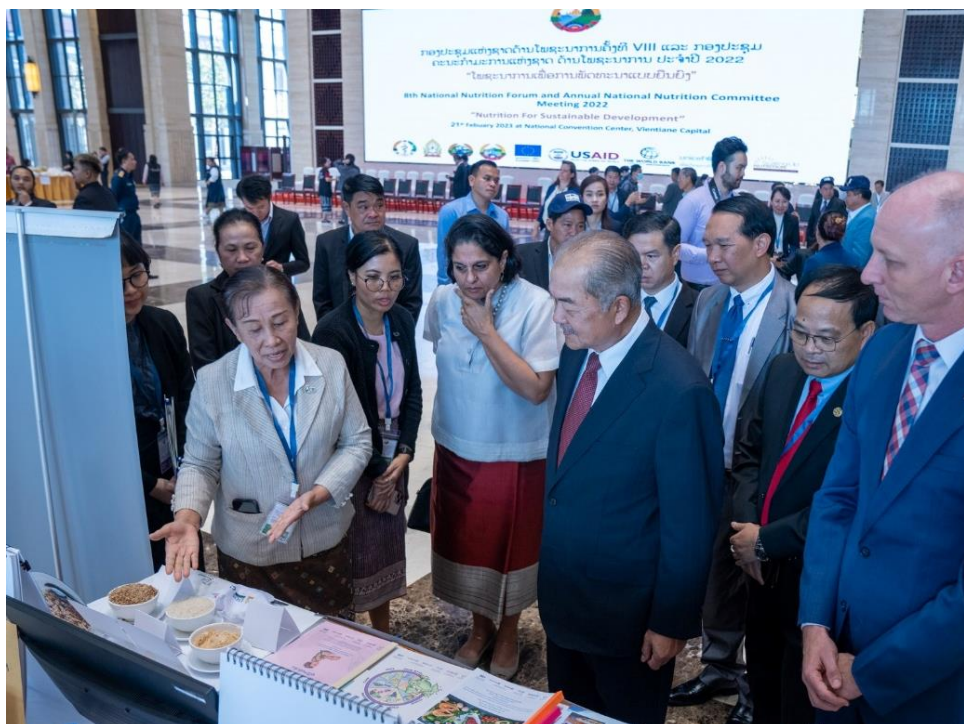


INSIDE:

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**Researcher Profile: Maikho Vongxay MPH**

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**Nutrition Research Agenda on track**

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**Learn Nutrition Online**



*Lao PDR Deputy Prime Minister, H.E. Prof. Dr. Kikeo Khaykhamphithoune, visits CRS Booth at the of implementing partners exhibition at the 2023 National Nutrition Forum*

## 8<sup>th</sup> National Nutrition Forum 2023: “Nutrition for Sustainable Development”

The VIII National Nutrition Forum (NNF) and National Nutrition Committee Meeting 2023 was held on 21 February 2023 at the National Conference Center, Vientiane Capital. The event was chaired by H.E. Prof. Dr. Kikeo Khaykhamphithoune, Deputy Prime Minister of the Lao PDR and Chairman of the National Committee on Nutrition.

This eighth conference was presented by the National Committee on Nutrition and aimed to summarize lessons from progress around implementation of the national strategy on nutrition in the past year, hearing from each province as well as the Ministry of Planning and Investment, Health, Education, Agriculture and Forestry, each mass organizations, the University of Health Sciences and key development partners. This year’s theme was “Nutrition for Sustainable Development” and sustainability was central to discussions of how to continue progress in 2023. The conference included an exhibition of the practical work and new tools and publications from many sectors with an emphasis on sustainable implementation at the local level.

The chair of the conference acknowledged the serious challenges ahead and urged everyone to commit to work together to reduce malnutrition in Lao PDR. Specifically, he called for increased collaboration between sectors in each province in their 2023 planning and instructed leadership to ensure tackling malnutrition is a priority and fully integrated into their 9<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Development Plans and annual plans.

NNF documentation can be accessed at: <http://bit.ly/405a1HY>

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## Nutrition Research Agenda Phase 1 Summary Meeting Complete



What do we still need to research and learn to effectively improve nutrition in Lao PDR? That is the question the National Nutrition Research Agenda (NNRA) seeks to answer.

Currently in Lao PDR, an NNRA is being prepared via a participatory process of interviews and discussions with stakeholders from many sectors. On February 2, 2023, the Lao Tropical and Public

Health Institute (Lao TPHI) presented and discussed the findings from the first phase. Recommendations were made for the development of tools to guide the second phase of research with input from relevant key sectors. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Latsamy Siengsounthone, Director General of Lao TPHI and the effort is being led by Dr. Somphone Soukhavong from the Department of Food and Nutrition Research, Lao TPHI. The final NNRA will be available in late 2023.

## Learn Nutrition Online

A new self-study resource for professionals is now available free of charge and in Lao language! The university-level module, Introductory Concepts in Nutrition explains key topics, including: nutrition determinants, nutrients in food, nutrition across the lifecycle, nutritional assessment, food security, and how nutrition is linked to communicable and non-communicable diseases.

The course is on the ANRCB YouTube channel in video form – so you can watch Lao language lectures accompanied by Lao slides. The presentations are also available for download in English-- allowing everyone to also use it improve their English skills related to nutrition.



## 4<sup>th</sup> NIPN Day Held

The 4th annual dissemination workshop for the National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN) was held on 20th of February 2023 at the National Conference Center, Vientiane Capital. It was chaired by the honorable H.E. Dr. Sathabandith INSIXIENGMAI, Vice Minister of Ministry of Planning and Investment and Convener of NIPN Advisory Committee.

The meeting featured new nutrition data and analysis including the drivers and eating preferences of primary school children, the relationship between maternal diet diversity and chronic malnutrition in children under 5, association between feeding practices and nutritional status in children, and a Lao food system assessment.

**All NIPN Day documents can be accessed at:**  
<https://tinyurl.com/nipnday2023>



University students, community development workers, and health care staff can all benefit from taking this course. The ANRCB project hopes these materials will contribute to the advancement of nutrition education and awareness in Laos and beyond.

Start studying at <https://tinyurl.com/you8we869>

## Lao Food System Profile: questioning the drivers of high malnutrition rates of young children and women of reproductive age

At the recent NIPN Day, Dr. Sayvisene Boulom of the National University of Laos (NUoL) presented some of the nutrition-focused findings of the new *Lao PDR Food Systems Profile* recently produced by Food and Agriculture Organization, European Union, and the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD). The assessment examined the relationship between nutrition drivers, their effects and those impacts on food insecurity and malnutrition prevalence. Some of the issues identified included:



- limited knowledge and access to technology in isolated communities and unsustainable land use combined with a lack of agriculture extension services results in low innovation and the persistence of subsistence farming practices, which perpetuate rice shortages.
- Climate change, lack of transport networks, and deforestation play a key role in the high costs of agricultural inputs, lack of market access, and the significant decrease in access to and stocks of wild foods and non-timber forest products. This resource loss is fueling a decrease in dietary diversity.
- Unemployment and low labor force participation in rural areas is a factor in limited household income to buy nutritious foods which also contributes to low intake of diverse diets.
- In some rural communities, traditions such as food taboos and food restrictions are commonly practiced, and these have direct relationship to poor dietary diversity.
- Worryingly, the assessment found low nutritional value “junk foods” are increasingly available and with that there is an increase in the consumption of unhealthy foods. This combination is a factor in poor dietary intakes.

Dr. Sayvisene Boulom explained the proposed systemic levers to tackle these challenges are to promote nutrition education, raise awareness and share information to improve food consumption behaviors and to promote locally available, indigenous, and nutritious foods.

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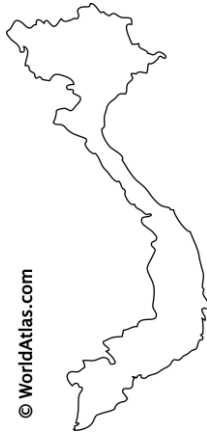
## Awardee Profile



Mr Maikho Vongxay is technical staff of the administrative and planning unit at the Center of Nutrition (CN). He holds a Master’s in Public Health and is team leader of a USAID-supported small research team focused on the topic “Factors associated with the effectiveness of breastfeeding protection, promotion and prevalence of breastfeeding in Vientiane province”. He has previously contributed to more than 20 research papers. He has experience in data collection via using face-to-face interviews with a structured questionnaire so to answer this research question, his team, supported by Roger S. Zoh Associate Professor, Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, School of Public Health, Indiana University Bloomington (USA), developed a questionnaire and worked with Lao breastfeeding experts to ensure applicability and appropriateness. The team is now gearing up to use the program STATA for data management and analysis.

Maikho explained he is interested in better understanding breastfeeding because it is a priority nutrition intervention of the National Plan of Action for Nutrition (NPAN) 2021-2025. He sees that improving breastfeeding can reduce malnutrition and improve the nutrition status of infants and young children in the country, “The COVID 19 crisis has brought a new and unique set of challenges, especially for breastfeeding because it disrupted access to health services including the antenatal care and interpersonal counseling on infant and young child feeding.”

Maikho says that joining the Small Research Grant mentorship program allowed him to “learn more about how to design research questions and the process of selection of research methodologies”. Maikho reports that this research initiative is helping to build the capacity for Center of Nutrition staff by applying new knowledge to improve their research skills.



### UPCOMING CONFERENCE:

## The 13<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Public Health among the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Countries 2023

*Theme: "Enhancing trans-disciplinary collaborations on Education and Research to tackle priority public health issues in the new Era."*

The Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) Public Health Academic Network started in 2008. It comprises members from public health academic institutions of 6 countries in the GMS namely Thailand, Vietnam, China, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar. Their annual conference will be held at Faculty of Public Health of the Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy (Hue City, Vietnam) June 30 – July 2, 2023.

This year conference will be focusing on Mental Health; Environmental and Occupational Health - One Health – Eco Health; Nutrition and Food Safety; Epidemiology of Communicable and Non-communicable Diseases; Reproductive and Sexual Health; Health Literacy and Health Promotion; Health Service and Healthcare Management; Health Economics and Health Technology Assessment.

**ABSTRACTS ACCEPTED THROUGH 31 MARCH!**

**For more information:** <https://gms13-vietnam.org>

## Winning Webinars

Since beginning in October 2022, the monthly nutrition research webinar series hosted by the Center of Nutrition has reached over 150 people and its audience continues to grow.

You can now catch any lectures you missed via the ANRCB YouTube page—each webinar is uploaded there in both English and Lao versions. Past topics to date include the impact and assessment of anemia, dietary diversity patterns in Nepal, researching food environments, linkages of nutrition and child development, social determinants of nutrition outcomes, and food safety.

The next webinar on [Child Nutrition and Early Development in Tanzania](#) will be at 9am on 5 April 2023.



## Practitioner News

The Lao Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Alliance (SUN CSA) is a network of organizations working together to improve nutrition in Laos.

On 22 March 2023, SUN CSA Laos reviewed the preliminary findings of its research on “Food insecurity in the context of rising food prices in Lao PDR” in order to prepare sharing findings at the SUN CSA Annual General meeting on 29 March 2023. The study involved 13 SUN CSA members and collected over 1000 survey responses from communities across the country. The report is intended to help shed light on the serious issues facing local families.

The report will be published on the SUN CSA website at <https://suncsalaos.org/>



ສາມາດຕິດຕໍ່ກັບໂຄງການພວກເຮົາໄດ້ທີ່ ສູນໂພຊະນາການ, ຊັ້ນ 2, ບ້ານຊຽງດາ ເມືອງໄຊເສດຖາ, ນະຄອນຫຼວງວຽງຈັນ. ກະລຸນາຕິດຕໍ່: [ANRCB@crs.org](mailto:ANRCB@crs.org)  
ພາກສ່ວນທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງກັບວຽກງານໂພຊະນາການ ສາມາດນໍາໃຊ້ບັນດາຫ້ອງອົບຮົມ, ຫ້ອງປະຊຸມ ແລະ ຫ້ອງສະໝຸດ ທີ່ຕັ້ງຢູ່ສູນໂພຊະນາການ ໂດຍການປະສານງານກັບສູນໂພຊະນາການ  
ANRCB is located at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of Center of Nutrition, Xiangda Village, Saysettha District, Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR.  
Nutrition sector stakeholders are welcome to conduct activities in training and meeting rooms and dormitory.  
Bookings can be made directly via with the Center of Nutrition at: [nutritioncenterlaopdr@gmail.com](mailto:nutritioncenterlaopdr@gmail.com) or via ANRCB at: [anrcb@crs.org](mailto:anrcb@crs.org)