

## Integrated Rural Development in Poverty Regions of Laos (NU-IRDP)

### Food Facility Action: Nutrition Education

#### 1. Content and Goal

Malnutrition is still one of Laos` major problems. Nutrition awareness and education activities aim to increase knowledge about “good nutrition” and respective food habits while acknowledging local conditions. Besides training and coaching of multipliers, training and seeds to build home gardens were to be provided to villagers to demonstrate effects in practice.

#### 2. Approach, method, scale

The approach was three-fold and staged: 1. Nutrition extension workers on Provincial and District level from the Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), and Lao Women`s Union and Youth Union were trained for adapted nutrition sensitisation and education, supervision and M&E; 2. Applying this training, the staff provided information and training to villagers regarding good nutrition habits and home gardens; 3. 172 Provincial and national decision-makers were sensitized about the issue of (mal-) nutrition in Nutrition Advocacy Workshops.

The participants in the villages were mainly families with children and young women as “key change agents”. In addition to Government staff, 142 selected villagers received a more intensive training in order to support the education in the villages as Village Nutrition Promoters. 71 villages/1420 households (Nutrition Education) and 53 villages/1060 households (Home Gardens) actively participated in the initiative.

#### 3. Impacts

The 79 trained officials show increased technical, organizational and managerial skills after the training, and keep on using their knowledge to further advice local people. Also, it is expected that the trained Village Nutrition Promoters further promote healthy food habits even after the action already ended.

Baseline and end-line surveys showed an increased knowledge about good nutrition among the trained villagers (from 9% to 30%), improvement of nutrition behaviour (60% improved their food consumption), breast feeding practises (improvement from 75% to 96% of breast feeding in the first 6 months after birth) and hygiene of the population in the villages which had participated in the trainings. Since especially women with small children have participated in the trainings, it may be assumed that these improvements have a positive, long-term impact on the development of the children. Additionally, the introduced home gardens provided pilots and practical experience for better food production, including improved food diversity and availability, especially in the rainy season.

The need to scale up nutrition approaches is very much recognized by now and will lead to further initiative, e.g. under the Scaling-up Nutrition initiative (SUN).