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Name of your Organisation: Norwegian Church Aid
Local Partner(s): District authorities in Huay Xai and Mung District

ABOUT THE EVALUATION

Evaluation year: 2004
Conducted by: Lao Consulting Group
Country: Laos
Region: Southeast Asia
Theme/DAC sector: 430.40

SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION**Title of Evaluation Report:**

NAMCHOUAM AND MEUNG RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT, 2002-2004

Background:

The Namchouam and Mung Rural Development Project evolved from the "Drug Supply and Demand Reduction in Border Areas of North-western Laos" Project funded by Norwegian MFA through the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP). That latter project started in 1993 as a tripartite cooperation between UNDCP, the Lao Government and the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and operated in Bokeo and Luang Namtha.

For the second phase of the project, UNDCP decided to cease operations in Namchouam, Bokeo province, as opium cultivation in the area's target villages was reduced to nil. In Bokeo, the project would continue in Mung district only. The decision disagreed with NCA's policy of long-term commitment as it had been working only for a short period of time in the area. NCA therefore negotiated an agreement with the Lao government in order to continue development activities as a separate project: the Namchouam and Mung Rural Development Project. This evaluation deals with the third phase of the project.

Purpose/ Objective:

The objectives of the evaluation study are (1) to verify the outputs of project activities; (2) to discuss and find out the future direction for activities in the communities; and (3) to share lessons learned from the evaluation study amongst partners and beneficiaries.

The evaluation study should focus on (1) achievement of project implementation; (2) project implementation process; (3) relevance of the project; (4) effectiveness of the project; (5) efficiency of the project; (6) impact of the project; (7) sustainability of the project; and (8) recommendations. (Annex 1 gives the complete evaluation study TOR).

Methodology:

- Interviews with provincial and district authorities, target groups and project staff (Annex 2 gives the list of people met);
- Reviews of reports and project documents (Annex 3 gives the list of documents consulted);
- Visual assessment during visits to target villages.

Key Findings:

1. In terms of achievement of project implementation, the project has improved living conditions of the poor in Namchouam area and Meung district.
2. By the end of 2004, the basic needs of the poor are better met as food security has improved; villagers have better access to health services, to education and to the market and family income has increased.
3. The project has generated numerous outputs:
 - In the food security component:
 - In the income generating component:
 - In the health service component:
 - In the education service component:
 - In the village authorities component:
 - In the project management and human resources development component:
 - Inputs used by the project to produce the outputs are appropriate.
4. In terms of human resources, the project personnel includes 14 persons in 10 positions to support and facilitate project implementation, coordination and management. District officers and villagers have responsibility for implementation of project activities under the supervision of district coordination committees.
 In terms of financial input for implementation of project activities, 50% of input is used for agricultural activities. Overall, project expenses totaled 698,080.64 USD of which 30% are costs of project hardware and 25% are personnel expenses.
5. Project implementation follows participatory approach and community development. Activities start with the participatory village planning, implementation of project activities and then participatory monitoring and evaluation. Implementation of activities are undertaken through interest groups that were formed and trained in group and revolving fund administration. Revolving funds were established to ensure potential for sustainability.
 The project maintains a good working relationship with project beneficiaries and government counterparts.
6. The project is relevant as it is desired as much by the target communities as the government of the Lao PDR as it aims to better the living conditions of the target population
7. For each purpose, the project is effective at: Food security improved (80%), Income generation increased (75%), Health service improved (71%), Education service improved (80%), Village authorities and organizations strengthened (50%), Project management and human resource development improved (60%). To the overall goal, the project is effective at 69.33%.
8. The project is relatively efficient as total expenses are equivalent to a cost per beneficiary of 41.71 USD/pers.per year.
9. The project has produced a lot of impact on the lives of target communities on the positive and negative sides but on the balance, the project has increased the quality of life of the target population.

Recommendations:

- Go-implementation of project and district staff
- Further strengthening of village organizations/groups with close follow-up
- Increased input on market development
- Food processing, value added products
- Increased implication/participation of villagers in the CB-DAC process
- Set a definitive date for completion in Nam Chuam and announce it to target population of the area.

Comments from Norwegian Church Aid (if any):

Through discussions of the findings and recommendations of the evaluation held with the project team, NCA Vientiane and the donor to the project, KCF, the project team established an action plan with main emphasis on strengthen the Go-implementation between project and district staff and strengthening village organisations. Focus has also been given to the increased participation of the villagers in the CB- DAC process. The third project phase will be completed by October 2006 and it is limited how much impact activities on market development can have in a remote area as Mung in such a short time span.

Norwegian Church Aid

NAMCHOUAM AND MEUNG RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

**EVALUATION 2002-2004
Bokeo, 29/11 – 06/12/2004**

REPORT

Submitted by:

LAO CONSULTING GROUP

December 2004

Summary

Table of contents

1.	Introduction.....	5
2.	Evaluation objectives	5
3.	Methodology	5
4.	Team Composition.....	6
5.	Work effectively undertaken.....	7
6.	Findings.....	7
6.1.	Achievement of project implementation.....	7
6.1.1.	Overall goal.....	7
6.1.2.	Project purpose.....	7
6.1.3.	Outputs (hard and soft outputs).....	7
6.1.4.	Inputs (personnel and financial).....	17
6.2.	Project implementation process	22
6.2.1.	Implementation of planned activities.....	22
6.2.2.	Monitoring (monitoring system, changes in activities and how did the project deal with the changes).....	23
6.2.3.	Relationship between NCA and its counterparts at the provincial, district and village levels	23
6.2.4.	Relationship between beneficiaries (men and women) and the government implementing agencies as well as NCA.....	23
6.2.5.	Ownership of the project by counterpart agency	24
6.3.	Relevance of the project.....	24
6.4.	Effectiveness of the project.....	25
6.5.	Efficiency of the project.....	29
6.6.	Impact of the project	30
6.7.	Sustainability of the project	31
7.	Recommendations.....	32
8.	Conclusion	34

Acronyms

CB-DAC	Community Based Drug Abuse Control
DCC	District Coordination Committee
DLWU	District Lao Women Union
FFW	Food for Work
LAK	Lao Kip
LWU	Lao Women Union
LYU	Lao Youth Union
MM	Muang Meung
NC	Namchouam
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
PLWU	Provincial Lao Women Union
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDCP	United Nations Drug Control Programme
USD	US Dollar
VDC	Village Development Committee
VHV	Village Health Volunteer
VLWU	Village Lao Women Union
VLYU	Village Lao Youth Union
VVV	Village Veterinary Volunteer
WFP	World Food Programme
WUG	Water User Group

1. INTRODUCTION

The Namchouam and Mung Rural Development Project evolved from the “Drug Supply and Demand Reduction in Border Areas of North-western Laos” Project funded by the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP). That latter project started in 1993 as a tripartite cooperation between UNDCP, the Lao Government and the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and operated in Bokeo and Luang Namtha.

For the second phase of the project, UNDCP decided to cease operations in Namchouam, Bokeo province, as opium cultivation in the area’s target villages was reduced to nil. In Bokeo, the project would continue in Mung district only. The decision disagreed with NCA’s policy of long-term commitment as it had been working only for a short period of time in the area. NCA therefore negotiated an agreement with the Lao government in order to pursue development activities as a separate project: the Namchouam and Mung Rural Development Project.

“The project is a participatory community development project which aims to improve the living conditions and reduce poverty amongst ethnic minority communities of Bokeo Province and has interventions in agriculture, health, education, environmental management, income generation and demand reduction including detoxification and rehabilitation of opium addicts.”

Phase 2 of the project started in 1999 with a new orientation: to shift field implementation responsibilities to district administration. The project thus focused its efforts in building the capacity of district staff as well as project staff. In the third phase (2002-2004), the project prepares for phasing out of 13 villages of Namchouam area and priority was given to strengthening the capacity of village development committees, interest groups and individual specialist. Resources will then be transferred to Mung where the project will expand to more villages.

This document reports on the evaluation of this third phase.

2. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the evaluation study are (1) to verify the outputs of project activities; (2) to discuss and find out the future direction for activities in the communities; and (3) to share lessons learned from the evaluation study amongst partners and beneficiaries.

The evaluation study should focus on (1) achievement of project implementation; (2) project implementation process; (3) relevance of the project; (4) effectiveness of the project; (5) efficiency of the project; (6) impact of the project; (7) sustainability of the project; and (8) recommendations. (Annex 1 gives the complete evaluation study TOR).

3. METHODOLOGY

Methods:

This evaluation is based mainly on:

- Interviews with provincial and district authorities, target groups and project staff (Annex 2 gives the list of people met);
- Reviews of reports and project documents (Annex 3 gives the list of documents consulted);
- Visual assessment during visits to target villages.

Framework:

The Evaluation study encountered a major constraint in the limited amount of time as the project had asked the evaluation team to visit all target villages. Furthermore, the project had given instructions as to target the poor and 50% of women.

Interview plan:

It was decided that village interviews will be conducted with Village Development Committees and 4 household representatives of which 50% would be female and including 2 households from the poor category of population, 1 from the middle and 1 from the rich. As a participatory project evaluation had recently been undertaken with villagers, informal interviews with open questions were considered appropriate.

Discussions with district authority and district coordination committees were already arranged by the project as one meeting for each district and another meeting was organized with the project staff.

4. TEAM COMPOSITION

1. Ms. Odarac, Team Leader from the Lao Consulting Group overviewed the evaluation study and was responsible for report writing.
2. Mr. Khampheuane, from NCA Long District overviewed all activities with emphasis on the CB-DAC process & Management
3. Mr. Somsanith, from the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office, assisted with agriculture related activities.
4. Mr. Nith, from the Provincial Office of Planning and Investment, assisted with overall objectives.

The evaluation team was accompanied during the whole process by Mr. Inpeng, the Project Education/Community Development Officer.

5. WORK EFFECTIVELY UNDERTAKEN

Date	Activities
29/11/04	Arrival in Houayxai, Briefing of evaluation team, meet with project team, meet Bokeo provincial and Houayxai district counterparts.
30/11/04	Travel to Muang Mung, meet Mung district counterparts, meet with Huanamkha VDC and leaders.
01/12/04	Visit Ban Tolea, Ban Phonechaleun, Ban Pakleu, Ban Poongpha
02/12/04	Visit Ban Chakor, Ban Na Ngam, Ban Namkha Leu
03/12/04	Travel to Khet Nam Chouam, visit Ban Phonephai, Ban Nam Laem, Ban Nam Mieng, Ban Namkor.
04/12/04	Visit Ban Tongkrang, Ban Orn, Ban Houay Phapoon, Ban NamPo.
05/12/04	Visit Ban Syphonexai, Ban Pangkhuene, Ban Chansavang, Ban Namchouam. Return to Houayxai
06/12/04	Return to Vientiane

6. FINDINGS

6.1. Achievement of project implementation

6.1.1. Overall goal

The project has improved living conditions of the poor in Namchouam and Mung.

6.1.2. Project purpose

By the end of 2004, the basic needs of the poor are better met as food security has improved; villagers have better access to health services, to education and to the market and family income has increased. Villagers are now starting to be aware that they need further strengthening to ensure sustainability.

6.1.3. Outputs (hard and soft outputs)

6.1.3.1. Food security has improved

To improve food security, the project focused on agricultural activities mainly rice and food crops production and animal raising.

Rice production

From 2002 to 2004, rice production in target villages has increased 83 tons (6%). This increase is mainly attributed to an increase in production of paddy rice (13%) as upland and dry season rice production had reduced (figure 1). Paddy rice production has increased as a result of expansion of rice fields, use of improved varieties and construction and rehabilitation of irrigation schemes for ensuring water for production in dry and wet seasons. Another factor that contributed to this positive change is the project support to farmers with regards to means for production either as technical knowledge or in terms of materials and tools for production.

Target population had also received over 370 tons of rice from Food for Work in exchange of labour provided for the expansion of rice fields, the digging of fish ponds, the repair of irrigation canals and the construction of roads.

Outputs of project activities that aimed to increase rice production include:

- (1) Expansion of rice fields of 248.59¹ ha from 2002 to 2004;
- (2) 232 families in 12 villages are using new rice varieties (although there is no data to show yields of the new varieties compared to the old ones);
- (3) 51 families in Namchouam and 21 families in Meuang Meung can produce dry season rice, however, it was reported that for 2004 only 38 families (19 in NC and 19 in MM) were actually cultivating dry season rice. Drought encountered in 2004 was one cause of low production;
- (4) Irrigation rehabilitated and constructed (*see section on irrigation*);
- (5) Farmers trained in the techniques of paddy rice cultivation, (*according to monitoring reports there were training each year: 30 trainees in 2002, 81 in 2003, and in 2004, 13 of which 6 need further strengthening*);
- (6) 3 Hand tractor revolving funds and 9 buffalo revolving funds established and used by farmers as traction force for rice production.

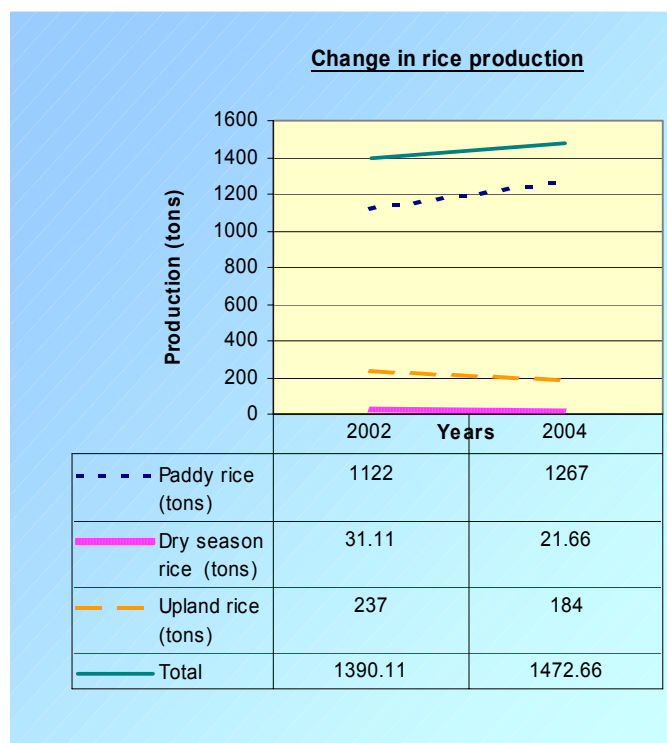


Figure 1. Change in rice production from 2002 to 2004.

Although production has increased, table 1 shows that it is the result of extensive production rather than yield as the latter decreased (-22.36%) while the area of paddy production rose from 371 ha to 584 ha. Yields for upland rice and dry season rice had also dwindled because of insufficient water for production. 2004 was reported as drier than usual.

Table 1. Rice yields comparison between 2002 and 2004.

Year	Area (ha)		Production (tons)		Yield (ton/ha)		
	2002	2004	2002	2004	2002	2004	
Paddy fields (ha)	371.00	584.00	1,122.00	1,267.00	3.02	2.17	
Dry season rice fields (ha)	15.00	11.10	31.11	21.66	2.07	1.95	
Upland rice fields (ha)	130.00	109.00	237.00	184.00	1.82	1.69	
Total	516.00	704.10	1,390.11	1,472.66	2.69	2.09	-22.36%

¹ Figure from monitoring statistics

Table 1 also shows a difference in the increase in paddy rice production area (213 ha) and the 248 ha expansion of rice fields. This disparity means that 35 ha of cleared land had not been used for rice cultivation. In effect, the participatory evaluation reported that on the 82 ha of newly expanded field in 2004, 47 families (NC 22, MM 25) did not transplant rice. The reasons are: lack of water for soil preparation and lack of labour (either in number or in the numerable work/activities to undertake). Other reasons gathered during interviews include laziness as the family has enough rice from FFW for the year or the field received was not appropriate for rice production. It was also reported that some families sell their parcel of land to Lao Loum but it was not possible to get a clear figure on the issue.

Food crops production

In the promotion of food crops production, the project focused activities on fruit trees, tree nurseries, corn for animal feed and upland mixed cropping. In addition, farmers also produced soybeans and green beans. Outputs related to activities promoted by the project in this phase include:

- (1) 5 families from 3 villages became model families for fruit trees cultivation;
- (2) Nurseries in NC and MM produced 754 seedlings of mango, lemon, orange, lychees and “kanthin” (*Leucena spp.*). *(The number of seedlings effectively transplanted and the survival rate was not reported however the last monitoring report questioned the sustainability of nurseries.)*
- (3) 4 nurseries renovated;
- (4) 5 families are growing tangerines on 7840m² and pineapple and banana on 4800m², 2 other families planted 350 orange trees in 2004 *(no information on survival rate)*;
- (5) 4 families from 4 villages (supported by the project) harvested 1.5 tons of corn for animal feed. Maize was also produced by other villages too, the district profiles showed a production of over 55 tons.
- (6) 5 family upland mixed cropping gardens had been established as well as one community garden. In total 2.5 ha are used for growing pineapple, cassava, stylo grass, cotton sesame, maize,... *(a zero survival rate was reported for sesame, and 2/3^{3/4} gardens observed during the visit were in need of weeding)*.
- (7) 96 families planted 8200 seedlings of Ketsana on 8.5 ha *(the survival rate is not known, it was reported that seedlings were doing well although some died and others were stolen)*.

Productivity of animal raising

To increase productivity of animal raising, the project aims to reduce animal mortality. Therefore, the project strengthened village veterinary volunteers (VVV) and supported vaccination. In addition to farm animals, the project also promoted fish culture, apiculture and chick production. However, the latter activity was unsuccessful as eggs procured were not fertilized. Project outputs include:

- (1) Establishment of a network of VVV;
- (2) Vaccination revolving funds in both districts;
- (3) Over 1086 animals vaccinated in 2004 (in MM: 205 buffaloes and 73 cows; in NC: 374 buffaloes, 93 cows, 211 pigs, 130 poultry);
- (4) 81 households used 5 fingerlings revolving funds of 24 000 fingerlings for fish raising.
- (5) 30 households in Meung had produced 172 bottles of honey from 114 beehives.

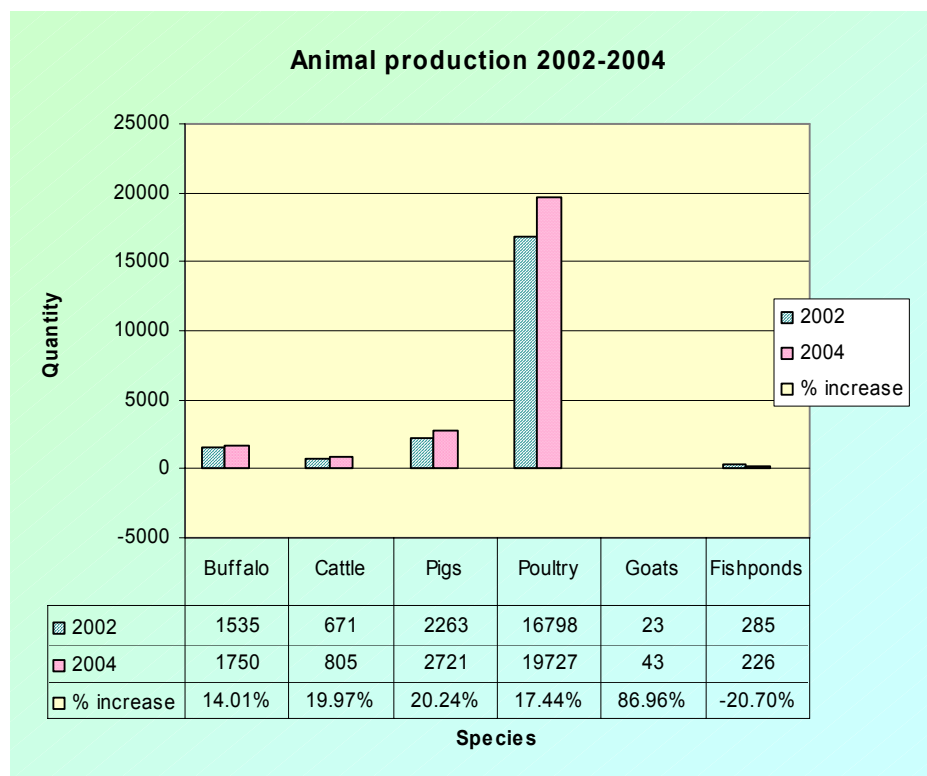


Figure 2. Overall animal production in 2002 - 2004 in target villages

Overall, there is increase in animal production in target villages in the past three years (figure 2). Numbers of buffaloes, cattle, pigs and poultry have increased of 14 to 20%. Goats raising in Namchouam seems to have come to an end with only one head left in Phouti although in Muang Meung it has increased 133%.

The quantity of fishponds has decreased 20%. 59 fishponds are not in use anymore. This is caused in part by the drought and another part by the fact that villagers were digging fishponds to get rice from FFW. For example, in Houay Phapoon, 5 rice for work fishponds were dug but they are now dried up and abandoned. Three old fishponds created by villagers themselves without the support of WFP are still producing. To the evaluation team, it seems that at least 3 of the 5 FFW ponds could be viable if villagers maintained them. When asked whether they dug the ponds for rice or for fish, villagers answered rice first and fish second.

As for vaccination, villagers put emphasis on big animals. In 2004, 33% of buffaloes had been vaccinated (table 2) and the rate of mortality was 6%. In Muang Meung, vaccination was reported only for cows and buffaloes.

Table 2. Animal mortality and vaccination in Namchouam and Meung 2004.

	2002		2004						
	Total	Dead	Namchouam				Muang Meung		
			Number	Dead (%)	Vacc.* (%)	Number	Dead (%)	Vacc.* (%)	
Buffalo	1 535	??	1 084	50 (5%)	374 (35%)	666	47 (7%)	205 (31%)	
Cattle	671	??	557	20 (4%)	93 (17%)	248	20 (8%)	73 (29%)	
Pigs	2 263	??	1 503	206 (14%)	211 (14%)	1 218	103 (8%)		
Poultry	16 798	??	11 475	1 179 (10%)	130 (1%)	8 252	1 756 (21%)		
Goats	23	??	1	0 (0%)		42	0 (0%)		

* Vacc.: Vaccinated

** ?: No data on the number of animal dead or vaccinated for 2002

No vaccination report was made for pigs and poultry although these have higher rates of mortality (a mean of 15.7% for poultry and 11% for pigs). Care is given to buffaloes as they are expensive investments and also because they are used as traction force for rice cultivation

Land use planning

In land use planning, the project supported the government work on land allocation. In 2002, 142 families from 4 villages (Jakor, Huanamkha, Poongpha and Tolae) in Muang Meung received titles for 253.9 ha of land. 115 families have started to use 80 ha. In 2004, more land allocation was made for Namkhaleu, Poonghine and Na-Ngam (MM). However, land allocated to Ban Namkhaleu cannot be used for paddy rice cultivation as the land is higher in elevation than water supply sources. In Poonghine and Na-Ngam, some villagers do not agree with the land division as they found the process unequal. They are demanding a revision of the division. In Poonghine, 6 families still do not receive land titles with the reason that they do not have money for registration.

Land allocation is seen as a measure to stop the shifting cultivation regime. In assigning land to families, the government hopes to stabilize production. As a consequence, land planned as forest areas will recover. In 2004, 15 volunteer foresters had been trained in forest resource management.

Irrigation systems

In 2002, one irrigation scheme was constructed in Ban Phonechaleun (MM) with an area of command of 3 ha. Villagers received 3718 kg of rice for work. Another scheme of 15 ha command was constructed in Ban Tolae with special fund from NCA. In 2003, a scheme was constructed on the Houaygoua 1, allowing 11 ha of command and providing 21 745 kg of rice to villagers. Another scheme was constructed in Na-Ngam with 15 ha command. Furthermore, from 2002 to 2004, over 50 ha had been rehabilitated by repairs of broken canals in Namchouam and Muang Meung.

8 water user groups had been established in Namchouam and 8 WUG in 4 villages in Muang Meung in 2003. In 2004, a WUG was also established in Na-Ngam however only three families benefited from the irrigation scheme as the other 24 do not have paddy fields yet. It was reported that some WUGs are weak or non operational and that groups of newly constructed schemes need more awareness raising.

6.1.3.2. Increased income for target families

To increase income of target households, the project promotes and supports crop production, animal raising, handicraft, small scale credit systems and market access.

In NC (2002), 6 groups including 44 families from 4 villages harvested 1116 kg of garlic. By 2004, 1649 kg was harvested and sales generated 4 500 000 kip income. In Ban Phonechaleun (MM), a lady reported that her harvest of garlic was good but she was not able to return the fund as she had given a lot to district officers on visit. In fact, in the whole village, only 4 on 7 families were able to return the fund plus interest (take 7 return 8 kg).

Other outputs in 2002 for NC: 20 chicken raising groups produced 6305 chicken generating 23 272 000 kip income. 187 bags were woven by 28 families generating 1 697 000 kip income. 150 sins , 19.9 kg of po-sa thread, 124 po-sa bags woven.

In MM (2002), 6 persons received training in dress making/tailoring but only three continue to practice. In 2004, three sewing machines were distributed to 3 villages but the

use is still limited as users feel unskilled as they had received only one training. A revolving fund for basketry was established in 2002. At present the basketry group includes 31 persons producing 443 units of basketry work worth over 7 000 000 kip, the bags weaving group include 5 persons, the cattle revolving fund has 4 cows, the chicken group includes 18 families with a 250 chicken fund, and the credit fund amounts to 5 000 000 kip.

4 saving groups were established in Namchouam, Chansavang, Syphonexay and Phouti in 2002. By the end of 2002, the saving amounted to 4 915 000 kip. The minimum deposit was 5000 kip/month. The groups received in all 496 000 kip of interest. In 2004, in Namchouam, funds have been combined to make a family and village development revolving fund. The family development fund includes 575 members from 12 villages with a total amount of fund of 68 039 200 kip of which 227 families used as loans amounting to 38 517 000 kip, of which, 13 532 700 is deposited in a bank and 15 989 000 is left in the village cash box.

The provincial women handicraft shop received fund to buy supply from target villages in 2002. The following year, revolving funds were also established for the district LWU to purchase handicraft from villagers. Credits funds were also established in Houaythad and Tolae for setting up retail shops.

47 persons attended training on management of groups and revolving fund in 2003. 112 people (59 from NC and 53 from MM) attended training on revolving fund and accounting in 2004 . It was estimated that 70% in NC and 66% in MM of the trainees can now manage and administrate revolving funds.

To improve access to market, the 17 km road linking Namkhaleu to Huanamkha had been repaired and improved, and 24 wooden bridges were constructed. The work was undertaken by a contractor (ST Construction) and was completed by March 2002. The road to Huanamkha was repaired by village labour and villagers received 55 118 kg of rice for work. One suspended bridge was constructed at Ban Thadeua, NC. In 2003, 24 km of road from Thamphabath to Huanamkha was improved with drainage pipes at 8 locations.

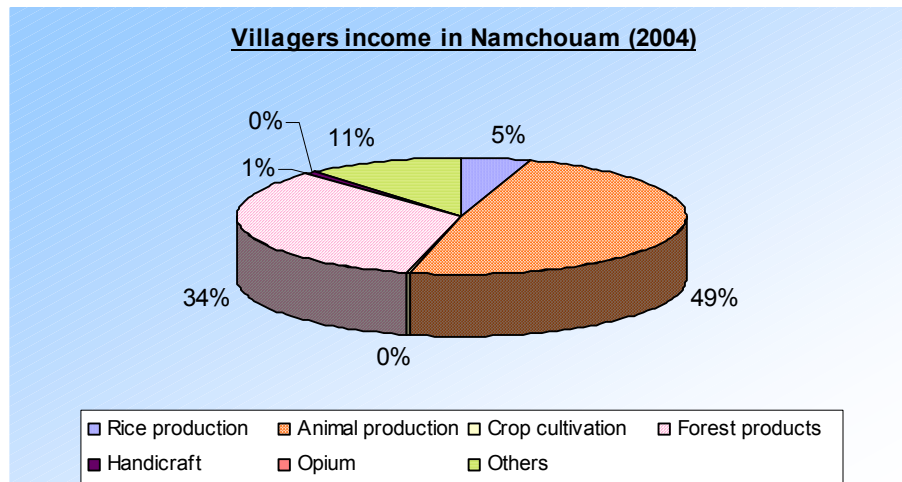


Figure 3. Income distribution by source in Namchouam 2004.

Figures 3 and 4 show that income in target areas come mainly from the sale of raised animals (a mean of 52.4%) , non-timber forest products (34%) and others (service, labour and

shops). The mean annual income in Namchouam is 1 641 099 kip/household and in Meung 1 127 257 kip/household.

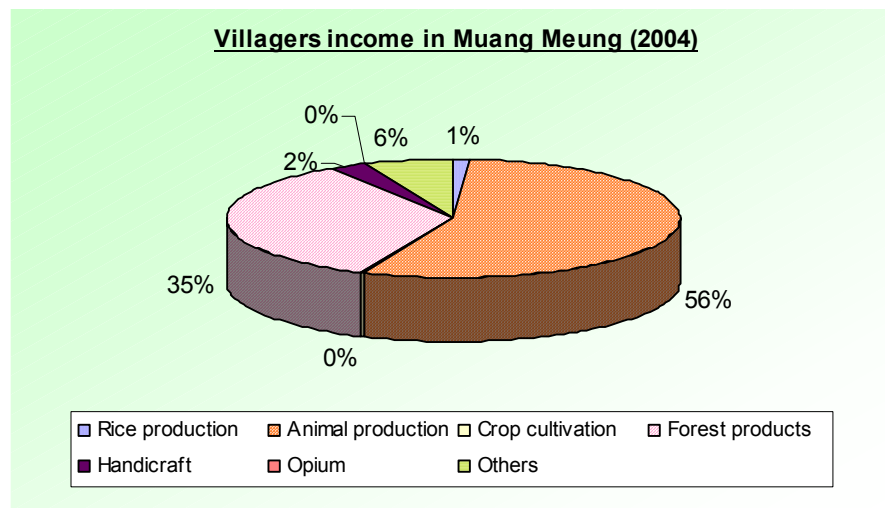


Figure 4. Income distribution by source in Muang Meung 2004.

Table 3. Sources of income in project target areas.

(LAK)	2002			2004		
	NC	MM	Total	NC	MM	Total
Rice production	?	?	?	41,034,000	5,790,000	46,824,000
Animal production	?	?	?	408,166,300	283,594,000	691,760,300
Crop cultivation	?	?	?	2,951,000	755,000	3,706,000
Forest products	?	?	?	283,039,730	176,634,200	459,673,930
Handicraft	?	?	?	7,057,500	12,693,000	19,750,500
Opium	?	?	?	0	450,000	450,000
Others	?	?	?	94,712,200	32,985,600	127,697,800
Total				836,960,730	512,901,800	1,349,862,530

Source: Village Profiles 2004, NCA.

6.1.3.3. Improved health service and access to health

To improve the health service and access to health service, the project promoted and supported the work of the medical mobile team emphasizing the prevention of diseases, health care and environmental hygiene. The project also worked on the improvement of the quality of the health service. Outputs of activities include:

Medical Mobile Team and services

In MM (2002), 164 persons received consultation and treatment services, covering 60% of pregnant women, and 76% of underage children. 340 persons (280 women) received education on hygiene and sanitation. In Namchouam, 74 persons attended education on hygiene and sanitation, 100% of pregnant women received consultations as well as 87% of underage children. In 2003, 813 persons from Muang Meung used the mobile clinic services. 183 children under 2 years and 53 pregnant women were vaccinated. 534 persons (310

women) from 9 villages followed hygiene and sanitary education. In NC, 219 persons were vaccinated (6 types). In 2004, 1107 in MM received consultations of which 419 children and 51 pregnant women. Vaccination included 7 types.

Prevention of malaria

In MM 2002 mosquito nets revolving funds were established with 160 nets. In Namchouam, 100 families received 100 mosquito nets. In the whole area, 85% of mosquito nets used had been treated. MM, 2003, the mosquito nets revolving fund included 270 nets for the same amount of families from 8 villages. It was reported that only 60% of households in target area used treated nets. In 2004, the revolving fund expanded to 419 families. Contribution is expensive for some families as the nets cost 12 000 kip/net and the anti-mosquito treatment costs 8 000 kip/net.

Prevention of diarrhea and other water borne diseases

For diarrhea prevention and the prevention of other diseases, the project had constructed 2 running water systems in Namchouam (one for Nam Laem and one for Syphonexai, Pangkwaen and Thadeua) and two systems in Muang Meung (one in Namkhaleu and the other in Tolae). In 2003, the project improved running water systems in 3 locations: Huanamkha, Poongpha and Phonechaleun in MM, and in 6 locations in NC: Namieng, Tonklang, Aon, Namko, Phonephai and Nampong.

Water user groups have been established with responsibilities for usually 2 persons to clean the intake head. In villages with new running water system, no visible problem was observed, however, in older systems maintenance to the taps and pipes has slackened. In many villages in NC, taps were broken and water was running off for whole days or else a maize core or stick was used to stop the water flow. In Nampong (NC), the village chief was reporting the difficulty in mobilizing newcomers (there was a migration of villagers from other areas into the village), most of the established families have already extended the running water system to their house compound.

In 2002, 44 latrines were constructed in Houaythad (MM) and the use was evaluated at 80%. By the end of 2004, 119 units of latrines were constructed in 6 villages. Of the 119 households, 28 (24%) do not use the latrines. In NC, the use of latrines is evaluated at 85%. During the course of the visit in NC, the team observed unused latrines, some of which without covering structure and others with big holes on walls and doors. In MM, except for the ones that had defective construction, the majority of latrines are still well maintained and cleaned.

Improve health service

The Namchouam dispensary has been improved and the project has increased the MM medication revolving fund to 8 198 000 kip. Village health volunteers, village nurses and midwives as well as dispensaries nurses had been trained. Medicine revolving funds had been established and equipment and materials provided at village level and for the dispensaries. In 2004, the Huanamkha health center saw 12 nurses whom stayed one month each, this high rate of turn-over results in lack of continuation and difficult follow-up. Table 4 shows health resources available by 2004 in the two areas.

Table 4. Number of village health resources in 2004.

	Namchouam	Meung
Dispensaries	1	1
Drug shops	1	0
Village nurses (pers.)	2	4
Village health volunteers (pers.)	27	15
Midwives(pers.)	24	13

Sources: Village Profiles (figures for VHV and midwives are different from monitoring reports 2004)

Community Based Drug Abuse Control (CBDAC)

To reduce opium addiction in target villages, the project follows the Community Based Drug Abuse Control approach which has proven successful in NCA Long district project (Luang Namtha). As its name indicates, this approach focuses primarily on the community as the central force for drug addiction control. Community participation brings as much pressure as assistance to addicts as the drug abuse control becomes a responsibility of the community. The approach assumes that the community has the capacity to understand the addiction problem and what it involves, and to solve the problem with support from district and provincial authorities and the project. The sustainability of the process is also assured by the establishment of a network of villages with addiction problems.

The process involves three steps: first, the community preparation when socio-economic data on addicts and their families are collected and analyzed, results are then disseminated in the community and awareness raising campaigns are undertaken. Second, the cure and rehabilitation which involve the contribution and participation of the community in tasks of their capacity. And third, the follow-up of addicts and their community after the cure to follow their health, to encourage addicts, their family and their community and to assist in planning of development activities.

In this sub-component, the project focused on strengthening government and project staff competence and abilities to address addiction problems, on strengthening village organization capacity of dealing with opium addiction and on detoxification and rehabilitation of addicts. This sub-component is implemented only Meuang Meung as Namchouam had already “eradicated” opium addiction and production.

Project outputs include trained government and project staff on CB-DAC and on getting people ready for detoxification; 9 drug reducing committees established; close to 400 people attending drug prevention campaign; 98 addicts had undergone detoxification in Huanamkha. In the monitoring papers, it was reported that 152 addicts volunteered for detoxification and rehabilitation.

6.1.3.4. Improved education service

To improve the education service and access to education, the project focused on increasing communities attention on educational activities, on improving the learning and teaching facilities of formal and non-formal education and on improving the quality of the education service.

Outputs of project activities include:

- (1) 2 education centers constructed, equiped and provided with learning, cooking and sports materials in Houay Phapoon (NC) and Tolea (MM). The one in Tolae received a solar powered electricity system.
- (2) 2 school dormitories constructed and equipped for in-board pupils in Ban Namchouam (NC) and in Ban Huanamkha (MM).
- (3) Existing primary schools have been improved and provided with learning equipment and materials.
- (4) 16 schools received 16 sports sets
- (5) 54 orphans received clothing and learning materials
- (6) District education officers monitored the teaching-learning process once monthly but without visible results apart from statistics on enrollment.
- (7) 14 unqualified teachers had received upgrading
- (8) Training classes set up for VDCs
- (9) Annual sharing meeting for teachers organized
- (10) Monitoring of the teaching and learning of formal and non-formal education at village Education Centres and Pupil Parent Association undertaken.

Support to pupils' lunch activities had been undertaken but was reported unsuccessful due to unclear guidelines for implementation. Activities like small animal raising, fish culture, kitchen garden, etc. could not be undertaken as there is no strong commitment and support from concerned bodies. In 2003, only the provision of 1676 kg of rice was implemented.

6.1.3.5. Village authority have been strengthened

To strengthen village leadership organizations the project aims to strengthen village leaders and development committees as well as the Village Women's Unions and the Lao Youth Unions. Project outputs include:

- (1) Village Development Committee trained in administration and fund management, and 89 persons from VDCs trained in their role and responsibilities
- (2) Sharing meeting between villages organized
- (3) 7 village meeting houses constructed
- (4) High speakers provided to villages
- (5) Monitor the village development committee with award for VDC as incentives for leading activities in the village
- (6) Over 1000 persons trained on gender at village level
- (7) Women sharing meeting at district level organized
- (8) Women activity groups trained on management
- (9) VLWU strengthened and 3 goodness process created
- (10) International Women's Day on 8 March organized
- (11) Women activities followed up by PLWU and DLWU
- (12) 31 persons trained on role and responsibilities for the Village Lao Youth Union
- (13) 5 persons trained in news writing and reading and had sent 33 news articles to the districts. The articles were reported as basic as the youths are not fluent in the Lao written language.

6.1.3.6. Project management and human resource management have been improved

To improve project management and human resources management the project focused on three levels: the project staff, the government staff (district and province) and the village with the aims to strengthen project coordinators in project management, to develop human resources in knowledge, techniques and skills. Activities are mainly involved with training, study tours, meetings and monitoring. Outputs include:

- (1) DCC monitored the implementation of activities by services
- (2) Coordination with NCA implemented regularly
- (3) Evaluation and project planning implemented regularly
- (4) Provincial level followed up and supervised activities
- (5) 24 persons trained in English language
- (6) Workshop on gender for government staff
- (7) 4 students from the agriculture school in Luang Prabang supported for their end of studies papers.
- (8) Sharing meetings organized
- (9) Farmers trained on paddy rice cultivation, on upland agriculture, VVV trained
- (10) Village nurses, VHV and midwives trained as well as dispensary nurses
- (11) Education managers and teachers trained
- (12) Villagers trained on broom making, basketry and fruit processing
- (13) Study tours on model families and animal raising, on credit fund, on income generation activities, on health prevention organized

6.1.4. Inputs (personnel and financial)

Human resources:

Human resources in the project include project personnel, district staff and provincial staff. Active project personnel comprises 13 persons at different positions as shown in table 5. Their roles are to support and facilitate project implementation and management, sectoral officers also provide technical support in their field of expertise.

Table 5. Project personnel as of 2004.

<u>Project personnel</u>	<u>Number</u>
Project manager	1
Secretary and accountant	1
Agriculture officer	1
Education and Community Development officer	1
Health officer	1
Gender assistant officer	1
Community development workers	4
Driver	1
Tractor driver	1
Administrative assistant	1
Total	13

District coordination committees comprising chiefs of concerned district line agencies were established in the two areas for work coordination and follow up in the district. District

staff from different sector including agriculture, health, education, LWU, LYU, Information, Drug control unit implement the project at district/village levels assisted by project staff. Their roles are to train and lead villagers, and to monitor on village project activities. They receive financial support from the project in form of daily allowance and travel allowance. At provincial level, Line agencies staff roles are to follow up and supervise project activities.

High turn-over rate of staff was briefly discussed earlier in the health sector outputs in terms of nurses responsible for dispensaries. Discussions with the Meuang Meung team reflect also the situation. Questions asked to many district officers could not be answered as they are newly nominated to the position. In fact, from 2000 to 2004, only 2 persons had not been changed. In consequence, this breaks the continuation of follow-up of village activities and lowers the assessment on the capacity and strength of district staff.

Financial Input:

Project financial input in terms of implementation of project activities from 2002 to 2004 amounts to 2,297,817,300 kip² (table 6). This does not include project administration and the procurement of vehicles. In addition, NCA had contributed a special fund of 63,000 USD which was used in the construction of irrigation schemes at Houay Ngoa, Houay Khok, Nam and the construction of latrines.

Table 6. Expense of active project implementation by sector.

<u>2002-2004</u>	<u>Expenses</u>
Agriculture	1,139,960,300
Health	422,254,000
Project management	236,252,000
Income	226,302,500
Education	175,648,000
Strengthen vill. Org	63,808,500
Training centres	33,592,000
	2,297,817,300

Figure 5 shows the share of financial input received by project component. Without counting the special fund, already 50% of expenses was used for agricultural activities. Health component shares 18% of expenses, 10% is used to strengthen project management, another 10% is used to support income generating activities, 8% goes to education and only 3% is used to strengthen village organizations.

² Exchange rate as of December 2004: 1 USD = _____ LAK

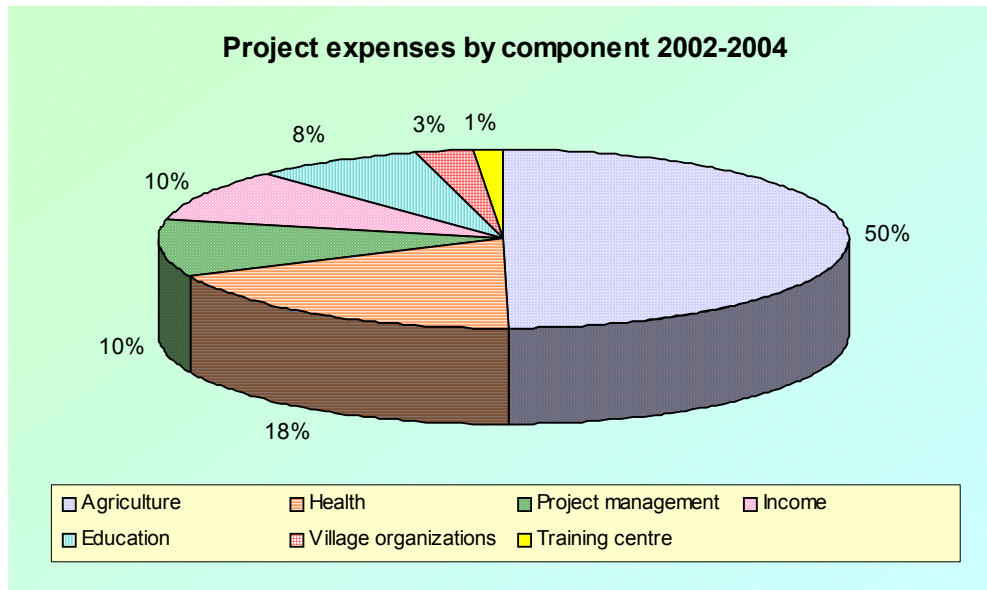


Figure 5. Share of project expenses by component.

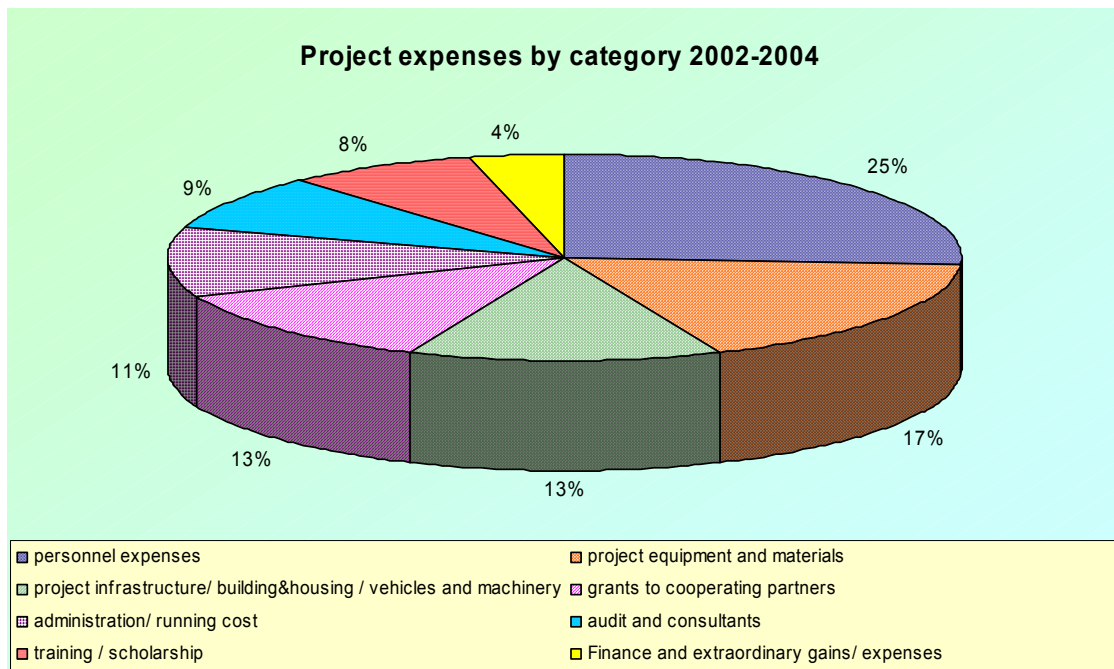


Figure 6. Project expenses by management category 2002-2004.

Figure 6 shows project expenses by management category. The total expense from 2002 to 2004 is 698,080.64 USD, of which 25% goes to personnel expenses, 30% was used for project hardware (including 17% to project equipment and materials, 13% to project infrastructure, building and housing, vehicles and machinery), 13% are grants given to cooperating partners of which 77,875.67 USD (equivalent to 88% of the category) was

handed over in 2003 (figure 8). Administration and running costs account for 11%, audit and consultants cost accounts for 9% which was used in 2002, and 8% goes to training and scholarship.

Table 7. Project income and expenses by category by year in USD.

	Year			Total 2002-2004
	2002	2003	2004	
grants and income (USD)	268,926	270,146.	251,644	790,716
1. National meeting/workshop	705	16,259	13,418	30,382
2. project infrastructure	75,436	31,825	22,023	129,284
3. project equipment and materials	33,563	35,798	42,733	112,094
4. national staff	58,647.	53,289	56,827	168,763
5. other personnel expenses	3,512	4,020	3,954	11,486
6. training / scholarship	16,221	22,595	2,0971	59,787
7. administration/ running cost	6,377	2,534	3,478	12,389
8. office ex penses	0.00	3,091	1,505	4,596
9. communications	8,365.29	1,459	1,842	11,666
travel expenses /entertainment /				
10. insurance	14,995	19,665	19,696	54,356
11. consultant cost	40,044	0.00	4,244	44,288
finance and extraordinary gains/				
12. expenses	11,060.02	9,303	7,311	27,674
Sub-total (USD)	268,926	199,842	19,8008	666,776
Expenses in kind – food for work		6,586	6,352	123,938
Total	268,926	261,428	260,361	790,715
Balance	0.00	8,717	8,717	

Table 7 shows project income and expenses by management category through the years. Project total income for 2002 to 2004 amounts to 698,123.54 USD and expenses amount to 698,080.64 USD. Overall the project keeps a good balance of accounts, using 100% of allocated funds, however, a balance of “0.00 USD” in 2002 leaves some question marks.

Figure 7 shows that 77% of grants and income were used in the first two years and 23% in the third year which should correspond to project phase out of Namchouam.

Administration costs is normally higher at the beginning of a project

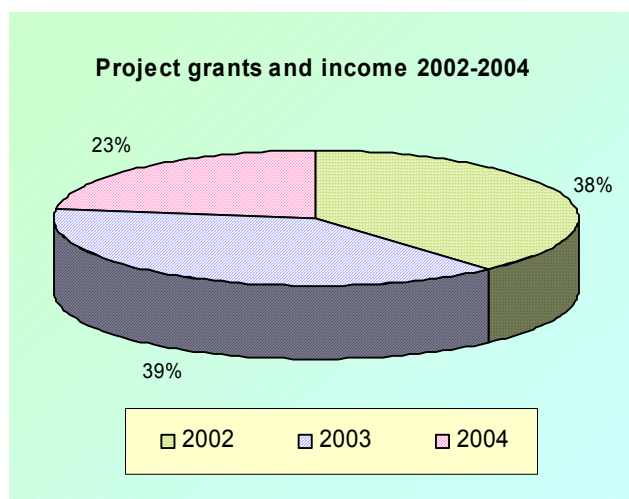


Figure 7. Use of project grants and income 2002-2004.

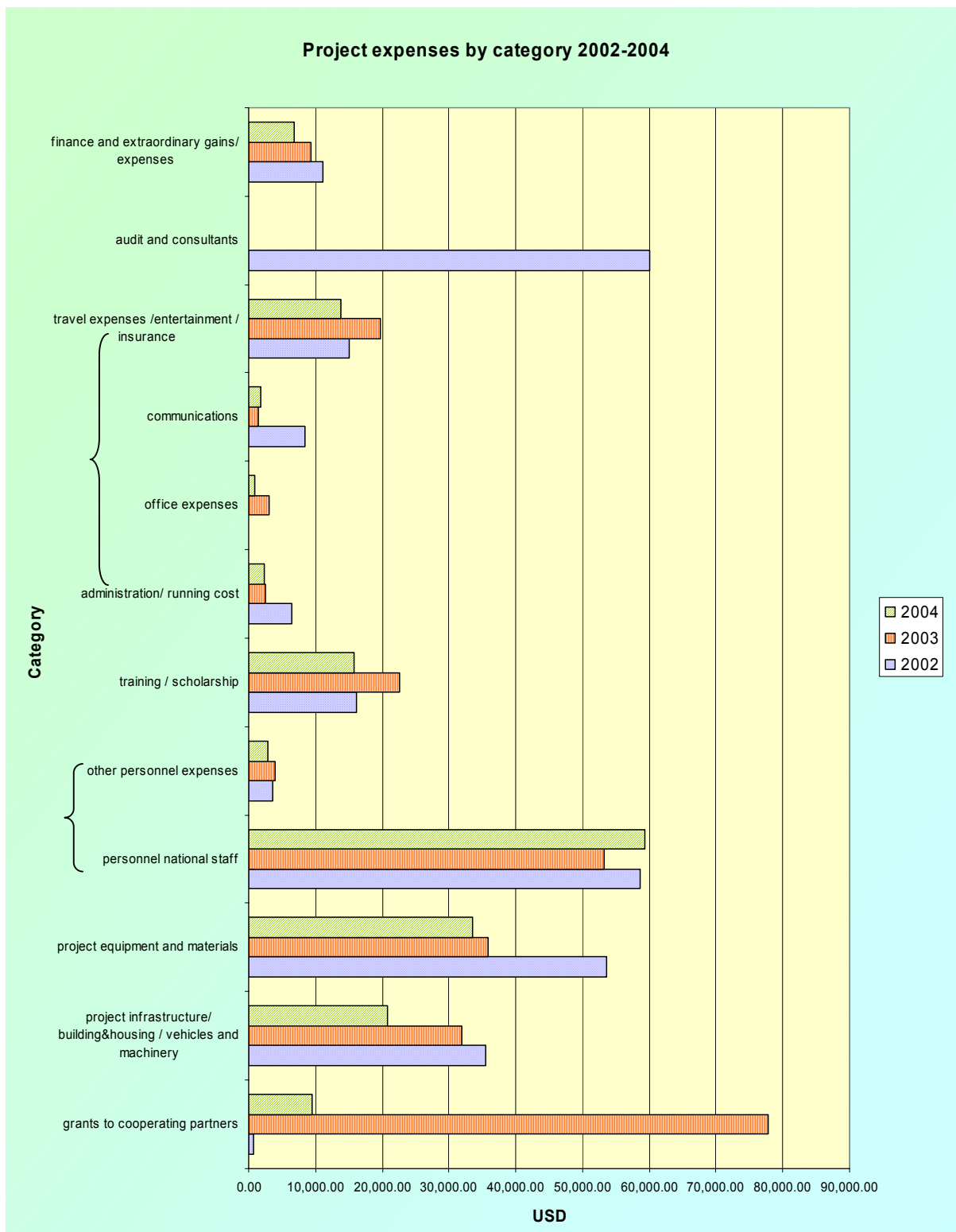


Figure 8. project expenses by management category by year.

6.2. Project implementation process

6.2.1. Implementation of planned activities

The project embraces a participative approach integrating indigenous knowledge, community development, participation, human resource and institutional development, community-based drug control, gender value and networking.

The project starts with the participatory village planning (PVP), implementation of project activities and then participatory monitoring and evaluation. PVP implies that target population identifies their own needs and the direction of their own development. The process is facilitated by a team composed of district staff and project staff.

District staff from different sector including agriculture, health, education, LWU, LYU, Information, Drug control unit guide and assist village organizations in the implementation of project activities with technical support from the project. In agriculture, district officers work with interest groups that were established then trained for activities. Villagers contribute what is in their capacity either as labour, raw local material or money with the aim of enhancing villagers feeling of ownership of activities. Revolving funds were created to keep an investment capital for activities ensuring viability of project in the long term. When a revolving fund is well managed, the potential for sustainability is higher. However, it is not an easy task to manage a revolving fund as it involves taking from the fund and then returning it which requires discipline and strong will, as seen earlier in the case of garlic production in Ban Phonechaleun. In the health sector, medicine revolving funds were also reported as not well managed as responsible bodies have difficulty in following up on collection of fees.

For each infrastructure activity, groups/people are established/nominated and trained for management, operation and maintenance. Normally, this should be undertaken before the completion of the construction as to ensure good usage of the facility and sustainability. By the time of the evaluation, 3 villages in MM still do not have established groups/people responsible for the maintenance of their running water systems. WUGs of newly constructed irrigation schemes have also been reported as non operational.

As for CBDAC, the heart of the approach is the community and its active involvement in all the steps of the process:

- (1) the community preparation when socio-economic data on addicts and their families are collected and analyzed, results are then disseminated in the community and awareness raising campaigns are undertaken;
- (2) the detoxification cure and which involves the contribution and participation of the community in tasks of their capacity; and
- (3) the follow-up of addicts and their community after the cure to follow their health, to encourage addicts, their family and their community and to assist in planning of development activities.

According to interviews and feedback on the CBDAC process, the preparation phase had not reached the heart of the community and had jumped steps like the establishment of an assistance system between villagers. During the detoxification phase, cooking and food was

provided by the project. These are tasks that the community have the capacity to undertake and the project should consider their involvement as much as possible.

6.2.2. Monitoring (monitoring system, changes in activities and how did the project deal with the changes)

The project has established a good and simple monitoring and reporting system composed basically of simple forms to fill. There are yearly, quarterly and monthly plans. The monthly plan is evaluated and updated monthly making the project flexible. Yearly plans are also reproduced on large format and given to the village development committees for following up of activities. In most of villages these charts are well pinned to walls of meeting halls. In other villages like Houay Phapoon, the charts were completely torn down and laid in pieces on the ground. During the visit, some villagers used the paper for smoking. On one hand, this might show a lack of care but in Houay Phapoon, these charts have no meaning to villagers as they cannot read Lao.

When a major problem is encountered, the concerned unit will be notify and it then reports vertically to its hierarchy and horizontally to the project. Reporting takes 1 to 3 days and response will arrive within 1 to 5 days of notice receipt. District units are the first to deal with the problem and if necessary assistance will be asked to the provincial and project level.

It is important to note that monitoring sheets do not include the exact same objectives as project documents. In the course of time, objectives have been simplified and reduced, and order reversed. Furthermore, there are loss of information from the raw material (hand written monitoring sheets) and the database version. Project staff should also be refreshed on the way to fill the monitoring forms as data have not been gathered in the same manner which unable comparisons.

6.2.3. Relationship between NCA and its counterparts at the provincial, district and village levels

NCA maintains good relationship with its counterparts at provincial, district and village levels. According to discussions, district and provincial levels are satisfied with NCA. NCA has delegated field activities to district levels giving full responsibility for allowances this suits the districts well as they feel free to do their work. However, the mission team finds that this freedom can lead to inefficiency and that a tighter GO-Implement between project staff and district officers will give better results to outputs. In the project own evaluation of 2004, there are still a lot of weaknesses reported due to lack of technical knowledge of district staff and demand for closer follow up. If project staff can work closely with district counterparts they will enhance capacity building and on-the-job training of the latter.

6.2.4. Relationship between beneficiaries (men and women) and the government implementing agencies as well as NCA

All project officers are well known in the field at village level indicating a sustained presence. Villagers have good opinions of project staff and some are very well loved. However, except for 5 strong villages, the rest still rely a lot on the project seeing it as a

saviour and wanting it to stay forever. To the mission team, villagers seem to realized only very recently that they need to take their development into hands as the project nears completion.

As for district level, beneficiaries know that they need technical backing from the district but they also understand that government fund is low. Except for the agriculture sector, there were no complaints about district officers. These complaints referred to visits of agricultural officers whom did not contact or communicate with people directly responsible for an activity. During their visit, they will only go to the village chief. An example is an officer would come to give guidelines for rice cultivation but would not set foot on the paddy field as he only stay in the village chief house.

6.2.5. Ownership of the project by counterpart agency

It is estimated that about 70% of government staff understand the project and know its role well and feel ownership of the project as part of the government work to develop the country. At provincial level and higher level of government at district level, the understanding is high however at lower level, the issue has not even been considered. Although, at meetings some people agree with other people's answers but the work performed does not reflect this feeling of ownership. Ownership does not mean only being responsible for but also taking initiatives and feeling challenged by the work itself.

6.3. Relevance of the project

The project is relevant as it targets needy population in remote areas who would like to improve their living conditions and government at all levels desired the same thing for their population. Target population are well aware of their present living conditions and would like to better their lives however their means are limited and their knowledge about opportunities, alternatives and techniques is limited as well. The project actually tackles these limitations and villagers appreciate the effort. This is shown in the way they don't want the project to leave as they said they still "have a lot to learn and there are a still a lot of things to do".

The project purpose and overall goal are also in accordance with the Lao Government policy which aims at poverty reduction, food security, eradication of slash and burn cultivation, eradication of opium production, increase household income and market oriented production.

Furthermore, the project purpose and overall goal do not go directly against the culture of the ethnic population. It adopts strategies that are appropriate to the present condition of target population, dealing with basic needs and no hi-tech technologies had been introduced. These strategies also refer to indigenous knowledge and community participation which means villagers participate by their own willingness and not because they are forced to.

Two indirect influences that the project does have on the ethnic culture of the target population are women issues in terms of gender training and the health issues when more villagers turn to health workers for dealing with their health problems instead of healers. One direct influence that the project has on the life of villagers is their production system based on

slash and burn cultivation. However this is a desired result as the traditional production system has been defined in the present context as unsustainable.

6.4. Effectiveness of the project

Effectiveness is a measure of how much project purposes have been achieved through project outputs. In the absence of comparable quantified data, a method combining half qualitative/ half quantitative is used here to assess the effectiveness of the project. Indicators come from the project document with slight modifications to adapt to the simplified objectives.

Food security improved

<u>Indicators:</u>		
➤ Increased paddy rice area	✓	
➤ Increased yields of paddy and upland rice	✗	
➤ Increased production of livestock	✓	(4/5)
➤ Reduced period of average rice deficiencies and percentage of population experiencing rice deficiencies	✓	80%
➤ Increased number of target villages with land use plans	✓	

The project has effectively increased paddy rice area (figure 9), production of livestock (figure 9), production of livestock (figure 2) and number of villages with land titling. Although there are no direct figures from 2002 to compare for trend in rice deficiency and percentage of population with rice deficiency, a per capita rice production gives an increase from 0.28 ton/pers to 0.33 ton/pers (production here includes the 370 tons of rice received in exchange of work as the principle underlining the Food for Work Programme assume that the time villagers spent to work on infrastructure construction could be use for production and rice allowance was calculated according to work performed).

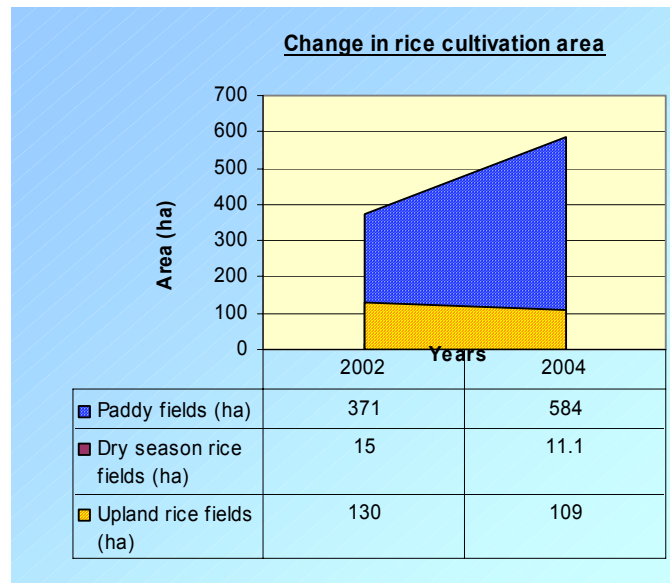


Figure 9. Change in rice production area 2002-2004

However, the project has not achieved rice yields increased as indicated in table 1. Thus outputs from project activities have achieved 80% of the project purpose to improve food security in target villages.

Income generation increased

<u>Indicators:</u>		
➤ Increased cash income in the target villages	?	
➤ Increased number of women groups doing income generation activities	✓	(3/4)
➤ Increased production of marketable goods in the target villages	✓	75%
➤ Increased road access to target villages	✓	

The project has effectively increased number of women groups doing income generation activities, production of marketable goods in the target villages and road access to target villages. Without concrete figures from 2002, it cannot be yet said that the project has increased cash income of target population. However, figures 3, 4 and 10 show that income in target areas come from animal raising (52.5%) and forest products (34.5%). As animal raising is a direct activity promoted by the project and animal production has increased, it can be extrapolated that income from animal raising has increased. However, at this stage it is safer to say that outputs from project activities have achieved at least 75% of the project purpose to increase income of target households.

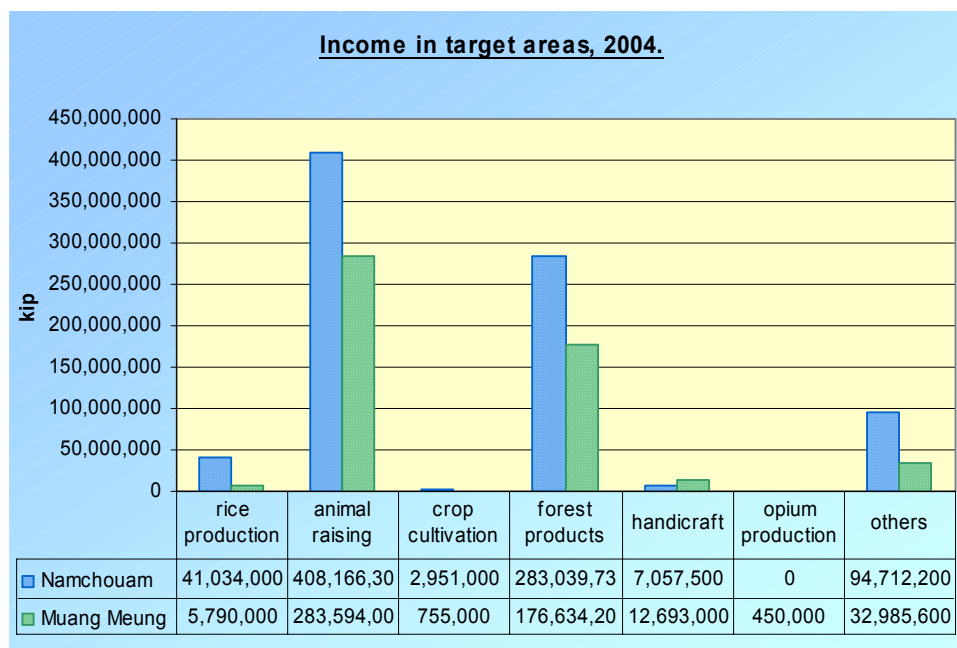


Figure 10. Income and its sources from target areas in 2004.

Health service improved

<u>Indicators:</u>		
➤ Increased percentage of target population using mosquito nets	✓	
➤ Increased percentage of target population with access to clean water	✓	
➤ Increased number of qualified and active village health volunteers	✓	(5/7)
➤ Reduced incidence of the most common diseases such as malaria and diarrhea	?	71%
➤ Increased number of coverage and immunization for children under 2 years	✓	
➤ Increased percentage of target population use latrine	✓	
➤ Reduced incidence of opium addiction in the target population	?	

The project has effectively achieved increased percentage of target population using mosquito nets, having access to clean water and using latrine. For the latter, the percentage has maintained to around 85% for Namchouam area and in Muang Meung, the use of latrines has increased from nil to 20%. The number of qualified and active village health volunteers and the number of coverage and immunization for children under 2 years have also increased. Incidence of the most common diseases such as malaria and diarrhea has reduced in NC but figures show a tremendous increase of cases in MM. These figures indicate that by 2004, half of the population of Meung district have malaria and 38% have diarrhoea. This increase can be explained by better access to the health service and thus more cases could be diagnosed. However, it is impossible to assess with certitude an increase or decrease. As for opium addiction, it is too early after the detoxification cure to assess the outcome. Thus outputs of project activities have achieved 71% of the project purpose to improve access to the health service and the quality of the health service

Common diseases	NC		MM	
	2002	2004	2002	2004
Malaria	239	168	338	1282
Diarrhoea	175	124	130	980

Table 8. Cases of common diseases in target areas

Education service improved

<u>Indicators:</u>		
➤ Increased school attendance / enrollment and drop out rate reduced	✗	(4/5)
➤ Increased number of active and functioning village schools	✓	80%
➤ Increased number of villages with active parents	✓	

associations	✓	
➤ Increased number of villages with established non-formal education programmes	✓	
➤ Increased number of villagers with calculation and reading skills		

The project has increased the number of active and functioning village schools, the number of villages with parents associations, the number of villages with established non-formal education programmes. The number of villagers with calculation and reading skills has also increased (figures 11, 12) but it has decreased in percentage of population. This is due to migration of numerous families in the area, mainly in Ban Nampo. This is also the case with children school enrollment, where rate of enrollment decreased but this can not be assessed as an achievement. Therefore, education outputs achieved 80% of the project purpose to improve the education service and the level of education amongst target population.

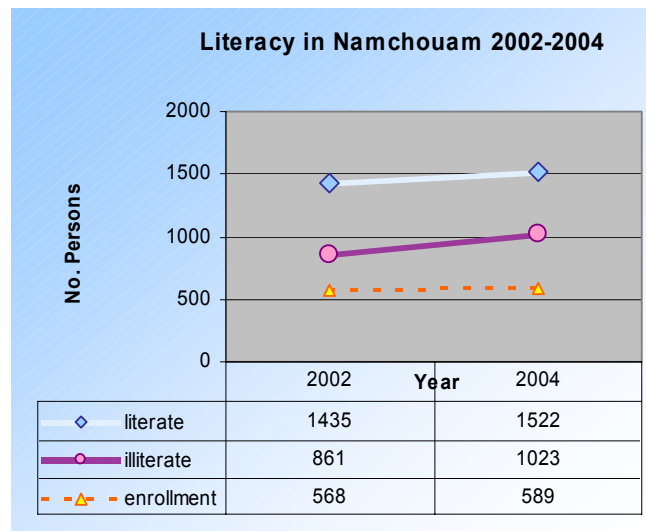


Figure 11. Literacy and enrollment in Namchouam

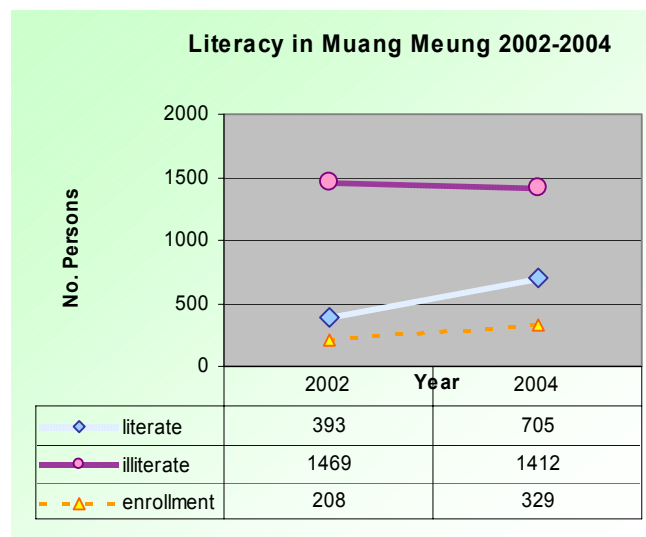


Figure 12. Literacy and enrollment in Meung

Village authorities and organizations strengthened

<i>Indicators:</i>		
➤ Increased number of trained and active village development committees	✗	(2/4)
➤ Increased number of village networking	✓	50%

➤ Active participation of villagers and village representatives in planning process	✘
➤ Increased numbers of functioning women's group	✔

The project has increased the number of trained village development committees, the number of village networking and the number of functioning women's group. Target population also participate in the planning process. However, it is important to note that "active" means more than being present at a meeting and answering questions when asked. It also means more than 2 persons speaking in a meeting. Assessed from the evaluation visits, the target population does not participate "actively" in discussions and the majority of VDCs does not understand the role of the VDC and the role and responsibilities of members. Thus project outputs achieved 50% of the purpose of strengthening village authorities and organizations.

Project management and human resource development improved

<i>Indicators:</i>		
➤ Functioning District Co-ordination Committees	✔	
➤ Monitoring system set up and functioning	✔	(3/5)
➤ Government services carrying out a bigger part of the implementation	✔	
➤ Government utilizing participatory working approaches	?	60%
➤ Reduced number of project staff	✘	

District Coordination Committees are functioning, the project has set up a functioning monitoring system and government services are carrying out a bigger part of the implementation. However, there was no evidence during the course of the evaluation visit to refute or agree that the government staff is effectively utilizing participatory approach. The participatory approach is embedded in the project strategy which set tasks to perform. To carry out a task does not necessarily mean that a person understand and uses this approach. As for project staff, the number has not reduced. Therefore outputs can be evaluated to have achieved 75% of the purpose of improving project management and human resources development.

Overall, villagers have improved their living conditions by participating in project activities.

6.5. Efficiency of the project

The project has provided equipment and materials for implementation of all components as tools for agricultural productions, for health care, for educational purposes, for income generating activities and for village strengthening. These were provided as donations (per example, school learning material) when the use benefit a large part of the community or as revolving funds (e.g. hand tractor revolving fund) when the use benefit an individual or a household. Revolving funds allow more people/households to benefit from the tool/equipment, give funding for operation/maintenance/repair and if well managed can ensure sustainability.

In 2002, there was major input of technical assistance. This is normal as in the first year of a project or phase, consultants are needed to set the guidelines for implementation and to build capacity of staff. Grants to cooperating partners was very high in 2003 (*The team has not yet investigated the reasons.*)

Not all input had contributed to the outputs as some activities had failed like the chick production. Also, the sewing machines have not produced outstanding output yet.

The scale of input is appropriate in terms of allocation to different components. Agriculture expenses amount to 50% of all project expenses, this reflect the actual situation in target villages where the livelihood of target population evolves around agricultural production. Furthermore, total project expenses for the implementing phase is 698,080.64 USD. If we compare this amount to the total number of beneficiaries (target population in 2004: 5579 inhabitants), this gives a cost of 41.71 USD/pers.●year, which is reasonable. The evaluation cannot find examples of project of the same scale which will bring the same outputs with less money and time.

Overall the project is efficient.

6.6. Impact of the project

Impacts of the project can be observed through different sectors. In agriculture, increased production insure food security and when a household does not worry about food, household members start to think towards the market. In more developed villages like Nampong and Chansavang, villagers are asking what else can they produce that would be of high value or what can they do with their pineapple when at production season they cannot travel.

Another impact is the modification in production behaviour of ethnic population as they turn towards a more stabilized agriculture. Land allocation in Na Ngam created tension amongst villagers as some find the process unfair.

Income generation activities have also produced visible impacts. In Ban Tolae, the establishment of the small shop has brought merchandise into the village. Villagers now have access to produces they had never encountered before. The person who runs the shop has the opportunity to meet other people and other cultures on trips for the procurement of her supply. She had also made good profit which incite her to further keep the shop. She thinks her life is easier when she can weave and keep the shop at the same time.

In the health sector, an impact can be immediately seen right at arrival in a village. Villages are clean which makes visitors want to stop and sit around. The majority of villages visited were clean. Villagers themselves know about impacts of health activities in their life. They enumerated: (1) better health, (2) less infant mortality, (3) less mortality due to illnesses and (4) with better health they are not incapacitated for production activities.

Health activities have quick and widespread impact on target villages as this can be assessed in all villages visited. In Meung district, the close availability of water and latrines does not only have impact on villagers' health but also remove the burden of fetching water and the hassle of finding a peaceful place to do one's needs. Running water also allows people to carry out daily activities with more efficiency.

In Namchouam, lack of maintenance of running water system starts to show visible outcome. Fenceless water points are best locations for animals to feed and quench their thirst. This renders the water point dirty. If local authority let the problem persist, the location could become breeding ground for diseases. In Nampong, a broken tap let the water running at full capacity the whole day. The loss of water is great. As Nampong is located on elevated grounds, the water runs off along the slope and because there is no proper drainage, it starts to form a gully.

In the education sector, the evaluation team has not encountered concrete impact from formal education and project monitoring had not reported any. Communication in Lao with children was generally difficult. It will take more time before the impact from the last three years of formal education activities can be observed. Non-formal education has increased the number of literate persons in target villages which enlarge the pool of human resource available for carrying out more complex tasks.

Strengthening village organizations results in some villages in stronger leadership, better administration of the community affairs and thus bring quicker development. However, VDC members feel that their workload had increased significantly and they have less time for either their own production or leisure.

Project management and human resources development have build the capacity of project staff government staff and villagers in different fields enabling them to carry out developments activities. Project counterparts were then capable of more initiatives for decision-making. The high rate of turn-over of government staff has negative impact on the project as it is a loss of capacity for the project itself. However, a person trained can still use the knowledge acquire in other situations.

The project has also impact on the quality of life of female population. Their workload had been lighten up by the proximity of water, they have better opportunities for income generating activities and they have access to targeted health care.

6.7. Sustainability of the project

Sustainability of development activities after this project depends on two major requirements: funds and leadership. The project would have built the technical capability of villagers to carry out activities and established revolving funds and organizational structures before leaving. If revolving funds are well managed, the fund would not run out and there will be continuous investment capital to carry out further activities. In addition to the fund, there needs to be a strong local authority to overview development activities. Leaders are the ones who can bring villagers together, who facilitate problem solving in times of crisis, who can motivate and mobilize for activities. During the course of the visits, only a minority of VDCs can properly answer questions on their role and responsibilities.

Of the 19 villages visited, 4 stood out as having high potential for sustainability: Nampong, Syphonexay and Chansavang in Namchouam area, and Namkhaleu in Meung district. One village which the evaluation team had passed by a couple of times but was not able to carry out interview has also high potential: Ban Houaythad (MM). This village is already far in the state of development, it is situated close to the district capital and it has a strong figurehead in the person of the district governor (his village). Ban Namchouam has not shown strong leadership, however, it is the “Khet” (area)’s chief village. The Khet’s chief is a strong and committed person with respect from the population. Furthermore, it is

the area's focal point with services (market, dispensary, higher level school). It will develop by default but the sustainability of project established activities and structures is questionable.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Capacity building

The project has generated quantity of outputs, however weaknesses still have to be strengthened in order to ensure higher potential for sustainability for Namchouam area after phasing out and as lessons learned for Meung district. Causes of problems lie in:

- Lack of technical skills in district officers (in part due to high turn-over rate)
- Weak VDCs
- Weak/ non functioning WUGs for irrigation schemes
- Lack of maintenance of running water systems as the persons responsible do not fully understand the importance of it.
- Weak management of revolving funds

To solve these capacity problems, it is recommended the following:

1. Go-implementation of project and district staff

This means to couple a project officer and a district officer whenever they go to the villages either for implementation of activities, for technical guidance or for follow-up. It is a capacity building scheme. The project officer will train "on-the-job" the district officer in the technical skill as well as a methodology of work (including the participatory approach) for each task to perform. The project officer would leave the district officer alone on a task only when the latter had proven capacity to carry out effectively the task.

This method will build efficiently the capacity of district officers, will reduce the effects of turnovers and will ensure close follow-up that is needed for phasing-out in Namchouam and for efficient management, operation and maintenance of constructed/improved infrastructure.

At first, this might seem to go against the target of increasing implementation responsibilities to the district but the project is responsible for ensuring that those who will lead implementation have the capacity to efficiently carrying it out.

2. Further strengthening of village organizations/groups with close follow-up

Newly formed groups are not functional even if they had been trained because they don't really know how to start and deal with real cases. As much as the district officers need on-the-job training, village groups need it also. The duo project-district officers in charge should spend whole day(s) as required with one group at a time and then follow up regularly for review of work undertaken and guidance.

Local authorities including VDCs should also be trained on leadership and community mobilization techniques.

Market oriented production

With increased food security, production starts to diversify and shift slowly towards market oriented production.

3. Increased input on market development

In more developed villages with high production, there is need to find markets for produces. The project had promoted shops held by women unions for handicraft products, it needs to do the same for other agricultural products. Furthermore an interview on the market in Namchouam brought about the fact that there were little agricultural commodities produced in target villages that were on display. The project should investigate opportunities that could be exploited.

4. Food processing, value added products

Simple food processing in order to add value to products or to increase storing capacity for sale at out of season time or just for later use should be investigated and training undertaken.

Reduction of opium addiction

5. Increased implication/participation of villagers in the CB-DAC process.

A lesson learned from the NCA Long District Project in view to reduce the rate of relapse, is that the community should be ready to provide assistance to detoxified persons in rehabilitation and a network for assistance should be established before the detoxification cure could be undertaken. This ensures (1) the understanding of the community, (2) their readiness to cope with rehabilitation cases, and (3) a network to assist the detoxified persons and their families. In addition it also encourages addicts to receive the cure as they can see that the community understand their case and is ready to help. It is thus recommended to the project to ensure that a community network of assistance is well established during the preparation phase.

During the detoxification phase, the community should also participate and contribute what they have the capacity, for example, food and cooking for addicts in detox. This will increase their understanding and the feeling of being part of the whole process.

Phasing-out Namchouam

6. Set a definitive date for completion in Namchouam and announce it to target population of the area.

NCA had worked in Namchouam since 1993. After 10 years of support, target population should take their development into their own hands. During the evaluation visit, the majority of villages still want the project to continue on, however it shows out as an attitude of a child who does not want to grow up. As long as the adult tend the hand, the child will take it. And if the project sympathizes, the project is perpetrating the behaviour.

The project should challenged villagers and make them believe that they will be able to carry out their own development. By setting a definitive date of completion and announce it as a challenge, the population will really understand that the time has come for them to take charge. The project can then carry out a last training (the intensive on-the-job training village by village discussed earlier) targeting weakest groups to strengthen. It will be the last effort for ensuring sustainability. For the 13 villages of Namchouam, this should not take over 2 months. The project should also plan and announce post-project evaluation.

Monitoring & Evaluation

8. CONCLUSION

The project evaluation carried out from 29/11/2004 to 5/12/2004 in 19 villages of the two target areas namely Namchouam area and Meung district found that:

1. In terms of achievement of project implementation, the project has improved living conditions of the poor in Namchouam area and Meung district.
2. By the end of 2004, the basic needs of the poor are better met as food security has improved; villagers have better access to health services, to education and to the market and family income has increased.
3. The project has generated numerous outputs:
 - In the food security component: rice production, food crops production, the productivity of animal raising and the land use planning have improved, irrigation schemes have been rehabilitated and constructed.
 - In the income generating component: income from crops production, animal raising, income of the women groups have increased and the market and small scale credit system have been promoted.
 - In the health service component: target population pays attention to the prevention of diseases and health care; prevention, health care and environmental hygiene have been improved, the quality of the health service has been improved and 98 opium addicts have been detoxified.
 - In the education service component: the target population are aware of education activities; the learning and teaching facilities of non and formal education as well as the quality of the education service have been improved.
 - In the village authorities component: village leaders, development committees, women's unions and youth unions have been strengthened.
 - In the project management and human resources development component: project coordinators have been strengthened in project management, the state and village human resources have been developed in knowledge and skills.
4. Inputs used by the project to produce the outputs are appropriate. In terms of human resources, the project personnel includes 14 persons in 10 positions to support and facilitate project implementation, coordination and management. District officers and villagers have responsibility for implementation of project activities under the supervision of district coordination committees.

In terms of financial input for implementation of project activities, 50% of input is used for agricultural activities. Overall, project expenses totaled 698,080.64 USD of which 30% are costs of project hardware and 25% are personnel expenses.
5. Project implementation follows participatory approach and community development. Activities start with the participatory village planning, implementation of project activities and then participatory monitoring and evaluation. Implementation of activities are undertaken through interest groups that were formed and trained in group and revolving fund administration. Revolving funds were established to ensure potential for sustainability.

A simple monitoring system had been set up for monitoring of activities. However here is lack of constancy in unit of data collected and there is loss of information from the raw material to the database.

The project maintains a good working relationship with project beneficiaries and government counterparts.

6. The project is relevant as it is desired as much by the target communities as the government of the Lao PDR as it aims to better the living conditions of the target population
7. For each purpose, the project is effective at: Food security improved (80%), Income generation increased (75%), Health service improved (71%), Education service improved (80%), Village authorities and organizations strengthened (50%), Project management and human resource development improved (60%). To the overall goal, the project is effective at 69.33%.
8. The project is relatively efficient as total expenses are equivalent to a cost per beneficiary of 41.71 USD/pers. •year.
9. The project has produced a lot of impact on the lives of target communities on the positive and negative sides but on the balance, the project has increased the quality of life of the target population.
10. Recommendations to the project are:
 - *Go-implementation of project and district staff*
 - *Further strengthening of village organizations/groups with close follow-up*
 - *Increased input on market development*
 - *Food processing, value added products*
 - *Increased implication/participation of villagers in the CB-DAC process*
 - *Set a definitive date for completion in Namchouam and announce it to target population of the area.*