

REPORT

Monitoring of (former) Livelihood Activities



Background

Until early 2013 the HNN project had been working with DONRE and DAFO on livelihood improvement in villages surrounding the HNN NPA. PRAs' and market research had identified agriculture and livestock as areas with good potential for sustainably improving the livelihoods of villagers living in the vicinity of the HNN NPA. An Operational Plan to implement pilot activities in the areas of vegetable and corn cultivation, pig raising, aquaculture and handicraft production in 5 HNN target communities had been jointly drafted and approved by PONRE and the Provincial Government in July 2012. Due to the PPR and the confusions that followed, further implementation and monitoring did not take place as originally planned.

On August 12 and 13 2013, DONRE and DAFO staff conducted a monitoring mission to the two communities where livelihood improvement activities had already been initiated (Ban Sa-aang and Ban Vangkhn), to observe the state of affairs and to discuss directly with villagers regarding progress made, difficulties encountered and future aspirations.

Participants

1. Mr. Sipanom Keovunkam (Bualapha DONRE NPA Livelihoods Unit Head)
2. Mr. Bounpheng Saysana (Bualapha DAFO Livestock Extension Unit)
3. Mr. Dam Soukchaleurn (Langkang DAFO Extension Unit)
4. Mr. Paul-David Lutz (HNN IP)

Outcome

Improved Pig raising in Ban Sa-aang

Between November 2012 and March 2013, the project worked with DONRE and DAFO to improve pig raising in Ban Sa-aang. Assistance included; formation of an 11 member (7 women) pig-raising group; extensive technical training on improving feed, housing, hygiene, reproduction and vaccination; a study tour to operational pig farms in Nyomalaad and Nongbok districts; construction of

new pig pens; provision of materials for vaccination, provision of the EU livestock project technical manuals; as well as a loan scheme arrangement providing 4 piglets for each of the 11 group members (i.e. 44 piglets, 33 sows and 11 boars - all which were vaccinated at handover).

Monitoring revealed that overall the pig raising activity was going well; most pigs were healthy and had grown significantly in the last few months. Group members had by and large implemented the improved feeding and hygiene standards introduced during the technical training and are serving as models for other villagers.



Some villagers have set up innovative systems to provide drinking water to their pigs

However, 5 out of the original 44 pigs (11%, all sows) have died in the last few months. DAFO monitoring in June concluded that the first two sows died of diarrhea-type infections. The cause of death of the other three is unknown due to a lack of monitoring by DAFO. Indeed, the death of one sow in early August was not even reported until the arrival of the team, suggesting that both **monitoring by DAFO and communication within the group has been substandard lately.**

Two out of the five sows that have died belonged to Mrs. Hong. She has since lost confidence in her ability to adequately take care of the pigs and has chosen to hand over the remaining two pigs (1 sow and 1 boar) to another group member, Mr. Ta. Mrs. Hong's case was discussed during a village meeting and it was agreed for **DAFO to formally cancel her loan scheme contract and alter Mr. Ta's loan scheme contract accordingly.**

In general, villagers have expressed their dissatisfaction with the **lack of regular monitoring by DAFO.** This seems to be due mainly to two factors. Firstly, DAFO staff say they lack the funding to conduct the necessary regular monitoring (i.e. at least once a month). Secondly, at present only Mr. Bounpheng Saysana has been assigned as responsible person by DAFO. However, he is often away in other parts of the district or in Thakhek. Villagers say that on several occasions they have tried to contact him in urgent matters but he was unavailable. There is a plan for Mr. Bounpheng to be permanently stationed at the envisioned DAFO Extension Centre in the neighbouring village of Ban Khanyou. This however is not likely to happen until the end of the coming dry season. Until then, villagers have requested that a **second person from DAFO be assigned,** so that they have someone else to contact when Mr. Bounpheng is unavailable.

Finally, some group members have requested **project assistance in purchasing additional vaccine against digestive diseases/infections.**

Aquaculture in Ban Vangkhn

Between July and October 2012, the project worked with DONRE and DAFO to turn some of the many war-era bomb craters that litter Ban Vangkhn into fishponds. Assistance included; survey and identification of suitable craters, formation of an “aquaculture group” comprising 5 families; a detailed one-week long technical training at an operational fish farm in Xebangfai District; provision of materials for preparing and conditioning fishponds; provision of the NT2 downstream compensation project technical manuals; release of 10 000 fish fingerlings in 5 craters-cum-fishponds on a loan scheme basis.

The monitoring mission revealed that despite the fact that project support for the aquaculture group was not continued as envisioned, the villagers have creatively responded to challenges (e.g. to the threat of flooding by using nets or moving fish to safer ponds) and are beginning to see real monetary benefits from the activity. Villagers have sold about 150kg of fish at a price of 25,000 kip per kg, **generating a total income of about 3,5 million kip for the 5 families**. In detail, the group member families estimate their income thus far as follows:

- Mr. Witawon and Family: 20 kg sold = 500,000 kip income
- Mr. Kaaon and Family: 10 kg sold = 250,000 kip income
- Mr. Gadtai and Family: 60 kg sold = 1,500,000 kip income
- Mr. Kamsai and Family: 40 kg sold = 1,000,000 kip income
- Mr. Bunsuu and Family: 10 kg sold = 250,000 kip income

Most of the sales have been made within the village and to neighbouring villages such as Ban Phanob and Ban Seanphan (both project target communities). Villagers admit they have not made good use of potential sales opportunities at the local market in Langkhang yet; some have said they are going to do so in the near future. In addition to the direct financial benefit to the 5 families, aquaculture has contributed to greater food security in the village while potentially relieving pressure on fish resources in the nearby Nam Ngo river.



Group members say that on average, they are selling about half of their mature fish, eating 25% and keeping the rest for reproduction. Reproduction was a major topic during discussions with the villagers. Right now, the fish are reproducing naturally. However, according to DAFO staff this will not allow for long term sustainability of fish-raising, as only “bpa nin” (tilapia) reproduce naturally at rates sufficient to ensure stocks are replenished, while the other two types of fish released (“bpa baak” and bpa “nuanjan”) will only reproduce about 10-20% of current stock naturally. Originally, the plan had been for the project to work with DONRE and DAFO to **organize a technical training on enhanced reproduction techniques at the Ban Nongbohn fishfarm in Xebangfai district**. It would be good if such a

training could take place after all; to give villagers and DAFO staff the skills needed to make aquaculture a sustainable source of alternative income in Ban Vangkhn.

Two group members have expressed interest in **piloting the raising of catfish in the dry season**. They have already received training on basic catfish raising techniques as part of the technical training in Xebangfai, and now request project support for the purchase of 1000 catfish fingerlings to pilot in 1 fishpond. However, raising catfish is comparatively more cost intensive (e.g. industrial feed and oxygen tanks would be needed). Considering the PPR recommendations, it may thus not be possible for the project to support such a pilot. Villagers have been informed accordingly, but have nevertheless requested assistance, as they believe there is good potential due to high local demand for catfish.

Finally, it again became clear that there is a **general need for clarification regarding the roles and responsibilities of DONRE and DAFO in monitoring and supporting these two livelihood activities**. How shall the two offices relate and/or coordinate with regards to livelihood improvement in the HNN area? Perhaps this can be outlined as part of the overall drafting of TORs/core competencies currently being prepared for the various DONRE HNN units.

DONRE Livelihoods Unit Head Mr. Sipanom Keovankam has noted the requests of the group members in the two villages and will explore options for the project to respond. Mr. Bounpheng Saysana will follow up on contract changes and additional staff for monitoring.



From left to right: Mr. Sipanom Keovunkam (DONRE), Mr. Bounpheng Saysana (DAFO) and Mr. Dam Soukchaleurn (DAFO) sample some of the fish raised in Ban Vangkhn