

INGO builds new water supply for village in Oudomxay

Times Reporters

In April, Plan International Laos completed the construction for a Community Water System in Vangtang village, Oudomxay province, providing enough safe water to use for drinking, cooking and bathing.

With community members experiencing physical effects from the nearby contaminated Nam Beng river they continued to use its water for bathing as well as washing their clothes and dishes but refused to drink or cook with it.

Most people were walking over 30 minutes just to collect water from the Nam Tang river which is believed to be much safer to consume.

After the installation of a new water tank, nine new water taps, with four other taps repaired, people living in Vangtang village now have enough safe water to use for drinking, cooking and bathing.

Plan International along with Oudomxay provincial and district health departments officially handed over the water system to Vangtang leaders at the end of last month.

Plan started working in the village in November 2015, helping community members to find a sustainable and safe alternative water source to the polluted Nam Beng river they had been using.

Vangtang was not originally one of Plan's Public Health Programme's target communities, but villagers and District Health partners repeatedly requested support to rehabilitate and enlarge their

water system.

Plan International's Public Health Coordinator in Houn district, Cha Moua said, "after receiving request letters from villagers, Plan and the District Health Office visited Vangtang and conducted a survey to determine their needs. We found that there were several reasons to help them."

Although the government provided Vangtang village with a water system more than a decade ago, the water supply is now insufficient especially after the village population has increased.

People began to reluctantly rely more heavily on the contaminated Nam Beng river for their water needs.

"We suffered using the unsafe water from the Nam Beng" explained Lee, a 20 year-old mother, "My husband and I have skin rashes from bathing in the Nam Beng for the past four years. I've suspected that the river contained chemical contamination from banana and watermelon plantations located along the Nam Beng but we didn't have a choice".

Oun, a 5 year-old schoolboy, said he sometimes doesn't take a bath, because he "felt itchy" after bathing in the Nam Beng.

Other effects of the newly built water system were also felt. "We don't have to fetch water for the school toilets anymore, which are located on the top of the hill. Next to my house, there is now a water tap that I can easily get the water for my toilet at home." Mone, a 9 year-old schoolgirl said.



Teenagers, responsible for fetching water from the river, are excited to finally have piped water supply.

LDC nations call for more assistance

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Greater funding is required from international communities in order to expedite development of the world's 48 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) including Laos, experts have noted.

The midterm review conference for the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs took place in Antalya, Turkey recently, to assess the LDCs' progress over the past five years, and to find ways of accelerating their path towards sustainable development.

Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment Dr Khamlien Pholsena led a Lao delegation to attend the United Nations conference along with other leaders from the LDCs nations.

Dr Khamlien delivered his remarks at the meeting, highlighting progress made as well as challenges facing Laos in implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action.

He also stressed the great efforts made by the government



Dr Khamlien Pholsena speaks at the conference.

to progress national socio-economic development and graduate from least developed country status by 2020.

In fact, Laos has tried to align its development strategies with international development programmes in order to accelerate national development.

Developed countries have been called to assist the poorest nations, as they have committed to, so that the poor nations can overcome challenges and enable poor people access to basic needs.

However the LDCs nations were required to enhance productivity and further develop infrastructure to ensure that the world's poorest nations are at the forefront of efforts to build an inclusive and sustainable future.

Speaking at a press conference, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, said the global community should never forget that humanitarian and social development is "indispensable" for sustainable development.

"We will continue to bring the challenges of least developed countries to the agenda of G-20," he stressed, noting that Turkey's official development aid was about US\$1 billion in 2010 and increased to US\$3.9 billion in 2015."

The Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Helen Clark said at the opening plenary that "This is an important opportunity to focus on the special needs of LDCs and to assess the

status of implementation of the IPoA, taking into account last year's important global agendas, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the associated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)."

"Despite important progress, however, significant challenges remain. Some 51 percent of the populations of LDCs live in extreme poverty, and 18 million children of school age are not in school. Despite LDCs having 12.5 percent of the world's population, their exports account for only 1.1 percent of the global total," she added.

The category of least developed countries (LDCs) was officially established in 1971 by the UN General Assembly to attract special international support to disadvantaged members of the UN family.

The current list includes 34 in Africa, 13 in Asia and the Pacific, and one in Latin America. The newest to have joined is South Sudan.

Local charcoal manufacturer exporting to Japan

Times Reporters

The BKN Company, a white charcoal producer in Laos, is now exporting 1,400 tonnes of white charcoal annually to markets in Japan but it still cannot supply enough to meet demand.

Japan needs 200 tonnes of white charcoal per month but BKN Company is only able to export about 60 percent of that demand, consigning shipments on average five times a month.

The company has been exporting white charcoal products to Japan since 2004, commencing with 196 tonnes in the first year.

Director of BKN Company Mr Boun Oum Phanthapanya, who is also the President of the White Charcoal Producers for Export Group, told *Vientiane Times* that the company is supporting the planting and preservation of mai tiew (*Cratexylon prunitifolium*) trees in Vientiane and the provinces of Vientiane, Borikhamxay, Savannakhet and Saravan.

A project to promote mai tiew plantations commenced in 2006 there is now some 1,300 hectares under plantation.

Mr Boun Oum said to promote the sustainability of the project, each year the company provides funds for mai tiew farmers and their families.

Under the project, the company signs a contract with its members through a two plus



Mai tiew (*Cratexylon prunitifolium*) trees growing in a plantation forest planted by BKN Company.

three system.

In this system, the company helps to supply seedlings, as well as providing marketing and technical assistance. The people, on the other hand, provide the labour and land.

Mai tiew trees help people earn an income because they are able to sell them to the company, which processes the white charcoal.

This project also helps to increase greenery and forestry in the country, which is in line with the government's policy.

Every year, to mark the

National Arbor Day and Children's Day, the BKN Company works in conjunction with partner companies and local communities to promote tree planting activities and ensure green forests in the future.

He explained that growing mai tiew trees in Laos is not difficult because it is a native tree and very easy to maintain.

Mai tiew trees should be harvested when they are aged between five to seven years as the main material for white charcoal production.

The BKN Company exports around 1,400 tonnes of white charcoal to Japan every year, he said.

"In the agreement between the company and Japan, the company should be exporting 200 tonnes of white charcoal per month to Japan but BKN is only able to export 60 percent of the orders."

Mr Boun Oum said it's not only Japan wanting white charcoal but also many other countries as well, which means the company cannot meet demand.

Authorities take aim at... FROM PAGE 1

The species found in this area is the yellow-spined bamboo locust, *Ceracris kiangus tsai*. This species was first found damaging crops in southern China.

These insects typically eat bamboo leaves in hillside forests, but upland rice farmers have been felling scores of bamboo trees over the last few years to clear the land for rice cultivation.

The department's website reported this week that in 2014 and 2015 there were locust outbreaks in Luang Prabang, Huaphan and Phongsaly provinces and almost 4,000 hectares of rice were damaged.

Last year, swarms of locusts were reported in seven districts of these three provinces, while last month 12 districts reported finding evidence of the pests,

and this month locusts were found in two more districts.

Their spread is thought to be related to the ministry last year not having sufficient stocks of pesticides, with only two districts in Luang Prabang province sprayed.

Mr Khansay added they were proactively spraying to kill locusts but their numbers had expanded in two more

districts because officials could not get to their eggs deep in the forest.

Luang Prabang province reported in June last year crops were destroyed in parts of Phonthong, Ngoy and Viengkham districts. Over 7,000 hectares of upland rice, sweet corn and other crops were affected, with losses estimated at 800 million kip.