

# Media Release:

## Research on institutional constraints to improved nutrition in Laos commences

16 February 2015

The Centre for Nutrition, Department of Hygiene and Health Promotion of the Ministry of Public Health, in collaboration with Laos-Australia Development Learning Facility (LADLF), an Australian Aid project, is implementing the first phase of a research project to identify constraints to effective implementation of the national nutrition policy in Laos.

The aim of the research is to assess, and start to address, key institutional constraints affecting implementation of national nutrition policies and programs, and to directly inform finalization of the Multi-Sectoral Food and Nutrition Action Plan.

“This is the first research to look into this area in order to help us to find ways to effectively implement the national nutrition policy to maximize benefit for children in Laos,” said Dr. Bounthom Phengdy, Director of the Centre for Nutrition.

Malnutrition hinders the growth of children and socio-economic development of Laos. According to the 2013 Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Progress report of Laos, stunting in children remains the biggest challenge in Lao PDR, with an estimated 44 per cent of children under five years of age who are stunted.

Recent data from the Lao Social Indicators Survey suggest that the rate of decline in under nutrition is too slow (less than 1 percentage point per year) to meet national or international MDG targets. With the annual growth of 1.4 per cent of the population, the number of stunted Lao children is more likely to increase than to decrease.

Attempts to address this have been made through improved socio-economic development for the poor and institutional establishments. These include the establishment of the multi-sectoral National Nutrition Committee and the Centre for Nutrition within the Ministry of Public Health, which acts as the secretariat for the National Nutrition Committee.

It is expected the second phase of work will involve undertaking a detailed analysis of institutional constraints, and developing and testing specific recommendations for improving institutional settings to support implementation of national nutrition policies and programs. These recommendations will help inform finalization of the Multi-Sectoral Food and Nutrition Action Plan.

The research is to be completed in 2015.

The two-phase assessment will utilize a range of research methods including desk research, one-on-one interviews, focus group discussions, field visits and structured/semi-structured interviews with key informants to gain their views on relevant institutional constraints, and to develop recommendations on and build consensus around how these constraints can be best addressed.

The research is funded by Australian Aid's Laos-Australia Development Learning Facility, which was established in January 2014. One of its core focus is to support and strengthen research-to-knowledge-to-policy linkages by commissioning policy-relevant research and knowledge-sharing activities.

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Photo by: LADLF/Latsany Pakdisoth

Ant eggs, fish and river shrimp in Saravan Province – good sources of protein and local produce.

**For more information**

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