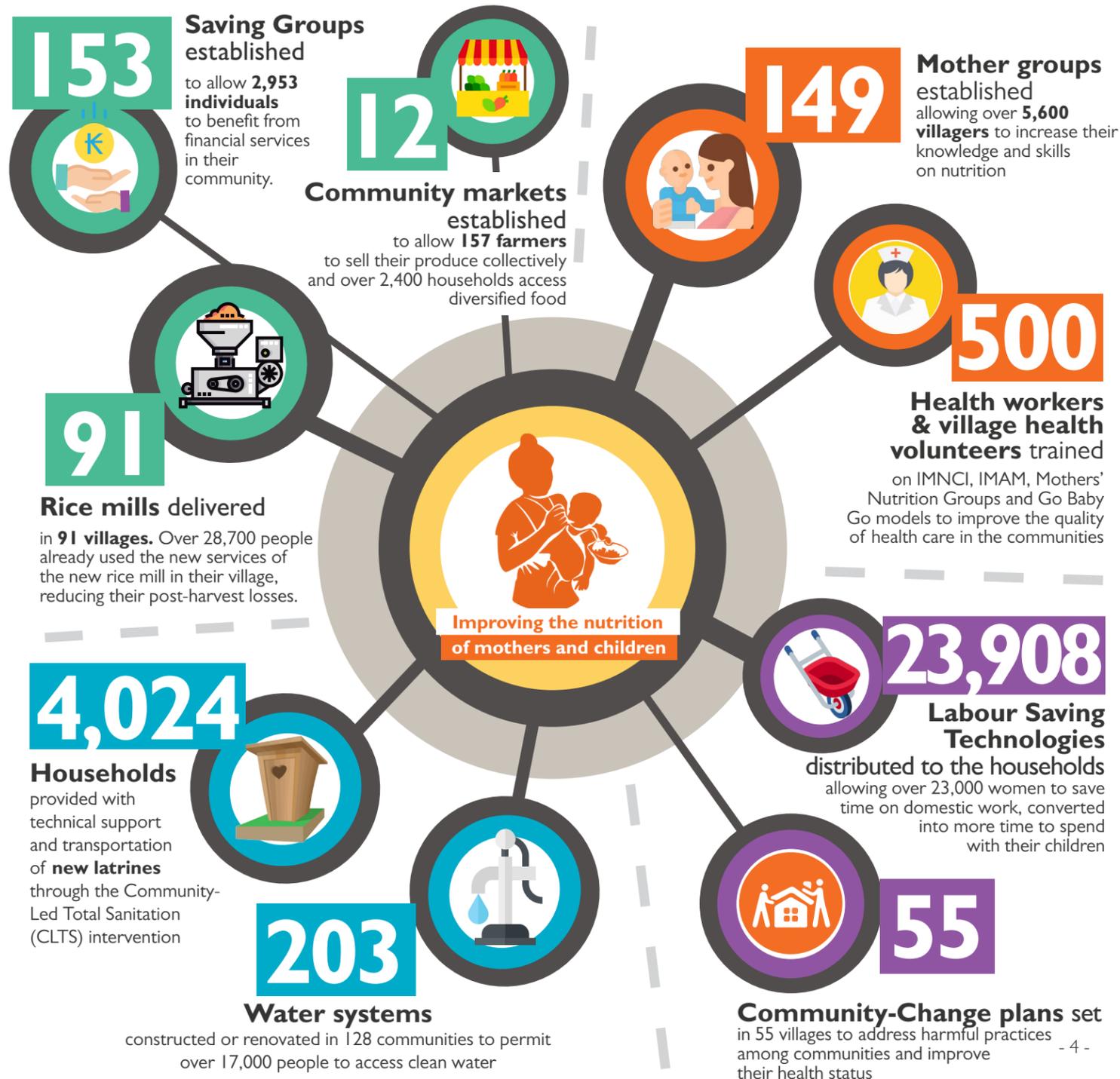


In Attapeu province, the cricket raising activity allowed the children of Mr. Mai and other family members to secure new source of protein, food diversity and earn additional income, selling 16kg of the insect for 64USD. In Saravane, AHAN team is now trained to better identify and support people with disability in our target communities, thanks to the support of the Lao Disabled People's Association (LDPA). In Savannakhet, a mother is bringing her child to the outreach mobile clinic. With the new growth monitoring equipment and training provided by AHAN, the health workers have all the tools to better identify and treat malnourished children. Appropriate counselling is also provided to families with children on normal growth, and families with children suffering from any form of malnutrition.

[Progress]

The visual track of the project achievements.

Find here some indicators of achievements from the beginning of the project to August 2021.



[Who are we?]

Portrait of our people.

This month, we meet **Daosamai Bouakhiewnin**, AHAN Project District Coordinator for World Vision Laos.



“My hope is that by the end of AHAN, the village volunteers will be confident and empowered to implement group activities.”

With a rich experience in the Lao development sector, Daosamai Bouakhiewnin chose to join the AHAN Project in 2018. Indeed, her childhood in Khong island, the extreme southern part of Laos, her studies in nursing and past work experiences in health and nutrition made her fully aware of the challenges faced by the children and mothers in remote areas, especially in the nutrition sector. Her passion and dedication to support the most

vulnerable children have been great assets and keys to the success of activities' implementation in Attapeu province.

“When I joined AHAN, my wish was to help in reducing malnutrition for children in our target communities, for the mothers and caregivers to have the right understanding on how to take care of the children, especially in the first 1,000 days of their lives”.

As a District Coordinator in charge of maternal and child health, Daosamai is the main link of the project with local partners, health centers and village offices from Sammakhixay district. Thanks to her nursing background and past experience she

became the coordinator of health, for the training of health workers and the implementation of activities such as Mothers' Nutrition Groups. She understands very well the importance of community ownership of the project's inputs.

“My hope is that by the end of AHAN, the village volunteers will be confident and empowered to implement group activities, especially the mother groups to improve the nutrition of their communities”. In the very united Attapeu team, Daosamai found her place easily to make a difference in serving the poor and vulnerable children.



[Update]

The picture story of the past months.

COVID-19 has been striking Laos over the last six months. AHAN Project teams support the Government efforts to control the spread of the virus in its target areas, also adapting to the new restrictions to continue implementing the different activities and bring a long-lasting change in the communities we serve.

Here are few illustrations of the past months' highlights.



With high COVID-19 vaccination rates in Lao urban areas, the project is now involved in the national efforts to reach out to the most remote areas to vaccinate communities. AHAN is working hand-in-hand with the Ministry of Health representatives at all levels to ensure remote communities are not left behind in the vaccination campaign, and can be safe and protect their beloved ones from the disease.

Through awareness campaign prior to the vaccination, our teams support the health workers to explain what is COVID-19, the importance of getting vaccinated and how this will help communities to recover more quickly from the disruptions caused by COVID.

Pictures from Phalanxay district (left) and Phine district (bottom right), Savannakhet province, and Toumlarn district, Saravane province (top right).

Over the last months, the project handed-over protective materials for COVID-19 frontline workers aimed to support over 66 health facilities.

It also provided new growth monitoring materials (height and weight scales and portable bags) to equip health workers in their outreach activities.

Handover of both materials in Saravane district office, Saravane Province.



The labor saving technologies provided by AHAN are easing the lives of the households, especially for the women. 1,000l water tanks (left) are able to store water for domestic uses and prevent individuals to go away from home to fetch for water. The Thao Fai Wai cook stove allow parents to cook with half less of wood: a time and energy saver reducing pollution.

Thaphangthong district (left), and Atsaphone district (right), Savannakhet province.



While their parents are participating to the Community-Change group meeting and take important decisions for the future well-being of their community, children have a friendly space to play and enjoy stimulating activities.

Phine district, Savannakhet province.

[In case you missed it]



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World Breastfeeding Week: a wind of change blows in Southern Laos.

Breastfeeding has become a new trendy topic of conversation in AHAN target communities. Three young mothers who joined the Mothers' Nutrition Groups established by AHAN in Savannakhet and Saravane Provinces recall their past practices.

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

New villages declared Open-Defecation Free!

Saravane and Savannakhet provinces recorded new villages declared ODF over the past months. Since its beginning, AHAN supported 40 villages to obtain this label, meaning every household of the village owns a latrine. Honorable mention for Toumlarn district, Saravane Province, where 10 villages have already received the precious title.

For the full story from Xonnabury district, Savannakhet province: [click here](#)



Sustainable access to water and woman empowerment: the story of Ms. Phaivan

In Saravane district, Phaivan is the financial coordinator of her village water and sanitation management committee (VWSMC). She explained how AHAN's intervention on access to water has changed the face of her village and made her a role model for the women in her community.

For the full story: [click here](#)

Disclaimer: the pictures displaying individuals or groups not wearing masks have been recorded before COVID-19 outbreak.

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Let's keep in touch!
Accelerating Healthy Agriculture and Nutrition

If you want to receive this newsletter, feel free to contact us:



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