



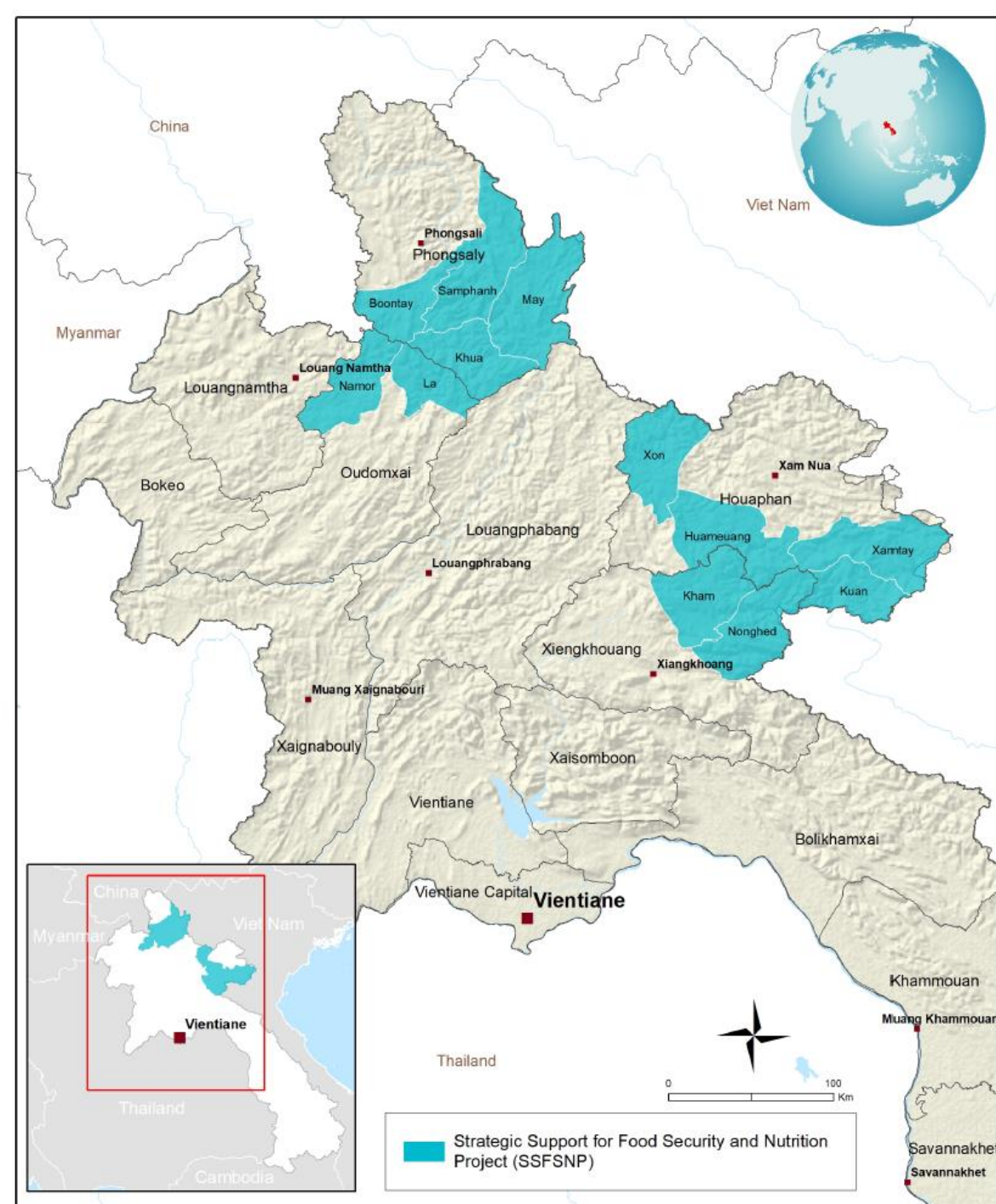
The Road to COP28 Webinar Series: Building Resilient Food Systems through Climate Action, Nutrition Security, and Closing the Gender Gap

GAFSP-funded Agriculture for Nutrition Project – Phase 1 (AFN I) Lao PDR



AFN Basic Design Parameters

- USD 38.82m (including USD 30 million grant from GAFSP)
- USD 3.8 mill as Additional Funding grant from GAFSP in 2021
- 400 villages in 12 districts in 4 provinces (approximately 34,000 HHs)
 - Phongsaly – 4 districts
 - Oudomxay – 2 districts
 - Houaphan – 4 districts
 - Xieng Khouang – 2 districts
- **Project Goal:**
“Contribute to reduced extreme poverty and malnutrition in poorest communities”
- **Project objectives:**
“Improved and diversified agricultural production and household nutrition enhance life prospects”
- Project duration 2016-2022



Three Technical Components

1. Strengthened Public Services (MAF-IFAD oversight)

1.1 Program Coordination capacity

1.2 Nutrition sensitive agriculture services

1.2.1 Participatory Action Research (PAR)

1.2.2 Forage development

1.2.3 Technical Service Centers

1.2.4 Agriculture Extension

2. Nutrition Sensitive Planning (MAF-WFP oversight)

2.1 District multi-sector planning

2.2 Village Development Planning

2.3 Farmer Nutrition Schools

2.4 Home Garden and farm planning

3. Investments (MAF-IFAD oversight)

3.1 Strategic Investment Plans

3.2 Village Agriculture Infrastructure

3.3 Farmer Investments: Garden Grants, Agriculture Production Group grants

3.4 Public-private investments)

Component 1: Strengthened Public Services

- 14 Technical Service Centres (TSC) supported, farmer trainings organized and extension services provided to neighbouring villages
- **29** Participatory Research Actions (PAR) **agriculture production models** developed and of which, **19 PARs** actively promoted within the project for sustainable climate-adapted, nutrition-sensitive agriculture and natural resources management technologies including development of simple, appropriate learning materials **for use by extension agents and smallholders;**
- 884 Lead Farmers selected, trained and certified as Village Agriculture Officers (127 female)
- 769 Village Veterinary Workers active in AFN project villages and supported by the project
- 900 on-farm demonstrations established in 285 villages;
- Forage production activities implemented in 196 villages;
- Project Monitoring Information System (**PROMIS**) developed at MAF

Component 2: Community-driven agriculture-based nutrition interventions

- Capacity building support to District Nutrition Committees, coordinating convergence activities;
- Five-Year District Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Plans finalized and endorsed in all 12 districts
- 365 Village Nutrition Committee formed and 365 / 300 Village Nutrition Plans on food and nutrition developed with 33,095 HHs participation in village nutrition planning process;
- 386 Village Nutrition Centres constructed, and Farmer Nutrition Schools (FNS) rolled out in all 400 AFN villages;
- 1,217 Village Nutrition Facilitators (79% women) selected, trained, facilitating the FNS sessions
- 34,628 persons (91.4% women, 85.9% ethnic groups) participated in the Farmer Nutrition School sessions with four module course on health care, basic farming practices, cooking, nutrition education, etc.,
- 1,150 Village Nutrition Facilitators and Lead Farmers, trained on Basic Agriculture Techniques (5-day course)

Component 3: Sustainable and inclusive market-driven partnerships


- **465 rural infrastructure schemes** (rural roads, irrigations, water supplies, community fish ponds, community markets, community bridges, drying facilities, warehouses, etc.,) **constructed / rehabilitated**, benefiting around 30,350 HHs:
 - 757 km of access tracks improved, widened or newly developed
 - 560 ha of irrigation schemes constructed/rehabilitated
 - 120 drinking water supply schemes constructed
- **871** Agriculture Production Groups (APG) formed. **802** APGs grants disbursed (around USD 4,500 per grant) to 802 groups (13,915 HHs) and activities started
- **22,970 garden grants** (USD 120) disbursed to women beneficiaries for homegarden investments;
- **7 Private Public Community Partnerships** supported with matching grants and semi-formal buyer agreement, reached between locally-based small to medium scale agri-enterprises and the supported APGs, benefiting 2,832 smallholder farmers in 73 villages

District and Village Nutrition Plans and Activities under 22 NPAN


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ເມືອງ ນາໜີ້
ແຂວງ ອຸດົມໄຊ
2021-2025



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Farmer Nutrition Schools (FNS)

- **FNSs are semi-structured interactive gatherings** in villages which are delivered by nominated and trained Village Nutrition Facilitators. **Village Nutrition Facilitators are selected** in a participatory manner by the village and are respected in their community. The primary aim of the FNS is to improve household food and nutrition security and promote women's empowerment.
- **FNS encourages social behavioural change** using several different SBCC tools, such as practical learning sessions and community sensitization. The tools and learning sessions focus on **household nutrition; food security; basic hygiene and WASH; domestic food preservation and processing; raising small livestock/fish; animal and human health; menu planning with nutritious and indigenous food crops; and overall highlighting the importance of dietary diversity for improved nutrition.**
- FNS specifically **target women** of reproductive age (15-49 years) and other vulnerable groups, with priority being given to **pregnant and lactating women** and girls, adolescent girls and **mothers with children under 5 (CU5)**. However, they are open to any interested **community members** wanting to join.





Results and Impacts in a nutshell

Overall, the project received a 5 out of 6 rating from IFAD

Reduced Poverty

- Incomes have increased (*per capita income USD 260 in 2017 to USD 494 in 2022*)

Reduced Malnutrition Rates

- Stunting and Underweight rates have decreased

Increased Agriculture Production

- Through improved technologies, infrastructure support and provision of grants, production of crops and livestock has increased by 94% and 104% respectively. Homegarden production increased by 165%

Increased Service Delivery

- Technical service delivery at village level has increased by Village Technicians, Village Facilitators, TSC and technical staff from government line departments

Increased Dietary Diversity

- Through SBCC, small scale agriculture production and provision of garden grants, households consume more diverse diets.

Increased Women Empowerment

- Through the FNS and Village Planning activities, there is a visible increase in empowerment of women

Increased Planning Capacities on local levels

- Increased capacities on village and district levels on nutrition sensitive planning

Some Project Performance Indicators

Rural poverty impact

Per capita income increased from USD **260 in 2017 to USD 494** in 2022, and the portion of the population living below the poverty level decreased from 70% to 46.4% during this time.

Sales increased by **203% for crops and 209%** for livestock over the life of the project. The COVID-19 pandemic and current economic crisis in Laos has most likely impacted the projected level of income increase during the last 2 years, nevertheless, the project achieved a robust increase in incomes.

Farmer's knowledge and skills have been **considerably improved** through provision of **training and technical support**. 10,570 farmer households of APG were found to have adopted a technology introduced by the project, a figure jumping to 20,630 farmer households if technologies related to homegardens are included.

Some Project Performance Indicators *cont.*

Food security

- The project generated **an increase** in the food security of rural poor men and women, most targets were met. Households experiencing one or more months of food insecurity dropped from 14% to 11.6%, and 14.2% in control villages.
- The project objective related to improved food security **was well surpassed** with 31,366 HHs having 2 months or less food insecurity and 29,765 HHs reporting having zero months of food insecurity, surpassing the target of 21,000 HHs.
- **Stunting rates decreased** from 47% to 44.9% in 2021 and projected at 43.7% in 2022 against a target of 42.3%. This is a good result considering the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis that occurred during the last few years of project implementation period.

Some Project Performance Indicators *cont.*

Agriculture production

- Project activities have led to a **good increase in agricultural productivity** or production in the project target area. Crop production increased by 94% and livestock production increased by 79%;
- Newly constructed or rehabilitated **irrigation schemes increased the irrigated area by 560 ha**, benefitting more than 1,200 households. Rice yields in irrigated areas increased from 2.7 mt/ha to 3.5 mt/ha;
- The outbreak of the African swine fever negatively impacted the pig production in the AFN areas during the first half of the project, but production picked up again during the last 2 years of the project.

Some Project Performance Indicators *cont.*

Gender equality and women's empowerment

- Women accounted for a substantial number of beneficiaries, 91% of Farmer Nutrition School participants were women;
- 22,970 Garden grants (USD 120 each) were distributed to women only;
- Women constitute 79% of the Village Nutrition Facilitators;
- The gender assessment **clearly shows an improvement in nutrition knowledge for women** but also indirectly for men, stronger economic empowerment and decision-making, time-saving, increased leadership and decision-making roles for women in the communities, and women having increased access to information and trainings;
- The project was able to **change** some of the gender roles and gender relations during the implementation period. The changes in the status of women within target communities and at the household level have been **positive**.

Some Project Performance Indicators *cont.*

Adaptation to climate change and environment and natural resource management

- 95% of the total beneficiary outreach had been assisted to cope with the impact of climate change, with specific interventions as **(i) promotion of short-term and drought-tolerant crops and varieties; (ii) water management practices including drip irrigation; (iii) organic production practices; (iv) soil preparation techniques; (v) irrigation; and (vi) promotion of forage cover crops;**
- However, in view of the increasing importance of **climate change and the severe threat**, posing to the target communities, this issue could have been given more prominence in the design and implementation of AFN and has been better integrated in the AFN-II project;
- **High pressure on the natural resource base linked to harmful agricultural practices**, primarily **uncontrolled clearing of forest on steep slope areas for cultivation occurs throughout the project target districts is driven by factors outside the influence of AFN;**
- Communities have **increasing problems with water supplies** which are likely to be **linked to clearing of watershed areas for production.**

Project Completion Report (PCR) April-May 2023

- “The **Farmer Nutrition Schools** are considered as a **highly successful activity** and an example of best practice with strong potential for replication and scaling up, by projects funded by WB, WFP, govt, etc.;
- The **appreciation and enthusiasm of Village Nutrition Facilitators** and FNS participants was evident during village meetings conducted by the Mission. Learning materials were said to be appropriate and accessible. In the early phase, the FNS were targeted narrowly to **pregnant and breastfeeding women** but after MTR this was broadened to encourage participation by **all women of reproductive age as well as older women, men and adolescent girls.**”
- “The pathway of addressing under-nutrition **through integrated agriculture and nutrition behaviour change communication** has been validated and a replicable model for implementation has been developed and demonstrated as effective.”

Project Completion Report (PCR) April-May 2023

- “As explained by all key informants, another **great result** of AFN is the **improved knowledge and awareness on nutrition of men and their enhanced interest on children care and prevention of malnutrition.**”
- “Another significant result of AFN is the contribution **provided on policy and governance with the operationalization of the District Nutrition Committees (DNCs)** in all 12 districts covered by the project and the development of community driven **Village Nutrition Plans (VNPs)** integrated with the Village Development Plans (VDPs) process and highly **representative of all village members, both men and women.**”
- “With AFN, **women became more confident to participate in household and community discussions** and more accepted by communities and household to do so. This was due to a large **participation of women to Farmer Nutrition Schools, increased knowledge on nutrition and agriculture, improved awareness on causes of malnutrition and how to prevent it**, increased income through selling of vegetables and small animals from homestead gardens, and active participation in village planning sessions.”

Project Completion Report (PCR) April-May 2023

Innovation

- “**The FNS represents** a novel solution within the context and the project area. The FNS methodology was improved over the project implementation period based on lessons learned, including a **reduction from ten modules initially to four simplified modules**, combining cooking demonstration sessions with behaviour change toward more balanced and healthy food preparation and feeding”;
- “**The Village Nutrition Plans (VNP)** represent a further innovation based on the observation that general **village development plans remained dominated by proposed infrastructure investments**. The project responded by introducing the VNP which assists villagers, led by the VFs, **to identify and address specific constraints and opportunities for improving nutrition**”;
- “While not strictly a technical innovation, the project led the way in committing to support the **convergence approach and strengthening the DNC, and took a decentralized implementation approach in line with the GoL decentralization policy**. The project has made notable efforts to document and disseminate lessons learned.”

Main success factors

- (i) Strong leadership and support from MAF with experienced full-time program coordinator and deputy coordinator and other national stakeholders in guiding provincial and district teams to implement the project activities;**
- (ii) Experienced full-time provincial and district project coordinators, playing coordination roles and technical support to project implementation and management;**
- (iii) Experienced full-time key project team (FM, Pro, M&E, etc.,) to provide advisory support to local partners;**
- (iv) Project approach follows decentralisation policy of the Government of Laos with decentralised planning and decision making with full engagement of local implementing agencies in planning, implementation and management, resulting in ownership, commitment and support;**
- (v) Regular steering committee meetings at national, provincial and district levels to review progress, approve plans and guide overall implementation;**
- (vi) Good coordination between MAF, IFAD and WFP, especially in-country with short communication lines;**
- (vii) Regular joint Project Support Missions (SM, ISM, etc.,) of IFAD and WFP;**
- (viii) The direct provision of grants and support to individual women (garden grant), producer groups (APG grant) and villages (VDF – rural infra) led to a visible increase in direct implemented activities, ownership and impacts;**
- (ix) The project strategy of providing nutrition-sensitive SBCC, small grants for home garden development, the support to agriculture farmer groups for semi-commercial production and the construction of small infrastructure schemes, together with bottom-up planning processes is the main driver for the success of the project**







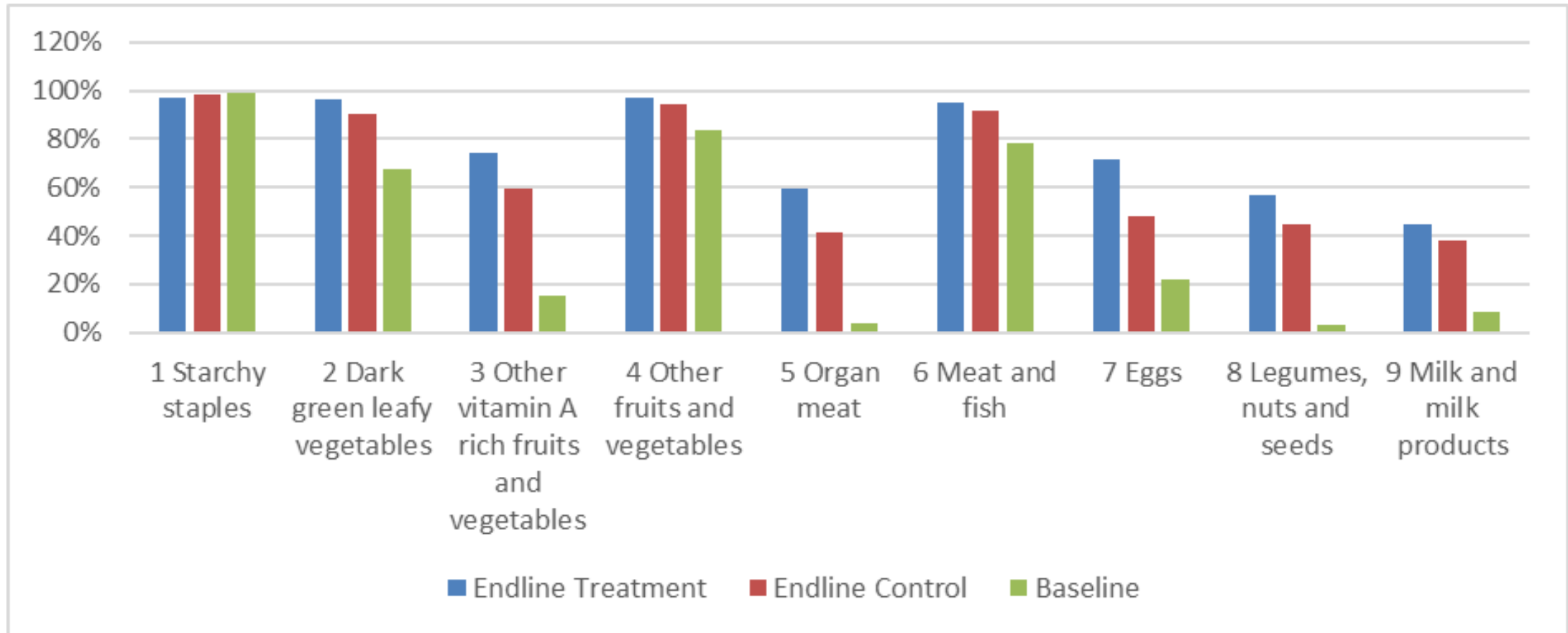


Impacts – Stunting / Underweight

Overall stunting/underweight data for AFN provinces / districts

Survey	Year	Stunting (%)	Underweight (%)	
LSIS – I	2011	57.5	26.6	} Decreasing trend
Baseline	2017	47.0	23.9	
Midline	2020	48.9	19.9	
Annual	2021	44.9	18.4	
RRPM-MTR	2022	43.7	21.4	
<i>LSIS – III</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>data not yet available from MOH</i>		

Impacts – Individual Dietary Diversity for Children 23-59 months old (IDDS)



Eight food groups see a large increase in consumption over Baseline, AFN villages score all higher than control villages, except for the staple food group (rice)

Impacts – Minimum Acceptable Diet (MAD)

Children aged 6-23 months, % meeting MAD

Province	Baseline Survey		Endline Survey	
	AFN Villages	Control Village	AFN Villages	Control Village
Huaphanh	24 %	21%	76%	44%
Oudomxay	26%	22%	45%	33%
Phongsaly	15%	18%	55%	15%
Xiengkhouang	19%	28%	72%	54%
Total	20%	23%	63%	31%



A woman with dark hair, wearing a black long-sleeved top with a white floral pattern and a colorful patterned skirt, is smiling and holding a large woven basket filled with fresh green leafy vegetables. She is standing in a field of similar plants. In the background, there are trees with yellow flowers and a banana tree. The text "THANK YOU" is overlaid on the right side of the image.

THANK YOU