



Phongsaly community has improved hygiene, sanitation

Over 300 residents of Hadset village in Bountay district, Phongsaly province, now enjoy better hygiene and sanitation after the installation of a gravity-fed water system funded by the United States' Lao Rehabilitation Foundation.

The foundation also provided funding to build toilets for a local school, which will further improve sanitation in the community.

A handover ceremony to mark the completion of the facilities took place in the village recently and was attended by the foundation's President Dr Luc Janssens, district authorities and other concerned parties.

The foundation's Coordinator Dr Phetsamone Indara said the people of this village are very happy with the new water supply which cost around 107 million kip, 30 percent of which was provided by local people.

Most of the people in the village belong to the Akha ethnic group and sustain themselves through farming.

Hadseth village has 56 households of 67 families who will all benefit from the new water system and toilets. The community is 24km from the district centre and has poor road access.

Dr Phetsamone said that now the villagers have clean water and toilets, women and children will spend less time collecting supplies from other villages.

The construction of the gravity-fed water system and toilets took several months and were built by a local construction company with the help of the villagers, who also provided construction materials.

The project has worked with the community to develop plans to ensure the water supply is used properly and to build a sense of responsibility and ownership amongst the population.

“We now have clean water and toilets, 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.

“We also plan to use the water in the dry season to grow crops and to raise animals such as chickens, pigs, cows, fish and frogs,” she added.

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

The foundation now plans to provide funds to construct other latrines for local use, including in schools in the near future, 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 6.5 million inhabitants live in rural areas, and poverty is overwhelmingly a rural problem.

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