

Source Document: UNESCO, “Undertaking the Human Rights Based Approach: Lessons for Policy, Planning and Programming. Documenting Lessons Learned for the Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming: An Asia-Pacific Perspective”

Integrating a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) into Programming: LAO

Name of Project: Application of Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming in the Water and Environmental Sector (WES) in Lao PDR.

Lead LLP Partner: UNICEF Lao PDR

Partner/s: Central, provincial and district government partners from the Centre for Environmental Health and water Supply (commonly referred to as NAM SAAT), Ministry of Health, Central, provincial and district government partners from the Ministry of Education, World Bank Water and Sanitation Programme, Australian Aid for International Development (AusAID), Oxfam, ADRA

Location: Northern and Southern Lao PDR

Human Rights-Based Techniques Used: participatory rural appraisal, participatory situational assessment, participatory monitoring and evaluation, community dialogues between provincial and district officials and villages, private sector mapping, transparent bidding processes for water supply (include names of those tendering being listed on the website), seven steps Implementation process (this focuses on community participation and dialogue, enabling communities to put forward their demands for supply, use, ownership and maintenance of services), community user groups (which build village consensus on contribution rates, maintenance of water systems, promotion of hygiene and responsibility for liaising with officials).

Project Specific Innovations:

- National consultation on implementing a human rights-based approach in the water and environmental sanitation programme were organized during which HRBA principles were introduced and discussed with 70 central, provincial and district level government representatives from the Water and Environmental Sector (WES) across the country. The case study in Luang Prabang was used to sensitize and educate government representatives on HRBA, their responsibilities as duty bearers and the roles of rights holders in working towards effective programme responses. Village chiefs and representatives from International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), the World Bank and AusAID also attended.
- Supporting provincial and district governments to develop hygiene promotion strategies

Project Background and Outline: UNICEF, in partnership with the Lao PDR Ministry of Health’s Centre for Environmental Health and Water Supply (NAM SAAT), has been working

with local communities in Lao PDR to design, implement and manage water and environmental sanitation (WES) facilities under a human rights-based framework. The UNICEF Lao PDR WES Programme cannot claim to strictly utilize the human rights-based approach (HRBA) to programming in all phases of the cycle. Yet, it has been possible to incorporate many of the guiding principles into programme components. This achievement, in line with UNICEF's policy of continuously advocating and promoting the principles of HRBA within the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and with government and NGO counterparts, is especially noteworthy given the rather challenging and often sensitive context of human rights in the Lao PDR.

A major initiative in taking the HRBA principles forward and in enhancing partner awareness of the approach was a case study in rural water supplies and sanitation services in early 2005. This case study involved a documentation of the UNICEF supported rural water supply and sanitation project in Luang Prabang province as part of a regional LLP documentation effort.

Human rights principles guide all phases of UNICEF process and are applied in all programme sectors. WES programmes now concentrate on sanitation, on building institutional capacity, and on raising hygiene awareness. This means working in partnership with the public sector and communities – especially women and children – in planning, implementing and maintaining WES systems.

UNICEF has worked in close collaboration with NAM SAAT to develop the rights-based strategies integral to achieving project outcomes, and has also supported capacity- building within NAM SAAT and rural communities to implement these strategies. The aim has been to create conditions that would enable rural communities in 14 districts to access and maintain sustainable WES facilities. The development objective has been to supporting a Demand Responsive Approach in rural areas to improve access, use and sustainability of water supplies and sanitation facilities; and, to increase health and economic benefits and reduce infant mortality and morbidity rates. In 2006, the LLP was scaled up in other villages in Luang Prabang province and expanded to Savannakhet province.

UNICEF Lao PDR is now in the final stages of undertaking joint programming in three districts in Savannakhet province. The 2006 LLP took into consideration all the recommendations in the 2005 case study and the comments provided by peer review in January 2006. Most importantly, was the recommendation to raise the awareness of rights holders on their right to water. As indicated, there are still a lot of sensitivities regarding human rights-related issues in Lao PDR. Yet, the valuable “learning by doing” approach through actual implementation of human rights-based approach to programming in the WES sector, and subsequent incorporation of the Lao PDR experience into this regional initiative, have contributed to an increased openness and awareness amongst partners regarding building processes and establishing foundations for sustainable and long-term provision of services and mechanisms in order to respond to the rights of children and women throughout the country.

Rights Advanced: The right to sanitation, the right to health, education, sustainable livelihoods, food security and women's rights to participate in the economic and social life of the villages.

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