

FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN KHAMMOUANE

A Quarterly Newsletter by
Health Poverty Action & Humana Fundación Pueblo para Pueblo



THE PROJECT IN A NUTSHELL

- **Duration:** 39 months
- **Beneficiaries:** 100 villages in 6 districts of Khammouane: Bualapha, Mahaxay, Thakek, Nhommalath, Xaybuathong & Khounkham
- **Objective:** To increase the availability of and access to nutritious food, create an environment that is conducive to improved nutrition, and strengthen authorities' capacities on food and nutrition security.

Project work under COVID-19 restrictions

The second quarter of 2020 was characterised by the global COVID-19 pandemic. While Lao PDR only confirmed a small number of cases, the country was under lock down for all of April, with the government easing restrictions step by step on a monthly basis since. Project partners in the EU-funded Food and Nutrition Security project, **Health Poverty Action (HPA)**, **Humana Fundación Pueblo para Pueblo (Humana FPP)** and **the Khammouane Province Health Office (PHO)** paused all activities involving field travel from early April to mid-May and staff worked from their homes. This time, albeit challenging, also presented an opportunity to develop new methods of remote community engagement. Community leaders were enabled to step up and demonstrate their leadership capacities in food and nutrition security. In this newsletter issue, we will share COVID-19-related project adaptations, give an update on the progress of activities and let project beneficiaries tell their own stories.



ມູນນິທິ ມະນຸດສະທຳເພື່ອຄົນສູ່ຄົນ
HUMANA
Fundación Pueblo para Pueblo



Engaging communities remotely

As many professionals around the world, HPA and Humana FPP project staff increased their digital working skills during the lock down period and conducted internal team meetings online. HPA staff, who are responsible for **nutrition-sensitive activities such as water, sanitation and hygiene, nutrition awareness, and health checks for children under 5**, remained in contact with their networks of Village Nutrition Volunteers, Women's and Youth Groups, and Village Development Committees through phone calls and WhatsApp. Humana FPP works on the **food security component of the project, including setup and training of Farmers' Clubs, establishment of demonstration plots and irrigation systems as well as vegetable, crop and livestock management**. Humana FPP staff, also using phone and instant messenger services, regularly checked-in with Farmers' Clubs' Committees, Step Up Farmers and Village Veterinary Workers. Through COVID-19 restrictions, HPA and Humana FPP were able to put to the test their respective community-based structures and identify what works well already and what needs more work before project completion. Apart from **monitoring progress of project activities**, HPA and Humana FPP also **shared COVID-19 information** with community leaders, and checked if any villagers were showing COVID-19 symptoms.

Putting to the test community-based structures established for long-term project sustainability

SPOTLIGHT: VILLAGE LOUDSPEAKERS FOR NUTRITION AND COVID-19 AWARENESS



Before lock down, HPA supported the installation of loudspeaker systems in 68 target villages. As part of its inclusive behaviour change approach, the project aims to convey nutrition-sensitive knowledge to communities through regular loudspeaker announcements. HPA has equipped village authorities and volunteers with **key messages on nutrition and malaria**, and established committees in each village who are in charge of equipment usage and maintenance. Additionally, broadcasting committees received **recordings with COVID-19 information** including preventive measures and symptoms. Village authorities are disseminating this information several times a week. Following up on loudspeaker installation and distribution of key health messages, after the lock down, HPA found that communities' response to the loudspeakers has been very positive.



ມູນນິທິ ມະນຸດສະທຳເພື່ອຄົນສູງຄົນ
HUMANA
Fundación Pueblo para Pueblo



Making the project COVID-19 safe



After lock down measures were partly lifted, and field work could resume, HPA and Humana FPP launched back into full action mode. Activity plans were adjusted to account for the break and **all staff were equipped with face masks and hand sanitisers** to keep project participants safe. At trainings, the project partners now implement **social distancing and hand washing practices**, and have reduced the number of participants at individual sessions.

Regular hand washing is further enabled by **newly established and repaired water sources**. To ensure communities' access to clean water as a base for good hygiene and to reduce malnutrition, HPA repaired 37 existing wells in 13 villages. Humana FPP has established 39 wells and 40 small-scale irrigation systems to provide water to all of the Farmers' Clubs' 200 demonstration plots. For well maintenance, the project has established **Village Water Committees** and trained them in well management and basic repairs. Government partners from the District Health Offices (DHO) and District Agriculture and Forestry Offices (DAFO) have been included in water system establishments to ensure sustainability.

SPOTLIGHT: CHILLIES FOR IMPROVED NUTRITION

Mrs Phasouk and her husband live in Yangkom village of Thakek District. In December 2019, they established a small plantation growing chillies, beans and other vegetables, with support from Humana FPP. **Selling chillies as a cash crop, the family has been able to improve their income, and the parents are now able to afford nutritious food** for their malnourished son. The other vegetables grown supplement the family's diet, and HPA raised their **awareness of good nutrition and hygiene practices** to improve the family's health.



ມູນນິທິ ມະນຸດສະທຳເພື່ອຄົນສຸ່ຄົນ
HUMANA
Fundación Pueblo para Pueblo



Update on current activities

With regards to the **food security component of the project** (Output 1), Humana FPP is continuing to work on irrigation systems, well establishment and the distribution of animals to Farmers' Clubs' members. Project staff are also checking in with Farmers' Clubs on their already existing vegetable demonstration plots and providing assistance where needed. In line with the seasonal calendar, Humana FPP is supporting farmers with preparatory activities for crop planting during the wet season and will take this opportunity to establish crop demonstration plots, 1 per Farmers' Club, including cash crops as well as rice using the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) method.



HPA, working on **improving communities' nutrition** and **building government partners' capacity** (Outputs 2 & 3), is running refresher trainings for Village Nutrition Volunteers and demonstration cooking sessions with mothers of malnourished children. The organisation is in the process of conducting a third round of health screenings for Children Under 5, measuring their height, weight and mid-upper arm circumference. DHO staff received a refresher training in the WHO ANTHRO tool to record and analyse the nutritional and health needs of children.

SPOTLIGHT: MRS KHOUANTA'S EXPERIENCE

Mrs Khouanta, member of her Farmers' Club's Committee, has received 5 chickens from the project as an **animal pass-on loan**. Participating families commit to giving the young from their animals' first litter to other families in their communities. These families, in turn, will do the same when their animals reproduce. Mrs Khouanta's granddaughter is one of the malnourished children monitored by the project, and through a **more balanced diet and regular medical checks**, her health has already improved.



Contact us

Health Poverty Action

Michael Pitt, Country Director
m.pitt@healthpovertyaction.org, +856 21 264 960
www.healthpovertyaction.org
 Facebook: @hpalaos

Humana Fundación Pueblo para Pueblo

Gitte Hector, Program Manager
ghector@humana.org, +856 20 2254 3426
www.hpp-laos.org
 Facebook, Twitter, Instagram: @hpplaos

This Newsletter has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Health Poverty Action and Humana Fundación Pueblo para Pueblo and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.



ມູນນິທິ ມະນຸດສະທຳເພື່ອຄົນສູ່ຄົນ
HUMANA
 Fundación Pueblo para Pueblo

