

Results of the CBMS Pilot Survey in Lao

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Abstract

The community-based monitoring system (CBMS) has been implemented in Laos as a pilot test in four poor villages in the poorest districts of Savanakheth and Saravanh provinces. The CBMS was meant to supplement the Village Book of the Lao local data collection system as a tool for social, economic and poverty monitoring. The Village Book aims to collect socio-economic information from the grassroots level and consists of data on population, housing, agriculture, labor, education, health and poverty (number of poor household by selected criteria).

The village chief is responsible for filling in this book and reporting to districts. The district report is then submitted to the provincial office which then report to the National Statistical Centre (NSC) once a year. This Village Book system, however, has been missing an important step for data collection in terms of household-level information. To correct this, Laos has adopted CBMS as a tool to assist village chief to collect the data. The village book needs to be improved, in particular, concerning the indicators. CBMS village book is important for the Lao local government but they need assistance to develop this tool.

The CBMS pilot survey covers four villages of Savannakhet and Saravan Provinces. The statistical unit is the household and the survey covers mainly demographic, social and economic

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characteristics of households and profiles of some villages. This information will be used for monitoring the social and economic situation and poverty reduction in the selected sample village. The sample has been chosen based on agreement of the active authority of the province, District and Village.

The pilot was conducted in November 2004 and took nine days of enumeration. The interviewers consisted of village chiefs and staff of other civil organizations in the village.

As seen from the result of the pilot survey, the villages are quite poor with more than 40 percent living in bamboo houses (defined as not permanent housing) and more than 70 percent without access to latrine.

Almost all households are engaged in agriculture activities but there are some differences of productivity between Savannakhet and Saravan villages.

In this area, too, people have high percentages of malaria infection. More than 50 percent of total villagers of CBMS villages contracted malaria. In Narhong village (one village in Saravan), the situation is more severe with more than 80 percent of people having suffered from malaria.

Introduction

In reiterating its strong commitment to the objective of poverty eradication in order to achieve its goal of overcoming the status of Least Developed Country by the year 2020, the government of the Lao PDR issued Instruction Number 010/PM in June 2001 which identified the poverty criteria and clarified the modalities for the preparation of an operational poverty eradication program. Based on this policy, the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy (NGPES)¹ was developed and adopted by the National Assembly.

To implement the NGPES as well as to measure the social and economic performances of the country, there is demand for information about the poor especially at the community level. It is necessary to have a system for monitoring and evaluation, especially for programs

¹ Formerly called the National Poverty Eradication Program (NPEP).

and policies toward poverty alleviation. To do the monitoring in Lao PDR, the government has adopted a bottom-up approach measure from the community to the national level known as the "Village Book Statistics."

This Village Book aims to collect socio-economic information from the grassroots level, such as data on population, housing, agriculture, labor, education, health and poverty. The village chief is responsible for filling this book and reporting to districts, after which the district report to provincial office, and then report to National Statistical Center (NSC) once a year. This village book was introduced in 2004; as such there are still numerous issues that need to be improved, particularly the capacity building at the village, district, and provincial levels.

While the NSC found the implementation of data collection using the village book useful and easy for the village chief to report to the local government/administration authorities, it also realized that the villagers were asked to aggregate data into the village book without providing them with any tools to collect data at the household level. In fact, the village book was more of an indicative questionnaire rather than a primary data collection questionnaire. Thus, the NSC recognized that a key step on primary data collection at the household level is needed.

Learning from other countries, the NSC has therefore decided to adopt the community-based monitoring system (CBMS) as an appropriate tool to address this issue and has started to implement it on a pilot basis in Lao PDR to strengthen capacity building at the provincial, district and village levels. The NSC used the CBMS developed questionnaires to collect information from 4 villages in Sepone (in Savannakhet province) and Toomlan districts (in Saravanh province).

This paper presents the results of this CBMS pilot survey to better understand the households' characteristics in the poor districts, in particular the selected villages for CBMS testing. This study also highlights the lessons learned from field enumerations and draws recommendations for future improvement of the CBMS in Lao PDR.

Survey methodology

Purpose and scope of the survey

The National Statistics Center (NSC) has recently received support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) through the CBMS International Network at the Angelo King Institute for Economic and Business Studies of De La Salle University, to implement the CBMS-Lao project in 2005 to 2006. This project will assist the NSC to develop a data collection tool and provide the technical assistance in strengthening the capacity building of local authority and to support the existing "Village Book" in Lao PDR. The project has re-identified the indicators of the Village Book and developed a mechanism for data collection and result analysis for local authorities in their monitoring work.

The pilot survey of the CBMS in Lao PDR covers 4 villages of the Savannakhet and Saravan Provinces. The statistical unit is the household and the survey captures main socio-economic information of households related to poverty monitoring.

Sample villages selection and field operation

The sample villages were chosen on the basis of the agreement between the provincial Committee for Planning and Investment (CPI) and the NSC. These villages are located in the poorest districts (47 poorest districts out of 142). There are 4 villages in the pilot survey; two in Sepon district in Savannakhet and two in Tumlane district in Saravan province (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of sample villages in each District

Province	Districts	Village	Urban/Rural	Total HH
Savannakhet	Sepone	Phonemuang	Urban	166
		Dansavan	Rural	197
Saravane	Tumlane	Nonesavang	Rural	53
		Nahongkang	Rural	42
Total				458

The sample data collection was done without the use of any statistical technique since the NSC wanted to focus on some districts where the local authority showed interest in implementing the CBMS. The director of the CPI was the main person in selecting the CBMS villages.

The provincial CPI is the strategic unit of local authority and has the major role in executing the NGPES in monitoring and evaluating poverty in the provinces and reporting to NSC. Each province has a statistical unit or section with the provincial and district officer implementing the CBMS. The CBMS key person at the district level is mainly required to prepare a summary situation report where all villages' views, problems, comments or any recommendation are integrated and compiled. Meanwhile, at the provincial level, the CBMS key person is mainly required to prepare the administrative and statistical reports as input for CBMS. The use of the CBMS results as well as the expansion of the CBMS approach are also discussed in the provincial report. These tasks, however, are being done by the NSC and will be handed over to the provinces during the implementation phase.

The pilot data collection was conducted within 9 days in November 2004. The enumerators or interviewers were the village heads, the heads of youth and women organizations and village security groups. Before the field operation, the enumerators were trained on how to collect data and how to fill them in the questionnaires.

During the pilot test, a simple map of the village was produced. This map was first drawn manually using some information of village and household characteristics and then the data were reloaded into the geographic information system (GIS) system using Arcview program for mapping.

Data entry and data processing

The NSC has developed the data entry programme using Microsoft Access that was installed in the provincial office. Training for the

provincial officers who would handle the data entry and edit was provided by the NSC. The data were then submitted to the NSC for analysis, processing and tabulation. In the long run, though, the provincial officer is supposed to take over this activity although it would take time to build up this capacity for local government officers.

Findings from the pilot survey

Village characteristics

The CBMS villages are located in the remote area of two provinces (Savannakhet in the central and Saravan in the south) of Lao PDR. Most of households are engaged in agriculture as well as in non-agricultural activities such as weaving and handicraft. One of the villages in the Sepone District of the province of Savannakhet-Dansavan is located close to the border between Lao PDR and Vietnam. As such, this village has better transportation facility and has more opportunity in income generating from non-agriculture activity (Road No. 9 which is connected to Vietnam and Thailand). In each village, there is a primary school and health care center except in Nonesavang which shares with Nahongkang. The two villages in Saravan have lesser number of households compared to Savannakhet villages as seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Village characteristics

Province/ Districts	Village	Distance to District Office	Total HH	Total population	Primary School in Village	Health Center
Savannakhet Sepone	Phonemuang Dansavan	1 km	166	1137	Yes	Yes
		50 km	197	1196	Yes	Yes
Saravane Tumlane	Nonesavang Nahongkang	6 km	53	256	No	No
		8 km	42	226	Yes	Yes
			458	2815		

Population and economic activity

Population

The total number of household in the CBMS village is 458 households and the total number of persons is about 2815. The average household size is generally larger in rural areas (6.2) than in urban (5.8). In Nonesavang and Nahongkang, the average household size is lower than the national average. In Lao, female population is higher than male population although in some areas like Phonemuang Village, the opposite is true (Table 3).

Annually, there is about 2.2 percent of new born babies or an increase of 61 persons in the CBMS villages. There are significant differentials in birth and death between gender as well as among the villages (Table 4). The high birth and death rates in the villages are consistent with the results of national surveys indicating the poor access to amenities like safe drinking water, health services, housing, electricity and toilet facilities.

In terms of people moving in and out of the villages, the data show that more females have moved out than males. In the 4 villages, 1.3 percent of the total population had emigrated during the period while only 0.4 percent had immigrated as shown in Table 5. In general, the immigration to urban areas was higher than in rural areas.

Table 6 shows the number and percent distribution of population by age group and sex. In Nonesavang, Narhongkang and Dansavan, slightly less than half of the population are male and slightly over

Table 3. Number of population

Village	Population			No. of HH	Average HH size	% of Female
	Female	Male	Total			
Nonesavang	133	123	256	53	4.8	52.0
Narhongkang	121	105	226	42	5.5	53.5
Phonemaung	565	572	1137	166	6.8	49.7
Dansavan	616	580	1196	197	6.1	51.5
Total	1435	1380	2815	458	6.2	51.0

Table 4. Number and proportion of new born and death during the past 12 months

	New born child			Death		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Nonesavang	9	6 15	4	1	5	
Narhongkang	5	4	9	1	-	1
Phonemaung	18	6	24	6	2	8
Dansavan	6	7	13	2	1	3
Total	38	23	61	13	4	17
	Percentage to total population					
Nonesavang	6.8	4.9	5.9	3.0	0.8	2.0
Narhongkang	4.1	3.8	4.0	0.8	-	0.4
Phonemaung	3.2	1.0	2.1	1.1	0.3	0.7
Dansavan	1.0	1.2	1.1	0.3	0.2	0.3
Total	2.6	1.7	2.2	0.9	0.3	0.6

Table 5. Population by age group and sex

Village/ Age group	0-4	4-9	10-14	15-19	<=19	20-60	61+	Total	Female	Male
Nonesavang	61	34	23	30	148	97	11	256	66	66
Narhongkang	40	43	27	16	126	89	11	226	64	64
Phonemaung	142	144	142	141	569	479	89	1,137	252	252
Dansavan	133	174	169	120	596	558	42	1,196	261	261
Total	376	395	361	307	1,439	1,223	153	2,815	643	643
<i>Percentage of total population</i>										
Nonesavang	23.8	13.3	9.0	11.7	57.8	37.9	4.3	100.0	51.2	48.8
Narhongkang	17.7	19.0	11.9	7.1	55.8	39.4	4.9	100.0	52.9	47.1
Phonemaung	12.5	12.7	12.5	12.4	50.0	42.1	7.8	100.0	48.7	51.3
Dansavan	11.1	14.5	14.1	10.0	49.8	46.7	3.5	100.0	50.4	49.6
Total	13.4	14.0	12.8	10.9	57.7	43.4	5.4	100.0	50.0	50.0

Table 6. Immigration and emigration

	Move out						Move in					
	Female	%	Male	%	Total	%	Female	%	Male	%	Total	%
Nonesavang	1	0.8	2	1.6	3	1.2	2	1.5	-	-	2	0.8
Narhongkang	4	3.3	3	2.9	4	1.8	1	0.8	-	-	1	0.4
Phonemaung	22	3.9	13	2.3	22	1.9	2	0.4	2	0.3	4	0.4
Dansavan	8	1.3	7	1.2	8	0.7	-	-	3	0.5	3	0.3
Total	37	2.6	25	1.8	37	1.3	5	0.3	5	0.4	10	0.4

one-half are female. The proportion of people under 20 is relatively high (50%). More than 25 percent of total population are children under 10, particularly in Nonesavang (23.8% of total population). About half of the total population are in working age (ages 15–60 years old) and only 5 percent are above 60 years old.

Economic activity (occupation of people aged 10 years and above)

Almost all households in Nonesavang (87%) and Narhongkang (91%) are occupied with agricultural activity with only approximately 2 percent of the population in Nonesavang working for the government, 1.4 percent raising animals, and 7-11 percent are engaged in other activities including being students.

In contrast, as shown in Figure 1, the people in the CBMS villages in Sepone district in Savannakhet province have more diversity of activity than those in Saravan province. About half of the population work as farmers, 7.5 percent work as small scale trader, 4.6 percent raise animals and 29 percent are busy with other activities. The population in Dansavan village, in particular, have a different labor structure since the village is situated near the Vietnamese border and thus have more opportunities to do other jobs like trading (19% are engaged in buying and selling of goods between Laos and Vietnam) and other available temporary work (11%).

Households engaged in non-agriculture activity

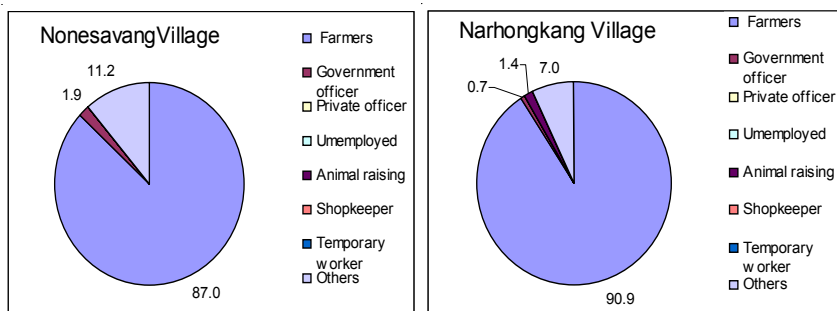
Besides farming and gardening, additional activities like weaving, handicraft, and furniture-making are also important for the people in these CBMS villages, especially weaving which absorbs 52.13 percent of the labor (Table 7).

Housing characteristics

There are a number of factors affecting the living conditions of households. To get a good picture of this, several surveys have been done. This is also one of the indicators in the pilot test of the CBMS villages. The results reveal an overall low standard of living conditions.

Figure 1. Economic activity in Tumlane and Sepone Districts

Tumlane District



Sepone District

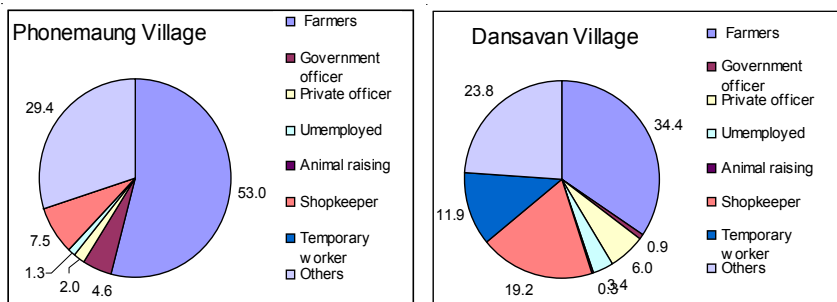


Table 7. Secondary activity of households

Village	Weaving			Handicraft			Furniture			Others		
	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total
Nonesavang	41		41	1	10	11				0	20	20
Narhongkang	30		30		33	33						
Phonemaung	26	1	27		2	2				3		3
Dansavan							3	11	14	2	2	4
Total	97	1	98	1	45	46	3	11	14	5	22	27
<i>(As percentage of total labor)</i>												
Nonesavang	97.6		56.9	2.4	33.3	15.3						27.8
Narhongkang	100.0		45.5		91.7	50.0						66.7
Phonemaung	89.7	33.3	84.4		66.7	6.3				10.3		9.4
Dansavan							60.0	84.6	77.8	40.0	15.4	22.2
Total	91.5	1.2	52.1	0.9	54.9	24.5	2.8	13.4	7.4	4.7	26.8	14.4

Housing material

The most common types of housing (Table 8) are wooden houses and semi-permanent houses (bamboo), occupied by almost 43 percent of total households. Only a few households in the two villages of Sepone district live in concrete and mixed wooden houses (around 10%).

Household by type of latrine

Most of the population in the CBMS villages do not enjoy good sanitation, with results of the survey showing that 71.4 percent of households have no latrine at all to use in their daily lives. The situation is most severe in the two villages of Nonsavang and Nahonghang where all households live without latrine (Table 9).

Household by type of water source

Table 10 shows that almost 87 percent of households got their water from wells or bore holes and another 12 percent fetched their water from rivers, streams or lake. It means that only 1 percent had access to what is commonly defined as safe water (piped water). This was

Table 8. Housing by type of construction material

Village	Type of House					Total
	Concrete House	Mixed concrete & wood	Wooden house	Bamboo house	Others	
Nonesavang			29	18	6	53
Narhongkang	6		22	20		42
Phonemaung	29	8	97	55		166
Dansavan	35	10	50	108		197
Total		18	198	201	6	458
As percentage to total household						
Nonesavang			54.7	34.0	11.3	100.0
Narhongkang			52.4	47.6		100.0
Phonemaung	3.6	4.8	58.4	33.1		100.0
Dansavan	14.7	5.1	25.4	54.8		100.0
Total	7.6	3.9	43.2	43.9	1.3	100.0

Table 9. Household by type of latrine

Village	Type of latrine				Total
	Modern toilet	Mormal/dry toilet	Others	No toilet	
Nonesavang				53	53
Narhongkang				42	42
Phonemaung	40	19	7	100	166
Dansavan	49	14	2	132	197
Total	89	33	9	327	458
Aspercentage to total household					
Nonesavang				100.0	100.0
Narhongkang				100.0	100.0
Phonemaung	24.1	11.4	4.2	60.2	100.0
Dansavan	24.9	7.1	1.0	67.0	100.0
Total	19.4	7.2	2.0	71.4	100.0

Table 10. Household by type of water source

Village	Water supply	Well/borehole	River/stream/lake	Total
Nonesavang	-	92.5	7.5	100.0
Narhongkang	-	100.0	-	100.0
Phonemaung	0.6	94.0	5.4	100.0
Dansavan	1.5	77.7	20.8	100.0
Total	0.9	87.3	11.8	100.0

the biggest problem in the poor villages of Lao PDR, particularly in the remote villages.

Sources of energy for cooking

The main sources of energy that people use for cooking are firewood and charcoal (98.5% of households). Only 1 percent of households used gas/fuel or coal for cooking and 0.4 percent use electricity (Table 11).

Table 11. Main sources of energy for cooking

Village	Electricity	Gas/ fuel/ coal	Fire wood/ charcoal	Total
Nonesavang	-	-	100.0	100.0
Narhongkang	-	-	100.0	100.0
Phonemaung	-	1.8	98.2	100.0
Dansavan	1.0	1.0	98.0	100.0
Total	0.4	1.1	98.5	100.0

Agriculture and livestock

Rice cultivation

Rice is the main staple crop in Lao PDR. Almost all households grow rice and are self-subsistence farmers. The households in Nonesavang, Nahongkang and Phonemaung are engaged in low land rice while household in Dansavan is more occupied with upland rice production.

In general, there is a difference in productivity (yield/ha) between lowland and upland rice cropping. Most of the rice production are for own final consumption. Only a small amount is meant for marketing.

Livestock

Similar to rice growing, livestock husbandry is another major activity of households in the villages. People raised livestock such as cow and buffalo for use in transportation and plowing rice fields. Livestock is a type of household saving which may be sold when money is needed.

In Saravan, the common animals raised by households are buffalo, pig and chicken while cattle are commonly raised in Savannakhet. Animal disease is one of the problems in the villages in Lao PDR. In Nonesavang and Narhongkang, the villagers have faced this problem.

In Nonesavang, over 40 percent of pigs, chicken and ducks in the villages died from diseases during the last 12 months while in Narhongkang, it is more than 38 percent (Table 12).

Health

Number of illness in the past 12 months

Sickness and health problems affect the welfare of households and limit the generation of household income. The most critical health problem is the high incidence of malaria (more than 84% of the population in Narhongkang, for instance) and diarrhea (57% of population) as seen in Table 13. In general, there are no differences of prevalence of sickness from dengue, malaria or diarrhea between men and women. The use of bed nets does not help protect people from dengue and malaria because they might get this even during the day or from unsafe drinking water.

Access to health services

On average, 67.9 percent of total population go to a hospital when they get sick (Table 14). Dansavan has the highest percentage access to a hospital in province and district but only 11.9 percent and 24.5

Table 12. Average number of livestock and percentage of animal deaths in the last 12 months

Village	Cattle	Buffalo	Pig	Goat	Chicken	Duck
Nonesavang	1	2	2		15	3
Narhongkang	1	3	5		48	9
Phonemaung	5	2	1	1	11	3
Dansavan	3	0	0	0	2	1
(Percentage of livestock death compare to total livestock)						
Nonesavang	14.5	1.7	44.3		49.3	45.7
Narhongkang	0.8	17.0	39.4		38.4	34.1
Phonemaung		0.3	7.4	7.6	9.8	10.8
Dansavan	2.0	0.0	0.0			
Total		4.8	29.0	6.0	31.1	29.2

percent in Narhongkang and Nonesavang, respectively, have access. Instead of going to hospital, people in Narhongkang and Nonesavang treat themselves by going to the pharmacy to buy medicines. Compared to villages in Sepone, the percentage of self treatment is relatively high in the Tumlane villages at 75 and 88.1 percent, respectively.

Table 13. Number and percentage of illness and use of bed net in the past 12 months

Village	Dengue fever	Malaria	Diarrhea	Tuberculosis	Measles	Others	Use bed net
Nonesavang	2	75	19	1	10	32	47
Narhongkang	2	98	13	1	1	1	41
Phonemaung	12	61	12	4	1	54	158
Dansavan	16	52	12			21	177
Total illness	33	286	56	6	12	108	223
(As percentage of total population)							
Nonesavang	1.4	54.0	13.7	0.7	7.2	23.0	88.7
Narhongkang	1.7	84.5	11.2	0.9	0.9	0.9	97.6
Phonemaung	8.3	42.4	8.3	2.8	0.7	37.5	95.2
Dansavan	15.8	51.5	11.9				89.8
Total	6.6	57.1	11.2	1.2	2.4		92.4

Table 14. Access to health services

Village	Self - treatment	Go to hospital	Total	Licensed pharmacy	Traditional herb	in shop	other
Nonesavang	40	13	53	11	0	0	29
Narhongkang	37	5	42	19	1	3	14
Phonemaung	54	112	166	38	15	0	1
Dansavan	16	181	197	14	2	0	0
Total	147	311	458	82	18	3	44
Percentage of total entire population							
Nonesavang	75.5	24.5	100.0	27.5	0.0	0.0	72.5
Narhongkang	88.1	11.9	100.0	51.4	2.7	8.1	37.8
Phonemaung	32.5	67.5	100.0	70.4	27.8	0.0	1.9
Dansavan	8.1	91.9	100.0	87.5	12.5	0.0	0.0
Total	32.1	67.9	100.0	55.8	12.2	2.0	29.9

Education and poverty

Literacy rate

The overall literacy rate for Lao PDR is 60 percent, i.e., six out of ten of the population aged 15 years and above could read and write Lao. Literacy rate is high in the urban areas and in the capital city and low in rural areas like in the CBMS villages. Men have a higher literacy rate than women.

Table 15 shows the literacy rate of Lao CBMS villages disaggregated by gender. Almost all women in Nonesavang and Narhongkang cannot read and write Lao. About 6 percent of women aged 8 years old and above can read and write Lao and only one-half of the men can read and write. This is due to the poverty in the village in the poor district in Saravan province. There has been no school in Narhongkang and Nonesavang until recently when they built a school in the village.

The people in the two villages in Savannakhet have better education. The rate is above the national literacy rate and there is no wide gap of literacy rate among male and female.

Poverty

Poverty in the pilot sites of the CBMS project in Lao PDR is defined as a situation where a household could acquire only less than 16 kg of rice for consumption per month per person or does not have adequate clothing and permanent housing, or is not capable of meeting expenses for health care, and education for one's self and other family members. If the household is missing one of these criteria, it is considered as a poor household. However, these criteria are not a measure of the access side but of the capacity to pay for those services.

There are many reasons and factors that lead to poverty. Education is one of the most important indicators. Results in Table 16, which show the number of poor households, are consistent with those in Table 15 which show low literacy rates for most of the villages.

Table 15. Literacy rate of population aged 8 years old and above

Villages	Female	Male	Total
Nonesavang	7.6	50.0	27.3
Narhongkang	6.0	52.6	28.3
Phonemaung	69.8	75.9	72.9
Dansavan	88.5	91.5	89.9
Total	68.2	79.0	73.5

Table 16. Number of poor and non-poor households

Villages	Magnitude			Percentage		
	Non-poor	Poor	Total	Non-poor	Poor	Total
Nonesavang	10	43	53	18.87	81.13	100.0
Narhongkang	4	38	42	9.52	90.48	100.0
Phonemaung	32	134	166	19.28	80.72	100.0
Dansavan	8	189	197	4.06	95.94	100.0
Total	54	404	458	11.79	88.21	100.0

Summary of findings

The CBMS pilot test aims to present the data and information at the household level mainly on household characteristics in 4 villages in Sepone and Toomlan districts.

The total number households in the CBMS village is 458. The number of persons in these households is about 2815, 40 percent of whom are young people under 15 years old. About 80 percent are agriculture household (based on the household head). The households are generally larger in rural areas with an average household size of 6.2 vis-à-vis 5.8 in urban areas.

The most common type of housing are wooden houses and semi-permanent houses (bamboo), occupied by almost 43 percent of households. Only few households in the two villages in Sepone district live in concrete and mixed wooden house (around 10%).

Almost all households are engaged in agriculture but there are some differences in productivity between Savannakhet and Saravan

villages. One village in Savannakhet called Dansavan is located near the border of Vietnam and people in this village are busier with trade and other activities rather than agriculture (rice and crops cultivation). Their main income sources are from agriculture, hired labor and small-scale household business.

There are more than 70 percent of households that do not have access to latrine. Eighty-seven percent households have access to well and 11 percent use water from streams and rivers as source for drinking and cooking. Most of the households use firewood and charcoal as energy source for cooking.

The high percentage of malaria infection affects all income generation and the education of villagers. Literacy is a big problem in the poor villages, especially among women. Almost all women in Nonesavang and Narhongkang cannot read and write Lao. Only 6 percent of all women aged 8 years old and above can read and write Lao and only one-half of the males can read and write. There is no school in Narhongkang and Nonesavang until recently. Meanwhile, the population in the two villages in Savannakhet have better education and there is no wide gap of literacy rate among male and female.

The findings show that the villages in the CBMS pilot test are poor both in terms of access to infrastructure and access to services. This is the situation found in most poor villages and poor districts in Lao PDR.

Problems encountered

To collect information on a village level is difficult especially if it is being done for the first time as in the 4 CBMS pilot site villages. From the pilot survey, one can conclude some main problems as follows:

- The enumerators (village chief) do not have any educational background. Most of them have only completed primary school. Thus, it needs time to train them to understand why

the data are important and how they should be captured carefully.

- Technique of data collection of enumerators is still low: filling in of questionnaires summary data is done manually without calculator thereby possibly leading to mistakes.
- Inconvenience of communication and transportation link from districts to villages where there is no telephone connection makes it hard to reach villages.
- The use of data and information at the village level is not widely understood. CBMS may improve this situation in the future.
- Some activities were delayed like the consultation workshop on the results of the pilot survey because of delays in the other implementation activities such as data entry due to some problems in data entry program.
- There are mistakes in designing the questionnaire, particularly in the education part.

Recommendation

This CBMS village book needs to be improved, in particular, the indicators to fit the needs and capacity of local authority. Capacity building is a long term process. Based on the experience from this pilot test, it was found that local officers need assistance not only during the training course but also on data collection and data entry. CBMS village book is important for Lao local government but they need technical assistance from the central government to develop and implement this tool.

Future activities

The forthcoming activity—the implementing phase of CBMS—is very important. First, the questionnaire needs to be revised and finalized based on the pilot test. The project will expand the number of villages to be included in the CBMS site. There are 3 main activities that have to be carried out in the next year:

1. Remaining activities from the previous phase have to be implemented such as holding consultation workshops (national and local) to disseminate the results from pilot survey.
2. Preparation for implementing the survey of CBMS project in 12 villages has to commence:
 - Improve and update questionnaire and data entry program;
 - Organize meeting with Survey Division to consult on the selection of the villages (a sample survey or not); and
 - Prepare to conduct a survey for the implementation phase in CBMS villages.
3. Training and workshop
 - Conduct a meeting and training for the provincial staffs on data processing and presentation; and
 - Disseminate results of the survey during workshops.
4. Conduct of a one-week training on mapping by the CBMS International Network Coordinating Team in the near future.

Comments

- This pilot study is a good achievement. However, the author should emphasize more on methodology rather than on showing results. More comments could also have been given if the questionnaire is included.
- The village chief should not be an enumerator since enumerators should be politically neutral.
- There is also the need for training on how to conduct interviews.
- The selection of locations should be strategic. It was suggested that selection of which villages need CBMS would be useful since not every village is up to undertake a CBMS.
- Provide details on how poverty was defined in this study.
- Provide details on who needs what information for what. Getting back to the political systems where those capacities, whether at the national, provincial or between local levels, are being made would be useful to see the functional decisionmaking points. What the next step would be is to push those up. Schools could be a place where some of these could be done. The process of capacity building could be done over the years.
- Training and using school children as enumerators was suggested.
- In the end, focus should be on the decision makers. It is not basically at the village chief level since there is a little resource for them to allocate.
- There is a need to strengthen the linkages with the provincial government and training and partnership could be at that level because they have to have capacity and interest in it.
- Look into structure of the government of a particular country on how best to use CBMS in local governance.