

PICRAIL Project Impact Summary

A summary document of PICRAIL Project implementation from 2019 to 2022



CONTENT

Table of Contents

01.

About ADRA

02.

About PICRAIL

03.

Where we work

04.

Project result

05.

Human Interest Story

06.

Recommendation

ABOUT ADRA

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is the global humanitarian arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—part of the 20-million strong Adventist community, with hundreds of thousands of churches globally and the world's largest integrated healthcare and education network.

ADRA delivers relief and development assistance to individuals in more than 118 countries – regardless of their ethnicity, political affiliation, gender, or religious association.

By partnering with local communities, organizations, and governments, ADRA is able to deliver culturally relevant programs and build local capacity for sustainable change.

ADRA's work touches millions of lives in more than 110 countries around the world. ADRA's on-the-ground approach allows immediate assistance in times of crisis and true partnership with the communities we serve.

110 countries served

ADRA Laos belongs to the global ADRA network, which has been locally registered as an International Non-Government Organisation in Lao PRD since 1992.

Our core sectors include Health; Agriculture and Natural Resource Management; Livelihoods; and Emergency Management. ADRA Laos has expertise in Nutrition, Reproductive, Mother, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH), Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Tobacco Control, Agriculture (Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) Organic Agriculture (OA) and Climate Smart Agriculture, Livestock, Livelihoods, Value Chains, Market Linkage and Business Development.

“**Connected,
Courageous,
Compassionate**”

Address and contact

Unit 17, House 301,
Saphangmore Village, Xaysetha District,
Vientiane Capital, Laos,
P.O 5000

Phone number | +856(021) 264 611

Email | info@adralaos.org

Website | adralaos.org

Facebook | ADRA Laos

Instagram | [adra_laos](https://www.instagram.com/adra_laos)

ADRA Laos HISTORICAL

ADRA has been serving the people of Lao PDR since 1991. During that time, ADRA Laos has implemented projects across 13 of 18 provinces including Luang Namtha, Bokeo, Phongsali, Oudomxai, Luang Prabang, Xaisomboun, Khammouan, Savannakhet, Champasak, Attapu, Xiangkhouang, Vientiane and Vientiane Capital.

Vientiane Province

- Sustainable Agriculture & Rural Livelihoods Initiative (SARLI) Project

Vientiane Capital

ADRA Laos Head Office

Xiangkhouang Province

Phoukoud District

- Enhanced Nutrition and Health for Upland Phoukoud (ENHUP Phase II) Project
- Phoukoud Integrated Climate Resilient Agriculture and Improved Livelihoods (PICRAIL) Project
- Sustainable Agriculture & Rural Livelihoods Initiative (SARLI) Project

Since 1991...

13

Provinces

124

Project



Picrail project

Phoukoud Integrated Climate Resilient Agriculture and Improved Livelihoods (PICRAIL)'s primary objective is to contribute to the overall socio-economic and rural development and poverty alleviation of Lao PDR by increasing food security through clean, safe, and sustainable agriculture and livelihood activities.

Timeframe | November 2018 - December 2022

Location | 16 villages in Phoukoud District, Xiengkhouang Province

Donors | The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and ADRA Deutschland e.V. (ADRA Germany)

Specific objective

Agriculture

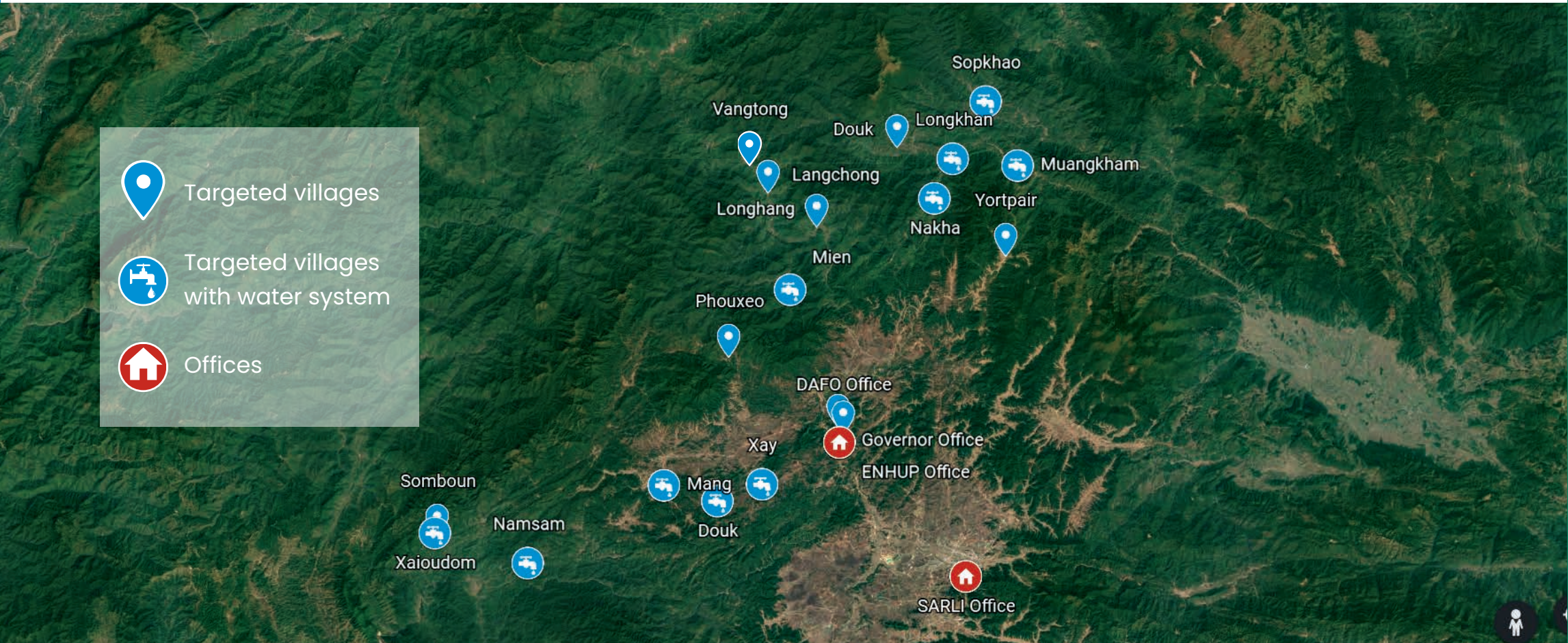
Vulnerable households have increased food security and livelihood opportunities through sustainable and clean agricultural production and livestock and aquaculture activities

Gender and Disability

Female-headed households and people with disability households have increased opportunities for positive engagement in livelihood activities and community decision-making processes

Capacity Building for district and provincial government partners

Implementing partners and key stakeholders have increased capacity and skills which will increase the sustainability of project outcomes and future activities.



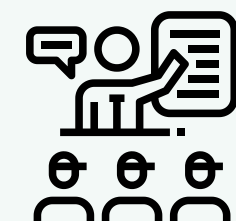
Activity Output level



PLANNING MEETING WITH 530 SELECTED AGRICULTURE HHS IN 16 VILLAGES

Achievement results

Male	Female	Total	PWD	SFHH
411	176	587	62	23



530 HHS WERE TRAINED IN CLEAN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE TECHNIQUES (16 VILLAGES)

Achievement results

Male	Female	Total	PWD	SFHH
582	763	1345	99	35



WATER ASSETS AND SMALL-SCALE IRRIGATION SYSTEM WERE IMPROVED TO BE ACCESSIBLE

Achievement results

9 Water system were constructed



PLANNING MEETING WITH 260 SELECTED LIVESTOCK HHS IN 16 TARGET VILLAGES

Achievement results

Male	Female	Total	PWD	SFHH
124	272	396	33	13



32 VILLAGE VETERINARY VOLUNTEER WERE TRAINED & SERVE THEIR COMMUNITIES TO IMPROVE ANIMAL HEALTH MANAGEMNT

Achievement results

Male	Female	Total
34	2	36



240 TARGETS HHS WERE TRAINED IN LIVESTOCK WELFARE

Achievement results

Male	Female	Total	PWD	SFHH
571	228	799	66	11



20 NATURAL FISH PONDS WERE CONSTRUCTED AND RECEIVED FISHLINGS

Achievement results

Male	Female	Total	PWD	SFHH
13	7	20	10	2



SOCIAL INCLUSION WERE CONDUCTED IN 16 VILLAGES

Achievement results

Male	Female	Total	PWD
1211	1381	2592	235



CAPACITY BUILDING

Achievement results

Male	Female	Total
35	16	51

PROJECT RESULTS



INCREASE FOOD SECURITY

Achievement results

Baseline	Midterm	End of project	End of project target
39%	52%	72.7%	73%



SELLING AGRICULTURE

Achievement results

Baseline	Midterm	End of project	End of project target
47.42%	60.47%	76.27%	70%



TARGETED HH WHO OWN LIVESTOCK/AQUA ASSETS

Achievement results

Baseline	Midterm	End of project	End of project target
78.37%	83.76%	89.86%	90%



% OF HH STORING AGRICULTURAL SURPLUS FOODS

Achievement results

Baseline	Midterm	End of project	End of project target
49.5%	60%	88%	70%

ANIMAL VACCINATION

Achievement results

Baseline	Midterm	End of project	End of project target
18.23%	70.22%	53.85%	70%



WATER AVAILABLE FOR HH 12 MONTHS A YEAR

Achievement results

Baseline	Midterm	End of project	End of project target
39.48%	56%	62.67%	80%



INCREASED INCOME

Achievement results

Baseline	Midterm	End of project	End of project target
14.68%	45.41%	61.06%	70%



COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE INCLUSIVE TOWARDS FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

Achievement results

Baseline	Midterm	End of project	End of project target
48.72%	60%	83.33%	70%



COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE INCLUSIVE TOWARDS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Achievement results

Baseline	Midterm	End of project	End of project target
39.29%	63.16%	63%	70%



Human Interest Story

All of the stories were gathered through one-on-one interviews with the beneficiaries, allowing them to freely share their experiences and feelings about their lives and the project.

FISH POND & GREENHOUSE

"My name is Silay, 43 years old. I really appreciate the support from PICRAIL for the construction of a greenhouse. Before we received the greenhouse we had to go to the forest to collect natural vegetables, which wasted time and difficult to find vegetables in the forest, especially in the dry season. Now, our family grows a lot of vegetables in the greenhouse and has enough organic vegetables for household consumption. We do not need to collect vegetables from the forest anymore, and we have time to do something else. We also raise some chickens and ducks. Vegetable trimming is given to the chickens and ducks to eat as they are good food for them, and we do not buy more rice bran as we did before. Besides, we are also making a small income of about 300,000-400,000kip from the sale of vegetables to the neighbors. This money is used to buy gasoline for my son's motorbike to go to school, fish sauce, and seasoning powder for the kitchen.

Next to the greenhouse, is our small fishpond that ADRA provided technical support and we received 1,000 fishlings from the project in August 2019. Now, we can catch fish from here to eat, and we do not have to spend time going to the river far from home. Sometimes, we spent one whole day in the river, but we could catch only little fish which is not worth our time sometimes we had to go hunting for some animals, but it was difficult for me because I have only one leg. Up to now, we have already caught about 30 kg for household consumption, and we will catch fish from here until April when the fish pond dries up, and we will take out all fish by that time. Next year, we are planning to dig one more pond for fish raising and expand the size of the greenhouse so we can produce even more fish and vegetables".



able Family

Vienthathor household is a Hmong household in Xay village (Phoungkor cluster), one of the target households that has a daughter, Mailor, with a disability. Her disability is severe and she has limited mobility. This household has 6 members; Vienthathor (husband), Ms. Nengya (wife), three daughters, and one son.

"My name is Vienthathor, I am 34 years old. We feel thankful for ADRA's support that provide us with a water tap, accessible toilet, cement paving, and a wheelchair for Mailor. These make a lot of changes as the major impacts to our daily life. We did not have a latrine or water tap at home for Mailor until October 2019. Before that, my wife had to collect water from one water tap which is 1 kilometer from home by using the cart with 4 wheels to carry water 1-2 times per day, and difficult to push the cart up the hill to the house. As the result, we had to use little water for bathing, cleaning, etc, and sometimes there was no water for bathing, and felt uncomfortable sleeping at night. Without water, we could not have a home garden or construct the latrine and had to go to the forest behind the hill for defecation".

Ms Nengya (wife) said, "Now, we have a separate water tap in front of our house, and toilet just next to the house. Our lives have been changed as the result of having these. We do not have to go to the forest for defecation which will widely spread diseases. We have enough water for bathing, cleaning, and we are cleaner than before. I do not have to push the cart with some containers to the water tap to collect water, which is one kilometer from here. Besides having enough water for use, we have a small home garden to grow some vegetable for our household consumption. Our family also has a plan to request for some fruit tree seedlings from the project."

"The last thing is the wheelchair that was provided by the project" said Mr. Vienthathor, the husband. In the past, it was difficult to take care of Mailor as we put her on a wooden chair, and she always fell down, and hurt, and difficult to hold her or put her on our back to bring her somewhere especially, during the planting season, every day, we had to leave Mailor at our mother's house which is about 1 Kilometer from our house, and it was difficult for my mother to take care of her there. Now, it is convenient as we received a wheelchair for Mailor, and we do not have to hold her or put her on our back when going somewhere. With the wheelchair, it is comfortable, and we just push the wheelchair to the place where Mailor wants to go, and Mailor can sit comfortably in the wheelchair."



Teach Me More *and I will do it myself*

"I now have a new skill. I can produce food for my family. Our time in the forest has reduced. I do not have to venture out to treacherous slopes and dense jungles. My family loves the mushrooms I grow. We make soup and grill, steam, and fry them,"

said Khamsing Sivongkham, who is one of PICRAIL beneficiaries.



He continued, "I have shared what I know with my family and neighbors. Five other families came to learn from me. We find and prepare all the [mushroom cultivation] ingredients together. We divide up the bags among ourselves after we make them. I have tried to invite more people to join us. I want to share this knowledge with as many as possible."

Khamsing, 42, lives in a stilt, wooden house, located in Namsam Village, which is 53 km from PICRAIL project office. The village is one of the most inaccessible in Phoukoud District. He and his wife have five other mouths to feed—two sons and three daughters. The eldest son, 19, having finished 12th grade, has to give up hope of pursuing college due to poverty. The second son, 17, and the first daughter, 14, dropped out of school after 10th grade for the same reason. One might think things could not have gotten worse. Their second daughter, 12, is disabled. She had been bedridden until a donor, through ADRA/PICRAIL, gave her a wheelchair. Being disabled, she does not have the opportunity to attend school or visit even her next-door neighbors. The device allows her parents to show her around. Their last daughter, 5, has not attended school yet because the village does not have preschool program.

Before ADRA/PICRAIL came to his village, Khamsing, being poverty-stricken, felt helpless. His family did not have enough food to eat. They mainly produce rice on a small plot of paddy which never yields enough crops. That forces them to also practice slash-and-burn agriculture. He knows well that this form of cultivation is both labor-intensive and harmful to the environment, and it is not sustainable. In addition, his family supplements their food shortage by foraging for forest products which are insufficient and unreliable. For instance, he had to walk more than three hours back and forth to a nearby river and forest to look for wild mushrooms. The most he could find was one or two kilograms. More often than not he came home empty-handed.



His family received a cow, grass seeds (ruzi, napier, and stylo), some tools, and multiple sessions of training, including veterinary/animal health, from PICRAIL. To apply the knowledge, he envisages taking good care of the cow and eventually having a herd. He also wants to expand mushroom farming and have enough produce to sell to the market. A kilo of mushroom sells for \$2.7, and Khamsing has already formulated ideas of what quantity he can produce and where to sell it. Besides having more food and looking toward the future, he thinks the income from his livestock and mushrooms will improve his family's livelihood; they can buy new clothes, and home appliances, pay for their children's education, and provide better care to their disabled daughter. Moreover, he thinks PICRAIL activities will help his family transit from shifting cultivation to animal husbandry and permaculture or more environmentally friendly practices.

Khamsing wants to streamline or scale up mushroom cultivation by requesting training on mushroom spawns. "I love mushroom farming," he said, "and I really want the project to teach me how to make spawns." This will allow him to be fully independent of project support and sustain the activity.

Khamsing first came in contact with PICRAIL through ADRA project staff who were conducting nutrition activities in his village. The news raised Khamsing's expectations and enthusiasm. In his view, he expected the project the help his family overcome poverty by providing new skills, knowledge, and/or funding to his family to enable them to overcome poverty. After participating in the project, he told that the project has met his expectations, and he wants to make the most out of the support it provides.

Khamsing thanks ADRA/PICRAIL and donors for remembering his village. He feels very proud of ADRA/PICRAIL. He can see the changes in his family: more food, less time in the forest, and new hope. He promises to be more enthusiastic and active. He also wants the project to continue and stay longer.



Help one *but three*

Imagine you have three disabled children in your family. You are in your sixties, and you still have to take care of them for the rest of your advanced age. No one understands this hardship more than Mr. Vansy Sayasin, a PICRAIL project beneficiary. Mr. Sayasin, now 68, primarily grows rice, raises animals, and plants seasonal vegetables and spices. He has three disabled sons and two non-disabled daughters. Not long ago, his wife and a son, a non-disabled one, died. His firstborn, a daughter, is married and has moved out on her own. He is now left to take care of the handicapped trio while living with his second non-disabled daughter and son-in-law.

The brothers were all born abnormal. Buaphan, 43, the oldest among the three, can neither walk nor speak. The farthest venture from home he has ever made was to participate in PICRAIL social inclusion event held in his village. Saykham, 28, has no idea what speech is. Though his legs are a little better compared to his brothers, he can only walk a short distance, from home to their fish ponds and animal pens located nearby. Khamphaeng, 24, walks on four and can barely make a sound. House-bound, like, Buaphan, he can only get outside when someone helps him down their stilt house.

Poor, old, and weary, he is now desperate for help more than ever. Looking back to the day his first disabled son was born, he said he had never received any formal support. Two of the brothers have wheelchairs, but they are old, flat, and broken; they were donated by two of their neighbors whose disabled members had died. Mr. Sayasin recalled 35 years ago a government agency visited him and promised to send some wheelchairs, but that promise never came true. He hoped someday help would come.

"Before no one [projects/agency] visited or set foot in my door. I am incredibly happy that ADRA/[PICRAIL] came and visited my home, asked about my needs, and provided help," said Mr. Sayasin gratefully.

June 2019 came, and the long wait was over. The Sayasins were selected for PICRAIL activities. Mr. Sayasin learned from a village meeting that a project named PICRAIL was coming to his village. He shared the news with his wife with a sense of relief and hope. "Finally, help is coming," said his wife who was still alive at the time. The two wasted no time withholding their participation. Failed hope, disappointment, and poverty only served to remind them that they needed to join the project and that the ball was in their court.

Mr. Sayasin, as a household leader, took part in PICRAIL community planning, disability survey, training, and meetings. Based on their potential, the family was selected for fish farming. They received a total of 1600 fishlings, and Mr. Sayasin was thrilled to apply what he had learned from PICRAIL into practice: farming techniques, feed production, pest control, water management, etc. Testifying to the results, Mr. Sayasin said his fish grows faster and bigger and has a very low mortality rate.

Mr. Sayasin enjoys sharing his practical knowledge with neighbors and the community at meetings and other collective gatherings. He also shares some fish with his neighbors/guests who drop by to see him at his ponds. His sons, at the same time, enjoy eating healthy fish. Saykham, whose legs are stronger, for instance, loves feeding and catching it. Though not easy, he can grill his catch for lunch with his two brothers—Buaphan and Khamphaeng.

After more than a year with the project, Mr. Sayasin can maximize fish farming. He wants to construct a greenhouse and a pig pen near the ponds. In his view, the greenhouse can draw water from the ponds and produce leftover vegetables for both pigs and fish. The pigs in turn can produce manure for compost and fertilize the vegetables. At the same time, vegetables and pig manure are good sources of fish feed. Mr. Sayasin hopes PICRAIL can help him achieve this dream and create an agricultural system that ensures his family's steady food supply and additional income.

While their father enjoys implementing project technical activities, the brothers miss the social inclusion celebration they participated December last year, 2019. "When will you take us again?" strugglingly asked Buaphan with the help of his father. The event was probably the only time they met so many people, more than 120. There were a lot of games, smiles, and other disabled people. The brothers were examined by a team from Xiengkhouang Provincial Center for Medical Rehabilitation. The interaction gave the brothers hope for new wheelchairs.

"Are you bringing us wheelchairs?" continued Buaphan distinctively.

Mr. Sayasin sets high expectations for the project. He wants to see his livelihood and food security improved. He intends to make sure he has enough food for his family, particularly the three disabled siblings. He as well as his disabled children also hope that PICRAIL/ADRA will coordinate with the center or any potential donors to find two wheelchairs for them.

To donors, Mr. Sayasin said, "Thank you for helping my family, thank you for lifting us up from poverty and giving us the opportunity to improve our lives."



We love *to do and to share*

“In this greenhouse, we can grow vegetables for both dry and wet seasons. We can eat or sell all of them. We use the money to buy seasoning and other items. Before we had a greenhouse, we could grow or sell vegetables only during dry periods,”

said Mr. Boualay Sayyavongkham.

Mr. Boualay, 65, is one of PICRAIL project beneficiaries, and lives in Namsam Village, Phoukoud District. He and his wife have five children: three sons and two daughters. His first son, 25, and a daughter, 21, are married and have their families. The rest of the children are unmarried and still live with him. Their youngest daughter, 15, is studying in 9th grade.

Mr. Boualay first heard about PICRAIL through a district livestock officer who visited the village with PICRAIL staff. The Sayyavongkhams are regarded as a model family owing to their diligence. They have been farming and raising animals for a long time. Many projects came to their village, and they actively participated. They carried on project activities even though the projects ended. With such activeness and personal commitment, it was recommended that the Sayyavongkhams are included in PICRAIL so they can be a role model for other households. At the same time, the Sayyavongkhams are also very keen on participating in PICRAIL activities out of personal interest. With every project, they see changes in their life. Therefore, they wasted no time joining PICRAIL. They believe it will further improve their livelihood.

The Sayyavongkhams are subsistent farmers who rely on a range of agricultural activities. They grow vegetables and rice; raise cows, goats, and poultry; and raise fish. Their lives had been quite stable until two years ago. Heavy rain and floods had damaged their rice paddy, garden, fishpond, and animals. They tried to rehabilitate what they could--the garden, rice paddy, and animals. However, their fishponds remain unrestored. They hope PICRAIL will support them in full recovery.

The family receives vegetable seeds, a greenhouse, three types of grass seeds, and two female goats. Two kids have been born, and they are ready to hand over the mother goats to other households. Mr. Boualay actively takes part in training, including mushroom farming, vegetable growing techniques, and goat raising. The project has been a big help for the family, especially the greenhouse which allows them to grow and sell vegetables all year round. Moreover, they apply the knowledge they receive, for example, composting for their garden and taking good care of their goats by building a good pen and fencing. Mr. Boualay expects to participate in animal raising training (veterinary/animal health) as he has not had a



chance to learn about this before. He also plans to restore his fishponds that were damaged by floods because, in the future, he expects the project to support fingerlings for his family, so he can raise fish for food and generate income.

However, growing vegetables and animal husbandry is not that easy in Namsam Village. Mr. Boualay told ADRA staff that there is a big challenge that all the villagers faced, i.e. water shortage. Not long ago, his family had to walk back and forth for three hours to a nearby river to fetch water for household use, goats, and other animals. They, unfortunately, did not have enough water for vegetables and mushrooms. Thus, he thinks, if the village has enough water to use, it can do more things effortlessly than it is now.

Mr. Boualay said he and his family members will share what they have learned with each other and other people.

According to him, Namsam is a resilient person, but they lack funds and knowledge. In the past, they could rely on slash-and-burn agriculture. But nowadays, many things have changed. The old way is no longer sustainable and offers no security. He wants his village to reduce slash-and-burn agriculture and shift to animal husbandry, fruit orchard, and vegetable cultivation.

He expects his family, especially his children, to know how to cultivate and raise animals to overcome poverty and have a better life. He also wants to see his children, especially his youngest daughter, who is still in school, and his grandchildren in higher education, so they possess the skills needed to make a living and have better opportunities.

Mr. Boualay is happy that PICRAIL comes to his village. He roots for the project to help people overcome poverty.

“When people came to buy vegetables from me, they liked to ask me for lessons and some advice, so I shared to them. I have never hidden my knowledge. If anybody wants to know, I am willing to share,”

said Mr. Boualay.



Uneducated *but Exemplary*

"I want to be an example to my community,"

said Khamphaeng of Longkhan Village.

"My family now has vegetables all year round. Our expense on vegetables has reduced. We receive a lot of kind words from our neighbors. They really envy our greenhouse," continued Khamphaeng.

Khamphaeng Thammavong, 50, is among many others who receive greenhouse support from PICRAIL. Raised as an orphan by his aunt, Khamphaeng is married, with six children. Most of them have moved out on their own. However, he still has a wife and two young sons to take care of. His youngest child is finishing high school soon.

Illiterate and poor, Khamphaeng was delighted when hearing about PICRAIL from a village meeting. He immediately shared the story with his wife, and both decided to join the project. Khamphaeng knew that his village is far from the market. Undiscouraged by the fact, the couple believes the project/activity will increase their food security.

Growing vegetables in a greenhouse is now a concept for Khamphaeng and his community. Aspiring to become an example to his neighbors, he has found that greenhouse produce is healthy, strong, and delicious.

Reminiscent of food shortage, Khamphaeng recalled his family did not have enough vegetables to eat. Often, when they missed the season, Oct to February, they had to survive without home garden produce for many months. A greenhouse allows them to plant whenever they want and have fresh produce for the entire year.

Khamphaeng's greenhouse came with many sessions of clean agricultural training. Khamphaeng learned how to assemble a structure

"I can neither read nor write, but I can give advice."

with plastic roofs, make a variety of composts, control pests, etc. He particularly remembers that burning is not the best way to prepare a garden bed. He found that new techniques taught by the project produces better results. Excited, Khamphaeng shared his knowledge with family members and neighbors, hoping they, too, can have a more reliable source of food.

Longkhan is situated in lower altitudes. Khamphaeng learns that it is quite challenging to grow vegetables during the dry season, particularly when there is extreme heat. He hopes there is support for the sunshade net. Now that his family has a more secure source of vegetables, he feels he has more time for income-generation activities. He wants to buy a cow and a calf so he can further take advantage of the free livestock knowledge provided by PICRAIL. He is especially interested in learning about disease control and fattening techniques.

Khamphaeng appreciates the fact that ADRA/project donors give him an opportunity to improve his livelihood and that the project staff is caring, diligent, and patient with him and the community.



Hopeful in the Face of Discouragement

""I want to be successful. I want to have many more and be able to sell them,"
said Mr. On Koudthongkham

"I want to be able to afford my children's education, improve our livelihood, pay for hospital bills when we are sick, and have some funds for my children."

Mr. Koudthongkham is married to two wives who bore him nine children. Two—daughters—are mentally disabled. He is one of the shrinking cases of polygamy in Laos. Of all his children, only one has made it to college—a sophomore. While another finished high school, the rest did not. They dropped to help their parents in the farm. Besides providing for the two wives and nine children, Mr. Koudthongkham also shares his house with a daughter-in-law and three grandchildren. The extended family grow corn, rice (shifting cultivation) and raise animals—goats, pigs, ducks, and chickens.

The Koudthongkhams were selected as a targeted household because they have two mentally unwell members, and they are poor. They received two goats and two pigs from PICRAIL. Unfortunately, not long after the goats were delivered to their farm, one contracted mouth-to-foot disease and died. However, the remaining one has given birth to two kids.

The two pigs, similarly, grew well until recently, March 2021. Swine flu swept through the district and killed all of them. "They were gorgeous," said Mr. Koudthongkham. "One gave birth to four piglets. The other was pregnant. I was looking forward to passing on two piglets to another household. But the disease took them all." Sad and desperate, he planned to discuss with the project the next steps.

Despite the fact that all the animals he received were vaccinated and one of his sons is a veterinarian trained by PICRAIL, the family suffered the loss. [Note that pregnant /lactating pigs are normally not vaccinated, and the outbreak happened during this period]. Nevertheless, they look on with optimism and emotional resilience. "I will save up and buy new pigs. I will keep them in a pen as far away from the road as possible," said Mr. Koudthongkham who believed the disease came through the roads. He also longs for continual technical support from the project, particularly vaccination and training.

Even though they felt downhearted because of the failure, the Koudthongkhams wish to send their thanks for donors, ADRA, and project staff for the inputs and knowledge. They will continue to make improvements and work toward future successes.



Destitute *with* *Cheerful Spirit*

A usual scene observed by her neighbors includes an old woman waking up early in the morning, sending smoke up the roof of her wooden house, and tapping a few steps before quietness reclaims its place. There is neither sound of children nor chicken around her house. That is Grandma Phone, 58, a bereaved widow living alone in a wooden house. All her children, three daughters, are married and have their own homes elsewhere. None of them reached high school—not to mention stable jobs. They are, likewise, struggling to make ends meet.

The lonesomeness seems to have been broken when her nephew, 19, decided to move in with her. Even so, nothing appears to have minimized her desolation. Grandma Phone remembers what it was like when her husband was still alive, and her children lived with her. There was not a quiet moment. Guests often came to their house. However, after her husband's death, she felt no one wanted to visit her. "People don't come to my house because there is not a man. No one wants to set their feet in my door because I am poor," said she tolerably.

With no external help, Grandma Phone resorts to weaving sinh (Lao skirts) to support herself—the only income-generating skill she learned from her parents. After house chores she spends the rest of the day—until 9 or 10 PM— at her weaving frame, making sinh hem for traders. A hem sells for approximately six dollars and takes around four to five days to complete. At her pace, Grandma Phone earns \$150 within seven or eight months.

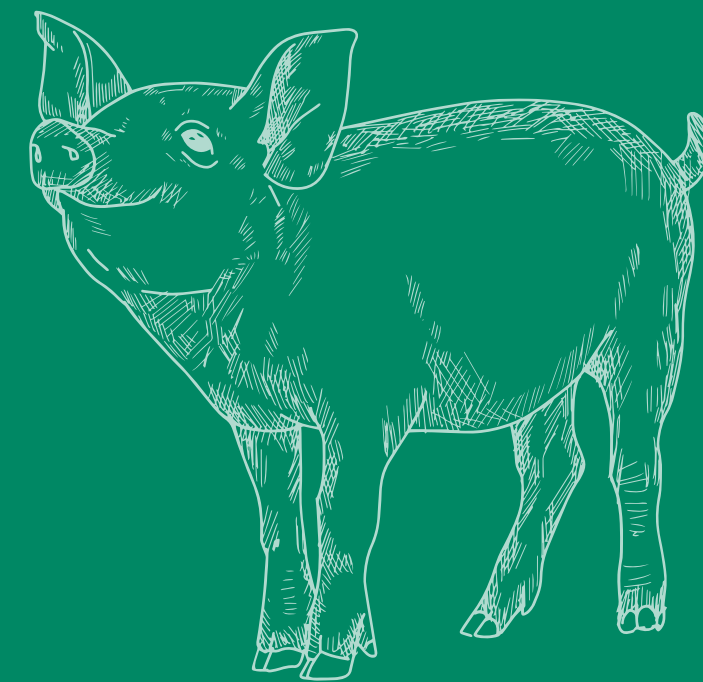
Before PICRAIL entered the village, she dreamed of raising pigs and had put every effort to weave as many sinh hems as possible to earn her way. However, what she earned was never enough. She still had to pay for food, utilities, and sundries. Though all her children have moved out, Grandma Phone still cares about them, including her grandchildren. "I want to have a happy home. I want to see my children and grandkids do well—having enough food to eat and a good house," said she.

A part of her wish was answered when a PICRAIL staff visited her house and inquired about her situation. She told the staff, a cultivation officer, confidently and joyfully she wanted to raise pigs. She was overjoyed when two female pigs were delivered to her house, followed by a short training. She was thrilled to learn about feeding, pen management, disease treatment, and vaccination. Though old and poor, she is generous. She shared what she had learned with her neighbors and was adamant in urging them to vaccinate their pigs since pig vaccination is a new practice. In the past, no one vaccinated their swine, and even now very few people do so.

After receiving the two pigs, Grandma Phone works tirelessly to raise them. A pen was built for them. Now, a new task is added to her chore list. Every day she gathers locally available materials and produces feed for her pigs. The feed is produced from banana trees, vegetables, taro leaves/roots, pumpkins, rice bran, etc. As a result of good care, she now has seven piglets. She plans to raise them until they are old enough, return two to the project for rotation, and sell the rest. She believes if all goes well—no disease outbreak, she will sell the piglets when they reach two months old and use the income to improve her life.

For Grandma Phone, life is a fight. Encouraged by her nephew, who is her manpower, she wants to be more climate-resilient by shifting away from rain-fed cultivation. She wants a big, 100-meter pipe for her rice paddy. With the pipe, she and her nephew will be able to consistently grow rice in their 8000 square meter paddy and abandon slash-and-burn practices. This will ensure their steady supply of food, overcoming the annually four-month shortage.

"I don't know how to describe my appreciation of ADRA and the project or donors. I am overwhelmed by your generosity," said she gratefully.



Maximizing Livestock Assets and *Scaling up*

Searching for a real doer and visionary recipient among project beneficiaries is like searching for a jewel, but it seems PICRAIL may have found one.

Yongyua Vang is remarried after a divorce from his former wife. The separation came after they had had three children together—two boys and a daughter. Two have moved out on their own, and one is still living with him. His new marriage brings two more young children.

Before joining PICRAIL, Yongyua said life was difficult. All his three older children, who were still in school, were left under his care. The divorce means that he was one person short in the field. He only had a few small animals and grew rice and corn. Labour shortage was at its worse.

One day a meeting was held in his village about a new project. He attended and learned that PICRAIL targets households with disabilities, female-headed households, and poor families. He remembers that the project would do many things—water construction, cultivation/home garden, animal raising, etc. “I was curious. I want to learn all that the project had to offer and apply it in my household,” said he. “I literally did not know improved agricultural techniques.” Sure enough, after I participated in the project and learned volumes from the project, I was eager to implement the lessons—livestock management, vaccination, and disease prevention; clean home garden techniques, food security, and environmentally friendly agriculture; natural resource conservation; and gender; social inclusion. Furthermore, he participated in a couple of cross-visits organized by the project team.

With regard to livestock inputs, Yongyua has received two goats from the project as well as grass seeds and essential training. It is unfortunate that one died of infectious ophthalmia. The surviving female has given birth twice—the first time with one kid and the second time with two. In addition, he is also caring for another female goat from another project beneficiary who has become unable to raise it. The added female also gave birth to another kid. All in all, he has two female goats and four kids to raise.

Yongyua lays out a good plan for his goats. “This year I will grow more forage grass and construct pens like what I saw in Savannakhet province when we visited a farm there. Young goats and parent goats need to be in different enclosures, but all need to be vaccinated on schedule,” said he. He plans to increase the number gradually and sell out male goats after selecting healthy ones for breeding because male goats like to fight and injure each other. Female goats will also be sold after selection.

“I want to try something I saw from my ancestors. They had big bucks because they castrated and raised them well,” said he firmly.

Contemplating the future, Yongyua wants to have more opportunities for his children, a good house, and an adequate income. He thinks the livestock inputs the project provides are the key and wants to start with, as mentioned above, increasing the number of goats along with farmed forage grass which is more sustainable.

Yongyua has not just received material support and practical knowledge from the project. He has also been given opportunities to share his knowledge with friends and neighbors through meetings and cross-visits. People also come by to ask him at home.

While appreciating every support from the project, Yongyua wonders if the project can further provide roofing materials—20 corrugated iron sheets for his goat pens. He hopes village vets are more active and provide closer support. He also wants the project to monitor the assets biannually.

To everyone who has a part in this project, Yongyua said, “Thank you for everything—the animals, information, lessons, ideas, and wisdom. I am extremely pleased. I have received everything you provide.”



I'm *not afraid* to fail

Tui, 39, lives in Mang Village, Phoukoud District with his six family members—his wife, three children, and his parents-in-law. Initially, his family was not selected as a PICRAIL priority target household because, compared to other households in the community, his family is better off. However, because he is active and has the potential to become a community role model, the project welcomed him to a mushroom training held at Phoukoud District Agriculture and Forest Office.

Tui is an active learner. He could clearly recall the needed ingredients and equipment, the cultivation process, etc. After the training, PICRAIL project manager provided him with some mushroom spawn for an experiment. Wasting no time, he built his mushroom shelters and started his own farm. Tui said that he was not afraid of failure or that what he did would be a waste of time. He just wanted to try and prove his capacity. At first, he did not expect to sell his production; he was thinking of consumption only. He thought if he succeeds, his family would have something to eat when their food is low. "I didn't expect to sell my production as our village is far from the market. I just wanted to know how much I can do and if I will be able to apply the knowledge that they taught me," said he.

The training took place on 17 August 2020 and by 17 February 2021, he has reached his third crop of mushrooms. Besides consumption, he sells the produce to his neighbors. For the previous two rounds, he could sell 40 kg at a price of 20,000 Kip/kg (2 USD/kg). After recouping, he could get a little amount of profit, which is good as he achieved beyond his expectation.

According to Tui, his endeavor has seen delightful results. Many households have reached out to him and asked him to teach them how to cultivate mushrooms. Having already taught two households, he plans to teach six more in the near future. Because mushroom spawns are difficult to make, he wants the project to support him, and once receiving it, he would inform the households and immediately launch the training.

As mentioned, Tui relies on suppliers for mushroom spawns. Even though the cost is not much, but transportation is the main obstacle. Hence, he would like to learn how to cultivate the spawns himself. He knows that he needs to have an expensive machine, and he is not sure if it is worth the investment. However, he at least wants to explore his options first. Furthermore, he also would like the project to conduct more mushroom training as he wants to review if what he is doing is correct as well as exchange lessons, and discuss problems and how to solve them with agriculture officers as well as other farmers.

ADRA Laos is gleeful that Tui has applied the knowledge he gained and transferred it to his neighbors. We hope, he and his family would continue growing mushrooms and expand their farm to produce more food and earn more income.



a pig saviour

"Because we all wanted pigs, so everyone is helping care for them,"

said Phimpha Chanthavy, a single mother who was selected for PICRAIL activities.

Ms. Phimpha, 46, is a widow who has 4 children. Her oldest children is married and has moved out. She is now living with the rest, two in their twenties and one is 16 years old, a son-in-law, and a grandson. The family earns income by growing rice and corn and raising ducks and pigs.

She heard about the project through a village meeting where it was announced that a livelihood development project would come to the village to help vulnerable households, female-headed families, and people with disabilities. Excited by the news, Phimpha attended a subsequent meeting and signed up for the project.

She and her family were joyful when they received two female pigs. She revealed that she had always wanted to raise pigs. Before the project, she had taken care of her neighbor's pigs in exchange for piglets. While doing so, she turned ecstatic to have received a pair from the project, without having to wait or labor for them.

The entire family is involved in raising the project pigs. With gleefulness, they constructed a stable and a fence with materials that they could source locally or from their community forest. They support each other in finding food for their animals, which include banana trees, taro leaves, rice bran, etc.

It did not take long before the two snout mammals gave births. The first time, 10 piglets were born, and the second time 13, totaling 23. Off this figure, 2 were rotated to another family,



11 were sold (roughly 500,000 Kip/head or \$33 in August 2022), and 3 were used for traditional rituals. Sadly, 5 piglets died because of an illness. Now she only has 2 piglets and their mothers left.

Phimpha confessed with disappointment that the 5 dead piglets were not vaccinated. The disease happened so fast that they could not treat it. "Next time I will vaccinate them. Last time I didn't do it, did not prevent it, and I lost 5 piglets, or 2,500,000 Kip was gone with the wind," she said regretfully.

Regardless of the loss, Phimpha is highly appreciative. As the piglets were born, she was diagnosed with a tumor. The sale of the piglets was just in time to pay for the treatment and recovery. It significantly reduced her financial burden. Besides health care, the money has also been used to buy rice bran for the pigs and daily necessities for the family. The family feels the piglets have saved them from debt and financial struggles.

She gladly said "I feel better with having pigs. I don't have to borrow money from my cousins or other people. I can count on them to support our needs. It feels great to have pigs."

Phimpha reiterates she is happy having received the assets from the project. She would like to thank project staff, ADRA, the donors, and everyone involved for not forsaking her family and community.

A Goaty Way to Improve Livelihoods

“Early 2021, I sold two adult male goats for 1,800,000 kip [approx. \$180], then I bought three young goats (two females and a male) for 1,600,000 kip [approx. \$160]. In October 2021, I sold seven adult goats for 9,300,000 kip [\$930]. Now, I have sixteen goats,”

recalled Lee Vang how his flock has multiplied and generated income since he joined PICRAIL.

Lee, 35, is married and winning bread for a family of 12, which consists of two deaf and mute sisters, a paralytic daughter, six other children, and two aging parents. The Vangs have only four laboring members—Lee himself, his wife, and the two disabled sisters. His oldest child is nine years old, while his parents are over 50. As a result, food insecurity has become their 13th family member, meaning they experience food shortages yearly. Just like other households, the Vangs rely on shifting cultivation, short-lived cropping, animal raising, and food foraging.

Given the hardship and disability conditions, the family was selected for both livestock and cultivation activities by PICRAIL. They have been highly successful in raising the goats the project provided.

While most people think raising goats have many problems, Lee sees otherwise. He does not think goats are naughty animals that like to eat damaged crops. Raising goats is something he enjoys and wants to learn more.

“I like goats,” said Lee. “In 2018 before this project came, I used all my family saving to buy four goats, because I thought I would receive high benefits from goats like other people. But later I realized that I did not know anything about goats. It was a bad dream for me. Not long after I began, all my goats died. I was very disappointed. I lost all the money we had saved for years.”

About a year later, PICRAIL project staff visited Lee’s village to introduce the project and make plans with the community. When Lee heard that the project supports goat raising, he decided to participate. Five other households were also selected. Each was given two female goats and a shared/revolving male.

This time, Lee strictly followed the technical instructions given by the project and DAFO staff, including the village veterinarian and livestock producer management group. All his goats were vaccinated twice a year. Consequently, his goats have gradually increased, and he could give back two goats to the village livestock revolving fund established by the project. The returned assets were then handed over to another household. Currently, Lee has sixteen goats.

“Over the past couple of years, I have learned a lot about goat raising such as when to let them out to eat, observe their health, identify sickness, and provide necessary treatment. However, I am still interested in gaining more real veterinary knowledge and techniques to raise my animals better and help the community when needed,” he continued.

In addition to goats, the Vangs received vegetable seeds, fruit trees, and grass seeds from the project. Being an active and attentive beneficiary, Lee attends training and puts into practice what he has learned. For instance, he has collected grass seeds ever since and has enough to grow in his grazing land in the year to come.

Concerning knowledge exchange, Lee said “I share my experience and methods with livestock group members at meetings such as building pens, choosing grazing land for the goats, when to take them to the pasture and herd them back to the pen, how to monitor their health, and how to keep dogs away from the goats, especially kids. Some people follow my instructions.

“My goal is to continue raising goats because they multiply quickly. I want to keep all my goats on fenced grazing land. I just do not have enough money to construct a barbed wire fence and would like to ask the project to support it. After that, I will sell some goats to buy cows to raise together with the goats in the same pasture.”

“On behalf of the community, I would like to say ‘Thank you’ for supporting us and helping us to improve our livelihoods. We hope the project will continue being with us far into the future,” said Lee with a bright and hopeful smile.



Undeterred

by Swine Flu Outbreak

Somphet, 62, cares for a large family. While four of his children are married and have moved out on their own, he still lives with six more and his wife. The family relies on rice farming, cropping, and poultry raising. According to Somphet, in the past, food shortage was always present and only improved when his four children could help with farming. Though the amount of rice they harvest has improved since the family is still listed as poor by government standards.

Somphet, who lost his left hand, first heard about PICRAIL through his village headman in 2019. When project staff and government officers visited the village, Somphet actively joined the project's introductory session, data collection, and comprehensive planning. "I hope I would be selected for some activities supported by the project, especially livestock raising which I like the most," said he.

In early 2020, Somphet was overwhelmed by the news that his household was selected as a beneficiary. He was given two female pigs under the project's livestock revolving fund. Under this fund, he needed to multiply the swine and give two offspring to other vulnerable households. All the household members were very happy and took good care of inputs. As a result, in September 2020, one of the pigs gave birth to eight piglets. Two months later, they delightfully kept their promise by returning to the fund two piglets that were given to another poor household.

It seems the more one gives the more one receives. In the following month, the second pig bore another seven piglets. "My wife and I were very happy that we had fifteen pigs including the two mothers, at that time. In 2021, we sold five pigs for 4,800,000 kip and killed one for a ritual," Somphet rejoiced. The money was used to buy educational materials for their children to go to high school.

Besides pigs, the family also received fifteen fruit trees and vegetable seeds in 2020 and ginger in 2021. The fruit trees have grown well, and only one seedling died. They still grow vegetables these days and harvest them for household consumption. Ginger is being harvested, and the family plans to save most of it for planting in the coming season because they are expanding their field.

Sadly, in September 2021, African Swine Flu broke out in the district, including their village. The outbreak caused widespread damage and wiped out eight of Somphet's pigs within a week. "It happened so fast, and we did not know what to do. We reported the problem to our village veterinarians, and they reported the situation to DAFO and the project. Later, we were told that there was no specific vaccine for this kind of disease now," Somphet voiced his frustration.

Nevertheless, Somphet takes the loss as a valuable lesson personally and collectively. According to him, the disease was likely caused by carelessness; someone might have brought contaminated pork to the village and passed on the disease.

"Our family is very disappointed now because there is only one pig left in the pen. But she is already pregnant and will have babies in three months' time. We will try our best to raise this one so we can have more pigs, as we did before" determined Somphet.

The family hopes the project will continue to help them how raise pigs successfully, teaching them tailored prevention methods, including vaccination. Had the disease not broken out, many households in the village would benefit from their pigs because demand for pork is high all year round.



Goat Entrepreneur

Can anything be more joyful than seeing project beneficiaries succeed in improving their livelihoods? Meet Sithat, one of our beneficiaries who makes our expectations come true.

Sithat, 36, lives in Longhang, Phoukoud with six family members, including his father and mother, a wife, and three children. His first child, 16, dropped out of school in Grade 5 to help the family with their farm. The middle child, 14, and the youngest one, 10, are still in school—secondary school and primary school.

Sithat first joined PICRAIL after being selected to be a village vet, who will facilitate our livestock activities in his village. He believes he was chosen because the village had faith in his commitment and abilities; he loves animal husbandry. At the same time, Sithat also realized that participating in the project would benefit both his family and the community. Happy with the appointment, Sithat started doing activities with the project such as attending veterinarian training, livestock training, fish and poultry training, etc. Besides, he also participated in cross-learning visits and workshops to learn from the successes of others.

Sithat takes pride in applying what he has learned to raise goats and cows. He disclosed that before the project came, there was no vet or a person who knew about animal health and treatment in the village. Everybody resorted to traditional methods to treat sick animals which are not as effective. As a result, when animals got sick, they often died because no one knew how to treat them. Nowadays, with the veterinary knowledge he gained, he can treat his animals and other villagers' on time, reducing animal death rates compared to earlier years.

"Being a veterinarian also generates income for my family. I'm constantly called to give injections and treat animals. When they give birth or fall a little sick, their owners call me," said Sithat.

However, being a vet is also challenging. The work has to be done with great care to prevent injuring both animals and humans. On top of that, accessing medicines and vaccines is difficult because the distance between the village and the town is quite far (about 60 km one way). Thus, Sithat only stocks up some regularly used medicines to serve his community. Other than what he has, animal owners need to travel to buy in the town when needed.

Currently, Sithat has cows, goats, ducks, chickens, and fish. While ducks, chickens, and fish are common, the family has only scaled up to goats and cows after he gained veterinarian experience from PICRAIL. Initially, they received two female goats from the project in late 2019. The pair gave birth twice a year and multiplied to a flock of 24. The family has sold 11 goats and rotated two to another household. At present, they have 13 goats left. At a price of 1.2 million Kip per goat or \$79 based on the current exchange rate, the family has brought in 13.2 million Kip or \$869 so far. The money was reinvested in fencing and forage grass cultivation, making it possible for the family to increase their cow fattening project to 11 heads.

According to Sithat, before the project, his family had never raised goats, but only a few cows and poultry. The pair of goats from the project was a trial but an important opportunity to try something new and promising.

The family worked tirelessly to ensure that the goats survive and produce offspring for other vulnerable families. Despite the fact that they were novices, they encounter no problems because they have a suitable location and make every effort to care for their goats. They grow forage grasses, from which they received seeds from the project, so there is enough food for their animal. Sithat, who attended many pieces of training organized by the project, has been instrumental in the success. He applies what he has learned and increases the number of goats.

With a smiley face, he told ADRA staff the benefits of goat raising goats grow fast and are easy to sell, generating quick returns. The income can be used to meet daily needs or plan long-term investments. "The money we earned from selling the 11 goats, we used it buy groceries and other necessities, brought new cows, invested in pasture expansion and fencing materials," he added.

Aside from giving advice on animal treatments, people frequently ask him for his husbandry secrets such as how to raise and care for goats and cows; how to manage grassland; what type of grasses they should plant; how much would it be enough for their animals; rotation and earning income from animals, and so on. All the lessons Sithat gained from the project and his practice, he would share with other villagers and advise them according to their conditions. When asked if his family could be called a model household, he confidently answered, "Yes!"

"When I came back from the cross visit, I shared what I had seen and learned with my neighbors. I told them, that to generate income, they need to manage their grassland smartly and construct their stalls correctly. I told them all that if we do it right, we can earn a lot of money," he continued.

Despite the fact that Sithat is doing well in veterinary and animal husbandry, he still wants to learn more, particularly about new diseases, so he can treat them and prevent/reduce losses. He is also interested in animal welfare as a whole as well as new techniques to crease productivity while refreshing old and gaining new knowledge.

Sithat reveals that in the near future, he plans to add more goats, cows, and fish to his farm, along with forage grass expansion and building a road around this pasture so it is easier to manage the animals and their food. Being mindful of the intensity, the family wants to keep the expansion manageable. Sithat also aims to buy a truck by the end of 2022. He plans to feed his cows and goats until they reach full size and sell them to buy the truck. In the longer term, he wants his family to live a better life. He hopes his two children who are still studying have the best education they can and have jobs. At the same time, for the first child who dropped from school, Sithat has noticed that he likes repairing tractors and vehicles, so he wants him to study mechanics and help the family.

"I am very grateful that the project comes to help because everything I've received really helped improve our livelihoods," said Sithat.



A Generous Food bank

It takes some kindness to share your food with a next-door neighbor. It will certainly take a lot of thinking to do it for the entire community. Whatever the case, Bounma Keophasith has been exemplary in giving. She owns a greenhouse in a highland village where ADRA is implementing PICRAIL project. As it happens, the greenhouse is situated by a road where Bounma's neighbors travel through to and come back from their farmland. Everyone likes to stop at her garden and ask for spices, herbs, and vegetables. The generous Bounma does not charge them and happily shares her produce with them.

“Other families have to ask for vegetables from me because they don’t have greenhouses. They can’t grow vegetables in the rainy season. I share my vegetables with them every day. I have many neighbors,”
stated Bounma.



Bounma lives with her disabled husband in Longhang village, more specifically Na cluster, Phoukoud district, Xiengkhouang province, Laos. They have five children, three sons, and 2 daughters ages between 22 and 30, who have started their own families. Among them, one was born with a hearing impairment. Her husband, due to a road accident in 2010, is left with a leg disability—a broken patella or a small bone located in front of the knee joint. The misfortune required a three-month hospitalization and four-month home therapy. The family felt somewhat a little lucky that year because they harvested approximately 500 sacks of rice from shifting cultivation or 22.5 tons. However, all was spent on their father's hospital bills.

Bounma heard about PICRAIL through a village meeting gathered all households in her community. Project and government staff delivered presentations on PICRAIL goals, objectives, activities, etc. Bounma felt she would be best with greenhouses because she was born a farmer. She particularly wanted her family to “have enough food to eat” and learn improved techniques on how to grow vegetables, including compost, bio-extract, pest management, etc.

“Before [the project] we were able to grow vegetables only in the dry season. Now, it’s all-seasoned. We can harvest vegetables any time we want,” testified Bounma.

In the past, the family had only a few short beds of vegetables. Currently, they have a twelve-by-nine-meter greenhouse. Bounma singly spent five days clearing and leveling her land to accommodate the structure. Though able to walk, her husband is no longer capable of such heavy tasks.

According to Bounma, last year or 2021 she fetched 600,000 Kip (around \$60) from selling leaf vegetables, garlic, lettuce, etc. She could have earned more had she sold all her produce. However, she is a kind giver who loves to share food with her neighbors and children, who live in Vientiane Capital or some 400 kilometers away.

Bounma enjoys sharing compost and biopesticide as much as the vegetables, including the mushroom products that she learned how to grow from PICRAIL. Besides attending onsite training sessions in her village, she also joined cross-learning visits organized by PICRAIL. At home, she does not let the learning go to waste. She collects and stuffs green leaves in a barrel, fills it with water, adds two kilograms of sugar, and mixes in some monosodium glutamate (MSG) pellets, fermented fish sauce, and shrimp paste to produce bio-fertilizer for her garden. The soup takes one month to mature. The extract is then mixed with water on a one-to-ten ratio for use. This formula is particularly good for leaf vegetables. Witnessing the results, many neighbors visited her garden and asked for some to try on theirs. Kind-hearted as she is, she willingly complied and gave them useful instructions on how to apply the fertilizer.

Aphids or sap-sucking insects are commonly found in her villages. But Bounma has learned how to deal with them. She mixes together Petawali, galangal, garlic, sugar, and lemongrass—all of the same proportion or 1 kilogram each—to make an extract to repel the insects. After 20 hours, it is ready for use and can be applied in a ratio of two tablespoons for ten liters of water. Likewise, she shared the product with other households. Nevertheless, she is struggling to control slugs and has been looking for ways to do so.

In addition to the above techniques, Bounma also learned how to sustainably select, collect, and store seeds.

Bounma hopes to further improve her garden by installing a water pump for a sprinkling system, adding more nets to fence off chickens, and acquiring another barrel to increase compost production.

She thanks PICRAIL for the inputs, opportunities, and knowledge, and realizing that the project is reaching its completion, she says she will continue to maintain the structure and buy parts to replace any broken ones such as plastic sheets, nets, ropes, etc.



Holy Cow!

"She is pregnant again!"
rejoiced Wan.

As a single mother, Wan, 57, lives with three young children in a bamboo, one-story house. Her other three older children have moved out on their own, and she is struggling to feed the remaining. The family predominantly grows rice and corn while raising small animals such as ducks and chickens and pigs. Their well-being is at the mercy of the weather, which has become increasingly unpredictable. In 2021, they had to abandon shifting cultivation due to drought and pest outbreaks. Their corn failed compared to the previous year, 2020. 2022 brings similar uncertainty. Though rain started as early as March, August is periodically dried. Consequently, looking over the sky, Wan's hope for a good crop diminishes. Her cornfield is plagued with ferocious rates. The plague can no longer be controlled by traditional means, i.e., killing them with bows and arrows or traps, and she does not have enough money to resort to chemical pesticides. Wan is exhausted.

However, against all odds, her smile broadens as she walks along her cows in a green, hilly pasture near her village. "This is the first time I have ever owned a cow. The project [PICRAIL] gave me a mother cow, and she gave birth last year to a female calf. She'll give another calf this year," excitedly said Wan.

Poverty-ridden, Wan does not own any grazing land—not yet. In 2020, PICRAIL livestock team approached her. She was presented with a dilemma of choice—a cow, pigs, or goats. Of all the options, she jumped for a cow.

To support her, the village and her relatives came together and decided that she could raise her cow in her uncle's pasture. Without hesitation, Wan signed up for the deal, agreeing to take turns herding her and the uncle's cows on a one-week rotation/herding shift. After the agreement had been made, the project delivered a pregnant cow to her home, which she nicknamed Deng, meaning red, by her color.

"Deng gave birth, but her calf did not suckle for THREE days," recalled Wan with burning anguish. "I came every day for three days. I spent the entire day with her. I was afraid Deng would lose her daughter."

Frustrated but still remembering what PICRAIL had taught her, Wan walked three kilometers home to the village to report the problem to a village veterinarian, who was trained by the project. After receiving an injection, Deng's daughter began to suckle and munch grass again.

"My cows are fat and healthy," Wan took pride. When asked about her future, Wan, being mentally and physically bogged down with lasting deprivations, could only imagine having four cows.

However, after breaking down her needs—food, housing, child's education, and daily necessities—Wan realized she needs 20 cows and wants to try her best. To reach a herd of 20, Wan plans to sell bulls out and keep females to breed. In the meantime, she has already begun to grow forage grass in a section of her land and will move Deng and her calves there next year. Since she does have money, Wan has been very creative in sourcing what she needs to start a small farm. She exchanged labor for grass seeds; a neighbor asked her to help him gather two sacks of seeds and gave her one.

Exchanging labor for goods has been her means of survival. Last year, 2021, the family could harvest only four sacks of rice and has since been living hand-to-mouth, trading labor for rice and small wages. Wan hopes the cattle will help her break this cycle and eventually becomes independent.

Wan is a dedicated amateur herder and recognizes how limited her animal husbandry knowledge is, even after regularly attending many training sessions offered by the project. But she will not think twice to seek help when she needs it. She has managed to keep Deng and her calf vaccinated and well-fed. She promises to invest all she can to keep them healthy and growing in number.

Prior to PICRAIL, Wan said she had never received any support. "Thank you PICRAIL. Thank you for remembering a widow like me. Thank you for your non-discriminatory kindness," Wan expressed her humble gratitude.



Green Gold

What would you do if you are the only rich person among a hundred poor? That is exactly how Chanh feels. He is the only person in Langchong cluster who has a greenhouse which has become the village's fresh vegetable store. The garden is so precious and vital that its owner has to secure it with a padlock to discourage unwanted food thieves.

For Langchong and many villages in Phoukoud, greenhouses are uncommon, and neither is all-seasoned vegetable production. Getting villagers on board is persistently difficult even when one has good ideas to increase their food availability. When PICRAIL was introduced to the community, its residents were reluctant to join the project. But that is not the case for Chanh. On the contrary, he was happy to hear that his family was eligible for input support because his wife is disabled. Furthermore, his desire to cultivate food for his family and appetite for new knowledge had overpowered the reluctance seen in others.

"I've earned more than two million Kip [roughly \$200] from selling vegetables and herbs since I had this greenhouse,"

said Chanh. Two million Kip is good money for a poor household in remote villages.

"We use the money to books and clothes for our children as well as electric bill, salt, etc. The demand is highest when there is a wedding or an event in the villages. Last year, we sold mint every day."

continued Chanh.

"We do share our harvest with the neighbors, but many like to come and take when we aren't home. There's this one particular old man who, many times, enter our garden without asking. That's why we have to lock the gate," explained Chanh, who treats his vegetables as if they had leaves of gold.

Langchong cluster is mountainous and overpopulated. Many houses are sandwiched together, leaving no space for a home garden. Chanh and his family live in the outer part of the village and have a space just enough for a greenhouse. His neighbors would have built their own greenhouses if they had enough land. In fact, many have asked PICRAIL for support.



Chanh could not be happier when he thinks of how little vegetable harvest they had before PICRAIL entered the village. "We didn't veggies. Not enough. When we did, it was one season only—not to mention earning income. Now, we have them all year round and get some money," said he.

In every target village, PICRAIL sets up a producer group, and Chanh is a leader for Langchong cluster. He enjoys taking part in training and cross-learning trips organized by the project. He learned how to make garden beds, space crops, produce compost and bio-extract, manage pests, etc. After learning, Chanh gathered his neighbors or group members at his home and shared the knowledge. He also led them in real practices—producing hormones from eggs, shrimp paste, and other ingredients; and making biopesticides from locally available tobacco leaves, Petawali vine, garlic, lemon grass, etc. He also shares knowledge and successes in village meetings and other events where he is afforded the opportunity.

Chanh's hope is for his community to have enough food [vegetables] to eat, share with one another, generate income from garden production, and eventually overcome poverty. As a father, though poor and desperate, he wants to do all he can to support his children's education. He wants them to at least finish high school. If it is at all possible, he expects his first son, 14, to become a driver; the second, a teacher; and the third, to be whatever he wants.

His greenhouse was first built without improved irrigation. Later on, a sprinkling system was installed to ease caring time and increase productivity. The system is, however, realized on communal gravity-fed water, and Chanh is concerned issues might arise when there is not enough water. Chanh, thus, requests a pump to draw water from a nearby stream to irrigate his GREEN gold.

"I'm overjoyed. Thank you PICRAIL [donors] for the support. I'm exceedingly proud of your help. I wish you more success as you continue to serve the needy. I hope PICRAIL continues," expressed Chanh.



Grateful and Enthusiastic Learner

"Before we received a greenhouse, we didn't know what it was, so we asked PICRAIL project staff, and they explained how it would benefit us, so we chose the activity."

said Ni, PICRAIL's beneficiary

Ni, 24 years old, lives in Xay village with her husband, a widowed mother-in-law, and three daughters—aged 5 years, 3 years, and 1 month. As a widow, her mother-in-law, Vanna fits PICRAIL beneficiary criteria, and the family is also poor. Vanna is aging by the day, and the responsibility to care for the family lies with Ni and her husband.



After an assessment of their conditions and capacity, the project first presented them with two options: animal raising and a greenhouse. They chose the latter. Ni revealed that they consume vegetables every day. In the past, they used traditional methods to cultivate vegetables and didn't know how to apply new knowledge. This would be a good opportunity for them to learn and apply new techniques.

Not long after, greenhouse materials were delivered to their home, and with the help of the staff, their family greenhouse was constructed. It has been three years now (2022). Ni stated that the greenhouse gave them many benefits. Before, they couldn't grow vegetables in the wet season; most of their crops were rotten, and they needed to buy vegetables from others. But things have changed now. Wet weather is no longer an issue, and they can grow vegetables all year round. In addition, they have earned extra income from the improved home garden technique. They have been able to bring in around two million KIP per year for the past three years—approximately \$115 by the current inflated exchange rate.

The greenhouse comes with a package of ongoing technical support. Ni and her family members were always invited to participate in the project's training. Ni particularly likes making bio-extracts. According to her, it makes her vegetables grow quickly. Also, because she has small children, in which heavy work can be harmful to her health, she feels making bio-extracts it is lighter compared to collecting and carrying manure. "Before, I needed to carry heavy manure to put on the vegetables, but now I use only 3 bottles (1.5 liters per bottle) of bio-extract in a month, and it is enough," Ni expressed. She also enjoys applying new seed collection and storage techniques. She explained that traditionally she kept all seeds unselected, simply dried, and wrapped them in pieces of cloth. The method requires a large amount to compensate for loss and/or low rate of germination. But now, they don't need to

indiscriminately collect and store seeds because they know how to select and store seeds in vacuum plastic boxes or glass bottles. Consequently, their seeds germinate well and see little loss.

Besides growing vegetables for daily consumption and earning additional income, the family also raises animals for a living. Therefore, along with learning how to grow vegetables, they also learn new techniques on how to raise animals. And in the future, they plan to expand their garden, build one more greenhouse, and invest in grassland. These will help them achieve their sole expectation, which is to have a stable income for their family.

As grateful as she is, Ni would like to thank all donors who provide her with new knowledge and materials that make her family more comfortable.



Recommendations

The evaluation approach was learning-oriented and participatory. It involved a wide range of diverse stakeholders with the aim of understanding the practices behind the project achievements and suggesting ways to improve future implementation. The evaluation team employed a mix of qualitative and quantitative tools to evaluate the PICRAIL project through a phased approach involving direct consultations, FGDs, and other participatory activities to obtain the opinions and suggestions of diverse respondents.



Midterm Evaluation

- Targeting strategies for general projects and Small Grant activities should be clearly communicated to villagers and implementation partners for the remaining period.
- Efficiency can be achieved by re-arranging the partnership with the government implementing partners by allowing them to implement activities with project staff providing supervising and overseeing roles.
- Separate gender and PWD indicators should be separated from baseline, baseline, and target to make reporting easier and clearer.
- Water supply should be separated from cultivation and livestock for food security and income generation. It recommends that the water supply is set as a result of the area contributing to health benefits rather than irrigation.
- The team should focus on group management to ensure the next recipients are selected based on their vulnerability, not their relationship with the village authorities.
- The project should focus on making sure farmers cultivate during the rainy season to benefit from growing vegetables in GHs.
- The project needs to generate and present data in a way that is easy to understand with visualization presentation.
- Establish accumulative data to monitor progress and create a dashboard for management use. Separate indicator for women and PWD, consider quantitative and qualitative measurements.
- It is recommended that the project work with the village authority and have a clear strategy in place to ensure that all people have access to the water for irrigation.
- The project needs to set up a grievance mechanism quickly, such as a telephone line or feedback box in community halls, to allow community members to send feedback and concern stakeholders safely.
- Producer groups have not been able to link with the market and plan their production for sale, so production has been for consumption and some surplus can be sold locally. The project needs to step up the effort to produce for the market in a bulk sale for a better price and bargain with traders.
- Communication is essential for stakeholders and target communities to understand the concept, implementation arrangement, and work plan of the project and its responsibilities and mandate. Communication also needs to address the advocacy aspect of the project.
- cultivation and fruit tree can be options for medium to longer terms development of the communities. It is recommended that more options are explored including wire tree, avocado, coffee, and so on.
- Fish culture in cement tanks can be used efficiently, but needs to be commercialized with an input/output business plan.

Recommendations

End of Project Evaluation

● **STRENGTHEN WAYS IN WHICH INSTITUTIONAL COUNTERPARTS TAKE OWNERSHIP OVER THE PROJECT**

A key component to ensure sustainability after the end of the project is to have the buy-in from government counterparts who will have to ensure proper follow-up, support, and funding when possible. It is recommended to add an advocacy component in the next phase of this or other projects to formally tie district strategies with expected results and lessons learned.

As the only institutional representatives elected in Laos, the project should involve the People's Provincial Assembly members from Xiengkhuang in any future projects. They do have the mandate to listen to their constituents through various complaints mechanisms, report to the National Assembly and/or local government departments on issues they are facing, and follow up with possible solutions.

● **SHIFT FROM A MODEL CENTRED AROUND FOOD SECURITY, TO A MORE DYNAMIC ONE FOCUSED ON INCOME GENERATION**

PICRAIL has achieved very much in terms of food security for the target populations. The livelihood component was geared more towards food security than it was towards generating wealth for households and communities. This is in line with the outcome of the project but has perhaps not explored the full potential of income generation in all its facets.

It is recommended to review the livelihood model by:

- Separating communities between remote ones and those closer to markets and urban areas so that the different needs can be assessed in detail. The remote communities would develop products (seeds, livestock, fruit, etc), while the other communities would market those products.
- Conducting market research on the products selected by the communities to assess financial and logistic viability of the products.
- Selecting only the most interested families to join in production and marketing groups, to train them on production, packaging, finance, marketing, processing.
- Investing in community infrastructure, including roads, storage facilities, water, etc, that could support trade. Consider engaging other community members through cash for work programmes to for the infrastructure.

● **MAKE THE TARGET GROUPS ADVISORS TO ACTIVITIES IN ALL PHASES OF THE PROJECT CYCLE, NOT ONLY DURING AD HOC MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

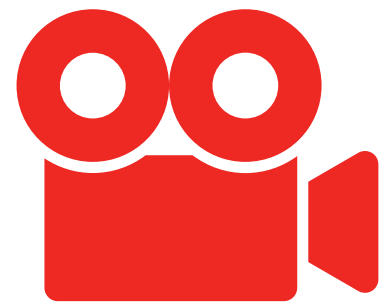
ADRA can create a Project Community Advisory Board, consisting of representatives from the target population to provide inputs to ADRA's community strategy and implementation. This should be done in ways that reflect the diversity present in the communities and should include women, youth, people with disabilities, farmers, and various ethnicities. It is crucial to purposefully engage the community during each phase of the project cycle, from planning to project monitoring and evaluation. Meaningful participation and ability to influence decisions isn't just something that is "nice to have", it is essential to increase project sustainability, and community ownership, and to significantly increase positive impacts.

● **PARTNER WITH ORGANISATIONS ON DIVERSITY FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE PROJECT**

The project wisely engaged PDDA to improve work with people with disability when it was obvious that some specialised knowledge was not available among existing partners. It is recommended that reliable and renown CSO partner organisations specialised on disability and gender, such as PDDA and GDA, are selected, just like for agriculture and livestock partners, to co-create the project from project inception. With specialists on board from the very start, the project ambition for women and PwD could go from their mere inclusion in activities, to transformation of power dynamics and prevailing stereotypes in the households and communities.

● **INCREASE QUALITATIVE INDICATORS IN THE M&E SYSTEM**

Although the logframe and monitoring matrix do have some qualitative elements, it is recommended to increase qualitative indicators to ensure the reasons behind the numbers can be adequately captured. Qualitative indicators should also specifically address the needs of women and people with disability, as success will look different for them compared to the rest of the population.



Video Products



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eHy0iyh-JvY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zj5lyfkrR-Q>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HlaY43bNLjc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KrY9V9zuGU>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMM_zb90T7w

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cB4ISUUzTrA>



ADRA Laos

 **SUBSCRIBE**

Get connected



Website

www.adralaos.org



Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/AdraLaos>



Instagram

https://www.instagram.com/adra_laos/



Youtube

ADRA Laos



Feedback Channels



Phone

+856 21 264 611
+856 20 2999 8544



Facebook

[www.facebook.com/
AdraLaos](https://www.facebook.com/AdraLaos)



Email

adminhrofficer@adrالاos.org
info@adrالاos.org



Address

House 301, Unit 17,
Saphangmore Village,
Saysetha District, Post box
5000, Vientaine, Laos

NOTE

Your comments and feedback will be kept confidential

Justice.
Compassion
Love

