

Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene for All Programme (SSH4A)

Laos

Sanitation in Laos PDR

Sanitation coverage is very low (estimated 8% in project areas) in Savannakhet province. Many villages do not have a single toilet, most people have never used a toilet in their life. In general, people only know about the expensive toilets built by a few rich families. Locally, there is a strong preference for pour flush toilets over cheaper dry pit latrine models. The challenge for the project is first to create demand for sanitation, and then introduce cost-effective toilet designs that are affordable for poor households, to enable the village to reach full sanitation coverage.

SSH4A programme in Laos PDR

The Sustainable Sanitation & Hygiene for All (SSH4A) project in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) targets 80 villages across 4 districts in Savannakhet Province in Central Laos. The SSH4A project target areas have some of the lowest sanitation coverage in Laos.

The Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach has been adapted to the diverse cultural context in Lao PDR. This innovative community process triggers demand for sanitation services.

The project builds the capacities of a range of government and nongovernment stakeholders to create an effective force for improving access to rural sanitation. It helps strengthen the capacities of the private sector and entrepreneurs involved in the sanitation supply chain in target areas to meet village demand for cost-effective toilets through business and technical training.

Partners

The Savannakhet Provincial Rural Development & Poverty Reduction Office is the lead agency that is closely supported by provincial and district offices of Health, Education, Planning & Investment, and the Lao Women's and Youth Unions.

Programme goal

Improved health and quality of life of 4,200 rural households in four priority districts in Savannakhet province by improving access to sustainable sanitation and hygiene.

Emerging results

- 46 government staff have been trained in the CLTS approach and behavioural change communication methods. Capacity is growing to implement and monitor sanitation activities at the provincial and district levels.
- The sanitation message has reached 70% of the families in the target areas, and more than 3000 households are committed to building a toilet, but most say they are waiting for the rice harvest before starting construction. (Severe flooding that occurred in August 2011 may affect actual results).
- There is improvement in sanitation coverage in about 50% of the target villages, with several communities moving close to 100% coverage in just a few months. Overall sanitation coverage is about 15%.

Key lessons

- The CLTS approach works well in this cultural context, but promotion campaigns must be carefully timed to avoid the agricultural and rainy seasons for maximum impact.
- Reaching full sanitation coverage requires community consensus, and strong leadership at the village and government levels.
- If other programmes have already provided free or subsidised toilets in the area, it is difficult to motivate people to work towards their own sanitation improvement.
- If provided with simple designs and trainings, many families chose to build their own toilet.
- In areas where demand creation is effective, the supply of toilet parts quickly becomes a critical factor. Activities to improve the supply chain should start early in the project cycle.



"Before, we would teach villagers hygiene promotion for hours and hours, but the results were very weak...CLTS approach is an effective tool to convince people to build latrines and improve hygiene."

Mr. Aloun Chanthalangsy, Head of Xonabouri District Rural Development Office

"When I had no toilet I defecated in the bushes like everyone else, It was very dirty and smelly...Now I have built a toilet and become a model for my neighbours - I am very happy."

Mr Sichanh Souvideth, Resident, Nakham Village, Atsahpon district

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