



## HASWAS project implementation

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HASWAS IS THE name of project trying to institutionalise a Demand Responsive Approach for WSS services in the poor remote northern provinces of Oudomxay and Phongsaly in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. HASWAS stands for 'Hygiene Awareness, Sanitation and Water Supply' and is the RWSS Component of the Provincial Infrastructure Project<sup>1</sup>.

The National Centre for Environmental Health and Water Supply (referred hereafter as Nam Saat Central) of the Ministry of Health was asked in May 1997 to prepare this HASWAS Project. This nationally led process represented a departure from the more traditional use of external consultants to prepare the Project Appraisal Document (PAD).

At the same time, Nam Saat was preparing a National RWSS<sup>2</sup> Sector Strategy through a series of consultation meetings. This was the first time for the concerned agencies in the RWSS Sector to prepare such a guideline national framework. The Strategy was launched in November 1997.

Thus, the aim of the HASWAS project is to pilot the RWSS Sector Strategy for broader application and replication throughout the country.

The World Bank Water and Sanitation Program for East Asia and Pacific (WB WSP-EAP<sup>3</sup>) provided back-up support for the preparation of both the RWSS Sector Strategy and the HASWAS project.

### HASWAS project preparation

The project preparation process was conducted by Nam Saat Province and District, in close collaboration with its local partners (Lao Women's Union, Lao Youth Union, National Front for Reconstruction, Rural Development Committee and others) and supported by Nam Saat Central.

The Sector Strategy emphasizes a Demand Responsive Approach to RWSS activities. The assistance should focus on hard to reach, remote areas using 'Community Dialogue' and 'Informed Choice' to clearly explain the suitable technology options. Communities should contribute towards the infrastructure services based on ability and willingness to pay.

A preliminary set of tools for 'Community Dialogue' and 'Informed Choice' (see Box 1) were developed for discussing the situation of the communities to see how their demands could be reflected into the project design. These initial community discussions were completed in 30 villages in the two provinces.

On the basis of the results from these discussions, the Project Implementation Plan (PIP) was developed. Unusu-

#### Box 1: TWELVE COMMUNITY DIALOGUE ACTIVITIES

##### COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

1. Village History Profiling
2. Village Mapping
3. Gender analysis of Tasks & Roles
4. Control of Resources in the Household
5. Decision-making in the Community
6. Hygiene Awareness Assessment
7. Identification of Community's perception on the routes of transmission of Faecal-Oral Contamination
8. Local Blocking Methods of Faecal-Oral Contamination Routes
9. Analysis of the Community's Health Status
10. Prioritising of the Community's Problems

##### INFORMED CHOICE

11. Sanitation Ladder
12. Water Supply Ladder

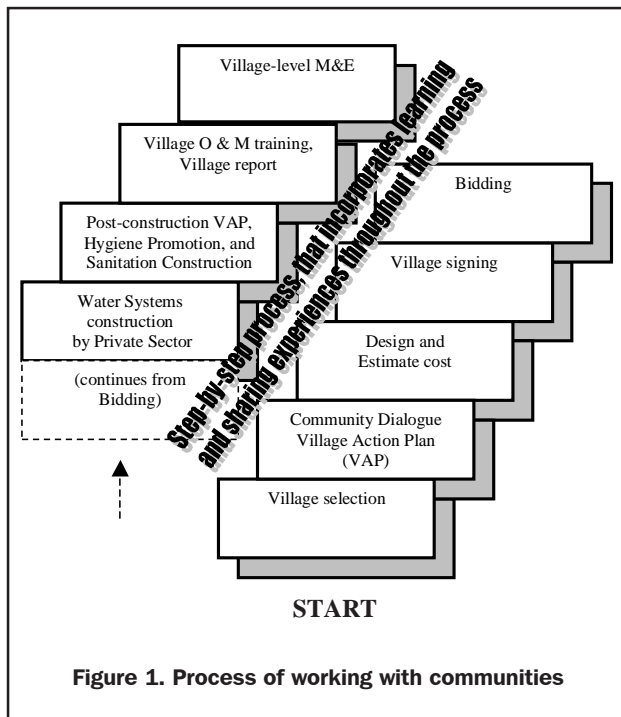
ally, the PIP does not specify how many 'hardware' or 'software' objectives will be met. Rather, in aiming to be a learning based pilot being responsive to the demands of communities, the objectives focus on the process of strengthening knowledge, sharing of learning and experiences at all levels, and supporting communities in their process of undertaking improved WSS services for equitable, sustainable investments. The initial plan aimed to support 90 communities through this process in Oudomxay Province, and 70 communities in Phongsaly Province.

This was the first time the Provincial Nam Saats had taken the lead in project preparation. The World Bank 'Quality Assurance Group' awarded 'Best Practice' to this project preparation phase. Many lessons have been learnt through:

- 1997: initial project preparation,
- 1998: negotiations between the Province and the World Bank,
- 1999: mobilisation of funds,
- March 2000: project 'Start-up Workshop' and more than 2 years of implementation since then.

### Methodology

One of the initial challenges faced by the Provincial and District Nam Saats was the limited number of staff available to undertake this project. There were only 1 or 2 technicians in the District Nam Saats to work with 100 or more village communities in each district. At the provincial level there



were only 5 Nam Saat technicians to support these district staff. Many of the villages are in remote areas with no access road.

In the past, when:

- services were provided at points close to major roads,
- donors decided themselves on the type of services,
- the cost of these services was high, and
- communities were seen as receivers of assistance,

then staff could manage the limited number of construction activities.

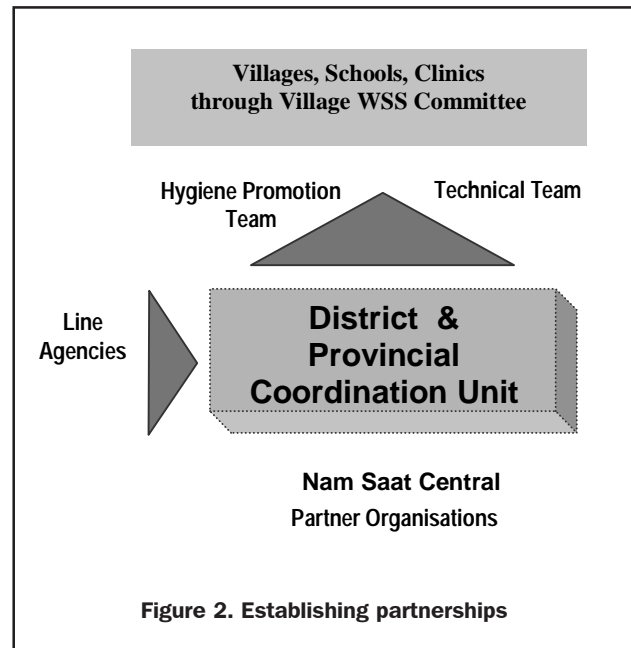
Now the RWSS Sector Strategy promotes:

- services to be provided in remote, poor areas,
- communities decide on the type of service they want and are willing and able to contribute,
- the cost of the services is affordable,
- users are seen as owners and operators of the improved services.

For this, a new step-by-step process for working with communities was developed (See Figure 1). This required the technicians to have many new facilitating skills, as well as improving technical competence. However, because Nam Saat is a part of the Health Department, often the staff are moved from nursing duties to be rural water supply and environmental sanitation technicians with little formal training. Also, the technicians had limited experience of participatory development techniques.

### Partnership Linkages

To increase the number of staff available for working with village communities, Nam Saat initiated a process of linking with mass organisations, such as the Lao Women's Union [LWU] and the Lao Youth Union [LYU] (which have



representatives in every village in the country), and with the Department of Education [DOE]. These organisations had considerable experience of working with communities. A training programme (and supporting field manuals, tools and recording books) was developed by Nam Saat Central (NSC) to strengthen the capacity of provincial and district staff.

In the initial stages, the process did not work well, because staff were not used to coordinating together between different Departments. To improve this inter-departmental teamwork and integration of activities in each other's workplans, Provincial and District Coordination Units were set up to coordinate and give oversight to activities. Support is provided from the Central level and other partner organisations. (See Figure 2).

### Roles and Responsibilities

Within this partnership framework, roles and responsibilities are being defined, such that:

- The community owns, uses, manages, operates, monitors, repairs and expands its RWSS services.
- District Coordination Unit (District Nam Saat + Partners) supports the Community's planning and implementation of its RWSS services.
- Provincial Coordination Unit (Provincial Nam Saat + Partners) supports the District Nam Saat teams, especially in planning, procurement, training and monitoring.
- Central Nam Saat acts as an advisor, facilitator and trainer for the PCU (including Provincial Nam Saat), compiles the national work plan and budget, and communicates with External Agencies and the central government.
- Central Nam Saat also leads the Learning Process at all levels and planning phases of the annual cycle.

New roles and responsibilities also had to be developed because of the new linkages with the private sector and village volunteers. This process took place through many consultation meetings with the different stakeholders to generate dialogue and understanding of the need for these new actors.

## Demand responsive approach (DRA) in the Lao Context

Having defined and agreed on the process and methodology for working with the communities, the Government staff were left with the question of how to fully understand and develop DRA in the Lao context? The Lao RWSS Sector Strategy emphasises the use of DRA including:

- improving service levels based on communities' ability and willingness to pay,
- through a process of 'Informed Choice' offering a wide range of technically feasible technologies.

An initial hurdle faced in the introduction of DRA methodologies was simply the translation of not only the words, but also the concept of DRA into Lao language. First translations were focusing on 'demand' as 'need' i.e. give the communities what they need. The translation needed to be understood not only at the Central level, but also crucially at the District and Community level. Recent translations have developed this into 'need' and 'contribution', such that all partners in the process understand that there are contributions involved for materials, labour and cash, to varying degrees from each party depending on the village situation.

The process for discussing the hygiene, sanitation and water supply improvements with communities is based on the following: -

- Ensuring A nationally led participatory approach
- Balancing the technical assistance support style.
- Promoting step-by-step progressive improvements.
- Assessing demand through 'Community Dialogue' (see Box 1) – a participatory methodology (based on PRA and PHAST) designed and initiated through a consultative process, and being adapted to the Lao context.

In each activity, (hygiene, sanitation, and water supply) the users decide on the choice that is appropriate for their situation.

## Progress of project implementation

To date in Oudomxay Province, 30 villages have participated in the 'Community Dialogue' process. Construction activities have been completed in 5 villages, and by the time of this presentation in November it is anticipated that the communities in the remaining 25 villages will have completed construction of improved WSS services also. A further 50 villages will be beginning the 'Community Dialogue' at this time. Post-construction training for WATSAN committees will be following the construction activities together with hygiene promotion.

Compared to the past when 6-8 villages might have construction activities per year in the whole province, the national team of government staff are beginning to incorporate learning from the early stages of this project into faster and better-targeted investments to assist poorer communities in remote areas.

## Major changes noticed

The provincial authorities have been identifying additional allies in the process of project implementation. Before Year 2000, Nam Saat worked alone in RWSS Sector, and used to design, construct, and supervise the RWSS services. ESAs or NSC procured materials centrally, which resulted in wastage (particularly cement) as materials tended to be sent to a provincial store for onward distribution at times not suited to the communities' needs, and transport costs were very high. ESA's also controlled the planning and budgeting of activities. Subsidy rules and records of cost sharing profiles were not available. The pace of implementation was slow, particularly due to the limited number and low capacity of the provincial and district Nam Saat staff.

Now in 2002, Nam Saat works with LWU, LYU, DOE and others in partnership. The villagers do planning with support from district & provincial team. Provincial Nam Saat (PNS) still does designs of the WSS systems. However, private companies now undertake construction through contracts, and the supervision is by PNS and NSC. The Provincial and District Authorities now decide the budget and planning process, and activities are integrated into the normal Government planning cycle.

The speed of implementation is increasing, as roles, responsibilities and understanding of the project cycle are understood through regular provincial and district meetings. Also, the provincial staff are now training private sector technicians who previously had no experience of

**Box 2. Data from 20 villages showing basic averages for gravity flow water (GFS) systems**

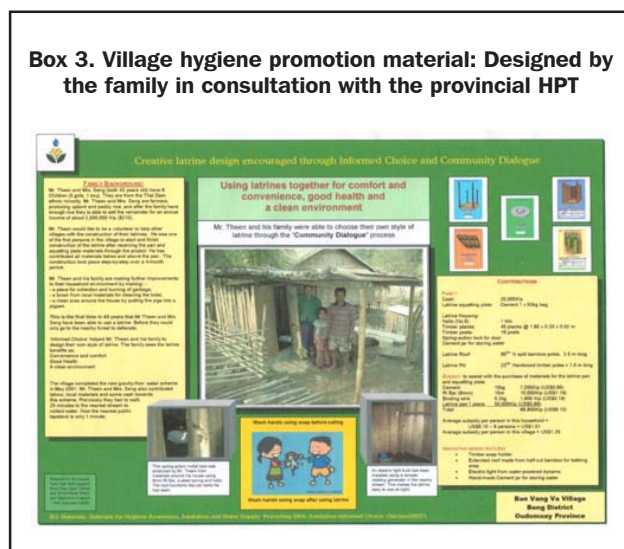
Village	Population	Distance to intake (m)	Cost* (US\$)	Cost/ Person (US\$)	Cost/ metre (US\$)
MokLaVin	210	1,200	2,280	10.86	1.90
HouayPha	220	1,400	3,210	14.59	2.29
HouayXengKham	261	2,260	4,170	15.98	1.85
PhonSy	274	1,140	2,430	8.87	2.13
LongYong	275	330	1,820	6.62	5.52
LangChing	286	1,300	3,920	13.17	3.02
PhouPhone	286	590	1,770	6.19	3.00
KewYab	296	1,860	3,720	12.57	2.00
PhouLouang	308	1,540	2,030	6.59	1.32
DoneNa	315	1,660	4,410	14.00	2.66
VangVa	318	1,290	3,370	10.60	2.61
VangTang	400	2,020	3,500	8.75	1.73
DoneCheng	413	1,830	4,020	9.73	2.20
TengVang	472	2,630	4,330	9.17	1.65
NaVang	650	2,660	8,090	12.45	3.04
Yo	678	2,790	5,200	7.67	1.86
SobLor	679	3,750	7,290	10.74	1.94
MokMeuang + Tong	693	2,630	4,640	6.70	1.76
Mang	698	2,720	5,470	7.84	2.01
SamKang	957	3,630	7,780	8.13	2.14
<b>Average</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>1,960</b>	<b>4,170</b>	<b>9.61</b>	<b>2.13</b>

\* External material cost, supported through IDA Credit.

construction techniques for rural water supply and sanitation. This is helping in the progressive scaling-up of activities. During 2001 only 5 villages were supported with improved services through this project. In 2002, this has increased to 25 villages. The plan for 2003 is 50 villages. Rather than only the 90 villages to be supported in the original plan for Oudomxay, the Province is now looking to extend this to 30 extra villages (Total 120 villages).

Materials are now procured at the local level and sent directly to the village at a time decided by them. This is helping to generate local private businesses, whereas before all construction materials had to be purchased in the capital or abroad. Community dialogue, informed choice, subsidy policies and instituting learning are in place and being incorporated into on-going project activities. Records are now kept of all expenditures (see Box 2 for an example of GFS costs), which is helping the concerned authorities to analyse costs, and develop and pilot innovative graduated subsidy models that help to focus investments for the poorest communities.

Previously, all hygiene promotion materials were produced at the central level. Often the pictures were in the form of a cartoon. However, many remote communities have not been exposed to this form of communication tool. The provincial team has been exploring ways of developing innovative methodologies for IEC hygiene materials, such as the promotion and marketing of village volunteers for hygiene promotion and sanitation improvements. The users themselves are designing the IEC materials for dissemination in the local area (see Box 3). The Hygiene Promotion Team (HPT) discusses with the community to select a local 'champion' (a person or a family that has shown an example of best practice within their community). A photograph image is used in the poster, as this is easy for all people in the local area to recognise the picture, and the poster is used only in the local area. The local 'champion' joins the Government's HPT in future activities in other villages.



The confidence of the provincial and district staff to plan, budget and implement activities that relate to their local situation has improved. They are now able, from the field experiences gained, to critically discuss and seek ways to improve the process of project implementation and dialogue with communities.

Now, the communities are seen as owners and operators of the WSS systems. Thus, the actual implementation comes from the Strategy, which in turn is owned by the people who designed it.

**Main lessons learned**

1. DRA helps to develop communities' ownership, but this takes time and resources.
2. The capacity of local government staff is developing through on-the-job training with proper back-up support from partners.
3. Private sector participation is increasing because of opportunities created in the local areas, rather than central level procurement and construction.
4. With proper guidance from the government through improved bidding and contract procedures, the private sector participation is increasing with a faster rate of implementation.
5. Bringing equity (ethnic and gender balance) needs to start from the planning stage (community dialogue)
6. Communities require time to meet and dialogue between themselves to fully understand each project step.
7. Villagers require proper facilitation and guidance from the local partners on selection of informed choice and understanding of the cost implication of the selective technology.

**References**

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**Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup>Financed through World Bank International Development Association (IDA) Credit.  
<sup>2</sup>Rural Water Supply and Sanitation  
<sup>3</sup>At the time of project preparation WB WSP-EAP was known as the Regional Water and Sanitation Group for East Asia and The Pacific of the World Bank/UNDP- Water and Sanitation Program (RWSG-EAP).

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