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Save the Children



USAID NURTURE

The U.S. Agency for International Development sponsored “Nurture” (USAID Nurture) project focuses on improving the nutritional status of women and children to reduce child stunting in targeted areas of Laos. This three-year project works to improve community and household nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene practices.

Despite strong economic growth, Laos still experiences some of the highest rates of child and maternal mortality and malnutrition in Southeast Asia. Lao children remain some of Asia’s most undernourished with national rates of stunting (low height for age) at 44 percent and 27 percent of children are underweight. The project uses two strategies applied primarily through community-based health workers and local village authorities.

IMPROVING NUTRITIONAL PRACTICES

The first component helps to promote good nutrition for pregnant and lactating women and to improve infant and young child feeding practices. The first 1,000 days between pregnancy and age two is a critical period for assuring healthy child development. The second component focuses on a modified, community-led sanitation approach to mobilize communities to conduct their own appraisal and analysis of their sanitation environment. This process spurs action to address nutrition-related issues resulting from poor sanitation, including diarrhea and other conditions that limit nutrient absorption, a major cause of stunting.

EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The project supports networks of people who speak the local language and understand the cultural and social context of diverse Lao ethnic groups. In addition, the project leverages private sector relationships to ensure scalability and sustainability of improved nutrition and community sanitation practices. It supports the Lao government as it clarifies roles and responsibilities across national, provincial and district levels to help ensure consistency and ownership of these efforts.

IMPACT AND RESULTS

The project conducts activities in select provinces prioritized by the Lao government. Children who benefit from these activities are expected to become ill less frequently, which can lead to better results at school and greater income as productive adults. The project focuses on improving child feeding, hygiene and sanitation practices that can be replicated in other settings across the country. A key aspect of the project is improving the nutritional status of children by engaging local village health committees, village health facilitators and civil society nonprofit associations currently providing health services.

PARTNER USAID Nurture is implemented by Save the Children in partnership with local organizations recognized for leadership in the field of water sanitation and hygiene. These partnerships capitalize on Save the Children's leadership in the implementation of large-scale nutrition programs and local expertise in community-led total sanitation while building on their existing relationships with the Government of Laos to help ensure expansion of activities in hard-to-reach communities.

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