

Together we can grow stronger

“A comic book”



ສະຫະພາບ ເອີຣົບ
European Union



ສປປ ລາວ
Lao PDR

Together we can grow stronger

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“Together we can grow stronger” A comic book

The European Union is an economic and political union of 27 European countries. It is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. It acts globally to promote the sustainable development of societies, the environment and economies, so that everyone can benefit.

In Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) the EU Delegation has a mission to further improve relations with the Lao Government and its people in mutual respect and for mutual benefits, in order to promote peace, security and sustainable development. The European Union is one of the major actors in Food & Nutrition security in Laos.

This booklet gathers stories around the main areas addressed by our flagship programme “Partnership for Improved Nutrition in Lao PDR” and the “Nutrition Budget Support to the National Nutrition Strategy and Plan of Actions” from 2016 to 2025.

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Introduction:

Ms. Dongchai, a medical student based in Vientiane, is worried by country statistics concerning malnutrition.

About one in three children under five years of age in Laos are malnourished.

Malnourished children that manage to survive are at high risk of developing lifelong health problems. Malnutrition affects all aspects of life by seriously impairing a child's capacity to reach their full potential for growth.

They also face lower educational performance, which in turn translates into less productivity and incomes when they reach adulthood.

Ultimately, inadequate nutrition of the population hinders Laos' progress and traps thousands of individuals in a cycle of poverty.

Ms. Dongchai decides that she needs to do something more about this and thinks about ways that she can help. She has heard that the European Union in Laos is supporting various nutrition programmes across the country.

Working alongside the EU Delegation to Laos she embarks upon an adventure which takes her out of her urban life and into rural Laos and she learns some important lessons along the way.



1 in 3 children in Laos are malnourished





Something really caught my attention...

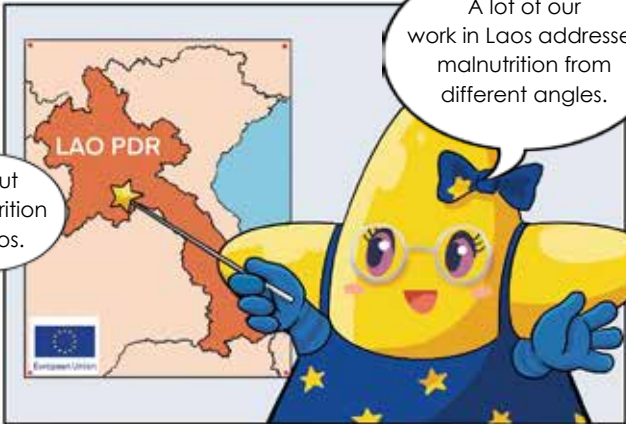


Welcome to the EU delegation!



I am Ms. Dongchai and I am worried

about malnutrition in Laos.



A lot of our work in Laos addresses malnutrition from different angles.



Malnutrition has many different causes.



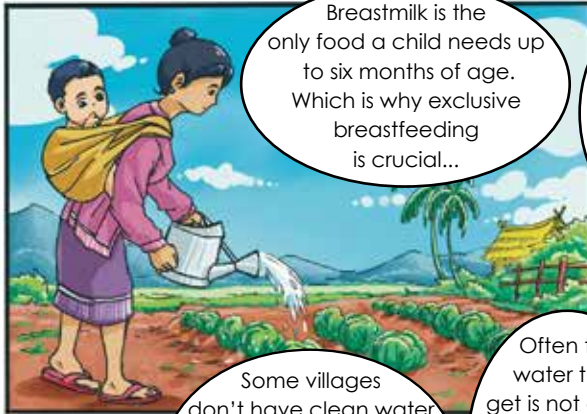
On one side, malnutrition has to do with family's ability to access nutritious food.



It also has to do with people's behaviour, like what they normally eat.



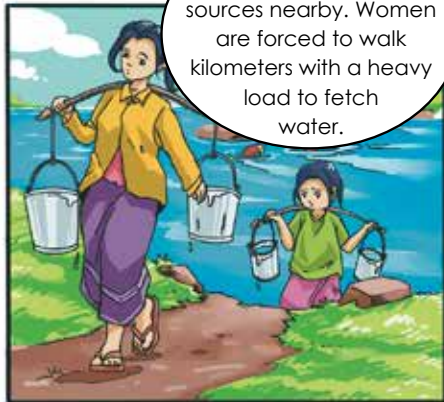
Breastmilk is the only food a child needs up to six months of age. Which is why exclusive breastfeeding is crucial...



...but sometimes mothers have no time or they do not know how to breastfeed their children best.



Some villages don't have clean water sources nearby. Women are forced to walk kilometers with a heavy load to fetch water.



Often the water they get is not clean, and people, especially children, can get very sick from it.



Ministry of Health



EU Delegation to Laos



Ministry of Agriculture
and Forestry



Ministry of Finance



This is why malnutrition
requires different institutions
to collaborate and everyone
must do their part.



Ministry of Public Works
and Transport



I am very curious and want to know why exclusive breastfeeding rates are low in Laos.



Ms. Dongchai goes to Mahosot Hospital

I am Dr. Latdavone I assist mothers with newborns every day...



Mothers are often influenced by confusing information from family, neighbours or advertising.



As nurses, we needed support to reach out to them and establish a relationship of trust.



16 nurses and I applied to participate in a course designed by international and local experts.



What I liked about the course is that it had the most up to date information but also adapted to our day-to-day reality.



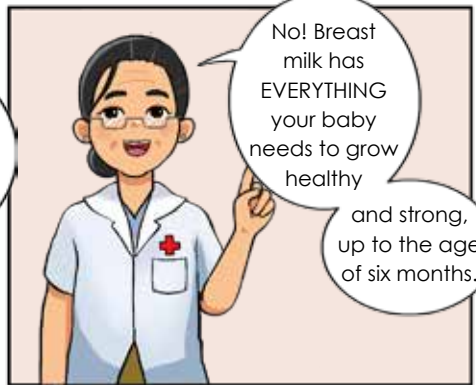
We now have the tools to establish a relationship of trust with mothers and support them to breastfeed correctly.



I am afraid my baby is not eating enough... should I feed him rice porridge or powdered milk?



No! Breast milk has EVERYTHING your baby needs to grow healthy and strong, up to the age of six months.



Make sure you are eating a lot of fruits and vegetables... ..and drink plenty of water.





With highly trained nurses around the country, I am confident exclusive breastfeeding rates can improve!



What can you do to protect, support and embrace breastfeeding?

- Government:** Enforce the Breastmilk Substitutes Decree to make sure breastmilk is always presented as the best food option for infants
- Fathers:** Share household tasks, cook healthy meals and make sure mothers have enough time to rest and breastfeed their infants
- Community:** Share household tasks, offer to take care of older children, share healthy meals, and make sure mothers are hydrated, nourished and have enough time to rest and breastfeed their infants
- Employers:** Provide mothers with 6-months paid leave so they can have enough time and resources to breastfeed their infants
- Healthy system:** Provide mothers with useful information and proper techniques so they can breastfeed their infants
- EU & other partners:** work and support the Government of Laos in their initiatives to increase breastfeeding with positive and encouraging messages, provide technical assistance

Facilitator's Guide

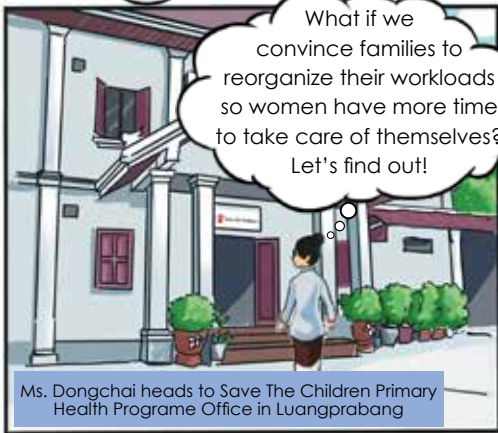
It is not always easy for mothers to breastfeed, they need all the support they can get!





I have seen so many women work so hard to give the best to their children.

Besides going to work, they normally take on ALL the household tasks. Leaving little time to rest or breastfeed their babies.



What if we convince families to reorganize their workloads so women have more time to take care of themselves? Let's find out!

Ms. Dongchai heads to Save The Children Primary Health Programme Office in Luangprabang



We did some workshops only with women, but some of their husbands at home did not understand why they needed to change.



So we decided to make smaller groups and included husbands in the training.

Time	Task	Men	Women
8:00-14:00	Work	✓	✓
14:00-17:00	Cleaning/Washing		✓
17:30-19:30	Cooking	✓	✓
19:30-20:30	Taking care of the kids		✓

This is a daily schedule and we want both of you to make lists of what you do every day.

Daily Schedule			
Time	Task	Men	Women
8:00-14:00	Work	✓	✓
14:00-17:00	Cleaning/Washing		✓
17:30-18:30	Cooking		✓
18:30-20:30	Taking care of the kids		✓

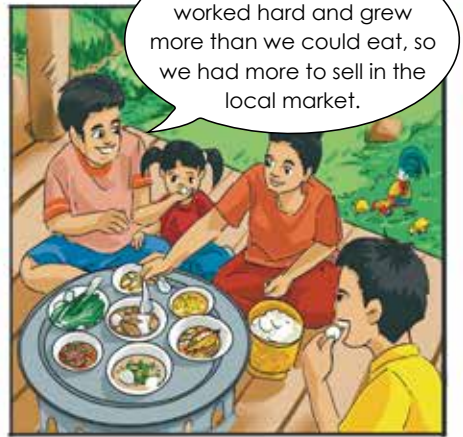
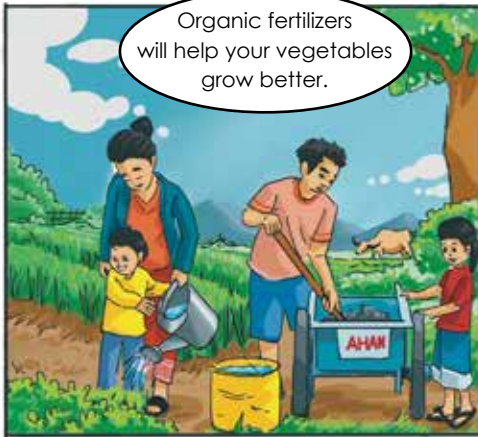
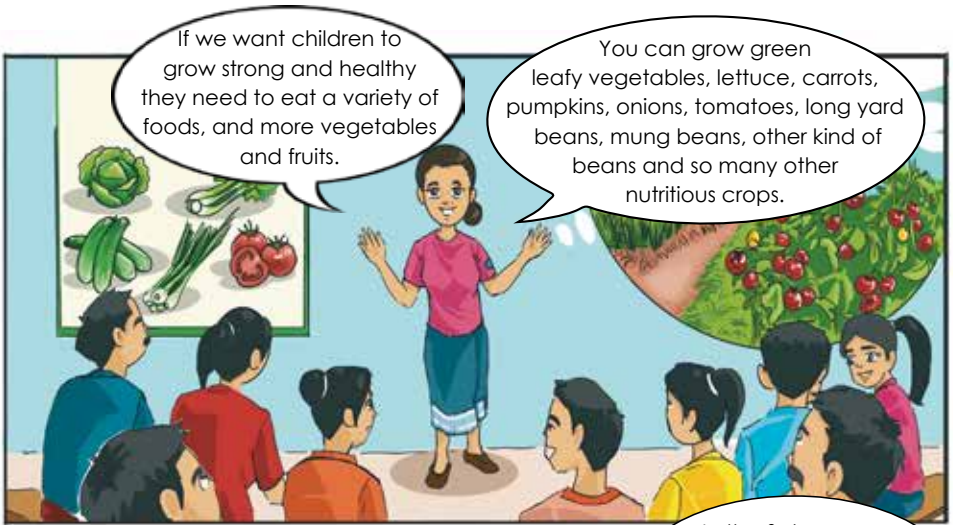
I didn't even realise my wife was working so much... I don't have a problem washing clothes or cooking!

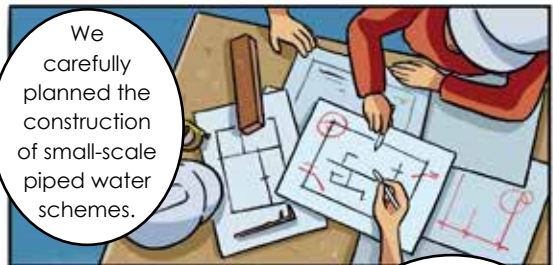
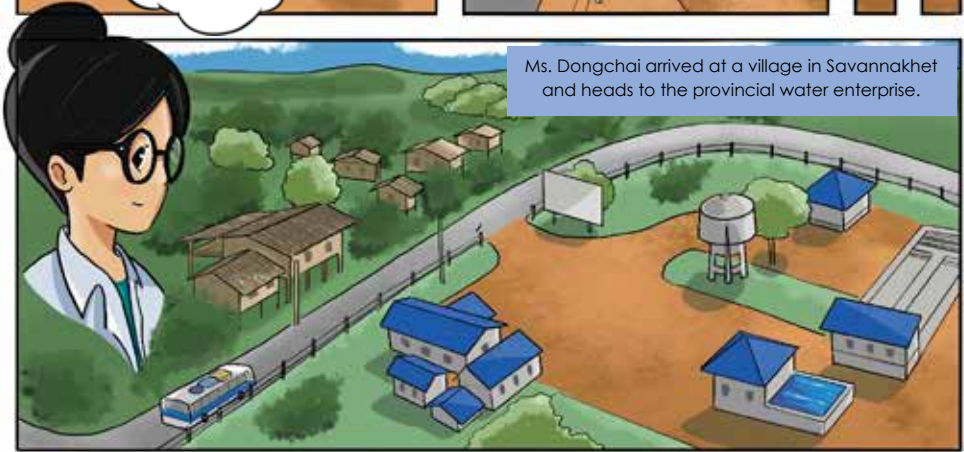
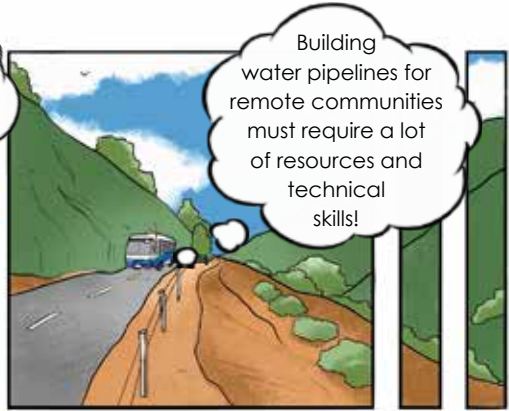
In the 419 villages of northern Laos where workshops took place.

Women have reported to have more time now to take care of themselves.

And cases of malnourished children have seen a significant drop over the course of the project.



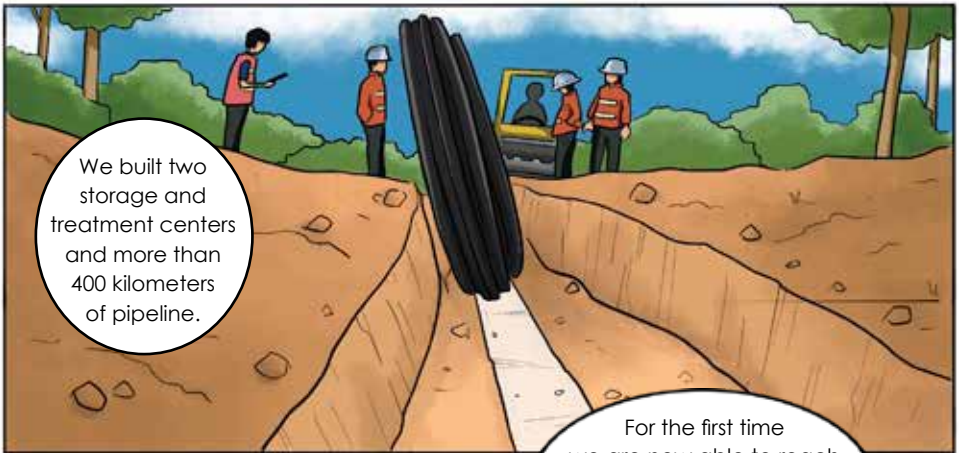




Our staff were involved in each step and were fully trained.




We built two storage and treatment centers and more than 400 kilometers of pipeline.



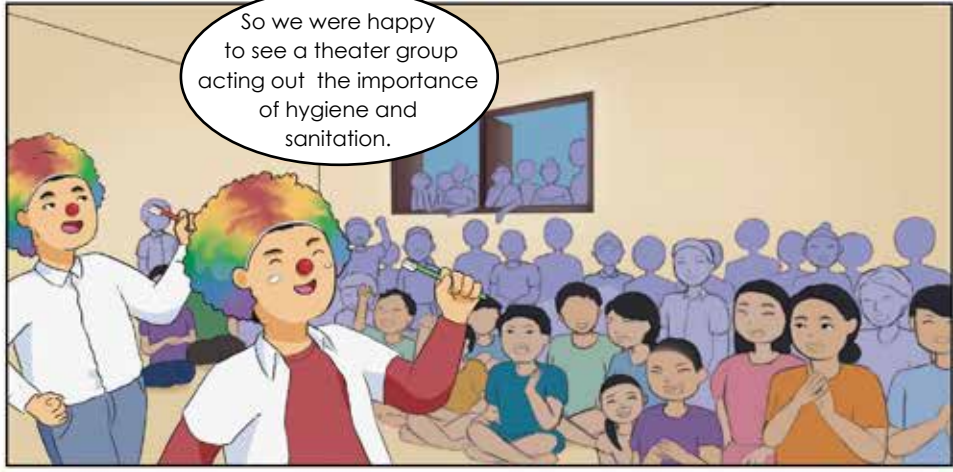
For the first time we are now able to reach rural communities from 62 villages in Savannakhet and Khammouane!





To reduce malnutrition, it is important to avoid drinking unclean water.

Most people in our village face issues in practicing good hygiene. Besides access to water, it is also important to raise awareness on good practices.




So we were happy to see a theater group acting out the importance of hygiene and sanitation.




Savannakhet

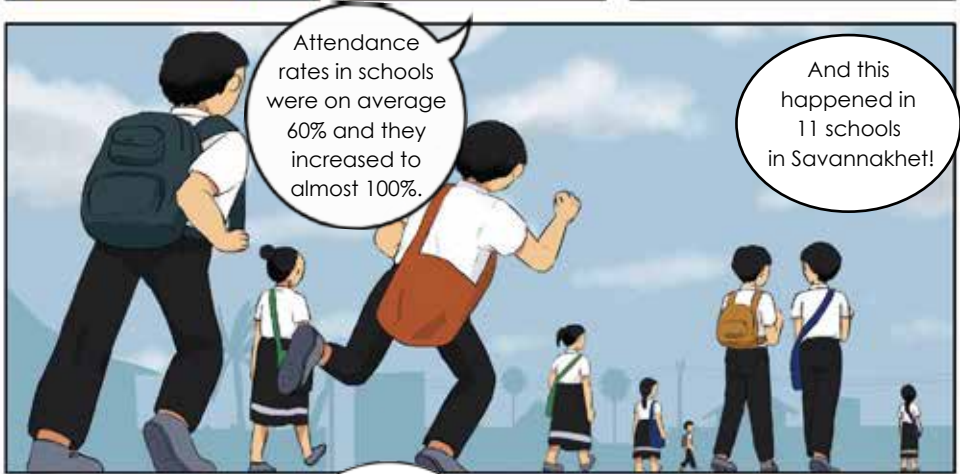
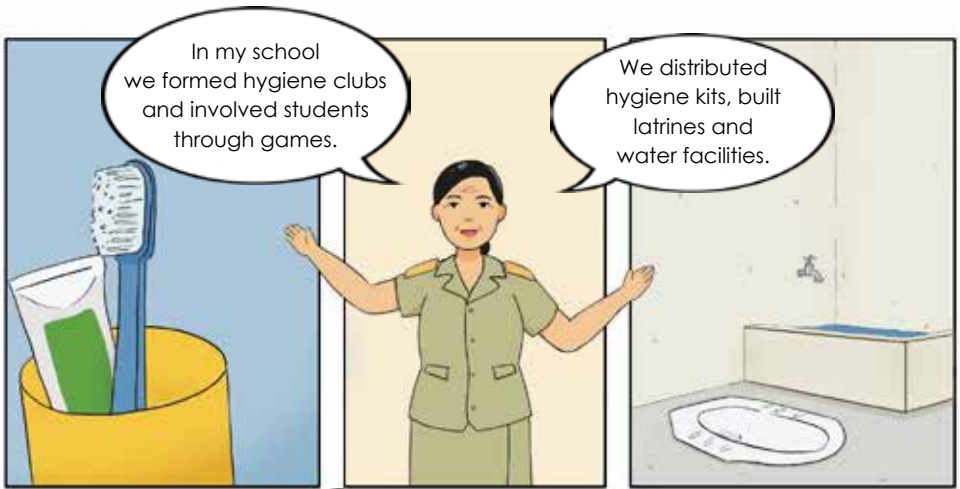
93 new latrines have been built in 13 villages in Savannakhet.

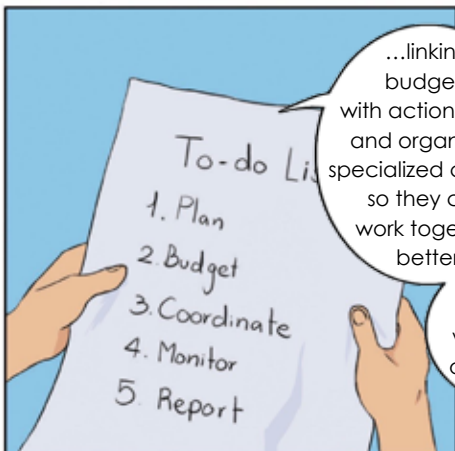
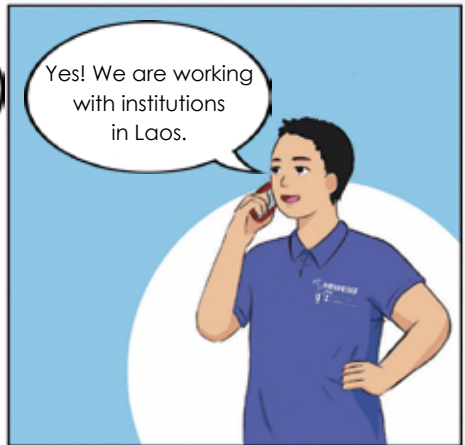


And other project staff organized interactive activities.



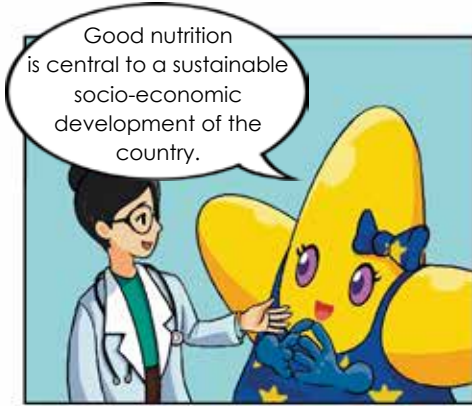
And more than **3,200** people have learned about hygiene practices through fun activities.





...linking budgets with action plans and organizing specialized courses so they can work together better and be more efficient with their work on malnutrition!





Good nutrition is the basis of a healthy and productive life!




...And we are proud to work with our partners in Laos to ensure good nutrition becomes a reality for all.



Hi! Let me tell you a little bit about us. The European Union - or as we commonly say "the EU" - is an economic and political union of 27 European countries. We work together to promote respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. We have 140 delegations around the world to support sustainable development, so that no one is left behind.

In Laos the EU Delegation's mission is to strengthen our relations with the Government of Lao PDR and its people. Our goal is to create inclusive growth and jobs to enhance living standards. We engage in a genuine partnership where everyone benefits.

As Team Europe we have committed to contribute an estimated EUR 550 million in support of:

-  a green and inclusive economy
-  human capital development
-  good governance

Following the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan, the COVID-19 recovery framework, and the National Plan of Action for Nutrition 2021-2025.





Lao PDR Government:



European Union implementing partners in Lao PDR:

