



Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme

Environmental solutions to improve nutrition and overcome ill health in Lao PDR

Environmental and health linkages were reviewed during a workshop hosted by the Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP) and Health Unlimited (HU) in Attapeu Province, Lao PDR, on 10-11 May 2006.

Attapeu is one of the poorest provinces in Laos with poor nutrition, lack of access to safe drinking water and inadequate medical services being major factors in people's poverty. The workshop, involving local people, and provincial and district government workers made practical recommendations to improve nutrition and health.

Local livelihoods depend almost entirely on natural resources. Wetlands, including rivers, streams and ponds are the main sources for drinking water. Protecting these natural water sources and ensuring safe drinking water through provision of wells, water filters and boiling water were identified as important steps to improving health, and reducing infant mortality.



Participants working together during the workshop

Malnutrition remains a serious problem for many rural people, particularly for women and children. Supporting the establishment of community fisheries, raising indigenous fish species in community ponds, and in rice fields can all contribute to improved nutrition providing rich sources of protein in protein-poor diets.

These are examples of practical measures showing the intricate relationship between healthy environment and healthy people. To follow up on the recommendations of the meeting, a health and environment curriculum is being developed jointly between villagers, provincial health and environment staff, HU and the MWBP.



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