



## **Oudomxay residents have clean water on tap.**

Over 1,000 residents of Huayxang village in Namor district, Oudomxay province; now have access to clean drinking water after the installation of a gravity-fed water system funded by the United States' Lao Rehabilitation Foundation.

A handover ceremony to mark its completion took place at the village and was attended by the Foundation's President Dr Luc Janssens, the Oudomxay provincial Health Department Director Dr Khamphan Xayavong and other concerned parties. Head of the Eye Unit at the Health Department Dr Phetsamone Indara said the people of this village are very happy with the new water supply which cost US\$27,200 – 17 percent of which was funded by local people. Huayxang village contains 153 homes with 210 families who will all benefit from the new water system. All the adult residents are farmers.

Dr Phetsamone said now villagers have access to clean water, women and children will spend less time travelling to collect supplies from other villages. The gravity-fed water system was built in November last year with the help of local labour and materials. The project has worked with the community to develop plans to ensure the well is used properly and to build a sense of responsibility and ownership of the well amongst the population. "We now can have clean water, which is much more convenient. We are all happy with this new system and can use the water for drinking, cooking and washing clothes," one local resident said.

The National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy, under which all development programmes are implemented, has identified clean water supplies and improved sanitation as one of four priorities of development. The Health

Department now plans to provide funds to construct latrines for local use, including in schools, Dr Phetsamone added. Eighty percent of the population now drink boiled water, sleep under mosquito nets, have access to water all year round and are well informed about hygiene. Laos is among the least developed countries in the world, and has a comparatively high degree of poor social and health indicators, according to the World Health Organisation. More than 80 percent of the country's 5.6 million inhabitants live in rural areas, and poverty is overwhelmingly a rural problem. Only 24 percent of the population has access to adequate sanitation facilities and 43 percent obtain drinking water from safe water sources, according to WHO estimates.

**By Times Reporters  
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